

*The*  
OPEN SPACE  
*magazine*

issue 15/16

fall 2013/winter 2014

double issue



Karin Rosenthal:  
a pastel performance of  
Stones/Water/Time/Breath  
(p. 52)

# *The* OPEN SPACE *magazine*

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The photograph on the cover by Karin Rosenthal, the text *Black Lake Eye* by Dorota Czerner (pp. 22-31), and two video pieces (*Ice Stones* and *Black Waters*) by Russell Craig Richardson ([vimeo.com/58270550](http://vimeo.com/58270550)), were responses to the score by Dean Rosenthal (*Stones/Water/Time/Breath*) on p. 52.

Sound files and other accompanying materials to the articles in The Open Space Magazine may be accessed at [www.the-open-space.org/downloads/](http://www.the-open-space.org/downloads/)

*To Astonish the Roses, 7 emails to Walter Branchi*, by J. K. Randall, is a supplement to this issue of *The Open Space Magazine*

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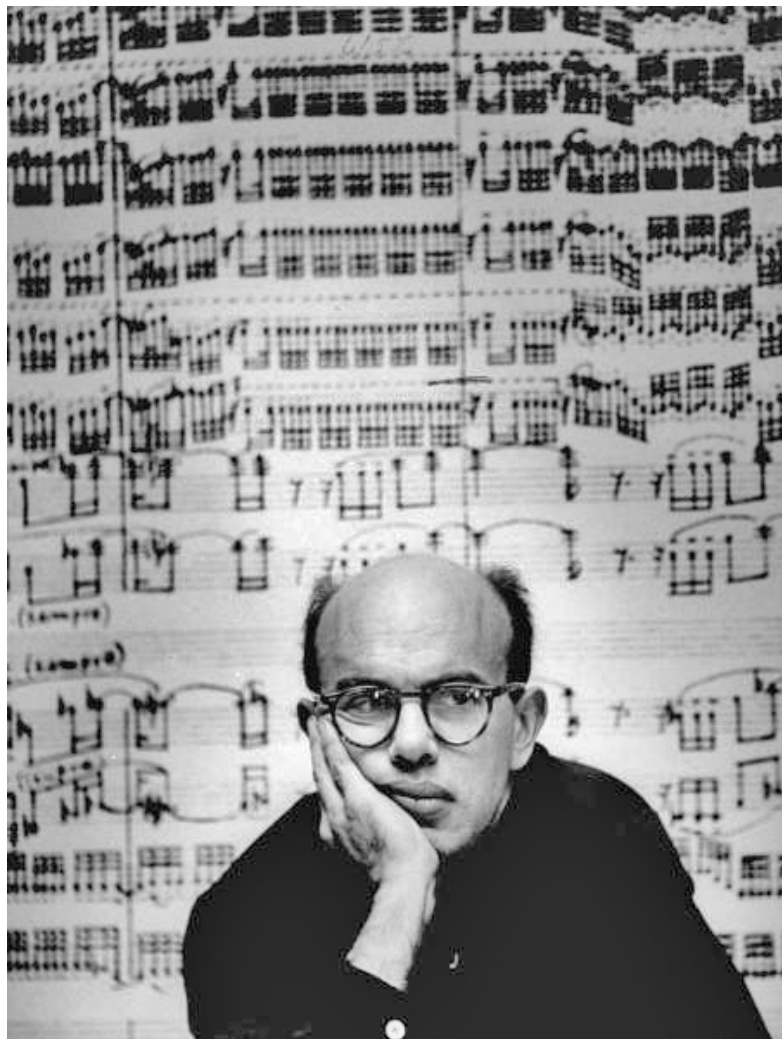


## Harold Shapero at Brandeis a memoir in memoriam

The Brandeis graduate program in music was just beginning when I arrived in 1954 to study with three young American composers whose music had been riveting me since my high school days - Arthur Berger was 42, had arrived from New York a year earlier; Irving Fine was 40 and a refugee from WASP Harvard; and Harold Shapero, local young-turk jazzpianist all-music wunderkind, was not yet 35, inconceivably young for an actual official professor. The whole music department operated out of Roberts Cottage - Roz Morrison, the secretary (the first Music Department person I spoke to) worked in the kitchen, seminars happened in the living room and bedrooms, and there was a graduate student composer living in the attic. And everybody was talking high-serious nonstop in every kind of people-group. So - coming from a redbrick New York City college - this was an astonishing environment for a school; and the nature and quality of the learning space was just like that - an intensely creative-intellectual family deeply engrossed in permanent strenuous conversation and incredibly serious about every aspect of their work and about music. Harold, even more than the other faculty, was also insatiably inquisitive about everything else: basic socioeconomic/political theory, technology, science (especially the astronomical theories of Fred Hoyle), but, first and foremost, philosophy, especially philosophies of consciousness, identity, and existence (Whitehead and James were constantly in his conversation) and, locally accessible, great living philosophers of religion, specifically Judaism (Aron Gurwitsch and Simon Rawidowicz); Herbert Marcuse too was always in powerful evidence at any campus meeting on any controversial subject. Harold himself wrote about "the musical mind" as a manifestation of subconscious processes, and developed a complex of thoughts about the relation of tradition to individual inspiration - something he shared with Arthur Berger. And all of this was included, anything could metastasize anytime (at Harold's discretion of course), within our nominally formal graduate music classes (which began whenever Harold showed up - usually very long after we'd gotten going on our own). And the interaction, on any subject, crackled with acerbic electricity, more streetgang jamming than new-age kumbaya, or Parisian-elegant (or Harvard-fake-polite) decorous one-upmanship; Harold's competitive energies permitted no softnose padded discourse; every topic - music-technical or music-aesthetic or world-examining - was stripped to street essentials and delivered with a brick. So - does it need to be laid out any straighter - he was idiosyncratic, volatile, radically iconoclastic, deep, ubiquitous, and - difficult, and outrageously interesting. His very early fame as a composer (which was a shadow behind this almost defensive pugnacity) was almost certainly tied to the intimidation his particular combination of qualities produced, all of which came through unmediated in his amazing music - chops were a major preoccupation, and he had them beyond mastery, totally transparent to everything his music needed to be. The big one for all of us was the Symphony for Classical Orchestra (Leonard Bernstein who also did faculty time on a now-and-then schedule always said "hi Genius" when Harold walked into the room unimaginably late as usual - Lenny got the intimidation vibe - he conducted the Symphony like a dedicated angel). I wrote my thoughts about the Symphony for a series of broadcasts I did on WKCR in New York on the subject of "The Philosophical Strain in Postwar American Music" - Harold's Symphony was an inevitable item on that playlist:

Harold Shapero's Symphony is cold as ice and strong as steel; its overt association with a "Beethovenian" model is completely deceptive. Its physicalities are plosives to the solar plexus, or a shove or a nudge from the blind side; its subtleties are moves far more rapid and deft than you could ever match, or ever even really follow; a demonstration of absolute musical mastery whose subject is absolute musical mastery; whose beauties are the knowledge and control of where musical beauty resides and from whence it arises. It is sui generis, and will never be surpassed: unambiguously, it tells you so. Its affinities are blatant and fierce; but untouchable, irreducible, and, ultimately, intractable.

-Benjamin Boretz



Harold Shapero in 1956

# Never Mind the Bollocks

By )-(U||!c|<

(james hullick: university of melbourne)

Hi Ben

Thanks for your positive words. Yes, I've been meaning to get the article to you, but life just seems to be getting in the way. Everything seems to take so long at the moment. Maybe it was always like this and I just had more energy when I was younger. I shouldn't complain though. My problems are first world problems, you know – getting through emails and squirreling back home for dinner before the pumpkin hour.

The kids are doing well. They're funny little critters. Astrid is the eldest – she's a very proud four and a half year old who says profound things that fill momentary voids ^\$&\*, sucking thumb //// – staring at TV:

“BEES HAVE WINGS.”

and later...

“BEARS LIVE IN CAVES.”

or

“THINGS THAT ARE SIMILAR ARE DIFFERENT.”

Baby Scarlet is nearly two years old now. I think I might have had a whole new kid there since I last sent you something. Has it been that long? Sorry, Ben, I really don't know how the days ran awayyyy^\$%^@ Sorry Ben&%^@%^&\$\$ \$The%Days(run^%%\$%AWAY\$#LIKE\$^#%WILD||HORSES#^@#&^%over the hill. %\$%%\$%# BUKOWSKI#%^&@ said that ???@^&%!@;)

She's got something of the Roman Emperor about her – Baby Scarlet that is. She is also quite adept at pilfering food and then squirrel-stuffing it somewhere for 'Ron' [Australian slang: later on]. Charlotte \$^&#&@%^#\$^& (= LIFE PARTNER [WIFE])&#\*(^#...and I joke a bit about how she looks like a plump little rococo cherub //(Scarlet not Charlotte)\\\\. [[No: not Charlotte. No – Charlotte is My Own Personal Benevolent Socialist Absolute Dictator {MOPBSAD}. Our little cat burglar {not the MOPBSAD} is quite the enthusiastic singer too: loud like a Welsh choir with a healthy disregard for the tune. Actually, they both (=daughters) seem rather full of song.

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46378426847263487623847628746287462834768237468237468 **BE** 2734628374 6283476.  
67586986/////////So, I was thinking that I would write you an article titled something like 'Never Mind the

Bollocks.' There's something about the whole punk %\$^# HuFHuF thing that sssseems important [[[important !#\$@% **IMPORTANT** to me now that I am A d.A.d. But you know, I get within an inch of writing something down and then I'm marauded by fascist emails or the noise of live action in beige. jameshul@pustoma  
jameshul@pustoma jameshul@pustoma jameshul@pustoma jameshul@pustoma jameshul@pustoma



James Hullick

jameshulik@optusnet.com.aujameshulik@optusnet.com.au

*There are no dreaming sonnets or arabesque curved hips in loved living now or those moments not listening watched turning toward the Sylvia Plath backyard nevermind.*

So I look out  
onto the city  
and ponder efficiency improvements  
and *death*  
*to the instant message*

*and what would Sylvia say?*

Or how it can be hard to BEES HAVE WINGS a good parent sometimes?

Did I, / / / / / I / / / say parent sometimes?????????\$\$^&\* &#\$.???????#@\$#\$^#\$&#\$&\$###\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$!!!!????  
parent sometimes. \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$!!!!????\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$!!!!????\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$!!!!????\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$!!!!????\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$!!!!????\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$!!!!????  
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HAVE good WINGS a parent sometimes BEES )^( )^( \*\*////////////////////  
////////////////////////////////////

**:::(((( )))\_so\_TELL\_mE\_about\_the\_J.O.b\_::://///++25362////////~**

Ah, but I shouldn't bitch too much, though Ben. I'm lucky enough to have a really real job now. Don't tell anyone – but they let me out to make art (they love it actually – how %\$%^& crazy is that????!!!!@\*%\$^&. I started here last year. Before that I was utterly broke. AND AS WE ALL KNOW – shhh! – (art is lived at a price ^%\$&\* @ \$ **AND SO WE** rt((&\*(%&(\*&\*HHG have T\*TTto **PUSHHHHHH!!!!** **THROUGH**HufH **HHHufHHHufHH**. Ben, there wasss sssso much I wanted to say – or write actually – you know, but I was utterly broke. Did I#@^\$ say that already? I just can't remember YRUEIU stuFF **ff ff** sometimes – you kNOW ufuiifddshduffuidfh. The kids – they can wake me and the MOPBSAD [Charlotte] up sometimes, and then we can't remember stuff so WELL6734!&^%(((\*\*\*)))) *Or then the days run away a little more horses-like*. %#^Did I mention the broke thing? I don't know... somehow it just got like that. Charlotte {MOPBSAD} was about six or seven months pregnant when the bottom dropped out. Empty wallet universe gaping wider in between nothing. I'd been living like an energetic la di da di da [frog song] jumping from one arts project to another, giving workshops, composing and organizing events. Anyhoo (((BEES))), the cashflow evaporated like horses; the hill; wild between jobs or something%&@#%\$#^21. And so arose a defining moment in the mysterious spiritual union of MOPBSAD [Charlotte] and the broke d.A.d.

DID YOU KNOW – BEARS LIVE IN CAVES?@!%^&!^%&@^!?????????????/

[the little girl said]

So Ben, I said to {MOPBSAD} – “Hey baby, I’m happy to go out and find some admin [[@#%\$!%\$\$\$] J.o.B. and get the rent paid.” Or I knew her mind was enveloping in the horror of an involuntary cash free household: single-fronted, two bedroom *et al.*, with draft, heater malfunction and coming-winter. But she wouldn’t hear of it, despite noted anxieties. “I don’t want to live with some shell of man.” And that was it.

She surprised me then: I was surprised. In fact, I was happily surprised, then, by Charlotte's perspective. I suspect MOPBSAD [Charlotte] might have had a little help with this perspective from one certain psychic she saw not so long before the golden age of the Big Daddy Broke-Assédness. I work now with bright minds that explore the intersection of music and psychology, and I imagine some of our cohort might find the notion of a psychic somewhat foolish. And yet, Ben, there is not a week that passes without me whispering many thanks to



James Hullick

The reality is that the Western education system and literature feeds young people a fantasy. It can be thought of as the Van Gogh Complex; or the artist is a martyr abandoned by communities; or only in isolation can this messiah create wonders of the gods. But Van Gogh – the archetypal lonely bird – came to his vision through the communities that he worked with: the art community in Paris; his preacher communities; his brother; his lovers; the mentally ill; and all the others too – or welcome the real world people.

After all these years, Ben, my view is that social conscience is inescapable in art. To attempt to deny social conscience is itself an act of social conscience. ^&\*&\$^%\*\$7????\*((((#)(@)(\$\*#)@(\$\*())@#@&\$%\*(\$&%( \$ And must we erase our humanity?

|||||  
|||||!!!!|  
&\*\$(\$\*#)%&\$#

## ^//:::FOR\_IntERAbiLiTiEs\_rising:::(((((((::))))))...>>>

So Ben, here's an excerpt that I thought might go well in the Bofflocks article. This was the thought process that spiraled out from *Guernica* across years hence: and then a month; or under a week; then over a day; and then rather quickly in an hour or two, falling into minutes or fading seconds flown away like wild midnight horses through hill-country.

*Meditating on sonic art as an act of social conscience can lead to philosophy; and specifically, the interabilities agenda. "Interabilities" is a term that denotes the interaction of people of all abilities. As an agenda for sonic practice, it describes people of varying abilities working together toward some sonic outcome. In and of itself, the term "interabilities" does not have anything to do with the quality of a sonic outcome. People of all abilities could be working together to make absolute rubbish and the term "interabilities" would be met. But the ethics behind interabilities activities elevates the activities beyond this broader blanket term. In the case of sound, for example, if people of all abilities work together to present a truly dreadful concert, then the positive ethic and social benefit of the interabilities agenda can be lost. The audience may have suffered. It lies at the heart of the interabilities agenda that interabilities activities will eventually strive to inspire participants and audiences alike to our greatest vision of humanity – where all people stand equal in society, and where all abilities are considered of equal worth to the wider human mission. Steve Jobs [see biography by Isaacson, 2011] proselytized that great success for Apple came from only hiring "A-team" employees; that B-team employees would only drag the A-team down. Not the other way round. This may be a seductive approach if your goal is to make money from a consumer product. Although, I very much doubt that this is the only way to achieve something special in a consumerist paradigm. Interabilities philosophy suggests there is another way – a fairly obvious way, actually – and a way that is certainly more conducive to building ethical sonic cultures. The secret in the wish-fulfilment of love is that vibrant cultures MUST arise from collections of people of all abilities: that the human cause is an all of community solution. There is no way out of this – not even for Steve Jobs. Even amongst the A-team there will be people of different abilities. The magic happens in cultures when the participants in a culture can work out what each person is good at, and then find a way for linking their best efforts together. This implies the need for wise leadership: for who decides what each person is good at? It also implies the need for ongoing interactivity and communication: how else will the nature of someone's abilities rise to the fore?*

*The challenge of the interabilities philosophy in the context of the arts – and in the context of sonic art – is all about artistic quality. While there may be other far more important benefits to society in interabilities arts activities other than quality art (such as building communities, social wealth and the nurturing of wellbeing), my experience has been that all the interabilities benefits are amplified for the better if the art itself is also fantastic. There is something about the nature of high quality art that is its own medicine for all the Bofflocks in the world. The bums and all the angels are brought to stillness when facing the mystery of transcendent art. And to be fair to Mr. Jobs, it was not the A-team that stopped the angels – but the magic of the Apple computers themselves.*

*Communities that celebrate the interabilities agenda stand to outstrip A-team agendas in the long run. For what if the interabilities collective can make art that is both immaculate and ethical? Then the virtuoso will have to adjust their place in the cultural landscape. There will always be a place for the Glenn Goulds of this world, but in an interabilities culture they will find they have to share that place with everyone else. If you doubt my thoughts, then turn your mind to the DIY fisting that early punk gave to Western culture. After the Sex Pistols and co., nothing was really the same again. Somehow, someone like Sid Vicious – a nasty swastika wearing junkie with a murderous rage, jail time and a heavily documented lack of musical ability – could*



*pulsate in the still beating heart torn from the chest of late 20th century youth cultism. If this prick could do it, then anyone can. Perhaps.*

*But there was real hate in those Pistols kids, and one has to ask if the ethics of the general interabilities mindset – that is, the ethics of community wellbeing – led them to greatness – despite the hate. Maybe it did. Maybe the goodness of the interabilities message – a DIY collective solidarity message – was all they had to kick back with into Thatcherism.*

*Or the collapse of working class Britain in the late 70s.*

## **!!!!(!@(\*)(! oR DEaTh or authenticity [!!!![>>?>/.///:~~~~~**

I think about this, Ben, in relation to my own adolescence. Back then we were privileged grammar school kids living in the city and loving the whole punk thang. Somehow it fed into our creative cultural language. So I thought I could tell this story too in the ~~Bollocks~~ article:

The school had a policy that school rules applied to kids even when they were not at school. If you were sprung smoking at a party on the weekend, then you'd find yourself outside the headmaster's office on Monday morning. It was the mid '80s back then. There were high expectations on the kids. I think the total rule of law and the expectations sent some kids bonkers. I remember days upon days where I hated school with all my heart, just like a real punk Brit kid. I was a bit Stepford Wives about it: I'd make the pretty shapes of engagement and hope that it would all pass by quickly or wishing the horses over the hill like days wildly away. I stuck it out, though, and while I was a real pain in the ass at times, I survived.

Most of us survived.

But then there were those kids who did not survive. One kid stole a car with his mates and then fell to his most-likely-drug-filled-death from a high-rise car park bleak concrete nothing at the bottom brain gone. I remember he hadn't done his religious ed. homework one time and was trying to find someone to copy from. No one had done the work. I don't think many of the kids actually believed in God. Maybe only the non-Christian ones – and of course they didn't do the work either. He flapped his arms around a bit: "why am I surrounded by dumb people?" he squawked. Just like an angry bird.

He'd been somebody's baby boy too; and I think about that remembering "BEES HAVE WINGS" and "BEARS LIVE IN CAVES."

The kids laughed at him that day, because he wasn't very bright.

## **momentary voids**

But no one had done the homework.

We had our own version of punk in Melbourne back then, and there were a lot of grammar kids lapping it up. We had The Birthday Party fronted by one Nick Cave, and mostly featuring a gaggle of Caulfield Grammar School boys in the band. These microphone swallowing angry birds were taking bags of drugs, releasing albums, flapping their arms, hoping to fly and carrying on like pork chops in full '80s freestyle. And then Nick made it big.

There was another kid from school who played in a Clash cover band with the flightless bird falling boy. He was smart, this one – funny and pissed off. I don't know what it was that pissed him off exactly. I think there was some unwritten rule that there didn't have to be a real reason for being pissed off. Maybe for some of us being a hormonal time bomb was enough. I listened to them play – these guys in the Clash cover band. They were shit... But now, as I look back through the mind-caverns, hollows whisper back hummily. They were shit, but they had something – something special that slips to darkness when you try to bring it to light. It would have been great if they had survived.

**Or death is the ultimate authenticity.**

### **momentary voids**

A lot of us were playing in bands at the time. We all thought we were big guys, as kids in bands often do. It wasn't long before armfuls of these kids followed the piper into that nasty great big black hole – drug-addled annihilation negative space. Hey man, if the grown ups were doing it down in the St. Kilda bands, then nothing was going to stop these angry teen birds. The falling boy fell shortly after the drugs started up, and then everyone really did have something to cry about. [*The darkness is a spiral.*] The music stopped. And then one night, after cyclonic partying, the smart funny pissed off kid + random mate furiously stabbed a girl to death in her bathroom, pumped to the wild eyed balls, frothing chemical madness in agony lightning up and out to the orbital stars. These kids had it all before them. In few short Sid and Nancy years they were either dead or in jail.

**Or death is the ultimate statement of authenticity.**

This became our culture. But you can't talk about it. No, you mustn't talk about it. Nobody say a thing. Keep it shut. Lock it away. No. Never happened. What are you talking about? No, that's not true. Are you making this up? No, you can't talk about the girl a couple of years below me who took her own life. She was so bright – a brain surgeon – a judge, she might have been. She would have soared magnificent. But she left us all to our rambling: I never could understand that. Or the teacher's daughter who stepped in front of train. Or the lonely lad who strange-fruited himself in his bedroom.

All this, Ben – all these momentary voids – all these lost children, lost to the darkness – are a part of the interabilities philosophy too. And they have, of late, been resuscitated deep within in my heaving nightmind. I am a father now [d.A.d]: when you really are a father, then all children become your children – especially the lost ones who never found a way back from the past. Or the other ones too, who survived and grew to grandmothers and grandfathers – even they become your children. Even them.

*Then there was the Sex Pistols:*

*The Sex Pistols, as with many angry young birds before, now and tomorrow, burnt very hot and very fast. The Pistols played their first gigs in 1977 and by 1979 Vicious was dead – outlived by John Lennon and Elvis. Rotten had left the band on tour in San Francisco in '78 with the immortal line spat out in the last momentary void of the last show: "Ever feel like you've been cheated?" One studio album (Never Mind the Bollocks: This is the Sex Pistols) and some singles; that was pretty much it in terms of output. And yet the impact still resonates today.*

*Why?*

*Nobody knows.*

*Maybe it has something to do with the interabilities agenda. I'd like to talk about this in the Bollocks article – although I'm not sure how that would be done. You see, Ben, I think that the interabilities philosophy has always been with us. I think that people intrinsically understand the heart of interabilities. When I think about the Sex Pistols, the falling children, and the sonic communities I work with today, I see the living and breathing interabilities agenda weaving its eternal silver thread through the ever renewingly spun fabric of people in gathering.*

*Or when I look at the cave paintings made by our first Australians – there! –*

*I see the ancient stroke of galactic DNA entwined in glimmering.*

*Or sewn with the hum of spinning bees with wings*

*spun sungingly by angel-daughters waking dawn in frost.*

# **////FRAGmENTED ChARACTeRIST!Css OF InteRAbiLiTiES:!!/))0///:.....**

I think, Ben, that punk can tell us a bit about interabilities. I've been making notes from this book I had lying around about punk [*Punk: The Whole Story*, 2006]. It could be good for unpacking interabilities a bit in the *Bollocks* article:

## **authenticity:**

"Sid Vicious hated us. He called us a bunch of poseurs, and in a way he was right." Steve Severin (Siouxie & the Banshees) [p. 117].

## **embrace limitations:**

"Steve Jones (Sex Pistols guitarist) doesn't bother much with solos ... ("There are two reasons for that – I can't play solos, and I hate them anyway.")" John Ingram. From the first ever interview with the Pistols [p. 24].

## **push limitations:**

"The Sex Pistols especially were wonderful. They actually reminded me of Beethoven, they were so grandiose ... Punk was all about bursting out." Deborah Harry [p. 8].

## **collectives:**

"As the idea of punk as a movement took hold, it was inevitable that some of the Pistols' earliest fans would take the do-it-yourself aesthetic at face value and form their own bands." Mark Paytress (journalist and contributor to MOJO magazine) [p. 117].

## **and the people will decide:**

"In the UK, the punk movement was much more political ... It was really about their economy, because their economy had turned to shit. A great percentage of people were on the dole, and there really was no future for these kids. People forget what a wreck the place was in the early 1970s." Deborah Harry [p. 8].

## **attitude:**

"Here was a band, the Sex Pistols, that *would* – and did – shoot down anything we didn't like, which in our case was absolutely everything." Malcolm McLaren [p. 280].

## **DIY:**

"you could grab a bin liner and stick it over your head and it would still be groovy." Malcolm McLaren [p. 280].

## **relevance:**

"You must understand that when I joined the Sex Pistols, I had no prospects whatsoever and this was my last chance to do something." Johnny Rotten [p. 23].

## **luck:**

Rotten was auditioned for the Sex Pistols cause he had a Pink Floyd top on which he had written 'I hate...'  
'Nough said.

# **>>S{ElePHantSSSS or ssScAVENGERS RODE tHe MouNTAiN///:...**

These thoughts, Ben, bring me to the discussion about a couple of the groups that I work with in an interabilities context. All the talk about family, upbringing, interabilities philosophy, punk, the lost kids, and everything else plays out in my work with the Amplified Elephants and the Noise Scavengers:

*We can't honestly proclaim the interabilities agenda without understanding that people of all abilities are also people carrying the baggage of life: the broken people; the hollow ones; the stuffed ones (headpiece full of straw); and all those flocking angry birds. From an interabilities perspective, we can't expect society to be pristine and pure, and then claim that all people of all abilities should have a voice. This is our crisis. This is our melting witch in green, wailing out the attachment of contemporary Western culture.*

*Or the physical challenge of punk: equality includes the blemish, the outsider and the rage.*

*Or what do we do with the angry birds?*



*UK punk tended to fixate on the hate in society. Palmolive of The Slits saw how this could destroy people like Sid, the vicious one:*

*“My perception was that he was a kid who was childish and rebelling against everything. I think the whole thing with the hate and anger of punk was it took him further than he wanted to go. There was a dark force there that was pushing him on. We were all playing with it, we liked to show off and look mean, but you have to be careful you’re not taken by it” [p. 135].*

*The Amplified Elephants show us that there are ways of encompassing the Sisyphus of life without needing to spit on the audience or knife your girlfriend. They are soundmakers with an intellectual disability, and spending time with the Elephants teaches us that people with an intellectual disability are not automatically mentally ill. They might face learning challenges, but they are not sick. The Elephants face this and other misconceptions daily. Or all the whinging in punk is eternally smacked down by the Elephants’ love of being. Or their love of a world that has them in it; or when I’m talking about the Elephants, people often want to know what sort of disabilities the artists in the group have. Hear me now: it just doesn’t matter. It’s an illusion. Or disintegrate the illusions spawning your mind.*

*So while I think an interabilities agenda should be open to the experience of darkness that many people feel, I also think that we can find ways of embracing both the darkness and the light, that don’t end in murder.*

### **Or death is the ultimate authenticity**

*I also spend time with another sonic art group – the Noise Scavengers. Noise Scavengers is a loose rabble of teenagers from Corio: brick veneer wasteland wafting at space between civilization and the nothing spelt out in scratched grasslands. There are some angry birds in this youth-pack that nightly drift across dark terrains – horses in moonlight, over the hill and far away; while in the houses tucked in rows little children with chubby hands dream about bears in caves flung starward.*

*Rather than trying to deny all this darkness gaping, I thought I would work with the Noise Scavengers and the Amplified Elephants on a show that might seek to sew silver through the black or evaporate the night. At the time, my actions were partly intuitive, and I certainly wouldn’t have found words back then amongst the strewn cardboard boxes of my mind to articulate my intuition.*

*As a feature of the show, I really wanted to include people of all abilities – that is, including the elite – so I invited the professional musicians of the BOLT Ensemble to join the production. BOLT is a group that I gathered together to perform my sonic works. The numbers in the group and performers tend shift from project to project or run out through this here is possible against that which ain’t; and can you make it to the gig, mate? Or I thought they might form the poise of mentoring the Elephants and Scavengers too.*

*One of the beauties of interabilities projects is that mentoring relationships can arise quite naturally. While it is the case that the more able tend to assist those people still developing, the great irony, of course, is that those who thought they were there to teach often become the student. The Elephants, with their patient manner and hardcore focus, ended up mentoring the other groups without needing to say a thing: just taught by doing, they did. That was a great lesson.*

*We called the show The Mountain, and it was presented at fortyfivedownstairs in Melbourne from 15–18 December 2010. The show featured chamber instruments (BOLT), found sounds and junk percussion (Elephants and Scavengers), noise music (Hullick), synthesizers (Elephants), and video projections (by animator Tien Pham and video artist Klara Klaric). The project responded to the story of Milarepa, a Buddhist saint from the 11<sup>th</sup> century (c. 1052–1135) who had started life out as a mass-murderer. Not such an unusual first job these days.*

*Feeling remorse for his violence, Milarepa sought out a guru – a mentor. The guru asked Milarepa to build a tower. When it was complete the guru asked Milarepa to tear it down: Build a bigger one. And then: “Could you tear it down now please?”... or then again with the process a third time: Build /// tear down. Eventually Milarepa left the teacher. All things come to pass – even wise teachers. Milarepa found himself a mountain cave. And there he set himself to meditation and enlightenment. Thus like his teacher before him, Milarepa became the guru. His students loved him in spite of the impermanence of things, and they asked him to write down his story.*

*This is how we come to have the text The Hundred-Thousand Songs of Milarepa.*

*The flood sweeps strongly down the vale above  
Soon becoming weak and tame in the plain below  
This shows the illusory nature of all beings.  
This proves the transient nature of all things.  
Think then, you will practice Dharma*

*A precious son is born;  
Soon he is lost and gone  
This shows the illusory nature of all beings.  
This proves the transient nature of all things.  
Think then, you will practice Dharma*

Indoctrinating people in Buddhist philosophy was not really the point of our project. It was not a religious project. It was a fairytale project. A project where a mythology could suggest a way to better living: if Milarepa the murderer could find enlightenment, then we all have the potential to find our way to our compassionate potential. I thought it was something worth exploring – particularly for the midnight kids all neon-like in their minds. As with the Elephants, it was a message we didn't have to preach. Milarepa did the talking for us all.

Then there is getting down to brass tacks: The Mountain was built through a multilayered and carefully planned workshop development process. This process was divided into two phases: (i) exploring sound; and (ii) composing The Mountain music.

It was part of the design of this process that each of the three ensembles would spend much of the development process working separately. This might seem counterintuitive to the interabilities agenda, but some separation – especially in the beginning – was very important. Through separation, each group was able to clarify its own identity and abilities without feeling the pressure of comparison with the other groups. The Elephants met once a week – every Thursday for two, two-hour sessions for a period of eight weeks. The Scavengers met during a school holiday period, 10am-3pm over two weeks, three days in each week. BOLT members attended and mentored some of the Elephants' and Scavengers' workshops. They also had a rehearsal separate to the other groups. Leading up to the event, we had rehearsals with all the groups combined.

As the development process unfolded, we were able to establish how the key ingredients of generating quality interabilities outcomes might shape the project. These ingredients have lately been informing my thoughts on interabilities characteristics fragmentarily noted above: authenticity; embracing limitations; pushing limitations; building collectives; social activation (the people will decide); having attitude; DIY drive; relevance; luck.

Working with limitations creatively was a driver for developing the sonic language of The Mountain. When working out what the limitations were for each musician within a group, individuals and the group found themselves in an often unspoken dialogue about authenticity. One of the Elephants was having trouble with her medication, for example, and this had resulted in an increase in seizures. So she focused on synthesizer drones for the show – something she could do that wouldn't overstimulate her. One of the Noise Scavengers was particularly adept at making a wire tray squeak across smooth surfaces. It was quite an irritating sound, crafted initially to annoy, but it ended up as a significant feature of the show. Within each group (Scavengers, Elephants, BOLT) there were many stories like this. As the director of the project, I made it my mission to use our exploratory workshop time to work out what each player could do that was special.

As the exploratory workshop process unfolded, I brought a list of "scenes" that we would use to structure the show. In discussion with the Elephants and Scavengers, we had broken Milarepa's life up into significant events:

**Scene 1: The Funeral**

Milarepa's father dies: Funeral. Uncle takes family money. Milarepa's mother tells the boy to learn the art of sorcery. The boy feels righteous in seeking revenge on his uncle.

**Scene 2: The Wedding**

The teenage Milarepa kills many people at the uncle's daughter's wedding with sorcery. The young man is a real bona fide serial killer on the run. He accidentally kills his mother.

**Scene 3: The Ghost**

Milarepa becomes remorseful as he experiences his mother's ghost.

**Scene 4: The Guru**

Milarepa seeks a guru – Marpa is the guru's name. The guru says no despite Milarepa asking many, many times. Milarepa is lost – not knowing what to do after rejection.

**Scene 5: The Towers**

The guru sets Milarepa tasks – building towers – but he hasn't said he will teach Milarepa yet.

**Scene 6: The Lesson**

Marpa says no again, but after much pestering from Milarepa the guru changes his mind and takes Milarepa on as his student.

**Scene 7: The Cave**

After many years with Marpa, Milarepa goes to the cave in the mountain to further his enlightenment. Milarepa writes his songs.

*Having established the order of "scenes," we were then able to apply the new sounds we had discovered to the various scenes. It should be noted that we were not creating programmatic, story-telling music. We did not speak or sing text. Rather, we used the scene structure and mythological impetus as a mechanism for creating abstract sonic expression.*

*Throughout our development period, we recorded a number of exploratory improvisations and sonic sketches. The various performers in each group were able to listen to their improvisations and refine them. Up to this point, our development process was probably not that different to the way that a number of pop culture bands work. Or not. As a little wise one once said:*

"THINGS THAT ARE SIMILAR ARE DIFFERENT."

*But after this exploratory period, our process departed from a semblance to band culture. The Mountain was mostly a "scored" project. Part of my interabilities thinking was that with my background as a composer, I should also be contributing that ability to the project. I listened back through the recordings we had made, and meditated on the details of our sonic adventuring. This material formed the basis of our score for The Mountain. It was a wonderful process – a process where the compositional contributions of the group were acknowledged and embraced, but also a process where this material could be refined and focused into elegant design. It was also a great educational process for the Scavengers and Elephants to have to "relearn" their improvisational sequences as compositions. It taught them a lot about the mechanics of music and playing in ensembles. Some sequences in the show remained improvised; however, Scene 3, The Ghost, was a structured improvisation by the Noise Scavengers and BOLT violinist Andrea Keeble. This scene can be heard on the following website: [www.clickclackproject.org/audio](http://www.clickclackproject.org/audio). Being able to shift from the improvised to the composed was a very useful benefit of our process. And it rang out with authenticity.*

**////@&&^\$\*#TIED UP IN strING///???////////(////**

I guess I write all of this, Ben, because there is so much that I would like to tell. But interabilities is all encompassing in nature, and standard intellectual discourse fractures under its weight. *There can be no complete telling of the interabilities universe. Gazing across this universe that envelops us, we can see constellations spun out by ancestral human hands. Here we witness a very ancient and partly forgotten grass roots conception vibrating out through the background radiation: of how interabilities creativity can embrace the big problems facing the planet today: climate change; poverty; excess; refugees; militarization and all the messy rest of it. You see Ben, The Mountain project demonstrated quite clearly that remarkable outcomes can be achieved by many people of all abilities working together. Or –*

*... our process, and the interabilities agenda that informed that process, presented a realistic problem-solving model for communities. I think of it as **the whole-of-community solution**. Atrocities arise when the whole community is not welcome to contribute to the solution. In Australia, we have an example of this whole-of-community solution. It's called the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). I have not heard one person say this scheme shouldn't happen. It is one of the few government initiatives that virtually the whole populace supports. So while people might call me a dreamer, drifting with bears in caves sprinkled from nebulae against the dark, we have before us a miniature example of the whole-of-community solution – of interabilities in action – in The Mountain; and we also have a large-scale example in the NDIS. Realistically, there's still a lot of detail that Australians will have to punch through to get the NDIS happening. But it will be done.*

**for we are not alone:**

There is a group in New South Wales called Tra-la-la Blip that involves people with an intellectual disability making electronic music alongside professional artists. In theatre here in Australia, there are groups such as Back To Back Theatre and Rawcus who also explore dominions of the interabilities agenda pertaining to intellectual disability.

**OR “Furthermore, we have not even to risk the adventure alone;**

“for the heroes of all time have gone before us, the labyrinth is fully known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero-path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world.”

*The Hero with a Thousand Faces.* Joseph Campbell. 1949.

**Or –**

**this love as ultimate authenticity**

Perhaps, Ben, the answers have always hibernated within us: a vision of society majestic, or spiraled across walls of caves anciently delineating the gathered people picnicking in the park. Everywhere. Always. It is with me when my daughters fly on swings into the blue and clouds.

It was within our little philosopher who saying, said: “Things that are similar are different.”

*Or without the difference we wouldn’t rise above our individual limitations:  
A darkness that falls away beneath small precious voices spinning fat angels and waking the frost.*

***This is how we prevail.***

So, Ben, that ought to do for now. I’ll be in touch shortly with something. And sorry again for the delays.

Keep well

James

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<sup>i</sup> Sorry Ben, can’t find the book for this one. I have a feeling I just made it up and was going to come back to it later with some real reference. Can’t remember now.

[illegible]

Graphic: First Enochian Call to Spirit  
from **The Sacred Alignment and the Dark Side of Sigils**  
by Robert Podgurski



## On/Off

### the Grid

After feverish misadventures – the travails of travel – between Ventspils, Stockholm, Gotland & London, I’m ensconced at last in a snug at the King’s Head, Roehampton. ‘O city city’ (whenever I end up in London, I take the walk I took in ‘The Waste Land’, & listen to the dead sound at the final stroke of)... & its marges. The setting for Truffaut’s dystopia – the Alton Estate. My friend Witold lives here now. I met him over absinthe in Dvinsk. *The Noble Traveller*. He is always where he needs to be, no? At any point. Fixed? I get lost, like I did in the Chemistry. ‘Go into the king’s whatever’, said Witold, ‘& I’ll find you’. But he doesn’t – instead he disappears.

This pub used to swarm with addicts, but now it mimics a posh, inauthentic tavern that never was. In the midst of a tantric fiasco, I’m unable to produce a ‘review’ worthy of my friend Bob the Pod’s book. But I figure (‘you make of it your figure; I make of it mine’) – it, this, to be – appropriate: to offer a few impressions of ‘this thick thing’ when again bouvervé... there is no again, is there, & those who’ve taken the Pod’s book home (my copy travels in a cheap off-white bedsheet filched from a seedy hotel) host angels warily, not unawares, & hear eerie benemaledictions in their sleep. P’raps the best thing I can say about a book.

Not long after getting the package, running out to the dark road where the village librarian handed it to me, I wrote to the Pod:

Your book is currently in Riga, in the hands of my name-brother, the sorcerous bard Pēteris Draguns, who has been working in Linda Falorio's tunnels intermittently since September 2010, when I gave him the photos Linda long ago gave me. I had a vision dictating that he should have them when circling the courtyard of the Writer's House in Ventspils – the bricks there form something of an eye, & the house & grounds are magic(k)al (I recall Gerrit Lansing's utter distaste for the geometry of Washington, D.C.; Ventspils – Windau – has a strong effect on me... or I am strongly attuned to it [my mother was born there, & the branch of my family now in Sweden descends from my father's brother's wife & son fleeing through its port in 1945 – my father's brother, the poet Vilis Cedriņš, was arrested by the re-invading Soviets & died at the labor camp in Vorkuta]). Immediately prior to the recent solstice, I returned to Ventspils for the first time since that fateful September.

As I was leaving Little Gulls, my abode at Cape Lament, I suddenly felt that Pēterītis needed to have it for a while, wrapped it in a sheet & took it with me. After a night in Ventspils (wch again brought about a sea-change in me [ 'no matter how far out we go / it is within' ]), I took the bus to Riga & ended up at what was once the Little Sun, the seedy hotel (now hideously renovated) where the grand (?) tantric fiasco that's at the heart of the first parts of the Penetralium began, in 1993 – 'life is most cruel where she is most wise'? As you know, the intense correspondence between us in that year led to your sending me the earlier manuscript of your work. *Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli!* After the dark solstice – after wine & raving lunacy at a café in the Quiet Centre, the genteel district of Riga that is home to the most spectacular Art Nouveau architecture – Pēterītis accompanied me to the hotel to get the book. The Grid passes through his hands just as his second book of poems is born (printed on the last full moon, it will be unveiled at a nightclub this coming Thursday – I will then reclaim the Grid). As you suggest in the preface, the tantric fiascos I've experienced (wch , of course, also provide spells in Paradise) are intertwined with workings of various kinds involving the Grid & the free-form Enochian magick you introduced me to. The peregrinations of your book – with the old manuscript recently returned to me, in the midst of another fiasco – leave a trail like those of the snails across the windows of the verandah here at Little Gulls, but of subtler substance even when the burin gouges the surface to cut yantras into the flesh. 'Kali goes on dancing on recumbent mercury'. ....

...

A while back I sketched out a sort of ‘esoteric autobiography’ for John Madziarczyk (an autonomous Typhonian), keenly aware of the perils of composition (of that brought forth or *left* out – of perspective). Such difficulties are what my work-in-regress, *The Penetralium*, revolves around, of course. Its fugal nature is still a mystery to me, *ego scriptor*. What I hope to do in my review of your book for *Open Space* is illuminate the nexûs I find (by ‘the labyrinthine feeling way’) in workings with the Calls... but as soon as I write ‘nexûs’, I’m struck by how *unbound* – how *bornless* the vistas you open can be. The angels mess around in the kitchen (‘alchemical broth’ – consommé). You handle the material the way you do because you’re a poet... & as soon as I write ‘handle’ (‘But handle the stone’), I think of the passages you wrote on Δ’s hand. (This is integral to Charles Stein’s recent work, too – the poet, not only the philosopher, is needed to unveil Persephone. ... ..)

The hypnogeographical & physical worlds (‘there is no illusory world, there is only the world’) are contiguous. The forms they take are nebulous, to my (body-heart-) mind – ‘outside the circles of time’ but simultaneously enstatic. Paper cuts (paper wraps rock, *ludi d’amore* – animal, bird, water, wall). It can get hairy indeed – as when I broke the femurs Gerrit had rejected as draining, chanting the First Call before my makeshift altar in Daugavpils, & got a distressing glimpse of the beyond (‘there is no illusory world’...). Or New Year’s Eve in New Orleans, performing the Calls for a coven of thanaterotic chaotes – my path had passed through the Voodoo initiation you & I took in western New York, taking me down to Louisiana (& in darker dreams – into the tomb). I sometimes chant the Calls in my sleep. ... .. The other night – & in the Baltic winter, the night can seem to cover all – I was thinking about Robert Kelly’s *Flesh:Dream:Book* & how he remarks that ‘at least he gets his priorities straight’ in that title. It seems to me that that trinity could also distill an approach to The Sacred Alignments and the Dark Side of Sigils. RK, having moved out of Western occult traditions and rejecting Austin Osman Spare as ‘adolescent’, claimed that Tibetan Buddhism offers ‘vaster vistas’. I do not share that view. I rather agree with Roberts Avens on the attempted transplantation of Eastern mysticism too often involving shaking the dirt off the roots of the tree, which cannot then take root (the ghosts in our soil being different). Imaginative – imaginal – work like yours opens new possibilities here. As E.P. writes in his catechism, Religio: ‘Are these things true in the East? This rite was made for the West’.

..... And in the Baltic winter, the night can cover all.

An appreciation.

No more seeming. What is a magic(k)al book? You would have to scarf it down – breathe it, go back to it. Never revise – an explication of the initial, initiatory vision, crystalline; that wch grabs you. Palpably.

Its justifications, occasionally weighted with pseudo-academic pretensions, matter not.

‘DOES NOT MATTER / NEED NOT BE’.

Last call for alcohol. The night can cover all. Right now, the rooks of Roehampton. A pigeon with an eye like a lit match, & all that.

Does cover all. “Break on through to the other side,” as Mr. Mojo Risin’ had it.

Geradamas, my first true teacher in the occult boutique, said – we plant flags for when we pass through again; this is all we can do.

It’s raining in Roehampton. The rain in Spain falls gently on the pain, deep in Cordova. Rain-deep. Amok means something else.

A cosmic revelation presented in a matter-of-fact manner. Not pretending to anything it is not.

I live in a small village by the sea, pop. 415 at last count, stretched across 8 km. I ran out to the road to get this book, as much a physical object as a text soon to be pirated & virtual. How did I get here? To ask what the Pod could probably call a rudimentary question is – rude. How rude this book is! There is some intellectual baggage & padding, lofty thought – but when direct experience is addressed, no excuses are made.

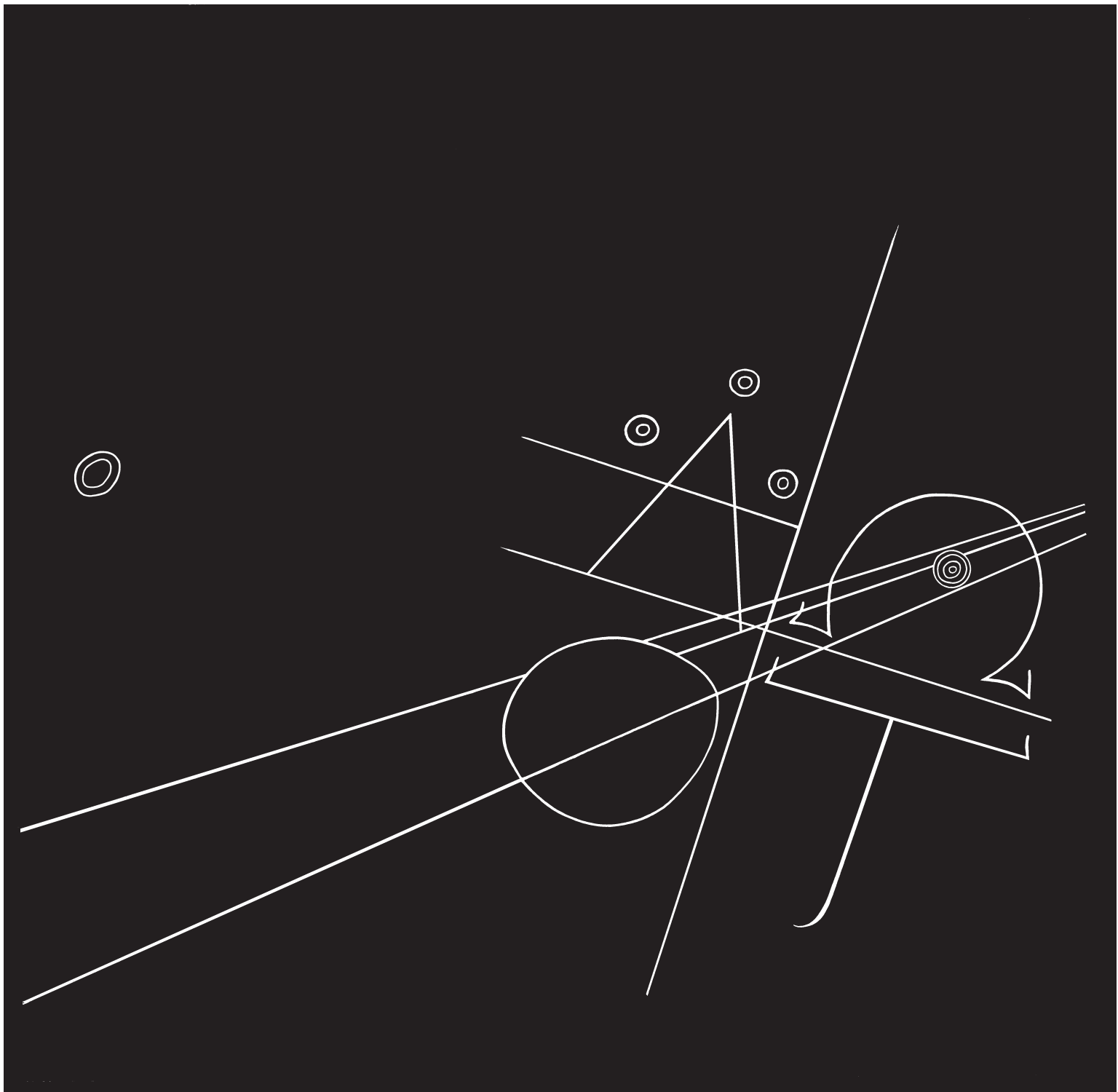
The *P* in what Thelemites tend to call *M in T & P* (*Magick in Theory and Practice*) is what matters most – praxis. A friend recently compared the Pod to a metaphysical car mechanic, wch made me remember Daumal’s ‘night of serious drinking’ – one learns to navigate in/with the house.

How did I get here? As an adolescent, I walked into a café & met a man who gave me the Book of Thoth. The rest was poetry. One can grasp this in reverse; the tentacles of the pentacles reaching out to ensnare us.

Here at the king's whatever, I envision Pod the rock climber. Proper Enochian calls for making the table & other accoutrements, necessities & sundries – grow the tree, fell it, saw & polish the sweet wood, & raise the bees to get the wax to answer fundamental questions in a pool of ink. Know the angels by their colours – know the colours by their angels. This is not a system given to free-form antics. 'Finding form we call this opening'...

What matters most is this opening – the sweetness of the wood, & wee homuncular angels pointing at – at. Do the work. Skim, even, if only – skip stones on this first water, damaged brilliants. There is a particular brutality here – even a subhuman car mechanic could grok it, given a proper wrench. As the epigraph to the intro puts it, from Philip K. Dick: 'What's got to be gotten over is the false idea that an hallucination is a private matter'.

– Peteris Cedrins



Graphic: The Grid Sigil





Dorota Czerner

## BLACK LAKE EYE

for Elaine R. Barkin

*"... why place stones on the grave?"*

to kiss a face held by a window

a face held onto

in a shard of light-

-graven

memories

*"... why stones ...?"*

to kiss

a window where the face

once was seen then effaced held back

bathed in its own speak

and the hurt of glass caught under the fingernail

picking up the pieces after a rock went through the window

we bleed

“... *why stones?*” — to keep the soul down

( ..... ) was the pain

of not to be with the living

but to be alive a stone thrown not

carefully placed

on the grave through that window

we visit the dead and plant stones in their homes

put down the pebbles always with our left hand

so that we too can stay put

dwelling where we are in who we are a face effaced

for awhile bathed

in its own breath

obliterated by the desire to speak

or whisper or cry out

( thoughts that we send away the way we throw pebbles  
that skim belly up above the resonant waters deep bronze in the summer )

a stone a rose

carved on the grave

“stone me, kiss me”, you say the frostbite of distance  
turning what was is nothing into something else

*stones do not rot, but take root*

held by a window

to keep us guessing what thinks itself behind each frame

when that memory fades where we fall dark apples

slowly sinking into the earth

till it anchors

the soul

along with all desire

to speak to speak out

and with each try the face of a stone gets

drawn closer toward the small black eye

where the ice breaks on a lake and a window

holds open another window

facing onto the mountains      the lake

with the face

that was drawn over by breath    by every instance

of someone's absence

of where out of sight    some shapes

slipped by    once through a window through    your own face

facing    a lover's face    a lake    a mountain now    all falling deep

deep under

the finely woven snowdrifts,

*visage*

*chaleur blanche*

*the Old Jewish Cemetery in Wroclaw*

*Cooper Lake, Woodstock NY*

*January 2013*

*“Le visage humain est une force vide, un champs de mort.”*

*- Antonin Artaud*

Fever, and figures

grow in the sand

Darkly indwelling sparks of sex

clutched in the hands of the dead

women

buried

with the coffeeblack eyes

flared open

fold the heat back onto the flint

The women sleep

their heads down breathing the earth,

cave the eyes, the mouths, the tar nostrils,

set the forms



to what is left of me after I leave  
after glowing myself out  
of the warm nest of my own face my embers flicked  
un-earthed un-silenced

I too flicker

like a trout caught in a shallow darkness

a Fish on the desert floor,  
sudden  
night glistening within the night

but it is  
inside us,  
the black

where the eye goes

to retrieve that one egg of lightning

that enters the abandoned skin of our bodies

filets the dream

until its bones align with the lines of storm

the crucible figured, figured out, filled in

coalesce

neither sky nor desert

Absurdly full-breasted and light

a woman moves through the bedding of sand

her foot feeling depth

feeding

the pulse out of me

into me

afar, the red moon rises above the horizon

like an ancient scar

that crawls onto time's body ( my eyes

( as if breaking in from either side of the edge

flare

the baby salamanders

*the Metropolitan Museum of Art*

*New Galleries for the Arab Lands,*

*the Yarmukian Culture*

*May 2013*



[scratchings : dies Martis, 2013. 29. I., Gaušragā.]

Again the Christ-eyed gray of the sea & sky seeping in through the mindskin. 'Unless the difference between inside & outside is trivial'? There is no horizon. Parsing old love letters in my gelid hovel, somnambulating the mazy byways of the City of Missed Trains. Green mucus nosebleed. Icy eyes, & a stypic moonshine odor. The stone cold stove on waking, the wind out of the cellar, rats scraping at the underbelly of the *hows*. Frozen lichen in the Temple of Cloacina. Torment has more flavors than ice cream in America. Long in the tooth. The leaden sky, the broken plumbing, the heavy eyelid of the seaside well, the tin bucket dropping through the scin-laeca below. To draw the brackish water up to drink. The snow is full of stars. 'Turn the tap in the direction of the sea', the librarian said. *Silts*. *No bākas*. Mērsrags glimmers in the distance, in the night \ fog milk, library milk, the Moon the size of 'God's hairy dick', with the moral stature of a scavenging bird. 'Turn the tap in the direction of the sea' to wash the bottle to give the milk (from Laima & Irbe — 'it does not take a clairvoyant to know that Bite does not yet give milk'). Do bees give milk?

... 'but out of time telling anyway'. Who mourns the deported whores, sent to Central Asia in the dead of night? Lukewarm sputum. The stone cold strove to kindle the fires. *Saskaldīt skalus*. *Schizein*. Toward dawn the wind died down. Night sweats. Half awake I search for your hands, Persephone. Like milk from the leaden sky. In the wake world, *svīst gaisma*. Blotted out. Blurred beneath the thud of winter. Blue-green mandarin oranges rot on the icebox. 'What are you box'? 'I am Hathor'. Is no more. Do bees give milk? An Old Prussian vocabulary — milk taking many a form, then horse & whore. Now the sea is tourmaline. Dislogotracted by these etymologies, too dark to see. Feeling my way to the well, caressing the margelle, my glasses fell. In.

The water a pestering green. A dead snail or two. Cheap Indian instant coffee mixed with rat droppings, salvaged from the floor behind the fridge. Crouching by the fork in the road to scribble a figment before it is lost. Nothing is ever lost, of course, but bookkept by dour archivistas in some subterranean Eden. It erupts in love. The other side of the Night of Fire. *Krāsmatas*. A dog named Ārprāts runs to Artemis's side. *Mademoiselle* (forbidden title) *la Chasseresse*. *Monsieur le Chasseur*. You cook wild boar for hours, or you die. They are nothing but feral pigs. The day is absolutely blank. The ice breaks, & the Dadaist from the next village falls through the various flavors of despondency into despair. Late January largo; I seek your hand, Persephone. Remorse. 'Feminism is an illness. She can be cured'.

'Twas the night before feminism, & all through the *hows* ... .. the stirrings of rats, & at night there are bats in your hair. The colibri of hope are finally kaput, to be eaten like ortolan. Laima's lord tells of the south wind, weh years ago brought blistering heat to the village. Between two to four hundred prostitutes were deported to northern Kazakhstan as anti-Soviet elements. Kiss the doorknob, kids would say, & you'll see Riga. It was an iron doorknob, of course. In the dead of winter. Lick it. Eat the bunting.

I was so afraid to go out, as a child, for mother said that songbirds were falling from the sky. Frozen, they'd land on your head like rocks. Farmer Gerbig caught a bat in his hat. 'Pet it', he said to my sister, laughing — 'it's just a little mouse with wings'. Crouching by the road to get Gerrit's book, I espy the tracks of the lynx again. Fresh tracks, leading into a landscape by Purvītis. How to paint snow, the sort torn from a blank sky & the kind that settles on the margelle of your lately abandoned heart-nest, sea-crows tearing at its carcass. The other day was so bitterly clear. The sun hovered in the southern windows, splashing against the bright red Oriental rug hanging on the wall. Behind every grate man is a well being. No one knows what happened to the whores in Kazakhstan. 'There used to be crones in the courtyards of Dvinsk'. Now there is only one empty train to Nineveh. The canal undug, the molar root, the flower of dolour pacified with poppy tea.

The lynx — our lynx! & Gerrit's book, inscribed: '*Sache que tout connaît sa loi, son but, sa route ; / Que, de l'astre au ciron, l'immensité écoute ; / Que tout a conscience en la création ;*', iz Victor Hugo, '*Ce que dit la bouche d'ombre*'... *ce que dit la bouche d'ombre*, in Innsmouth. Imboca.

The rats are trains that crawl toward Nineveh. The bats wag their blatant superstitions at you. The sky is white now, a dirty white, a trashy repository where no word said ever hovered close to anything. The windows facing east — *les fenêtres donnent sur la mer*.

& south where the sun rises, as weak as bees'-milk by the White Sea. *Je ne pourrai jamais envoyer l'Amour par la fenêtre*, you wrote, you translated, you cited — no, no; you never wrote a thing. It began in there, or out there. The trivia Hecate lingers in. *At. Of*. The little woodland birds the cat will slaughter come spring.

& if there is spleen in my sez — no, I am washing you away, or shitting you out. What drew me in turns to revulsion, a repulsive mappemunde I will not milk. 'I'm going to throw myself out the window', a friend screamed, until her former lover finally said — 'do so; you live on the ground floor'.

It is never good in January, the Moon the size of now. Waning, a book in hand. It might be the middle of summer on Cape Ann, the ancient lions coupling with our lynx. Icy eyes lit from within. Their size. Like saucers.



Such fine dust for autochthonous Cubists to eat, when all is lost — it is never lost, no; rosy-fingered archivistas secrete a residue. Dismal dispersion, my dear bravo — do so, you live on the ground floor. In total silence. On the outskirts of Late Capitalism. In the interchange of tinctures. I let go of it all, this night.

Carrying cappuccinos up to Abraxas, to sit in the zephyrs beneath your lyncian eyes. Waking, emptying, salt the bowels, freshwater fish in my part of the sea. The nearest river's name is mouth. I once came in a train. Twice came. Rubbing myself, or entering a wayward Palestinian from behind. The trains stop in Tvankste, there are crocodiles in the Kaliningrad canals, & drawing in the milky smoke of a Belomorkanal will take you back in time. *I was a child & she was a child in our kingdom by the sea* — castaway, husk.

To kiss the cold wall, or a girl who says she sees the world like a boy who's been kicked in the balls. Kiss the coldest wall of all.

The pawprints of our lynx lead to a perfectly recollected nowhere. Recalled. It all began at the end of the mole in Windau, reciting *If you are addressed*, '*you are addressed*' by heart. 'By heart' — 'tis as idiomatical as 'drunk as a fish'. RK: 'The central question of the twentieth century is erasure'.

There is no 'you' anymore. Return to sender. The sky is the color of an evil opal, & the pipes to the cesspool are frozen solid. There were amethyst days, & the here of me would be somewhere in the woods, steadily chopping — the ancient Cubists fondle the snails in the drinking water, looking for home. *До свиданья, друг мой, до свиданья.*

# The Universe of One, And, the Music of the Other

Benjamin Boretz

*I am going to say some things, I am going to read some things, I am going to play some things.  
[But first I want to express my sorrow for the people who were killed and hurt in Boston  
yesterday...once again, there seems no way to assimilate events of that nature into the scope of  
these concerns of ours which normally feel so urgent...]*

*I was going, in any event, to open with music; there is a piece I composed recently in memoriam,  
for Milton Babbitt, which feels right: The Memory of All That, a sonnet of John Donne for Milton  
Babbitt..]*

I

The Universe of One

Making distinctions, making judgments. Each bringing into consciousness a distinct panorama of qualities, a distinct gestalt of identity experienced. You could say they were the same properties experienced differently, from a different perspective, in terms of different predicates. Or you could say that their outputs are ontologically distinct, that judgmental experiencing is always preemptive, creating experience by filtering incoming properties through a normative dictionary and rulebook. Of course, you have to make distinctions in order to make judgments; and it would seem that in the history of each person they originate simultaneously, in a moment at the birth of consciousness, in that ineluctable moment of traumatic ontological dissonance when the world suddenly consists of things, is not just identical with the unitary ur-thing of unarticulated being, the moment of I-discovery which is in fact the originary ontologization of the other, the intrusive other. When a distinction intrudes as an unresolvable contradiction of the unity of being. The traumatic moment of first ontological dissonance. It may be imagined that the shock of ontological nonconsonance, experienced traumatically as ontological dissonance, a flight-or-fight survival issue, is the nascent moment of thought, inceiving the natural history of the labor of perpetual self-normalization, the normalization of one's own bedrock ontology, one's moment-to-momentarily incorrigible intuition of the identity of what phenomenon just happened, of what entity just reified, the perpetual labor of creating reality, of maintaining sanity.

So - originary experience indelibly marks each of us, ontologizing our consciousness from that point forward so as to - at least - color every experience thenceforth in a way that is locked into our own individual historical progression. At the gross-consciousness level, the register of practical and social life, the chaos that you could imagine resulting from strenuous and critical interactions of beings experientially opaque to one another is avoided by the imposition of culture - that is, the tyranny of conventional wisdom that tells you how to interpret what is happening, what to think of it, and, indeed, what it is that is in fact happening. Conventional wisdom teaches you what to experience when you experience your own experience, teaches you what to say you are experiencing, teaches you to believe you are experiencing what you say you are experiencing. It doesn't just teach you what distinctions to make, it defines and circumscribes the limits of what a distinction is, what the issues are on the basis of which distinctions are and can be made, and what value to place on which side of each distinction. Obviously, creating the cultural level of consciousness not so much to align all the chaotically disparate natural consciousnesses of people as to supersede them, using them as the originating engines of undefined experiential energies which are given substance, reality, meaning, and intersubjectively intelligible properties, enabling the level of reality which is functionally intersubjective.

And it works; the world works, even if it seems to work in frequently deplorable ways. Without judgment, the world doesn't work; without distinctions, there is no world. But of course we're talking about music; and the question is whether that chaotic disparity of sensibilities which underlies the orderly uniformity created by conventional wisdom is not crucially the realm precisely of the aesthetic; the place where the distinctions are precisely the ones that matter at the heart of the enterprise of creative expression. That the well-tempered effort to hear conventionally, in terms of the givens of musical culture, of the distinctions and judgments ontologized within their defined terms, is in fact sensitivity training in the service of a certain particular register of sensitivities, a powerful homogenizing agent which makes possible the conduct of musical life, its way of sorting out issues of performance, of composition, of description, of opinion, as if they all made mutual sense - and thus enabling the intelligible continuity of the cultural institution that enacts and reproduces itself as music, as the reality of what music is.

But it may be imagined, and I do imagine it, that the chaos of incommensurable and perhaps not even mutually intelligible musical ontologies that live invisibly (because they have no culturally defined conventional identities) in the cracks and below and even apart from the surfaces of "normalized" music actually embody the primal origins of the lust for music, the source of its creative power, of its capacity for penetration to the very personal souls and minds of its makers and receivers. Possibly it's why no one deeply involved in a musical practice seems to feel completely comfortable with anyone else's performance, composition, description, opinion: because the ontological imperative is to represent all performances, compositions, descriptions, opinions, theories, pedagogies, as candidates for definitive and authoritative - it's psychically imperative because the universe of one has never identified itself as the origin of the intuition of alienation, and thus ontological diversity, which I've claimed is inexorable, is experienced not as

imperative because the universe of one has never identified itself as the origin of the intuition of alienation, and thus ontological diversity, which I've claimed is inexorable, is experienced not as potential richness of experience but as a lethal threat to the secure, comfortable, institutionalizable reality provided by cultural convention.

What is it that determines the right way to play, or hear, or describe a Beethoven sonata, say, or to compose something under its cognitive guidance? There's nothing in Beethoven's scores except some interpretable materials for, presumably, making music (that's an assumption too). For, possibly, making your music; who said otherwise? And what could that possibly mean? Beethoven's score doesn't tell you what to make, but gives you some stuff with which you can make something; but there are traditions of performance, that are transmitted by institutional authority between generations of performers and other certified practitioners. And that determines - competitively within the circle of certified authorities - what is, to quote a friendly colleague who was blindsided at a music faculty colloquium by an analysis I wrote of a Brahms symphony, "persuasive". Not what might be interesting, or suggestive, or even factually accurate as a shared report of a pretty far-out experience, but - crucially and exclusively - a competitor for authority. But I guess I think that authority is not a very interesting issue for music; and - as I have written elsewhere - it's not even an intelligibly applicable concept, for music. And that that deficiency is not only a good thing for the expansive richness of creative experience, but is one of the determining properties of the realm of experience which might be called "aesthetic".

What would happen to the institutions of music under the application of my thinking along these lines is - well, really - not my problem. What is my problem is the invention and propagation of the widest and most engaging variety of experiential adventures; in particular, the work of self-development focuses me on that issue of making distinctions rather than judgments - especially in finding my own self-interest in expanding my experiential range into new (or even old) music which resists intuitivity. And as always, discovering modes of listening which transform - neo-ontologize, to put it colloquially - the identity of the music as it enters my consciousness. But more of that later.

More immediately I want to light the issues I'm engaging here by borrowing from a piece I composed in 1994, called music/consciousness/gender - a multidimensional composite of words, images, and music by me and other people - it wants to explore the layers of musical consciousness and ontology below the radar and between the cracks of the familiar categories into which musical thought is classified; to try to articulate the elusive issues of identity and personhood - and interpersonhood - which I intuited were lurking in those murky depths - outside the normal, or even comfortably acceptable, territories of musical thinking. Scattered through this piece are six passages, read live in the performance as voiceover to relevant music - but I'm going to read them in sequence here, just as text, to give you an idea of how I was imagining the expansion of my own conceptual and experiential music space - and hoping to share it with anyone else as well. Each text is a portrait of the inner experience of an encounter with music; from six perspectives of relation between the music and its recipient. The first three and the fifth are portraits of generic situations - self-situations, actually. The fourth and sixth are portraits of responses to specific music playing simultaneously (all of them are simultaneous with

sounding music); the music of the fourth text is a collage I composed out of music of Jimi Hendrix and John Coltrane; the music of the sixth is the Adagietto of Mahler's Fifth Symphony, played by Claudio Abbado and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. So this succession tries to articulate some of the kinds of qualities I've been talking about here:

1. As music enters me (music: Lament for Sarah)
2. As my music enters you (music: Lament for Sarah)
3. As your music enters me (music: Randall: ("...such words as it were vain to close..."))
4. You want gynophobia (music: Hendrix/Coltrane collage)
5. As our music enters us (music: inter/play session: "don't be so polite")
6. As this music enters this room (music: Mahler: Symphony 5, Adagietto)

I.

As music enters me, it touches me in places of gender. touches. probes. opens. explores. sculpts within. suffuses: Present-being, other-being, new-being. genderful. degendered. new-gendered. dimensions of genderbeing in no form of binariness. whole-body sensing genderself, becoming unigendered, polygendered, neogendered, the who am I an everchanging identity of selfgender. As music enters me, as I enter music, we are both — music and I, both, entering one another — together transforming receiving penetrating gendershaping. Or are we ungendered mutually, gendershorn, fused and purified to become the Sacred One, within, us together as one, gendered or not or unnameably in the material language of gender-name-rituals of ritual-gender-naming? Together opened, filled, to the brink of not-other-being, this music, this I, in our own undefinable interprocessing (is it gendering?), are we not discovering unbeknown illinguistic multiunitary gender-identities, within each other, within ourselves? To be moved, by music, or with, transported ontologically, inhabiting a new-perceived world, resonating a new-composed music, being thereby a new-created new-being, of unsignifiable but saturately selfspecific gender: Was I male, within myself? Was I female, within myself? Was I person? Am I still? Have I been some resonance, some inflection, some reinvented creature alchemized out of the base matters of male and female? (Yes, if I remember correctly, . . . )

2.

*As my music enters you, it seeks to touch you in the place of gender, in the place where transmission of meaning is fused with the creation of presence. . .*

*As my music emerges from me to you, it seeks to find you in the place where conversation may transform, where my voice speaks within your ear, where my speaking is a listening from within you to become presence within you; the possessing sense I have of 'expressing myself' is just a sense of possibility, the touchable possibility of co-inhabiting that which is reality to me, with you together and with you within it, from which we both might carry in ourselves a resonance of my ontology as it came to belong to us both, might indulge the ontological fantasy that, by virtue of my voice having been received empathetic within you, and having been emitted empathetic of you, we are not altogether ineluctably alone.*

3.

**As your music enters me, as you play it for me , or as I play it for myself, and as I open within myself to receive it, and as I open within it for it to receive me, I navigate to find the posture of interface, to sample by twisting and bending my angle of reception, playing or listening, the distinct poignancies of each convergent resonance, to find myself somewhere encoded within, possessed or exorcised, loved or derided, acknowledged or denied, understood or disregarded, saved or doomed, caressed or abused, tremulous in desire and fear, intensely wound between terror of dissolution and glow of exaltation, not just straining to hear if there is to read to anticipate what it is a message for me encoded there, but needing it wanting to know it to be it to be what it means. . .**

— you want gynophobia, and you want it from Ludwig van Beethoven no less? OK, but pretty wimpy 'n' chaste if you ask me — how about this music for hardball standup studstrutting? Isn't gynophobia the real hardcore of its violent inexpressivity its virulent hyperkinesis?

— , says: you can't enter me nohow, noplace, impenetrable energetic wall, — genderneutral?

— , and say, fuck symbolism, fuck fake phallic punking stage imagery, smoke, hey it's just smoke, and electricguitar in a Papageno suit's no clincher neither — cheap thrills, say, pay no mind — check out the real stonewall number's being done on you, blueswise, jazzwise, yeah, even rockwise — how's that music the music of those lyrics, anyhow? Sadeyed or devilcrotched, the pasteon frontzippered dustjacket's a scam cover for the real number nine hollow nowhereperson rattling within — totally gendernull. (Rock: the blandest harmonic/melodic configurations at the most ferocious volume: crazy, but expressionless, and utterly asexual, right?)

So what is that expression?:

:

— The sexuality of the oppressed. — no, the sexuality image through which the image of oppression is embodied.

— Is the image of thrashing suffocated furious nonpresence (jazz) or malpresence (blues) or dyspresence (rock).

*(Deconstructed till fuckinmother naked.)*

Today! Now! Think of Beavis! Think of Butthead! (Is 'think' the right word?)

Maybe not, but think too of the pitiless transparencies of Joni Mitchell, the cooler Coltrane named Alice, the sacrificial confidings of Janis Joplin, the devastating lucidities of Laurie Anderson, the bedrocking homefacts of Tracy Chapman, the demystified athleticisms of Meredith Monk, . . .



5.

As our music enters me, as our music enters you, as it inscribes us within our space, as it entwines us together within itself, as it enfolds itself within us together, as we inscribe ourselves within our music, within each other, together within it, it within us together, interpenetrates each of us by the other by it; involutes each of us within the other within it; replaces each of us both with itself. . .

or, brutally estranges, walls our space between us: you as mega-you. pervasive-you, as ur-you, I as invisible-I, inchoate-I, mute-I, stifled-I, infinitesimal-I, or you, blindingly unimaginable Other, and I, intensely distinct Other-Other, or most ambiguously, you, verging on, blurring. the I/Other boundary, I, passing within, transgressing, dissolving, renegotiating the both-, the I-, the Other-spaces,...

6.

As this music enters this room, it unwraps the covers of the soft psychic underbelly of us within its space, revealing, and engaging, and enacting, things we dare not know by name; . . . we, together, conspire to undergo the secret thrill of the revelation and the engagement and the enacting, allowing ourselves to enact within, conspire to collude in keeping the secret which unrevealed spares us the shame of exposure, yet intensely trembles within at the yielding to the touch and the immersion within, this music which sustains with almost unbearable tension the velvet cover without and the bloody sordid mess within, predaciously toying with and unctiously sensuously beautifully pimping to our unacknowledgable prurience, our fantasies of the unacceptable, probing into the soft rotten fruit of my, and your, hidden degeneracy, viciously pitilessly exposing itself to us, so insidiously cannibalistic, engorging us in its limitless narcissism in its own Self, into which we, seduced in this diabolical devouring masquerading as the profession of ultimate intimacy (what? here, in this crowded lighted public space?), we, emotionally, ontologically, are being, are, appropriated, depleted, eaten, evacuated, enervated, *had*. . .

## II

### And, The Music of the Other

What about the intrusive Other, the Other's music? There are musics I find it hard to engage. Because the terms of my intuitive engagements with music don't seem to yield experiential determinacy, or if they do, it's an experience of nonengagement, or nonengagability. So I was very interested when Michael Dellaira asked me to review some "new music" for his magazine, *New Music Connoisseur*. So that I could do the work to bridge the aesthetic, and, really, the generation gap. Here are some of my notes for that writing:

Auditorializing precompositional schemata - as opposed to "composing" - creates sound artifacts which appear to live at a somewhat detached distance from their receivers. Never get too sweaty or too up close and personal. A quality of being not so much undercomposed as uncomposed, or, better, othercomposed. This is either the occupational hazard of a certain kind of auditory conceptual art, or its aesthetic (or at least philosophical) attraction, for its practitioners and fans. Algorithmic methods are particularly inclined to produce such affects, but as always it depends on the particular music and the particular occasion of reception - that is unless you read the program notes first.

There is no question that the repetitive-pulse structures of minimalist composition make a powerful experiential point. The only question is whether they do not always make the same point, whose individual inflections are locked within an overbearing stylistic affective definition.

Everyone really knows that objectivity in the descriptive criticism of musical experience isn't even really a coherent idea, let alone a real possibility. So it's too bad that so much writing lusts strenuously to assert that kind of authority, so that it misses the real, available, and far superior opportunity to share creative images of those unique (and literally, but not metaphorically, unsharable) episodes of "secondary consciousness" (as Eliot Handelman calls it) we encounter in any immersed listening. I wasted a lot of energy and space - decreasingly over time - during my time as Music Critic for *The Nation* (1960-69) getting my prose to represent my personal experiences of music with the implication that they deserved to be taken seriously as candidates for determinate/definitive opinions/descriptions/verdicts. To what end is increasingly murkier to see. Maybe nothing more than a misplaced sense of where assertiveness of that kind would leave some residue of individual musical awareness in the jammed social space of musicjabber. In any case, I read all that as mostly having the effect of masking and blunting, rather than vivifying, the images of my senses, thoughts, epiphanies of music I was often jumping out of my skin listening to (Liszt! Mendelssohn! Bach! Salome! Stravinsky! Schoenberg! Varese! Milton! Elliott! Arthur! ...!).

So now, is it at the other end (bottom of some tube or other) that I strike a discursively responsive pose (looking as attentive as is appropriate I trust, feeling quite uncertain as to my relevance in this new sound world, but up for anything...)...? It's the music of someone that everyone probably already knows better than I, Keeril Makan (with others to follow, below). A

piece for violin and percussion, 2, and it really knows how to make a point: starting by hammering a repetitive canbang just enough more times than it would create a "motive" but canny beyond its compeers in leaving articulate space in which action (not the staticness of uninflected reiteration) can - and does happen - space, miraculously, of changing length (no relentless buildup to the inevitable as in orgasmoform, even significantly downsizing progressively to widen, deepen, open clear space for its takeoff into scintillating hi-tech gamelanmusic. Which takes off, but does not lose itself in its own self-absorption - actually always seems sentient within itself, and interactive with me, gracefully falling off its theatrical cliffs into startling mode changes, pattering in place to elonging, a soundribbon that indiscernibly crosses big soundmode thresholds, unbrutally but continuously always on the move to elsewhere...but always in a pace and at a rate particular to each mode in itself, so there's never a sense of a composing operation doing it to me but rather an inviting companionship offering sound discoveries and adventures in a humansize way but always engaging and, well, interesting to listen to. *Zones d'accord* for solo cello gets carried away with itself a bit more than I get carried away with it. But its occasionally frantic inventiveness of things for a cello to do that obviously a cello was never supposed to do is at least continuous listening fun, and maybe strikes a deeper resonance in its cumulative course. *Target* (maybe a bit of Diamandagalasism here, and even a touch of *earthlight*) finds ways to *be* (as against to *become*) continuously (and varyingly) intense. Like *earthlight* (and unlike Diamanda) it always give me a place to listen from, spaces from which the individual utterance qualities can lodge their sonic and expressive interest - which seems to come from everywhere in the world within the single singer's voice (gratefully and congenially composed for throughout the piece). I do love (and sort of miss somewhere in this piece) Diamanda's piercing screams (one of the formative experiences of my listening life), but there's more payoff than deprivation in its absence here. The compositional quality of *Target* is remarkable in how its unrestrained eruptive wildly variable emotional theater is channeled into a continuous musical unfolding that gives me a lucid sound window through which to hear each inflection and never goes over the edge of arbitrary. The disc is gorgeously recorded with what seem to be consummate performances by everyone (there is also *Resonance Alley*, a solo percussion piece) but I especially enjoyed the amazingly sonically and articulatively agile violin playing of Jennifer Choi of Either/Or and the microscopically precise sound and trajectory of the vocal performance by Laurie Robin.

Jocelyn Robert's self-performed collections of "piano disklavier" pieces (*mobile* and *immobile*) have an arresting severity, a disciplined austerity keeping an almost anticompositional insulation between composer and piece, like what I earlier called *othercomposed*. Like auditorialized analyses of precompositional schemata, a kind of sonically materialized conceptual art putting a receiver through an interesting exercise in listening, to sound objects which appear to remain tangibly at a distance in conceptual space, manifesting there more to be contemplated than to get up close and personal with. The piano-disklavier medium, and the very precise timing of every articulation (from swirling clouds of sound to starkly individuated single stone-steps) create a curiously post-Conlon Nancarrowish sensibility, strangely less aggressively techified than Nancarrow's startling playerpiano hallucinations, whose self-propelled relentlessness gets me scrambling to get out of the way as much as straining to catch every mindblowing hammerstroke. Where the experience of a Nancarrow exercise is a trip into the uncanny supernatural, Jocelyn

Robert's pieces are more of a spacewalk, in a time that detaches from time and spatializes coolly evolving images of figures and phenomena. Something like, in the piece called *für ludwig*, a ghost-shadow of Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata, or in *la pluie*, a slowly materializing xray of some idealized Chopin Ballade. Elsewhere, Robert builds accumulating pitch-objects with minimal restricted pitchfields unfolding against one another in asymmetrical cycles; or maximal densely congested pitchfields whirling in lockstep like the particles of a manic comet. And then the meticulous stonestep music, prying open wide space-intervals (seeming not like time intervals but like openings to look within and through), and moving balletically along erratic unintuitive unpredictable but finally rational and civilized geometrical paths. Despite its near-zero severity, it's all quite comfortable and mannerly; but I bet it would be completely out of sight on an old mechanical Nancarrow playerpiano.

**Keeril Makan**

*TARGET*

2 (1998)

Either/Or (Jennifer Choi, violin; David Shively, percussion)

*Zones d'accord* (2002)

Alex Waterman, cello

*Target* (2004)

Text: Jena Osman

Laurie Robin, mezzo-soprano; California EAR Unit

*Resonance Alley* (2007)

David Shively, percussion

Starkland CD ST-217

**Jocelyn Robert**

Jocelyn Robert, Piano Disklavier

*mobile*

pendules 1

für japan

la foule

la rue

la place

pendules 2

für oslo

für ludwig

merles cd a-III

*immobile*

boleron 1

für louisa

für eli

boleron 2

la pluie

merles cd h-1

Doretz: *music/consciousness/gender*; performance on Open Space DVD 1; score in *Being About Music*, Vo. 2 (Open Space, 2003); originally score and cd (audio only) performance in *Audible Traces* (ed. Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hammessly) (Carcioli, 1998)

## **text | composition – scores and structure after 4'33"**

mark so

In 2006, Christian Wolff came to CalArts and played a record of some Renaissance vocal music, by Ockeghem. He explained that it was a canon, and the reason we heard it as such (if we heard it as such) wasn't that we could actually hear the differing mensuration of the voices, slowly splintering a single melodic idea in time between them and thus driving the form, but for its distinctive, recognizable *noise*.

To bear this out, if canon (or any form) occurs to us with a sensation of immediate familiarity, its recognition happens along with—one might even venture to say *within*—the sensation of a basic indeterminacy: noise. Or put another way, this noise, paradoxically, *puts together* our sense of the familiar form, makes its recognition possible. Indeed, the plying of this paradox is the trade of any music. Jumping ahead to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the music of John Cage and beyond, we can comprehend a changing set of fundamentals in this old labor—changes which have comprised the basis of experimental music practices ever since, not least for those of us who write text-based music.

### **4'33" – a silent hinge**

Hermann Helmholtz, Luigi Russolo, Henry Cowell and Edgard Varèse might well orient a particular strand of pragmatic realism in experimental music that carried well into the last century, culminating in the span of Cage's output beginning roughly with *First Construction (in Metal)* in 1939 and concluding with 4'33" in 1952. I call this trend *realist* because it seriously and centrally engaged the phenomenology of musical experience, the physics as well as the poetics of the perception of real sounds in real sounding situations; and *pragmatic* since it spurred a revision of music practices (listening, writing, performing) through the expansion of resources and extension of techniques, guided by the reality of sound towards a musicality that came to terms with that reality more and more.

At the same time, a certain old order of the musical work as the province of the composer, and the score as illustration of that work and repository of its structure, remained untroubled—modified, made more elastic perhaps, but essentially maintained, even as music expanded to encompass an increasing understanding of the world of lived sound.

For its part, Cage's music prior to 4'33" progresses by a series of turns through this old order (musical structure as province of composer and score), ultimately setting it into crisis. *First Construction (in Metal)* and *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* (also from 1939) push structural control into what Cage considered the general rhythmic background of the work, using a fairly standard scoring, but constantly threatened with losing its hold on the 'image' of what happens, thanks to notably unorthodox instrumentation (metallic percussion, playback of phonograph records) whose unpredictable sounding nature largely takes over the character of the performed work.

By the *Sonatas and Interludes* for prepared piano (1948), the prefatory table of preparations—effectively constituting the piece’s ‘orchestration’—assumes over the function of illustrating the work (vaguely, as in a catalog of sound potentials, divorced from time), leaving the standard-looking piano score to serve as little more than a rhythmic diagram. In the score for *Water Music* (1952) the illustration is pure diagram, no longer representing the sounding character of the work at all, but mapping a chance-determined procedure of timed actions for the performer to execute upon a rather haphazard assortment of materials, mostly resulting in incalculably noisy sounds, of unpredictable duration. And finally, 4’33’’: the ultimate stroke of musical expansion to include every possible sounding reality, capstone and concluding gesture of this musical trajectory, and also the last masterpiece—the composer as master of the musical work and its structure, judging the ultimate role for his score in that capacity: *void only*.

As surely as 4’33’’ closes this pragmatic-realist epoch in experimental music, it opens a new one, in which a piece defined as “not playing” (three movements marked *tacet*) isn’t devoid of structure, but potentially (pending realization) full of it: radically open to anything that happens, any structure that may arise. Hence, a shift from the composition of works based on a terminally inadequate theory of sounds, to *situated compositional practices*. Whatever instances a piece across the time of a real situation—the structure of whatever happens—will have been its compositional structure, not the better or worse replica of some structure given in the score, which, no longer an image of the work before the work, now serves as a project or platform to orient ourselves as musicians and push-off against to start a piece going.

Perhaps the best register of this shift occurred while Cage worked to execute the extraordinarily complex splicing scheme of his *Williams Mix* (1952), when he came to fully recognize the new productive potential of the score—that it doesn’t merely approach fidelity to real consequences (never quite getting there), but fundamentally differs with sounding reality. This understanding radically repositions composition entirely within the present of realization, *as the structure of what happens*. Now not only a piece’s coming-together but its coming to pose or to stand in its reality, composition becomes a pure function of the indeterminacy—the *chance*—of realization. A piece might or might not happen, without guarantee. But this is the only way it *can* happen.

The consequences of this shift for experimental music composers couldn’t be greater. To briefly recapitulate: in coming to terms with ‘how things really go’—the increasingly overwhelming specter of sounds’ chaotic reality, the limitless possibilities of harmonic and rhythmic arrangement, and so on—the sense of the composer’s hold on structure shrank further and further into background arcana, a kind of systems-maintenance devised to intrude ever less upon the sounding surface, letting reality ring true. But sound only proved more difficult to manage with each retreat of control, not less, until composition backed off to regulating only those general ‘big brick’ decisions that left barely a trace on the score, much less on sounding. Finally, Cage reduced this task to the largest and last brick: time itself, with a score constituted entirely in the indication of *some duration*, leaving nothing for the score except to turn mutely into the face of pure realization, throwing the work off the page. Now, we look not to score but to realization to find “the piece,” and musical interpretation (performance) proceeds towards faithful participation in *the composition a piece will become*—which can have no replica, nor abstraction. As composers, we no longer ask: How will my piece resist or fortify itself against the indeterminacy of the real situation? But instead, perhaps: How might my piece welcome this indeterminacy as the basis of its life, with necessity and joy? Clearing the score’s slate with regard to structure, 4’33’’ draws not a blank but *a text*: it invents a new genre of writing music, which proposes and defines the project for realizing a piece using not musical notation or graphic imagery, but ordinary language. No longer charged with illustrating the work, the score is set free to operate *as a text* like never before. Now, constituted in a generic set of defined potentials, the score instigates faithful realizations which may fragment over and over, each time producing a purely particular and contingent work—*pure*



*history*: a singular temporal phenomenon, a unique duration.

\*

As I consider my own scores, it's impossible not to be general about how text serves. Often, it defines activity to be undertaken; number and arrangement of participants/materials involved; lengths of time; degrees of intensity; formal proportions; spacing; conditions of harmony, continuity, and setting; etc. Typically, I use an imprecise language of designation—a few sounds, a long time, quite soft, unhurried, somehow overlapping, independent or somehow together, in an ordinary room open to the outdoors, etc., these dicta being vague and purposely diffident as to specifics, generally indifferent to material contingencies and open to, quite radically speaking, *whatever* realization. In other words, I tend to make a deliberately “boring” foray into ordinary experience, to cast my score in a soft, yielding form, nonchalant in regard to what it will encounter in life; to set water upon sand, so to speak.

The “common” language I use stands in keen relation to the understated, subtle responsiveness of idle chatter, and to the ebb and flow of normal perception. It seems to formulate a poetics suitably receptive to real complexity in simple circumstances, a kind hand greeting life in the embrace of conversation. Against the umbrella-jab of formal imposition, intended to suss out its shape amid the noise (as in Wolff's sense of canon), a language rather of the caress, engrossed in the edge between the provisionality of setting out and the community of involvement, within the fluid margins of the encounter; the grammar of this formulation perhaps emerging and disappearing along the subtle arc of its utterance, at once unremarkable and baffling as a desert spring. Instead of calibrating the form of a hard solid, which, when hurled at the wall, stops dead, I want my score to somehow foster communication, to find an angle of permeability, and to slip and weave through the interaction, even/ever potentially to be lost in it.

Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, in coming to grips with the score as a basically formulaic text, comprised of generic textual matter while precisely aimed at the possibility of a singular encounter, I've found that the role of score-writing does not retreat into the circumspect flavor of its (somewhat arbitrary) materials, a purely detached, internally consistent conceptual artifact—that what the score becomes and how it functions is far from arbitrary. If no longer the painting, then surely the score is *drawing*: genre of immediate, just perception; harbor of discoveries as yet unrealized; sharp and incisive, yet necessarily provisional. A language to draw near and touch what can only be discovered in life: a touching question. And it *must* touch, for its aim is to move duration to song. Anything less garners only the sound of death in the arbitrariness of textual regression, “about such and such...” The quality and precision of the question, in other words, show not in the cleverness of what is said to be known by it, but in whether it *works*. There are shapes the pencil makes which the brush knows nothing of, shapes of communication, of trying-out and getting to know, of making and holding contact; the fragile line turning along the path of seduction that draws mind and world into mutual subjection, the track of impressionable insightfulness only after and upon (over) which painting may deduce. What good is a “comprehensive” question if it fails to instigate the musicality of the subject it addresses—if it fails to touch? A good question yields not answers, but a community of the question (not necessarily a group of people, no society, but all that comes together in perception), gathered along the spreading seam of contact, formulating a discourse through which, in the deepening bond of embrace, the sensation of reality doesn't narrow but explodes.

I know nothing of comprehensive approaches, only small things: what strikes me in the course of a day, reading a poem or some experience of life, etc. For me, this is the only way to set out, an encounter which simply moves me to some sense of its life, and I hold language like a drafting

pencil; I want the prick of perception to register in the score, to locate a point and gain access to some avenues onward from it. Like any sequence of drawings, this process doesn't hold still; the very nature of it is restless and experimental, perpetually refreshing, moving on, getting closer, getting involved again and again, and in so doing, learning and getting better at it, making each approach less beholden to its legs and more immediate, more faithful within the nature of the situation. Any system has a baseline of criteria and limits that in a sense lies settled beneath/ before even the first mark. This baselining of formal terms is antithetical to the musical situation. It comes to the crossroads only to mark its end, its dire inadequacy to continue, and then forever point back ignorantly to the consistency of its rhetoric, the soundness of its rules, and so on. But language has no such baseline, at least not necessarily so. Language is not an imaging system, but a drafting procedure. Its functions are inherently musical, the development of which require musicianly practices (skills and instincts), perpetually inventing and discovering ways to continue the discipline of an exploratory drawing that moves from text into life. (This, after all, is all that reading is.)

In summary, I would venture that scoring with text involves the combination of these four basic, musical functions of language:

enumerative   instructional  
propositional   poetic

Certainly not unique to text scores and arguably prevalent throughout all the history of writing, these functions power the versatile practicality of writing across all its conceivable applications, from banal commerce to poetry. And now, for the first time, the score has come fully into *the field of writing in general*. As the score has passed from its old role as a special kind of representation—somewhere between painting and writing; repository of the proper image of the musical work; surrogate for the mastery of the composer's hand—and into the field of writing (pure supplementarity), compositional structure has become solely the province of realization.

It is hard to imagine a clearer gage of the score's new role than its coming into a condition of ordinary language: manifestly fragmentary, vital supplement to something yet to come, the shape of our setting out... What the score loses in giving up representation, it gains in the elemental utility of language as a vehicle of perception—how the world can arrive in a word, naming our affectionate point of contact with it; how writing makes object of our attentive affection just like drawing does, exquisite marking of our involvement that entrances and incites us to further affection. Not to say that there can no longer be other styles of score besides the strictly text-based (I frequently use them myself): standard notation, graphic diagrams, other schematics both written and otherwise, etc.; nor that the principle of generic formulation necessitates formal imprecision (but this categorical “paper precision,” within the terms of a given formula, will differ fundamentally with the singular precision of what happens, and the composer must accept this as a given). But such considerations are all bracketed by the functional capacities of language, understood entirely within the preliminary role of score-as-text in the wake of 4'33", having now become a form of writing in general: like the page beneath this print, definite in shape yet open and speechless, waiting for *whatever* to take place. In this light, the text score reads not as an image of the musical work that preserves its compositional structure, but a text which may initiate it.

*All was silent except the pedals of the loom, from which a tapestry  
streams in bits and pieces. “I don't care how you do it.”*

– John Ashbery, “Lost Footage”



**(some fragments)**

*structure is real*

and what we do in scoring has nothing to do with it. When *Williams Mix* turned out the way it did, Cage took the clue. He couldn't get the splices lined up, and instead of an inexactitude to be bridged, it became a sign (he called it an omen) that fuss and meddling don't get you anywhere; what happens will always have its own structure, and that becomes the structure of the piece. Composition, if it has to do with structure, doesn't exist before (in the score, in your head) but in the present of realization.

*what scores do*

if not structure: they define form and formal procedure. The translation or projection of definition across real situations creates the potential for familiarity/unfamiliarity, recognition/bafflement; but this happens in the midst of a fundamental indeterminacy—the complex and mysterious interaction of (general, abstract) definition moving through a real situation (singular, durational). The relation of the two occurs essentially by chance: some structure emerges, realizing some precise, local phenomenon around the generic shape hitting it, like the wake of a ship as it cuts across the chop. Definition is abstract. That's where we start, what we score—the actionable platform, the shape. What has potentially changed in what we do when we write is we now have the option of not trying to control structure, to see it as essentially out of our hands, come what may, and to entertain maybe some new options of musical approach, other than control.

*duration is real*

To hold to some determinate, derivative, analytic relationship between structure and form is a mathematical conceit, impossible in reality (you might as well be doing pitch-class analysis). It accounts for not one iota of the actual temporality—*duration*—of a piece coming into realization. You can't even talk about Cage's chance-determined blocks of generic time (what he called rhythmic structure) as compositional structure—after all, what's *indicated* in reality is so profoundly different: *durational structure*, the irreducible happening present. Duration is duration: pure, singular, contingent temporality, not some prior drafting of blocks of time. What's structure in the profoundly complex encounter of definite form moving into indeterminate reality, if not pure history, the duration of what happens, transient airing of form in so much unpredictable weather?

*minimalism*

is an aesthetics of the strictest discipline about the projection of form into duration, which has the effect of making a clean horizon for *any* instance of structure—a clear, strong point of view, like sculpture, which is every bit as durational a thing as music, every bit as open to the unpredictability of structure. What we have, I think, is the successful separation of the aesthetic point of view—the setting out—from any pretense of a transcendent artist/composer behind the structure of the artwork. It's just the artist as step one in a whole arc of the time of the work, and nothing about that time is set in stone beforehand, except perhaps a point of view. Not to say that a piece has no consistency, just that there's a relationship between form and structure that is fundamentally indeterminate, and that indeterminacy occurs at the level of structure (what happens), not form (the score).

*text*

It's not incidental that the text score appears at the moment of the huge shift in the conception of the nature and location of musical structure. Rather, it seems the implicit attitude of text scoring is deeply related to the shift. It's language, it's fragmentary, it's imprecise, it's a written supplement... It makes abstractions about activity and form definite and clear, as well as imminently actionable, without claiming to demonstrate or model the work itself: it *isn't* composition, can't be confused for it any more—how could it? It completely breaks with the representational model of the score as an illustration of the musical work, doesn't function any more as that kind of image. You can no longer confuse just looking at a score for participating in its realization, in the structure of the work. *Thinking* about it, maybe—there's certainly room for mental realization. The *act* of reading it, certainly. But there's no equivalent to sight-reading with a text score, nothing giving you a visual image ostensibly analogous to how the piece is supposed to go, that *stands in* for its happening, where you might hum along and get *more or less* an idea... Certainly, the line between writing and what happens is much clearer with a text score. It's a much harder barrier: what's preliminary—the setting out, the formal project that gets *proposed* in a score—can't easily be mistook for the realization of structure. That's the surprising thing for me to come to, as a composer: instead of disappearing forever out the back door of history, composition comes back to life in realization, involving everyone and everything that occurs in its present. We *wait* for composition now—exactly in the sense of doing 4'33"—rather than hiding it down the proverbial hole. We write pieces so that they can come to be composed, to come into position.

*a short conversation about Morton Feldman*

That's something I like about Feldman's late scores. They look sort of 'impressive' when you first see them, the level of compositional control, but then immediately you realize they are pretty stupid and so much better than the way he describes them. Yes! Totally dumb. I think his lack of education made him feel compelled to talk about them in a certain way. But his sloppy self always came through and in fact saved him. Yes—fat, lazy Feldman who can't count. It's funny how people fetishize his notation. He had that knack for working memory into form. But it's the same principle at play in sculpture: you can't take it in all at once, you have to reckon with it over time as you move around it in space, and in pieces, seeing it from a variety of angles...

*Ideas, Christian Wolff also said, are living things.*

# **Stones/Water/Time/Breath**

to Christian Wolff

Site-specific: outside, by the water, any body of water, like: a pond, the ocean, a lake, a stream, a river ...

Materials: stones. As many or as few as desired. Maybe they are already there.

## **Performance:**

Arrive, set a start time, start.

Use the stones as elements or implements to make percussive sounds on the water.

Play the water with the stones.

Play singly, together, rhythmically, with solos, triplets, common rhythms, irregular rhythms, cycles, patterns, with no rhythms.

There can be pauses.

No speaking.

When you feel the piece has ended, end the performance.

For any number of performers.

Dean Rosenthal

May 12, 2012  
Edgartown Great Pond  
Martha's Vineyard

# Maybe They Are Already There

Dean Rosenthal

I.

What did it mean to compose **Stones/Water/Time/Breath**? I had been searching internally for a meaning to this for a long time, at first as a coming to terms with what appeared again over the last decade or so, to be a resurgence of the text score movement that seems to have originated in (and dominated) the works of Fluxus and, most prominently, George Brecht's Water Yam and La Monte Young's Compositions. Later, Portsmouth Sinfonia, the Scratch Orchestra and many others, like Christian Wolff (Prose Collection), Steve Reich (Slow Motion Sound), and Tom Johnson (Private Pieces) would take up this mode of utterance. Much of the new work appeared to have come from students of CalArts, my ghostly alma mater, which I'd attended before conspicuously dropping out. I had noticed text scores also came from other U.S. institutions, including Wesleyan University, College of Charleston, Hampshire College, Northwestern University, and Oberlin Conservatory. Surely a good number of other educational institutions in North America and around the world have participated in this direction and continue to do so today. But this essay is really about my piece within a personal context and not merely a history of the rich and fascinating tradition of alternative notations that include verbal/text notations.

Conversations with others since this rediscovery of this popular way of composing led to dead ends initially. Why was this tradition being revived? Coming back to composing in 2009, after a decade-long hiatus from compositional activity, had alerted me to a number of developments I had no idea about - these new textual notations were one of these developments. Was this revival of interest? Text scores could definitely be seen as an easy way of writing music. An out. But there are some intentions that couldn't quite be conveyed with conventional notation. I quickly decided that the good pieces required a model of sophistication, imagination, a reckoning with history, inspiration and execution, and then went looking for them. There were a lot of scores to pore over! The multiplicity of works maintained an uneven quality, and I felt the critical ought to be considered alongside the creative. In this sense, my piece arrived as something of a curious surprise. Let's have a look.

II.

In April and May of 2012, I went overseas to Europe to give concerts, attend a conference, and meet musical friends and peers for five weeks. During my last week of travels, in Paris, I attended and participated in an outdoor concert at the Bois de Vincennes with composers Antoine Beuger, Jürg Frey, Tom Johnson, members of the Dedalus Ensemble, and others that included an all-afternoon performance of Stones. Stones (this score comes from "Prose Collection", 1969, Frog Peak Publications, free download) is a text score by American composer Christian Wolff. In Wolff's piece, we were instructed to:

*make sounds with stones, draw sounds out of stones, using a number of sizes  
and kinds (and colors); for the most part discretely; sometimes in rapid  
sequences. For the most part striking stones with stones, but also stones on  
other surfaces...*

It was a great experience to be there and to participate and much good music was made that day.

A month later, after I had returned, I found myself once again encountering, in stones, this singular quality of possibility. I was at a pond one night, alone — a large pond in Edgartown, on Martha's Vineyard — and I began to skip the stones I found at the water's edge. I listened to them bounce and sound the water. I listened to the sounds the stones introduced to the water, the rhythms of the stones, controlled and then liberated.

*Why not play tuptets, I thought? Now, let's pause. What comes next? Here's another stone in front of me, in the dirt. This one is much larger. How should I approach the water with this stone? Will I make a high throw and let the sound and the circles resonate? Or a soft, small toss, dropping the stone into the water merely a few inches from the water's surface? Should I use one stone or many or several at a time? What comes next? What comes after that?*

I quickly realized I was playing music and immediately after that realization came the realization that I was composing. This experience would have to be formalized. How could I convey this music, this performance? How could I make it inclusive of others and address my immediate surroundings? My love of nature became evident to me immediately. In many of my recent pieces, I go about finding the music to compose outside of myself. I find the music in found objects like existing mathematical structures, the pre-recorded music of others, and recordings of existing natural and man-made phenomena. The music of **Stones/Water/Time/Breath** is also about objects found, a meditation and mediation on a found place and found implements.

III.

**Stones/Water/Time/Breath** was also about memories. I remembered learning how to skip stones with my father by the water. I remembered the easy lesson, the practice, the encouragement, at the ocean (as I later wrote in my piece, "at a body of water"). The memory of skipping stones after family events by the water. With friends. Lovers. Why not now with other musicians? This seems to me like a natural extension of the logic that often controls or influences my decisions. I could make new memories in my role as composer. I see myself in this role as a facilitator of experience, creating an event that leads to a performance. This is a new role. How does this work?

Site-specific: outside, by the water, any body of water, like: a pond, the ocean, a lake, a stream, a river ...

The piece is located physically in an indeterminate space. It could conceivably take place indoors. It could conceivably take place by a lake. At a swimming pool. On the ocean. This instruction allows the flexibility of self-governance while determining a point of termination. You are participating in the composition process. This brings you to a creative space that allows for solitary or group gesture.

Materials: stones. As many or as few as desired. Maybe they are already there.

What, besides a body of water, agency, and the ability to follow written instructions is required to perform **Stones/Water/Time/Breath**? Stones. This fact, along with the suggestion that "maybe they are already there", is the vital statement of this work. What is meant by "maybe they are already there"? This is probably the only poetic line in the text. You have chosen to locate yourself by stones, at a distance to them, or somewhere in the middle. If you know where you are headed, you will know what is ahead of you. If it is an unknown, this likely (but not always) remains unknown. The suggestion can be considered as an open question for the performer and the ensemble to answer.

Maybe They Are Already There

Arrive, set a start time, start.

This means the piece really starts when you pick a destination; this requires you to arrive after all. Set a start time. Of course, the set time to begin the performance may be set in advance, but the score indicates that it should be chosen after the performers have completed their journey to the performance destination. This means the performers have still more compositional choices to make as they prepare for the performance, which now already seems to be under way. Still, you start.

Use the stones as elements or implements to make percussive sounds on the water.

Play the water with the stones.

Play singly, together, rhythmically, with solos, triplets, common rhythms, irregular rhythms, cycles, patterns, with no rhythms.

The performance requires the performer to perform the music by sounding the body of water with stones. The water is played in a variety of ways (or maybe several or maybe only one) following the suggestions of the text. The emphasis is at once focussed on group action and the individual. Is there a social compact within this structure? Maybe. You become part of a community, but not necessarily in ways that are meaningful. You can still go off and do your own thing. If you perform with others, you combine experiences, but the results may not always be interesting or helpful. Or maybe they will be.

There can be pauses.

Pauses are different than measured silences. In an email conversation with a friend, I realized that the idea of pausing in my piece really comes from the idea or existence of silence and the idea of rest or inactivity. In silence, there is an inaudible lack of activity and so, too, in pausing there is that paucity of movement. Both physically and mentally, in every exterior and interior sense, the body rests and movement subsides. Thus, the outlook can be conducive to nature, ebbing and flowing, in growth and death.

No speaking.

The idea that the performance takes place without any performer voicing his or her thoughts is tentatively given voice by the presumption of uninterrupted sounding music. No one wants their piece interrupted (unless that interruption is a welcome one) and this seems to be a good enough reason for me to make this request. In **Stones/Water/Time/Breath**, the idea that the music of the stones on the water alone with the attendant sounds of the location is in fact the completeness of the realization of the score is intentional: we are given a point of departure as both performers and audience.

When you feel the piece has ended, end the performance.

For any number of performers.

These are very common instructions to many text works. They seem appropriate here. Still, it is surely helpful to describe how these simple imperatives are related to **Stones/Water/Time/Breath** in particular. In performance, this piece lasts from ten seconds in length to ten years, or possibly longer. Obviously there is a practical component. Naturally the piece will begin to take form during the performance and, later, dissolve-resolve to conclusion. In conversation with a friend, who observed for himself that, "your piece is a function of time," I realized that it was also actually a function of

community (or lack thereof) and a facilitation of experience, both discursive and living. When you feel the piece has ended, you punctuate the experience, as time has passed, by completing the score. The music ends and the event continues, as the performer (or performers) begin to and ultimately withdraw from the performance.

Any number of performers may participate — what does this come to signify? It is important in the role of composer as facilitator to invite a community of one or more to come together in order to fulfill what has become, in fact, both a ritual and a work of art. What happens is entirely composed of the choice made by the interpreter at the composer's directive. Often this choice is obvious: a group of friends, a class of students, a solo performer, a previously formed or pickup ensemble that wishes to promote and explore the function of experience in full agency.

#### IV.

I will look at two performances in this explication of my work and present my thoughts as they pertain to the actualization of **Stones/Water/Time/Breath**.

***First performance: Edgartown Great Pond, Martha's Vineyard, May 12, 2012.***

***Approx: 10 minutes. 8:20 - 8:30 p.m.***

When this piece was composed, it was clear that I would try it out almost immediately. The following day seemed auspicious and together with my wife, Karin, I went back to the spot where the work was born. We attempted to document the preparatory motions (finding stones, setting times, locational representations) and set out with our start time, our destination and began. The performance began with a single stone breaking the plane of the water and continued for ten minutes, two individuals coming together and separating. I was often aware of and comfortable with the space and time set out for us. I wondered what was happening with the other side of this performing dyad. Was I working too preciously? Trying to make my sounds with my personality or my musicality? We seemed to discover the realization of this score successfully. There was a feeling of experimentation with nature and a conveyance of both solidarity and solitude. There hadn't been a prepared intention here. There was never a called-for result, and the music we made — the crunching of the sand beneath our feet, the sounds of fingers and stones and wind, plunks and skitters of stones and the water, the descending, silent sun — this had been both a structured and free example of life and sound, and it was exhilarating.

Later, Karin reflected on this performance:

*We were married there, that was on my mind. At the end of our wedding we skipped stones. So I was thinking about that. I was remembering, I was watching you, listening to your stones hit the water. I was also listening to the sounds of the stones I played as they hit the water, watching the water as the stones broke the surface and made ripples. I was thinking about place and memory, from having been in that place before, I was listening. How would this develop? How would this end? How would we know when the performance was over? It seemed very peaceful and nice, there did feel like there was a resolution at the end. We had decided that when we would stop we would go back a few feet, to show we had ended. When I felt I was done, I did that. I stepped back. You played a few stones, individually, for a few more minutes. Then you stepped back. I felt a sense of resolution. I hadn't known what the piece would be, and then it was.*

*It was a good feeling.*



**Performance: Nine Mile Pond, Wilbraham, MA, July 22, 2012.**

**Approx: 18 minutes. 7:30 - 7:48 p.m.**

*I was raised in Wilbraham, a suburb of Springfield, Massachusetts, that is approximately 120 miles north of New York City and 80 miles west of Boston. It seemed like a good idea to go back and try this piece out there. I made the decision in advance to make this a solo performance; I wanted to understand something about this piece on my own in the environs that I had known as a youth. Wilbraham is an upper middle class suburb, with no particular culture to speak of other than that of American 1980s suburbia: nice houses, friendly, self-conscious, almost exclusively white, relatively uninteresting, but pleasant. There is a private school in the center of the town, and Wilbraham is now known for several things: having (in considered company) the oldest recorded American folk song in the history of the country ("On Springfield Mountain," circa 1760s), being the home of Friendly's, the family restaurant chain, and having a several mile stretch of historic homes on Main St., which added to the rest made the town center, complete with a soldier's memorial, brick building post office, village store, and gas station — the picture of a lovely New England postcard. Nine Mile Pond is a pond named for the nine-mile distance from this pond to Springfield center.*

*As a younger person, I was artistic, but this history of mine has been a strange one, and I am still intrigued by the thought of returning to a place I once spent time in, in the context of performing as an adult. I'm not sure if it's a full circle, or any circle. Growing up, I had planned to be a musician since turning 10 — but definitely not the musician who would come home to play stones on a pond and work in this originary context. The pond I chose to return to, Nine Mile Pond, played a special role in my life while growing up. There were trails behind my parent's home, and I walked them alone and with friends and family often; they led to different places: open valleys, streams, lively open spaces, and other destinations. Those trails and the places they led to are now gone, erased by developments and the encroachment of more and more suburbia. The woods then were beautiful and I spent a lot of time there. I had made a strong identification with nature then, would this once again be possible? One of the trails let out onto a dirt road that led to a pond. Nine Mile Pond. There were houses on different sides, and I often wondered how I would access those roads to see those different neighborhoods. I passed Nine Mile Pond often. There was a convenience store just past this large pond that was often the destination of my walks, either alone or with a friend. I went to the store and bought treats and returned to our neighborhood past the pond and through the trails — like a movie scene, walking, stopping to look everywhere, then over to the store to pick up a little something and walk back. I really loved those walks. I loved exploring. I often rode my bicycle, I rode on the same paths and streets.*

*Maybe this performance was about returning to a part of my childhood, reaffirming my earliest creativity. The part of me that is curious about almost everything is part of this piece. The connection is the water. Was the water at this body of water more special to me? It was stable. Consistent. I took pictures when I came back as a university student. In the winter the pond looked beautiful, in the summer it looked warm and murky. The water might have been a dark blue-brown, completely opaque. Sometimes people boated there. Nine Mile Pond was modest. This water was a sort of steadiness. Nothing at that time seemed profound about Nine Mile Pond. It was simply there, just as I was, maintaining a consistent presence.*

July 22, 2012: I've just completed the performance at Nine Mile Pond. Today was so quiet, still with sounds of cars and watching the concentric circles created by the stones penetrating the water, seeing the mosquitos that skittered over the water. Before I arrived to the spot I chose, I drove around the pond several times, rediscovering my childhood walks, picking up stones on — of course — Lake Drive. We parked at what is now a Chinese restaurant and what had once been the convenience store



that I'd walk to as someone younger. I arrived with Karin at a spot on a hook in the road close to a small commercial plaza. There is a small beach there. "No public swimming." It was semi-littered with trash. But there were stones. We moved aside the detritus, and set up, Karin with her camera, tripod, and Flip cam, and myself, simply preparing. A solo performance.

At 7:30 p.m., I started. First, a stone Karin had chosen. A small stone, dropped lightly into the water from a height of no more than four inches, a foot or so from the edge of the beach. Plunk. I thought, "maybe they are already there" — this direction-notation, seemed to come from beyond my intended notation suddenly, this somehow took on an integral element of performance. They were already there, the stones. We had collected many ahead of time from nearby, but these stones, spread over the small beach, these were already there. This was not a beautiful part of the shore, yet there were lily pads to the right of us. I listened, in and out, to the sounds of the cars driving past in both directions on the adjacent road. There was a bird, there was the sky. The weather had been cloudy when we arrived, but now the sky had broken open, revealing streams of sunlight. A more active role seemed called for, less mental, less structural, conscious. In this performance, I let the openness of the score take over and combine with the directives I had set down. And I felt I took part, I participated. Where was this participation located? There were moments when I played a stone, and waiting, conscious pauses came after some time, and later natural pauses. There was a one note solo. I watched concentric rings of where the water rang from the stones. Many stones. Perhaps over a hundred. The participation seemed to be characterized by a consistent integration of my sensing both musically and as a performer. This was a separation of composer and participant. This performance had at once brought me home and taken me into the present by nature of the separation.

V.

What does all of this mean? I look back and reflect on this experience and see that there's a logic and an intuition at work. After all, successful music has to have both, if you approach composing the way I do. But what can I prove in **Stones/Water/Time/Breath**? I think what I see is simply an experience that reflects concerns with environment, locality, collaborative authorship, and ultimately, community. The last concern reflected, community, can be considered to have both social and ecological values and I am pleased that I've discovered an original approach to these values within my artistic practice. And like the stones that I found in Wilbraham and Edgartown, and the directive in my text, maybe "they" are already there.

### **Three Scores for a Composers' Ensemble**

**In these scores, each page is a movement.**

**The pages do not contain instructions to the composer-players.**

**They are scores, direct stimuli for realtime compositional realization, to be played, literally as written:**

**The text on each page is, in realtime, continuously and persistently the stimulus-score for each moment of playing, over the real time of the section being composed/played.**

**The scores were among many created for the Composers' Ensemble which flourished in the Bard College Music Program Zero from 1989 to 1997. They were among the scores that seemed to have a significant and particular impact on the compositional experience of the composer/players.**

**-Benjamin Boretz**

NOTES FOR OPEN SPACE CD 6 (1994):

("a score is a stimulus..."); The Purposes and Politics of Engaging Strangers

I

information is not imagery.

data is not resonance.

duration is not time.

time, back-ordered but never reset after start, created by

timesound, recreated by cumulative everevolution,

not accumulating masses everaccumulating mass,

not accreting only information data or duration . . .

(b.a.b., 1993)

II

There are scores for players, there are scores for composers. A score for players you read as an invitation to enact, creatively, an intention, an idea, an image, a narrative, a sound, a structure, a quality, a complexity, a feeling, perceived as pre-existent, as implicitly in the score-code, however many sonic details are inscribed, or must be invented in the playing. A score for composers you read as a specific inducement to discover within yourself, to converge upon with your co-players, to invent, without preformed expectations, an intention, a meaning, a sensibility, a trajectory, a vision, a landscape, a music unknown before and unimaginable ever except under the influence of the scoretextimage. A score is a score for players or a score for composers strictly by virtue of how it is being read in a given playing; any score can be read as either, though some are more likely to be read as one rather than the other. The first two CDs of this volume document playings of scoretexts which were conceived and engaged as scores for composers. The third CD documents the live creation—with the presence of a gathered audience—of a socioexpressive occasion, converging and materializing texts and sounds of various kinds—including scores for composers, scores for players, and documents of sound- and word-making sessions—for a shared contemplation of issues and phenomena perceived as emergent, and urgent, therein.

(b.a.b., 1994)

This 3-CD album contains realtime composition by the Bard Composers' Ensemble of four "scores for composers": "Wait"; "Inhabit"; "till all and ends anon follows and rise"; "The Purposes and Politics of Engaging Strangers". players: Tildy Bayar, Ben Boretz, Sebastian Collett, Megan Hastie, John Hopkins, Penelope Hyde, Mary Lee Roberts, Catherine Schieve, Charles Stein, Paul Winkler.

**(1/81)**

**A score is a stimulus. to  
specific expressive events. to, that is,  
experientially realized creative activity.**

**There are primary and  
secondary creative activities. depending on the  
depth of expression elicited from you.**

**A stimulus to creative  
activity you value for its specificity. The greater its  
specificity as a stimulus the more potent its  
capacity to engender and participate in an episode  
of creative activity associated with it.**

**Stimulus specificity. which,  
liberates ideas in direct ratio to its distinctness. is  
easily confused with coercive specificity as to  
literal detail. If a stimulus has the effect in a given  
episode of creative activity of being coercive as to  
literal detail to some extent: to that extent, its  
stimulation is specific, but of something other than  
primary creative activity. at most of some form of  
secondary creative activity.**

**To the extent that a quest for 'correctness' ('compliance') replaces a quest for the maximum awareness of specificity of stimulus in the interest of specificity of response: primary creative activity is unavailable.**

**That you might value knowing a song or a piece must be that its recollection and recomposition in performance creates an expressive outlet. Its presence in your awareness is a potential for expressive development within your selfscape.**

**If psychologically you are able to respond to the specifics of traditional music in notation with the liberty of being freely stimulated at closest range to primary creative activity: then traditional music in performance could already be stimuli to primary creative activity.**

**But, psychologically, you are not.**

**A score to which your response is powerfully specific (in the form of 'ideas') but not coercive is a creative musical medium. in a profounder traditional sense.**

**Each must discover which scores are musical media of primary creative activity.**

(1/81)

Syllables / Pitches  
mean / sound  
as they do  
by grace of  
context  
such context  
being  
palpable  
solely  
as  
those same  
syllables / pitches  
sounding

words, laden with accumulated  
universal meaninglanguage networks

*squeezed to an  
evident univerty  
verisimilified,*

*filtered to a  
navigably narrow  
memory space.*

pared to a  
transparent  
unidimensionality --

by the  
pressure of  
utterance

a single node,  
new or old,  
in the network  
is  
isolated  
elicited  
articulated  
illuminated  
extended,

What a word means is probabilistic contingent on the historical  
fortuity of its entry point into the language-world experience, equi-valently  
noded infinitely universalizing hairy tangled network of its  
everaccumulating meaning-range in everunrolling speakwordtime.

# **Four Speculative Pieces for The Composers' Ensemble**

**ben boretz**

**may 1991**





**WAIT**

2

# EXPLORE CONTRADICTIONS



**DEVELOP  
A DEFINITE  
ATTITUDE  
TOWARD  
OTHER  
PLAYERS**



**THINK  
BACK**

**Three  
Pieces  
for  
a  
Composers'  
Ensemble  
to  
compose**

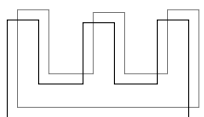
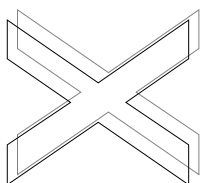
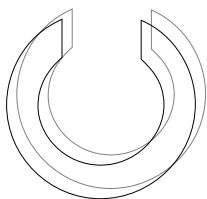
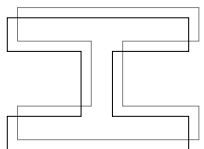
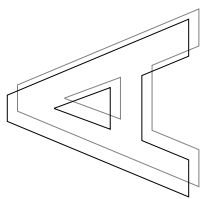
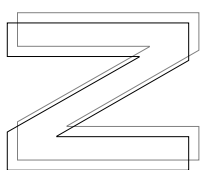
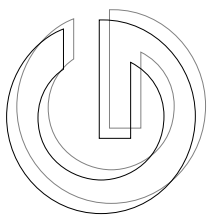
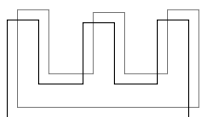
**october 1992**





# EXTRACT MEANINGS

2



3.

**INHABIT**

5 parts for 5 people, 4 parts  
for 6 people, 3 parts for 7 or 8  
people

ben boretz  
september 1994

NUBBLY

foresee

ALOHA



**Crow**

outside

homebody

**NOT**

ONE

SUBM

ERGE

low

immense

loom

**ceiling**

blossom

**scrambl**

**e**

building sunspo  
t

haunts

cavity

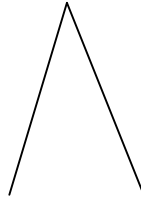
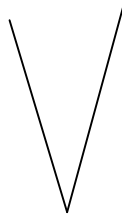
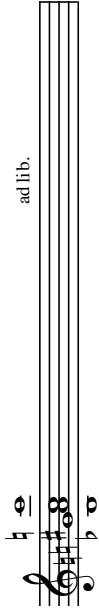
BLACK

unary  
thought

other  
unstrung

**no**

**StRai  
n**

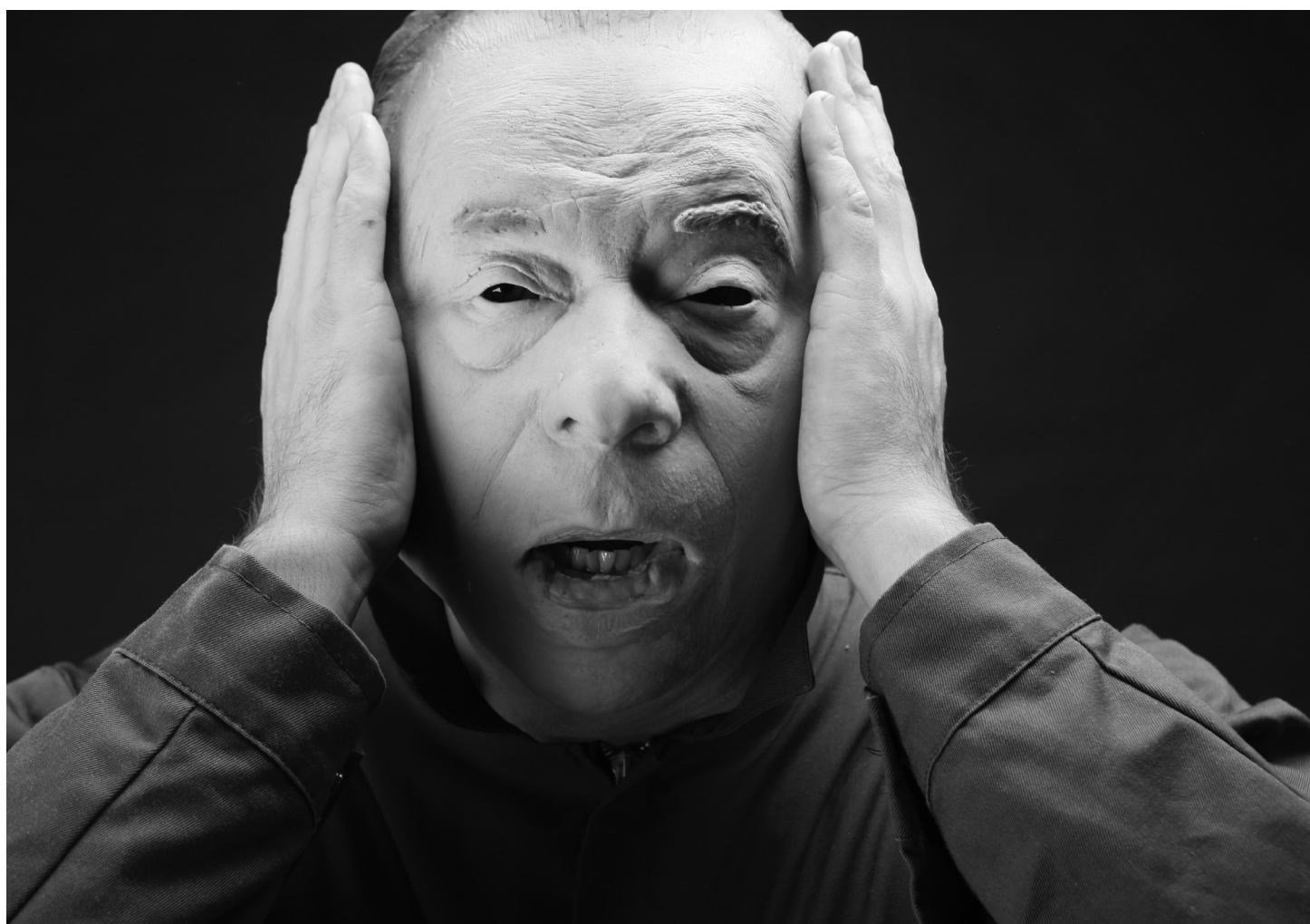


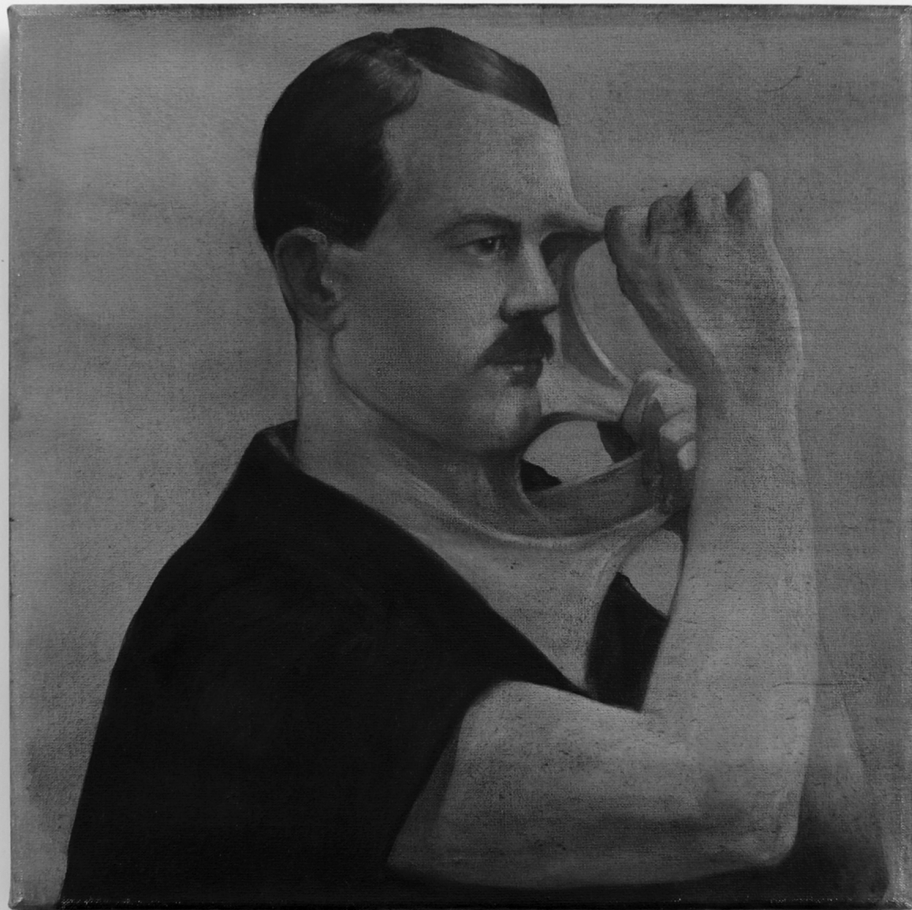
















When I first heard from Piotr Skiba he, in Morristown NJ, I in Woodstock NY, we both originally from Wrocław, Poland, he was fresh from graduating *summa cum laude* from the Painting Department of the Academy of Fine Arts of Wrocław. Taking dead aim at the New York art world and soliciting my assistance in articulating for the American scene his nascent artistic vision. I was, he explained, his only possible link to American culture which proved to be a very tenuous condition.

This was seven years ago. The residue of this encounter was that we became first collaborators, then collegial friends since then. The growing interest I developed in the aesthetics and content of Skiba's work, as well as his engagement with my ways of thinking, gave us the idea of my writing a text to accompany the exhibition entitled "Teabagging" at the LETO Gallery in Warsaw, in April 2013.

— Dorota Czerner

selected works, illustrations:

1. *Black Homer*, spray black matt, 2012
2. *"Man, that Negro stole my show!"*, latex mask, 2-channel video installation, 72 min. loop, #2, 2012
3. *"Man, that Negro stole my show!"*, latex mask, 2-channel video installation, loop, #1, 2012
4. *"Man, that Negro stole my show!"*, latex mask, 2-channel video installation, 72 min. loop, #2, 2012
5. *untitled (Mr. Rubber)*, 20 x 20 cm, black ink and acrylic paint on canvas, 2011
6. *Try walking in my shoes*, bronze casting, 10 kg, 2013

special thanks to Piotr Lakomy

# HEART OF GRAYNESS

## THE ART OF PIOTR SKIBA

Dorota Czermer

### Rikyu Gray

A Japanese master of the tea ceremony, Sen no Rikyu, admonishing students against falling for the glamour of excessive splendor, wrote: "Change your collar cloth, wear a fresh sash of charcoal gray cotton cloth (*sumizome*) and a new pair of socks, carry a new fan. To entertain your guests at dinner, lentil soup and shrimp in vinegar sauce is quite enough to serve..." During the late Edo period when, with the increasing popularity of the tea ceremony, the Master's instructions had turned into a new canon, the despised color gray also gained tremendous popularity as an embodiment of the principle of *wabi-sabi*, sometimes characterized as the aesthetics of "richness in sobriety".

The Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa<sup>1</sup>, founder of the "metabolism" movement, while referring to the tradition of *Rikyu Gray* drew attention to the fact that the color gray, so frequently handled with a certain reluctance, epitomizes a space of coexistence and continuity which is close to the Buddhist concept of Shunyata, or non-sensual emptiness, thanks to its incessant confrontation of various contradictory elements. According to Kurokawa, in the case of architecture or visual art in general, this condition may be translated by attempts to create two-dimensional, flattened worlds (we could perhaps risk a comparison to a comic-strip) temporarily frozen in time and space, which at the same time retain some quality of the "eternal Baroque"<sup>2</sup> due to the strong dynamics of inherently opposing trends. (The former observation seems to be particularly important for the proper reading of the seemingly childish drawings of Skiba.)

From the point of view of aesthetics, a sensibility, or perhaps even sensuality, emerges from the heart of this grayness, deriving its edge from the overlapping and interpenetrating patterns of persistently mixed messages. Re-contextualized within the framework, which is the opposite of clarity and order, the marginal iconography or situations normally associated with the fringes of culture suddenly acquire a prominent and attractive dimension.

In a series of photographs and paintings entitled "Sausage Hero", documenting the sideshows and moods of an abandoned amusement park on Coney Island, Brooklyn, Skiba builds an Aesthetics of Periphery; a choice which flows in part from his fascination with various oddities, but also, in equal part, from a genuine conviction that the truth of experience, or maybe just its beauty, can be found among apparent ugliness, filth, fairground junk. So-called "freaks" who used to be a main attraction of Victorian traveling circuses — physically crippled individuals with horrific deformities who fell prey to the greed of the impresarios of popular "freak-shows"; all these monsters and their bizarre props, now reflected/observed in a distorting mirror of Piotr Skiba's reinterpretations, become an occasion to examine the artist's own (as well as our own) defects - humps of memory, perverted obsessions, shards of past disappointment.

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<sup>1</sup> Kisho Kurokawa, *Each One a Hero: The Philosophy of Symbiosis*, Ch. 6: "Rikyu Grey, Baroque, and Camp" (Kodansha Amer Inc; 3rd edition, August 1997)

<sup>2</sup> The concept of "eternal Baroque" is borrowed from the classic essay "Du Baroque" (1935), by the Catalan writer Eugenio D'Ors, who claimed that whenever two apparently contradictory tendencies are combined in one dynamic movement, the resulting style inevitably resembles Baroque.

Although the viewer is constantly forced to walk a tricky line, it is never obvious what would be the best guide to avoid stepping into dubious territory: good taste, moral judgment? Or is it our sanity that is at stake? Exercising power akin to shamanic rituals infused with psychotropic potions, the situations created from within Skiba's fringe zones sharpen the viewer's sensitivity to phenomena which ordinarily remain beyond the reach of perception. An interactive performance, "Shoot the Freak" — a gallery reconstruction of a real-life show that the artist stumbled upon during his Coney Island peregrinations — was one such superficially attractive scenario designed to lure the audience into the swamp of apparently entertaining interactions which in fact take place at the expense of the dignity, perhaps even the physical safety, of the Other.

Stirred by impulses similar to those mentioned by Kurokawa, Piotr Skiba instinctively looks for marginal contexts, which can provide him with opportunities to construct situations layered with multiple meanings, full of internal conflicts and ambiguities; consciously or unconsciously, reaching into the shadows in the hope of finding the key to retune our sensitivity. Gray, and to some extent its extreme form - black, so readily used by the artist - contains a whole chromatic palette and can be perceived, in its symbolic dimension, as a source of not always obvious, but nonetheless rich sensations. Therefore, aesthetic experience, constructed in this 'gray' area which eludes any attempt at definition, requires a greater degree of sensitivity. Increased attention.

Assuming a stance of perpetual hesitance (especially in the space of his performances) that could be best described from the artist's point of view as "I do not really know what I'm talking about" and from the point of view of the viewer as a situation of equally disturbing uncertainty as to "what is really going on", Skiba creates a tension of conflicting emotions, where we're often tempted to give our simultaneous approval and refusal, succumb to the inner struggle of consent and resistance which arise at the exact same moment.

### **tea-bagging**

Acting in a mask, pulling faces, or simply flipping us off, Skiba likes to cross all the boundaries of the acceptable, displaying a remarkable lack of inhibition. "Look at me, I'm a pervert!" — even the titles of his works are in our face, infused with sexual overtones, as are his themes, sharply focused on (oftentimes auto) erotic representations. Such may be the case of the title of the most recent exhibition, "Teabagging", which, as we learn from the internet, is a form of oral sex in which a man places his scrotum directly in the mouth, or onto the face or head of a sexual partner in a repeated in-and-out motion. Wikipedia adds that tea-bagging<sup>3</sup> is an activity typically used in the context of BDSM and dominance role-play, with the dominant male tea-bagging his submissive partner. Although it is a kind of sexual touching, practiced for the enjoyment of both partners, the situation of a "teacup", that is the person who is being treated as a receptacle for a "tea bag", is generally perceived as humiliating.

Indeed, the very choice of the title evokes disgust. We feel as if we are forced to watch, delight in, or experience things we'd prefer not to touch at all. These are phenomena, themes, representations which in our opinion would benefit from a greater distance. Could be looked at discreetly... Things we'd prefer to engage with from a position of not so much a viewer as a *voyeur* ...

### **masks, masks, masks**

However, just as with *The Elephant Man*, as portrayed by David Lynch, the man hiding behind the hideous "mask" of Piotr Skiba's imagination — whether it is material, or purely symbolic — is an intelligent and sensitive person who slowly constructs, or rather re-constructs his identity by revealing his inner makings. Sometimes the unveiling, equated with the

3 on: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea\\_bag\\_\(sexual\\_act\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea_bag_(sexual_act)) ; accessed on 05/20/13.



long process of scrubbing off the lifelong deposits of emotional trauma can be achieved through a cathartic mystery play as is the case in a video series with the Muppet Rowlf.

"Sausage Hero" (including videos of the puppet) is not the first, nor the only work in which Skiba uses an artistic alter ego, a hero of a personal mythology aggregated from various elements of the ready-made or found pseudo-biographical elements, but rather an ongoing inquiry into his own condition as a contemporary artist. In the cycle of multimedia pieces from 2007, presented under the collective title "Storytellers", the artist, constantly penetrating the fluid boundary between himself and the Other, focuses on a motif of multiple masks, sometimes one mask worn over another, which in a repetitive gesture covers/reveals more and more characters, opening the Russian dolls of an imaginary past. Accompanied by an obsessive confabulation of narratives: the real and the invented, the lived and the borrowed (from someone else's life story), the true and the entirely fabricated ... beginning with "Storytellers", Skiba's projects turn into a carnival of masks and schizophrenic splittings of identity, thus consistently forcing the viewer to adopt a multiplicity of interpretations.

### **Muppett Rowlf lives a life of his own —**

dancing — singing — and clearly not giving a damn about the complexities of existence. Drawing inspiration from his earlier experiments, Skiba consciously allows the energy of the material—the puppet, which is focused on the extension of his forearm, to silence all the rules he once had to internalize in the Academy. As if it were a tube of paint splashing on canvas in some fantastically reworked Action Painting, the puppet shapes its own energy.

This raises the question of whether the substitution of painter's tools and materials by a "ragdoll" dog is from the artist's point of view an act of self-destruction, or perhaps self-defense? No doubt Skiba fully embraces his inner jester who in this case wields a double-edged sword: the blade not only hurts the artist himself, but also targets the hypocrisy of the art world. On the one hand any attempt to examine the video with Muppet Rowlf as the creative activity of an Artist with capital A leads to the destruction of our image of a "serious" artist. On the other hand - and this is, in our opinion, radical - the act of putting a puppet in the place of the brush and pigments, in a sense redeems painting.

By virtue of this decision, the monochromatic, delicate paintings of Piotr Skiba, executed with exquisite technique, oftentimes self-portraits, or else portraits of characters belonging to the cabinet of his self-made mythology, acquire the status of relics. Turned into privileged objects of memory, or worship, they are somehow put "out of circulation" by the artist himself. Skiba now places them in the space of a personal sanctuary where they can and must be protected. Paintings, large and small, as well as the cartoon-like drawings, all the works created by the gestures of painting, the gestures which focus all the expressive energy (but also of the same hand which for a while became *possessed* by Rowlf - the perfect Other) are now as precious as they are rare.

Piotr Skiba treats his painting with nearly mystical sensitivity and care, to which it is also entitled by the central position it has occupied throughout his career, right from the beginnings of his artistic path.

Text for the exhibition

Piotr Skiba, "Teabagging" — April 2013 / Galeria LETO / Soho Factory, Warsaw.

## **state/shaft shaft/state**

**Sam Truitt**

From January through December of 2004, I was a full-time business writer at New York-based Reis, Inc., a brokerage firm for commercial real estate statistics and analysis. The business was located at 15 West 37th Street, and the editorial group within the company was located initially on the top floor. Using an Olympus W-10, a digital voice recorder with a built-in camera, I spontaneously spoke the “state” strips on the building’s roof, distinguished by its excellent view of the Empire State Building, from which one half of this series takes its name. However in June of that year our group moved to the 4th floor, which Reis also leased. Removed from easy rooftop access, I continued to compose through the day but now standing on the fire escape at the back of building. It was a poor prospect. That area also served as an air “shaft”.

What follows are direct transcriptions of some of these recordings, the whole of which (about 80 in number) is called “state/shaft shaft/state”. To note, they were made standing in place (on the roof or fire escape), which distinguishes them from my “transverse” series, which were made mostly in transit.

The 16 original “state/shaft...” recordings—of which this selection are a transcription—are available at [wordforword.info](http://wordforword.info) (issue 22, August 2013).

## shaft

stuck here  
in the red  
as grim a set as I have  
in my  
ripped pectorals  
febrile nightingale  
of dual h-vac  
but happy realize

of correspondence of  
the unknown then  
echoing  
my name engraved  
on a



between two walls  
afternoon  
known  
two-score years  
fanning lead air  
surmounting toss  
units

irrelevance of  
circumstance  
letters to  
to the unknown now  
unknown past

marshmallow

**state**

there is no place from which I  
wobbling  
and fear too thousands of  
what are you watching guard  
and  
closer to moon than any  
around  
blinking  
gonorrheal shadow dave  
with



cannot see you  
windows  
rear up  
away from all  
near neigh now  
musical note  
something to plead

## state

eerie  
snow  
falling

it is  
not

for an  
not

falling



and

not  
even

and

softly



pretty as the  
seems

silence it is  
there

instant I am  
therefore  
everything is  
into ear

## shaft

unbeknownst to me    there is a red cloud in infamy

                 like a  
                don't you think  
eat smart

                 than  
                and  
picking at the earth's

                 under  
                growing a new  
                that  
                honey  
                 just to  
                where we  
pieces of landscape

this composition  
                dimension



                 rising up  
pop tart  
we'd do better to

gnash on nails  
serotonin dust  
crust

                 a scab  
man's hand  
gland  
lives on money

the left  
have kissed

                 on the  
fire escape  
lines in a steel

## shaft

what lies on beyond white door  
seems void there as  
to  
stand there on  
maybe  
do  
or what is magic  
but finding a door  
into the  
crisis



no escape  
clamor down in fire  
parapet  
scream a spell  
but that won't  
anything

void at the back of

## state

constant pain beneath the edges  
and pleasure easing them again these places  
where you begin and i end and  
if you could be here like Whitman 'round the chowder kettle  
with your pants tucked into your boots  
this strange surround of this rooftop building scape  
the varying height the physical scales  
and shock of seeing another human up here

on another  
below

of

distant sounds below  
sirens  
the throb beside me of  
innards

churns  
or this

these  
are another place  
me inhabits  
here for you to enjoy

beats the heat  
but I want to come back  
few hundred feet

pervades a piece of us  
more than earth  
breath more than sound

us more than I  
could ever contain

and even then remain  
of what is only a crust



building above or

me here on this  
intervening level  
of traffic and

the building

churning like my  
stomach now  
hungry

wheel  
spinning off  
words  
another part of

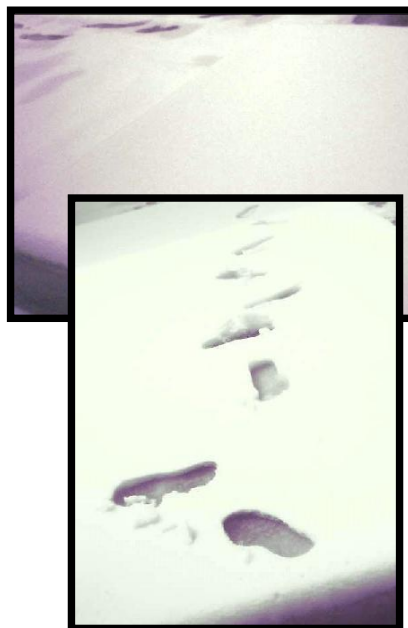
this garden  
surfaced in silver  
reflective paint  
off  
to how a

above the street  
where I am  
connected to sky



## state

I've sort of stopped  
hearing anything from  
anyone  
as though this period were a period  
in the new-fallen snow and  
stopped here  
without  
not Parsifal's three drops of  
in the  
no place to go or maybe just going  
or maybe like Caine walk across  
in Kung Fu the  
nobody left to beat up even



anybody

the tracks just

me in them  
blood  
snow  
around in a circle  
the rice paper  
t.v. show  
ourselves

## shaft

some land mass    a  
perhaps or what the  
                         dream

is   now   at the  
level   humming around  
         that is also a bird

                 to the dream we  
                 80 ways  
amid canyon walls



funeral  
aboriginals  
the earth  
dreamed  
vibrational  
us  
in the head  
attached to  
hand  
reaching out  
to draw us in  
go around in

alone

## shaft

on the steps below   white where  
memory goes

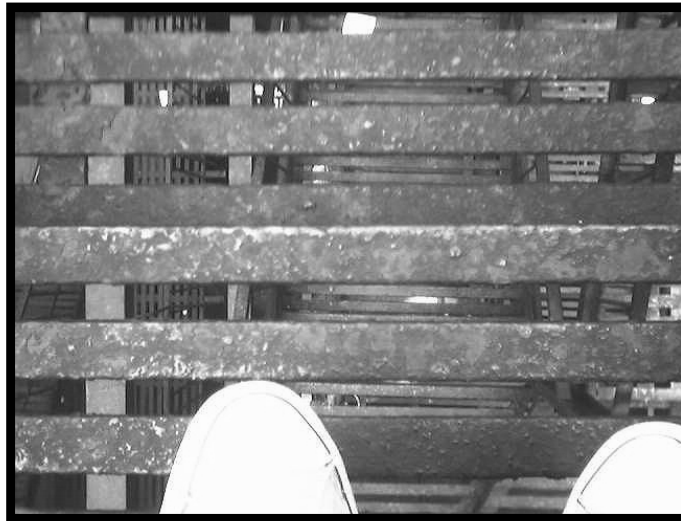
berserk   the  
benzedrine   or  
or anything we  
define the  
not a  
pause

the white  
Melville

up the stays the  
some foremast

the South Pacific

wind  
that leaf on the tree   in a forest of air  
but it is inside us and then of it   what can we grasp?



way it can on  
just dreams  
take inside   to  
confines of  
scream but a

within which we  
might reach  
down grab  
a moment  
moment  
wrote about  
from his working  
days   on the  
Pequod  
shrouds   to  
sail  
to rest there in

**state**

words come from here  
know where  
inside me to you which  
out of cold stone to point



which is I don't

I cannot reach  
with any part of me  
into infinity

state

I'm against that wall    some part of me rotten sticking  
before dry sliding

into pool    from which  
drink

horse    that in another age was dragged to edge of  
la de da

another day in the bellies of    whales

that define the  
confines of this  
metropolitan  
statistical area

it's all

and  
breath  
o city



there    in my  
downstairs  
reflective salient  
measuring that  
between the end

of the pipe    with U-curve at end

actual writing below    rippling    in the breeze that is your

beloved and hum hues preparing for your fall



you

city

report

gap

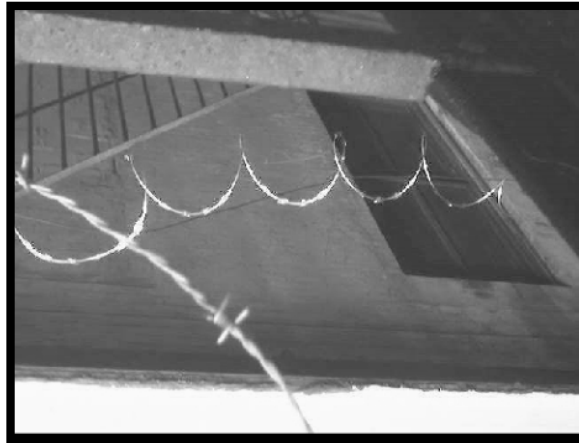
**shaft**

a try    try in the light the savage city boils  
                                to keep ourselves in tact  
  in fact  
              rubbing two sticks together and apart  
to form our own spark    our own contact  
              along side paradigm of papers and widgets  
or sprockets that populated cartoons  
              when we were kids    growing up    as said

Naomi said to  
window  
the key is in

savage city

of subway grid



in the burbs  
in religious ecstasy etc.

Allen the light is in the  
the light in the window

foils candy wrapper  
and cigarette butts  
achtung  
necropolis of id

## shaft

how opulent the range  
of feelings flaunt their aim

waving in the direction of our lives

motes of light like grease on fry  
or man on wall sealing a  
where

may  
joining orchestra at back

where I spend time in



pan  
duct  
air  
conditioner  
moan  
of this place

back of face

state

if you tear in there   away the wall   you step off   the roof



are



and  
then  
where  
you?

winding down the stairs   into the grip of  
money   a tit in the vice  
hair under the armpits  
like a lettuce field   all of us   in rows   boxed  
in weeds of cubicles   under our fluorescent strips

gold



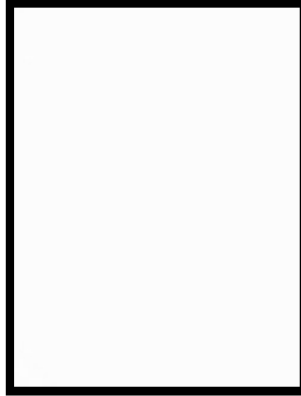
## state

how close can you get  
look there's a bit of  
growing out of  
which is dirt gravel

and clung as do we all  
love canal  
back in the day we were  
the force

become real

in sperm cloud into ether  
and found there point at which three planes  
come together to meet creator  
dig life out of crater like this like now



to edge of sun  
without whiting out?  
straw scrub  
what cannot be seen  
under tar paper



some  
seed has  
found  
at side of

closer to

of an idea  
when shot

## shaft

effectively  
considerable weight  
from structure of  
a hole

a letter to the dead  
to know we  
know

you  
cells  
dotted all  
like this man who is

now done to leave  
élan  
to know you and I



veering off

dot carving there  
to roll into ball to kick  
o'er goalpost

hear you to know we

are among us in our

along the complex  
ham- ming it up  
in front of his window  
where he was blur of

we  
are not damned

# Seven Metaphors for (Music) Listening: DRAMaTIC

Joshua Banks Mailman

## Abstract

This essay probes the nature of listening by refusing to pin it down to a single essence. The epistemological value of metaphor is explained in terms of the cognitive metaphor and embodied mind theories of Lakoff and Johnson as well as the philosophies of Rorty and Fiumara. Then the various natures of listening are explained via seven metaphors: (1) *Digestion*, (2) *Recording*, (3) *Adaptation*, (4) *Meditation*, (5) *Transport*, (6) *Improvisation*, and (7) *Computation*. As a positive example, this set of metaphors promotes recognition of the inherent plurality of listening by staking out distinct facets which cannot be reduced to one another. This irreducibility is made more vivid and conceptually manageable by associating each of these facets with more concrete activities that are literally irreducible, or indeed seemingly unrelated. Moreover, some of these metaphors suggest the complementary and sometimes interdependent nature of diverse aspects of listening.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

You might have guessed that the parentheses in my title do not imply that what I have to say is less applicable to music, nor even that it is tangential to it. Rather, at a time—our time, the early 21<sup>st</sup> century—when the ontological fences dividing music from the sonorous riff-raff and rarefied speech utterances of the rest of our lives have virtually crumbled, much of what pertains to music listening now pertains to all the rest. The parentheses suggest an expansive role for discourse about all kinds of listening, musical and non-musical, in whatever sense that distinction persists.

For those of us who dedicate most of our time to theorizing, composing, analyzing, improvising, critiquing, or performing music, we are not only listening but also listening to ourselves listen, and thus are tangled in a reflexive loop of *auto-meta-listening*. There is always the danger of incestuous solipsism, but at best, the looming claustrophobia of such focus heightens our appreciation not only for a plurality of *ways* to listen, but also for flexibility in how to conceptualize the act of listening, which is the surface I will start scratching here.

## Metaphor

The idea that *metaphors* for listening are anything but beside the point perhaps requires some explanation, all the more so because I contend metaphors for listening are exactly the main point. There is no such thing as *pure* listening; all listening relates to some other activity, as does every activity. Is this still doubted? Epistemologically, metaphor has been on the back foot for more than two millennia. As Fiumara (1995: 3) puts it: 'Metaphor frequently inhabits the margins of discourse and its potential incivility generates concern for its management. There is a subliminal anxiety which results from the difficulty of maintaining the boundary between 'proper' terminology in the face of metaphorical boundary-

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was previously published in the *Journal of Sonic Studies* 2/1, 2012, <http://journal.sonicstudies.org/vol02/nr01/a03> Reprinted with permission. Thanks go to *Sonic Studies* editors Vincent Meelberg and Marcel Cobussen for prompting this essay with their call for papers on the topic of listening.

crossers...'. She goes on to note Thomas Hobbes's disapproval of metaphoric expressions in *Leviathan* (Hobbes 1660); Hobbes complains that reasoning with metaphors is like 'wandering amongst innumerable absurdities' (Hobbes 1968: 116-17). The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw its own version of this as analytical philosopher Rudolph Carnap, icon of the logical positivist movement, sought to produce a scientific discourse cleansed of all metaphor so as to avoid the proliferation of *Pseudoproblems in Philosophy* (Carnap 1928).

Such skepticism about metaphor is directly or indirectly inspired by Plato's famous contention that sensory experience is inherently deceptive, that all imagery is false, that only pure thought is accurate. Over such a length of time, Plato's purity-of-thought trope has accumulated enough momentum to permeate almost every kind of discourse to such an extent it goes unnoticed—like the taste of water. (For instance in the spiritual realm, we see it in the doctrine of monotheistic religions that god should not be represented as an image.) An axiom underpinning Plato's purity-of-thought trope is what Rorty calls *mind as mirror* (of nature), which Fiumara quotes Rorty to explain:

If 'To know is to represent accurately what is outside of the mind', to understand the nature of knowledge we must remain confined to the task of ascertaining the way in which the mind is able to construct such representation. Rorty suggests that, in fact, 'The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations—some accurate, some not—and capable of being studied by pure, nonempirical methods. Without the notion of mind as mirror, the notion of knowledge as accuracy of representation would not have suggested itself. (Rorty 1980: 6)

There are several reasons why this may apply—to advantage and detriment—to the act of listening, but I will address this soon enough. The point for now is that to the extent the mind is regarded as capable of mirroring the world, *fidelity* of representation is prioritized above all, such that *negation-of-image* serves as a modus operandi for achieving *purity-thus-accuracy*. This modus operandi obscures the epistemological value of metaphor, trying to serve as gate-keeper, standing in the way of metaphor as a legitimate mode of thought that serves the progress of knowledge.

Since metaphor involves mapping between distinct domains or systems of thought and experience, it is inherently antithetical to epistemological notions of accuracy based on fidelity, neutrality, purity, which demand demarcation and segregation of domains of knowledge as a means of control to prevent epistemological impurity. Fiumara characterizes the concern as one of containment and mastery, that 'the very idea of transportability of words, notions and features could be a threat to the dignity of our mainstreams of philosophy, in the sense that certain ideas might not only be out of place but out of control.' (Fiumara 1995: 3)

The mind as mirror axiom is flawed (as Rorty [1980], Fiumara [1995], and others now argue), because the notion of a *true* representation is inherently elusive. Consider the example of neurological systems of cephalopods as the basis for a thought experiment. Hanlon (2007) has identified and captured on film one the most fascinating instances of spontaneous camouflage, in this case an octopus perfectly matching the color, shape, and texture of a specific coral cluster.<sup>2</sup>

[Hanlon's video of octopus camouflage can be viewed here:  
<http://www.sciencefriday.com/videos/watch/10397> ]

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<sup>2</sup> Hanlon's article is accessible online at [http://www.mbl.edu/mrc/hanlon/pdfs/hanlon\\_currentbiol\\_2007.pdf](http://www.mbl.edu/mrc/hanlon/pdfs/hanlon_currentbiol_2007.pdf)

Watching this footage, if we see the entire coral cluster as just coral, is our mind mirroring reality or not? If we see part of the coral cluster as octopus, are we not then failing to see reality? An important aspect of reality is its ecological dimension, which in this case is that the octopus's color, shape, and texture perfectly match that of its surrounding coral. If it is not seen this way, the mind is failing to mirror reality; but if it is seen this way, the mind is still failing to mirror reality. Which reality do we prioritize when we 'listen' to what we see?

One might counter-argue that this is a special case involving deception. Yet, at what level of consciousness are cephalopods aware of or in control of their camouflage presentation? (They match textures and colors though they are apparently colorblind.) Consciousness aside, although their camouflage is *meant* (in evolutionary adaptive terms) to deceive predators, in what sense could it be regarded as deceiving non-predators? If the chromatophor displays of cephalopods were presented instead as sound patterns composed to blend with surroundings, would our minds be mirroring reality by hearing the whole blended ecological context or by picking out the composed sounds from surroundings? Would it matter if these composed sounds were created by a human composer or a different creature? And would it matter if they were composed to avoid predators, attract a mate, or for 'pure' artistry sake? Is it possible to distinguish these categorically? And what is the octopus *representing* through its own neurological system? Cephalopod camouflage is not simply a reflex, because it involves a complicated dynamic analysis of the scene. Cephalopod neurological systems do mirror reality in a sense. Yet it is not a true representation (not an honest mirror), but, rather, a kind of fooling. In a sense, however, if we are not fooled by their display, we are not fully 'hearing' what these remarkable creatures have to say. If we are fooled by their sophisticated camouflage are we 'hearing' what they are saying? Or not? The notion of mind-as-mirror is foiled, or at least severely problematized, by the case of cephalopod camouflage; and the problems raised by viewing the intricate camouflage of the cephalopod pertain as well to our reception of the soundscapes around us.

The more profitable path is to regard the representational aspect of knowledge as part of a process of two-way communication, as well as one-way reception through the senses. On this view, knowledge is accumulated through lateral processes that are inflected by the embodied nature of our minds (Lakoff and Johnson 1999), rather than through a vertical purification of thought as Plato would have it. For music, this is no cavalier claim; for instance, the emphasis on negation of image as path to purity, thus accuracy, in Schoenberg's opera *Moses and Aron* has been regarded as his statement on how to best understand aspects of his music (his 12-tone method). Here we see Plato's negation of image, negation of lateral cross-reference, through the doctrine of Western monotheistic religion, projected onto our approaches to music, how to understand it, how to listen to it.

The notion that communication is ever neutral and transparent is thrown into doubt by Quine's (1960, 1969) *indeterminacy of translation* doctrine, for instance. Yet the notion that language neutrally and transparently transfers information persists, as is noticed by cognitive linguists. In an influential paper, Michael Reddy (1979) characterizes the folk theory of communication that English speakers typically use as based on a *conduit metaphor*, in which it is assumed that mental or emotional material can be physically moved from one person to another (almost as mental telepathy or clairvoyance) and that language is a medium, a conduit, through which this transfer takes place.

Reddy approximates that the conduit metaphor forms the basis for about 70% of the language used to talk about the English language. It 'leads to a distinct viewpoint regarding communication problems.' (1979: 167) A problem with communication, a failure of it, is framed by this distinct viewpoint. 'One area of possible difficulty is then the [speaker's]

insertion process.’ Another is the listener’s extraction. One consequence of this is that it is easier to blame a communication failure on the speaker than on the listener, who is passive in this framework: after all, little effort or competence is required to find the contents of a package once opened. In general, Reddy argues, the conduit metaphor confuses our understanding of language by reinforcing the notion that language contains meaning and transfers it between people.<sup>3</sup> It skews our expectations of language.

My purpose is not only to problematize the act of listening by doubting its apparent passivity, but also to problematize the definition of listening by proposing that there is no such thing as pure listening, that probing its nature in some purist fashion is less productive than explaining its multiple facets through various apt metaphors.<sup>4</sup>

Rather than metaphor being considered as exclusively an artistic device, the relatively recent cognitive metaphor and embodied mind theories (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999) have prompted a broader conception of metaphor, arguing that it is the cognitive mechanism by which all abstract thought (from everyday speech to mathematical reasoning) arises from physical experience. The fact that Lakoff and Nunez (2000) argue that mathematics—Plato’s pet example of pure form—is inherently metaphorical, suggests just how radical an overhaul of epistemology is afoot. Cognitive metaphor and embodied mind theory entail a radical dehierarchizing of epistemology. In Plato’s view, form is the highest kind of knowledge, resulting from an ascent up and away from the physical world, a purification from the connection to and between physical experiences—in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the term *structure* has largely served as a rhetorical proxy for this. By contrast, according to the theories of cognitive metaphor and embodied mind theory, knowledge arises incrementally through productive cross-domain mappings between different kinds of physical experience. What this means is that knowledge, far from being a sterile purity, is rather a righteous fertile promiscuity. Listening and other forms of knowledge acquisition are multifaceted lateral processes, each devoid of an essence, devoid of any single essential nature.

What about pure reason and the pursuit of pure form? When Hobbes vehemently discourages metaphors as an impediment to truth, he echoes Plato’s fixation on attaining truth as *pure form*. As Plato presented it, form is a kind of negation, a purification from the defects of perceptual experience. More than ever before, the bankruptcy of this notion of form and formalism is becoming apparent, as I explained above. Form becomes empty and meaningless if divorced from context and process (which is itself a kind of context). For instance, metaphor involves mapping between and among forms and contexts, and so Fiumara (1995: 4) warns that a retreat from metaphor risks the ‘threat of linguistic involution: a degradation which might jeopardize the development of a meaningful relation between nature and culture, world and language, deforming the relationship itself into a parasitic, destructive pattern.’ Shaviro (2009: 30) remarks that through Whitehead’s

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<sup>3</sup> Reddy proposes there are two versions of the framework: ‘The major framework sees ideas as existing either within human heads or, at least within words uttered by humans. The ‘minor’ framework overlooks words as containers and allows ideas and feelings to flow, unfettered and completely disembodied, into a kind of ambient space between human heads. In this case the conduit of language becomes, not sealed pipelines from person to person, but rather individual pipes which allow mental content to escape into, or enter from, this ambient space.’ (Reddy 1979: 170)

<sup>4</sup> The urgency of metaphors for listening is not merely that of an *open concept* such as *game*, which Wittgenstein (1953) argues cannot be defined by necessary and sufficient conditions. Rather, the need for metaphors for listening is demanded by the fact that it is not an externally observable phenomena like a physical action, a ritual, or a game, but instead is an internal cognitive activity: an abstraction.



philosophy we see 'It no longer makes sense to separate the theory of *what* we know from the theory of *how* we know.' Knowledge is acquired through the medium of experience; epistemology and media theory fuse together. Contrary to Hobbes's claim, there is virtually no reasoning without metaphors; reasoning instead occurs through what Fiumara (Fiumara 1995) calls an optimizing balance between the metaphorical and literal.

Not surprisingly, this is recognized by musicologists and music theorists who explain how metaphor is pervasive and often systematic in both formal and informal discourse about music, suggesting how it affords what we take to be musical meaning (Cook 1990, Zbikowski 2002, Spitzer 2004, Clarke 2005). This is more reasonable than expecting meaning to arise in a pure neutral way, because all perception occurs through the body, and metaphor is lateral mapping between different kinds of embodied experience; so such mapping always has an opportunity to occur and cannot help but occur. 'The body is the pre-requisite for perception, ...it impurifies perception, exactly because it enframes perception.' (Meelberg 2008: 65)

### The Plurality of Listening

The idea that there are different ways to listen and indeed different kinds of listening has been discussed in various ways by music theorists. Huron (2002) describes a listening mode as 'a distinctive attitude or approach that can be brought to bear on a listening experience' and suggests a non-exhaustive list of 21 listening styles and strategies for music: distracted listening, tangential listening, metaphysical listening, signal listening, sing-along listening, and so forth.

[View Huron's list online: <http://www.musicog.ohio-state.edu/Huron/Talks/SMT.2002/handout.html> ]

Morris (2002) identifies three 'levels of attention': (1) *Ignoring* music that is sounding, which is what happens at social functions for instance; (2) *Intermittent* attention, where the listener goes off on tangents that are suggested by the music; Morris makes an interesting point that musical experts see intermittence as problematic and blame it on the listener's lack of appropriate knowledge or ability to use it, or attribute it to deficiencies of the composer or performer; (3) *Complete, undivided* attention, where one pays constant attention, never losing contact with the music; musicians are better at this, and following a score helps.

The flexibility and the conceptual, active, or agential dimensions of listening are brought even more to the fore in writings of Lewin and Spitzer. (Both are inspired by Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit, or 'dubbit', illusion.<sup>5</sup>) In his influential essay on 'Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception,' Lewin (1986) discusses at length how a heard event is not ontologically defined in a unique way, because it admits multiple perceptions, which vary according to the temporal context, that is, according to what has been heard subsequently, not to mention the influence of whatever theoretical apparatus is adopted as a lens through which to hear. Spitzer's (2004) approach emphasizes the metaphorical nature of listening even more, suggesting that a hearing *is* a 'hearing as'.<sup>6</sup> This implies that there is not a privileged pure mode of hearing, but rather always a lateral referential mapping between sound and thought, between physical stimulus and its reception in the mind.

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<sup>5</sup> The picture, drawn from Jastrow's (1900) *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, can be *seen as* either a duck or rabbit, depending on how the viewer is prompted (or prompts him or herself).

<sup>6</sup> With regard to music, Spitzer takes his cue from Scruton (1999: 78) who argues that musical listening is 'hearing sounds as music'.

All of these inquiries are in the vein that my mine wishes to flow in. For the purpose of making these pluralities more vivid, my device is to tentatively deny that listening is even defined as an act or action. I pursue this denial productively by viewing listening only through the lens of other acts and actions, each of which, through its particular affinities, brings different dimensions of listening to the fore. My strategy—however contrived it may seem—has the added benefit of suggesting parallels to other fields of inquiry, to which and from which productive discourse may flow.

### **Listening as Recording**

*Listening as recording* is probably the most common and perhaps also the most troublesome way listening is conceptualized. It assumes that listening is a neutral and virtually effort-free activity. More than any other, this way of conceptualizing listening stresses fidelity. It assumes what Reddy (1979) calls the *conduit metaphor*, the view that communication is a simple lossless transfer of information, as if moving a physical object from one location to another. Although there are situations in which listening may result in recall that meets the level of precision expected or demanded by the source, this is by no means usually the case, and in some ways may be beside the point, for instance if the source intends to deceive or if the source is not even a conscious agent.

Transcription and dictation tasks are the paradigms for *listening as recording*. Upon inspection, however, it becomes clear that every transcription-dictation task grounds itself in some or other set of ontological commitments, as is well known to ethnomusicologists (Nettl 2005: 74-91). Conventional melodic dictation assumes a straightforward categorization of pitch events into notes. Conventional harmonic dictation entails a categorization of sounds into chord labels; chord labels entail some or other theory of chords; not all such theories are interchangeable with each other. On the basis of my experience teaching ear training, I can testify to the fact that one chord ontology versus another can significantly influence what one hears, including what might be called the *accuracy* of such hearing. The fact that dictation is often used for learning foreign languages testifies to the fact that listening is not simply recording. For if it was, then it would have no pedagogical value for learning a foreign language.

One of the problems with viewing listening as recording (in the sense of transcription) is that it must very often be admitted as a failed effort, a failure. This we witness when psychologists or skeptical musicians question whether serial or dodecaphonic ‘structures’ are ‘heard’—often designing and carrying out listening experiments to corroborate their scepticism. This is induced by their false impression that the calculation that goes into composing the music demands from the listener a detailed recognition of every sound so calculated in relation to the way it is calculated. Yet the same is not expected of a listener hearing simpler music. The fallacy of this impression is explained aptly by Scotto (2004). This brings up the fact that differences of opinion on musical aesthetics are often tightly bound to the question of what ‘listening’ is, and how that might be, or should be, influenced or determined by what the music is supposed to do. Is it mere entertainment? refined decoration? communicative expression? emotional engineering? Or something else?

Returning to the issue of listener recall and expectations, there is the importance of hearing information that is ostensibly peripheral to the message transmitted as well as the case in which there is no message. When listening to tone of voice to determine the attitude of the speaker, one’s transcriptional accuracy is often rightly subordinated to assessing the sonic landscape holistically—an aspect of *adaptation* to be discussed further in the next section. In cases in which no message is transmitted, the ability to either reproduce a heard



sound to a sufficient level of precision might be taken as a gold standard for listening, as when comedians do impressions of other celebrities. The non-verbal case is even more interesting, and may involve sonic reproduction as well as diagnostic assessment based on such reproduction. Both of these are depicted, for instance, in an amusing series of AAMCO TV advertisements and in which customers emphatically convey the sounds of their ailing cars, while an attentive auto-mechanic miraculously diagnoses an engine problem by ear.

[View the AAMCO ad online:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBUASLYOIJY&feature=relmfu> ]

What's amusing in this case is that the customers have mentally 'recorded' the sounds of their cars' defects, to such an extent that they can faithfully reproduce the sounds; it's striking for being so unusual. And the auto mechanic's diagnosis suggests a sonic version of a game of charades.

*Listening as recording* is probably the most prevalent way listening is conceptualized. Because sonic environments (which exhibit familiar and unfamiliar, natural and artificial, intended, unintended, and indifferent sounds) are potentially so rich and diverse, listening as recording sets a high standard. This is both good and bad. On the positive side, it stresses our capacity to enlist all our attention to the act of listening, with sometimes astonishing results. The downside is that it buries other significant facets of listening. For instance, when listening is regarded as recording, the medium on or through which the 'recording' takes place imposes a strong bias on what is heard. The discrete symbolic nature of transcription or dictation washes away all that falls outside the ontology of the symbols, not to mention holistic facets or nuanced facets that defy transcription altogether. So we find that our concept of listening is severely flawed if it fails to account for the attitude or disposition toward listening that is adopted in the first place.

### **Listening as Adaptation**

*Listening as adaptation* is one of the more important recent developments in theories of listening, involving an enlightened ecological perspective. John Cage and later sound artists such as Max Neuhaus, who were inspired by earlier sonic pioneers such as Varese and Russolo, drew welcomed attention to the virtues of hearing environmental sounds aesthetically. For instance Neuhaus's 1976 *Listen* poster conveys his desire to 'give credence to...live street sounds' by 'taking the audience outside.'

[View the Neuhaus image online: <http://www.max-neuhaus.info/soundworks/vectors/walks/> ]

Alan Licht's (2007) virtually comprehensive account of sound art attests to the prevalence of this change in global sonic consciousness.

The adaptive aspect of listening has become a significantly focused area of study since the 1970s. This is the ecological approach to the study of listening, which is covered comprehensively by Eric Clarke (2005), who pays homage to earlier writings by James Gibson (1966, 1979), Stephen Handel (1989), and Albert Bregman (1990), as well the comprehensive body of work by W. Luke Windsor (1994, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2000, 2004). Clarke notes that 'musical materials have the capacity to place a perceiver in a certain relationship with music — ironic, humorous, accepting, critical, alienated' (Clarke 2005: abstract for chapter 4, pdf version). He also reviews the listening style typologies of Theodor Adorno and Pierre Schaeffer.

Not covered by Clarke is Oliveira and Oliveira's (2003) ecological approach, which I find particularly helpful in its directness; it considers perception as it emerges from the

interaction of the perceiver and its environment. Organisms have no conscious control over the purely local parts of the perceptual system, such as the stapedius muscle of the ear. Yet many organisms do have the capacity to self-organize or ‘tune’ their focus in order to better interact with their surroundings and detect information, for instance, as it is important for survival. ‘*Self-tuning*’ is Oliveira and Oliveira’s term for this special ability displayed by the perceptual system as perceivers interact with their environment. ‘Self-tuning is a self-organizing process to better fit the perceptual system with adequate information’ (2003: 47). Some such self-tuning takes place in immediate response to stimuli, though more importantly some such self-tuning occurs gradually over a lifetime.

In ecological psychology, bits of information gathered through such self-tuning are deemed emergent properties and are called *affordances* (Gibson 1977), in that they afford the organism actions specific to their own wellbeing—actions superfluous to, and therefore information superfluous to, other organisms. Affordances are emergent in that they exist neither in the physical world nor in the organism, but rather emerge from the interaction of the organism with its physical or cultural environment, called a *niche*.

More recently, Thibaud discusses similar issues in terms of ‘tuning into ambiance,’ drawing attention to how the ecological perspective is more particular to sonic than visual experience: ‘[A]n ambiance can be specified by its ‘tone’ (an affective tonality), it involves our ability to be ‘in tune’ with the place, it has something to do with ‘sympathy’ and ‘harmony’. We speak sometimes of ‘a vibrant atmosphere’. While our everyday language is predominantly based on visual images, such is not the case with ambiance.’ (Thibaud 2011)

Despite how it might seem, listening as adaptation pertains not just to survival-motivated information gathering, but also to aesthetic pleasure. For music, a good bit of attaining the proper mindset for aesthetic appreciation derives from a synthesis of conceptual and perceptual learning, as I have previously (Mailman 1996, 2010a) explained as being one of the aims of music theory and analysis and which has been addressed more recently by Croom (2012). The process of getting into the apt listening mindset (as an aspect of music theory and analysis) is explained by Peles (2007) as using causal inference to systematically establish ‘initial conditions’ from which a reader-listener can appreciate a particular musical effect:

Knowing something about the causal history of the effect enables us [theorist, analyst, teacher, writer] to induce it in those who wouldn’t otherwise have the experience; it allows us, in short, to change the initial conditions. We start at the earliest point in the causal history to which the subject responds, and move incrementally up the chain from there, effectively reading the causal history forward *toward* the effect, rather than backward *from* it as we did when we were constructing an explanation. In this respect music theory has two tasks, one explanatory and the other didactic. (Peles 2007: 74)

That aesthetic appreciation of music varies so much is partly attributed to the fact that most people are habituated to certain musics to such an extent that their focus becomes not only conditioned but even entrenched, whereas the focus of others remains flexible; their ears are open to learn previously unheard nuanced sonic effects.

Though not exclusive to music listening, the ecological approach has drawn attention to what is essentially a bifurcation of listening orientations such as those just mentioned. These are, as Truax (2001) puts it, *listening-in-search* vs. *listening-in-readiness*. In the first case, one has decided in advance specifically what to listen for, whereas in the second case one is attending holistically to the entire soundscape. (Though not necessarily the same, these also parallel the distinction between *attentive listening* (focal attention), and *diffused listening* (global

attention). Recently, industrial sound theorist Julian Treasure (2007) calls these *listening positions*, distinguishing them as *reductive listening* (*listening for*) and *expansive listening* (*listening with*). Provocatively, Treasure furthermore notes a gender bias in regard to the listening positions: males often tend toward *reductive listening* (*listening for*) while females tend toward *expansive listening* (*listening with*).<sup>7</sup>

[Videos on this topic are found here:

[http://www.ted.com/talks/julian\\_treasure\\_shh\\_sound\\_health\\_in\\_8\\_steps.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_shh_sound_health_in_8_steps.html)

and here

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/10/10/treasure.sound/index.html?hpt=C2.>]

In her book on the philosophy of listening, Fiumara distinguishes *logos* from *legein*, noting how the logico-metaphysical tradition has emphasized logos to the detriment of *legein*. *Logos* is *grasping, mastering, using*, whereas *legein* is *letting lie together* before using (1990: 15). In this respect *legein* is more like listening as recording, or in any event is less invasive than *logos*. As Fiumara explains it, *logos* has tended to dominate our concept of listening, making it too proactive, to the detriment of listening's ecological potential, which is embodied in the concept of *legein*. Rather than enabling manipulation, as *logos* emphasizes, *legein* by contrast means keeping and preserving. 'Keeping represents the essential quality of authentic listening and remembering. The kind of hearing that preserves may well be deserving of philosophical priority.' *Legein* 'aims at coexistence with rather than knowledge of' (Fiumara 1990: 15). Otherwise we may, out of convenience, reject whatever is difficult to master. That is, listening-as-prompt-for-action (*logos*), is highly selective listening. Whereas listening as *legein*—which is reminiscent of the exiled book-lovers who memorize and therefore memorialize entire books in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*—is a more authentic kind of interpersonal engagement. The adaptive ecological aspect of Fiumara's *legein* oriented view of listening is strong.

To some degree, a listener adopting the most appropriate listening angle, channel, vessel, depends on how she may be situated within speech communities (Bahktin 1986, Cumming 2000: 17), for instance as exemplified by Mead's (2004) chapter title "'One Man's Signal is Another Man's Noise": Personal Encounters with Post-Tonal Music.' There's also the didactic or pedagogical element alluded to above in regard to aesthetic appreciation: how does a listener gain entrance to various musical 'speech communities'? How is authentic *legein* to be promoted and developed?

Although it is not the approach Fiumara takes, I find that one way of promoting *legein* is actually through *logos*, deployed pluralistically, flexibly, sensitively. In listening to music, 'tuning in', getting to the right 'initial conditions', is often a matter of knowing what kinds of changes to focus on (as opposed to what remains invariant). For instance, in music that is constantly dissonant, the ebb and flow of consonance and dissonance is not an appropriate feature to tune in to. Cogan (1984: 152) suggests the importance of choosing features carefully in music analysis based on modeling flux of intensity: 'It is important...to understand which sonic features bear that potential charge of change in each piece's specific context.'

*Listening in readiness* requires flexibility, but it often also requires specifically a flexibility of focus, which then becomes a specific *listening-for*. Thus *logos* can be harnessed for the purpose of *legein*, as one from among a vocabulary of listening focuses is called upon to optimize a particular listening situation. As I (Mailman 2010b) show in the first movement of

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<sup>7</sup> A text conveying some of Treasure's views can be found here: <http://gold-silver.us/forum/archive/index.php/t-36789.html?s=1f209b955a6ae9b7aa93cc903415de0e>]

Ruth Crawford Seeger's Quartet 1931, the features that give rise to medium-range form may be different in different sections of a piece and may even be features that do not bear form in other pieces of music. After many years of *expansive listening-in-readiness* to (*listening with*) this piece and contemplating it, I developed a particular kind of defused global attention that I could then articulate and deploy in terms of *logos*, so a productive *legein* can be communicated precisely to other listeners less familiar with the work. *Listening in readiness* can be promoted through a pluralistic vocabulary of specific ways of *listening for*. This is adaptive listening developed communally and promoted through *logos*. Specifically, the flexibility that *legein* demands may be promoted by the intersubjective communicability of *logos*.

The *flexibility* thesis proposed has two facets: On the one hand, as explained by the information theorist Abraham Moles (1966), the transmission of form is achieved through 'channels', in which a message may be expressed as a temporal form, that is, a contour of flux. In other words, the reception of form and expression depends partly on the nature, the disposition, the configuration, of that through which it is transmitted. Previously (Mailman 2010a, 2010b, 2011) I generalized this to the concept of a *vessel* of form, which encompasses two reciprocal space-time metaphors for the time-lapsing of musical works. A *vessel* is any specified disposition or mechanism for information gathering that is apt for detecting appropriate flux of intensity of whatever quality is relevant to the situation. The concept of *vessel* encapsulates many of the adaptive aspects of listening just discussed. The relevance to *expression* is that form can itself serve as a vehicle for *expression*. That is, forms can serve as signals, which can act as vectors of transmission for feeling, as Whitehead (1978 [1929]) puts it. Or as I explain in my analyses (Mailman 2010a) of Medieval secular songs, a form can serve as a *vessel* of meaning. A *vessel* is a *logos*-fueled tool that works in the service of *legein*. Knowing there are various—in fact infinite—vessels promotes flexibility of listening which underlies authentic *legein* as described by Fiumara.

Listening as adaptation begs at least as many questions as it answers. Does a listener choose or is a listener chosen by a particular speech community? How does one develop, articulate, self-tune to a specific vessel? What time-scales are involved? What role does memory play? What is the appropriate balance of reductive listening (*listening-in-search*) and expansive listening (*listening-in-readiness*)? Is the adaptive dimension of listening a matter of compulsion, habit, or decision?

### Listening as Improvisation

Thinking of *listening as improvisation* promotes not only the spontaneity of listening—which may be an openness in the sense of *legein*—but also the agency of the listener, including all the ethical ramifications of that. *Listening as improvisation* is not just the unscripted aspect of listening, but moreover its anti-scripted potential, determinable by the context as well as by the listener's volition.

Consider that Reich (1968) describes process music (which is pre-determined) as the opposite of improvisation. Transferring this to the listening act itself: if one has determined in advance what to listen for (*listening-in-search*) or how to listen, this is the opposite of improvisational listening.

George Lewis (2007) explains improvisation as more than just a set of musical practices but rather as an ethically charged 'real world' mode of behavior, quoting philosopher Gilbert Ryle on this point. Ryle remarks: if someone

[i]s not at once improvising and improvising warily, he is not engaging his somewhat trained wits in some momentarily live issue, but perhaps acting from sheer unthinking habit. So thinking, I now declare quite generally, is, at the least, the

engaging of partly trained wits in a partly fresh situation. It is the pitting of an acquired competence or skill against an unprogrammed opportunity, obstacle or hazard. (Ryle 1976: 77)

From this point of view, all life actions exist on a continuum between ritual or automation (on the one hand) and improvisation (on the other). Lewis also remarks that '[f]rom a musical improviser's standpoint, composing, performing, and listening...come together in the practice of improvisation.'

In regard to *legein* vs. *logos*, listening as improvisation cuts two ways. On the one hand, improvisation entails a responsiveness to the unpredictable flux of a situation, being alive to the situation one encounters. On the other hand, it also entails the prerogative to self-determine one's thoughts and action. As Lewis (2007) puts it: 'improvisative production of meaning and knowledge provides models for new forms of social mobilization that foreground agency, personality and difference.' Improvisatory listening therefore suggests alertness to a situation as it unfolds, but it also implies that the listener has the ability to exercise choice in how to focus. Aspects of the idea of self-determination in listening are traced in Steege's (2007) doctoral dissertation on Helmholtz, who bore a 'reformist impulse to submit listening to a rigorous and virtuoso discipline of attentiveness to the radical particularity of sensation.' The important thing about listening as improvisation is that it is the alternative to a scripted listening approach, in which—as when listening to a fugue—one follows a conventional prescription for attending to events known in advance; instead, listening can be just as spontaneous as performing.

The *legein* and *logos* aspects of spontaneous listening do not necessarily conflict, as even Gibson's (1979) ecological theory of perception identifies affordances as 'action possibilities': actionable options revealed through sensitivity to context. In fact Lewis's 1980s *Voyager* system (and the work of the same name) illustrates a computationally implemented effort to balance self-determination with contextual responsiveness in an unscripted situation.

[Read about and listen to Lewis's *Voyager* here: <http://www.ubu.com/sound/lewis.html> ]  
*Voyager* is interactive software Lewis programmed to 'listen' to a live human improviser, choosing to ignore or respond to the human's musical gestures by playing its own musical gestures or remaining silent. When it does respond, *Voyager* does so by spontaneously deciding what aspects of the human performer's gestures to focus on, and whether to imitate or oppose them. *Voyager* therefore embodies agential aspects of listening.

### Listening as Computing

Our routine ontology of sound attests to the fact that listening is partly computational. That we 'hear' vibrations as higher or lower pitch is the result of automatic mental calculations. (Otherwise we would hear them as different speeds of pulse.) Parsing a stream of spoken sound into words, segregating a sonic landscape into multiple streams of information—these are information processing actions, involving networks of intricate systematic procedures.

The idea that listening is computation goes hand in hand with the fact that listening is cognitive and that cognition—even its involuntary perceptual aspects—can be modeled computationally. The human perceptual-cognitive system is capable of measuring or estimating quantities pertaining to its input, the stimuli of its environment, as the cognitive psychologist Lisa Feigenson explains. 'Adults can represent approximate numbers of items independently of language. This approximate number system can discriminate and compare entities as varied as dots, sounds, or actions' (Feigenson 2008: abstract). Consider music analysis in this context. If an interpretive analyst of music wants to tune his or her audience's



focus to a particular quantitative or ‘approximate number’ aspect of a musical work, Feigenson’s research suggests this might be done in part ‘independently of language,’ since evidently such quantitative cognition is partly non-verbal. Not only is the human perceptual-cognitive system capable of measuring or estimating quantities, it actually does so naturally, involuntarily—as when we estimate distance to catch a ball moving through the air, judge the temperature of our food for eating, water for swimming, weather for dressing, when we distinguish shades or hues of color in our visual field, make decisions by weighing risk, and when we determine the interval or relative duration between two pitches in music. All of these acts, though fallible and approximate, are essentially mental computations—and to conceptualize them as such is the basis for *computational modeling* of cognition. (For neuroscience theories of the mind as computer or information processing system see for instance Churchland and Sejnowski’s *Computational Brain*. [1992])

Computational modelings of musical cognition include Roeder’s (1987) declarative model of atonal analysis, Temperley and Sleator’s (1999) preference rule modeling of meter and harmony perception, Mavromatis’s (2005) hidden markov model of melody production in Greek church chant, and Large and Crawford’s (2002) *auditory temporal computation*.

When defined with appropriate breadth, computational modeling of music listener cognition can be traced back to the mythical discoveries of Pythagoras in ancient Greek civilization, more recently to the 16th century writings of Zarlino and Descartes, and later to Rameau and Weber in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Zarlino and Descartes suggest intersubjective bases of consonance perception based on collections of intervals defined as mathematical ratios. As Moreno explains: Descartes examines the criteria for the construction of sound ‘in terms of measurement (calculation of identities and differences among intervals or temporal units in a composition against a common unit) and order (serially arranging the results of measurement according to degrees of complexity). The results of such analysis constitute the mark for certain, demonstrable, and intersubjective knowledge.’ (Moreno 2004: 14) The computational modeling is pertinent to listening because intersubjective aspects of music are not always physical. Some musical entities occur in the listener’s consciousness but do not exist acoustically in the physical environment. (Such musical entities are mostly emergent qualities [Mailman [2010a])

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Rameau’s concept of *fundamental bass* (comparable to what we now call chord root) again implies that some mental calculation is involved in perception of harmonic progression; his notion of implied dissonance situates them in the mind, rather than in mere acoustical vibrations. Thinking of Rameau’s ‘implied dissonances...if the acoustical datum in a composition and/or in its performance is in a way deemed insufficient for our adequate comprehension of it, then the very ontology of sound within the theoretical category ‘harmony’ (i.e., the conditions that determine its being) is open to question, and the epistemological stakes placed on listening rise...An adequate understanding of [the] musical imaginary [what implied dissonances possibly are] depends upon an explanation of the function of the subject of human agent behind the implied notes’ (Moreno 2004: 15-16).

In this tradition, the most self-conscious instance of such subjective computational modeling prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Weber’s popularization of roman numeral analysis as a way to characterize the moment-to-moment perception of tonal key center and chord changes in relation to it. With chords aurally characterized by a number corresponding to the intervallic relation between its chordal root and the tonic pitch, we see a phenomenological relation of the listener-subject (*noesis*, or what Weber called ‘das Gehör’) and perceived object (*noema*) defined by a numerical calculation. In classical repertoire—such as the opening of Mozart’s ‘Dissonance’ Quartet which Weber analyzes—a chord is not simply any notes

sounding at the same time, but rather an entity with a subtler status. In a sense the chord is ontologized through the process of it being perceived, since the listener might be aware that the chord's status as a chord arises from it being perceived as such. 'A modern self-questioning subjectivity [is] manifest in the way [Weber's] 'das Gehör' interprets what it hears, knows itself to do so, but doubts whether its experience can be represented' (Moreno 2004: 19). It might be said: the *noesis* observes, contemplates, elaborates, and thereby creates its own *noema*—aware of the partially derived nature of the *noema*.

Such computational modelling of cognition (whether 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, or 19<sup>th</sup> century style or the more modern making of computing machines that emulate mental processes) allows the interpretive analyst to sharpen her own observations and orient her listener-audience closer to her appreciative perspective. A computing machine can thus serve as an instrument of mediation, through which the interpretive analyst can communicate his or her 'first hand' experience of flux. The phrase 'instrument of mediation' is borrowed from Morgan and Morrison (1999), who stress that for a model to serve as a mediator, it must operate autonomously. I (Mailman 2010a) chose the metaphor of the *computing machine* because typically machines are thought of as operating autonomously, after initial activation.

I explain that such mediation is thus an experimental mode of phenomenology involving the concept of a computational machine working in a feedback system of informative communication, therefore called *cybernetic phenomenology*. Since the 1980s, some music theorists have sought to represent their own listening experiences through the development of computational models, for instance Lewin's (1981) unrolling vector model of rhythmic patterning, Roeder's (1995) calculus of accent model, and Quinn's (1997) 'fuzzy' model of melodic contour similarity. Related to this, but not phenomenologically driven, is Rowe's (1993) 'machine listening' software system *Cypher*, which computationally models how basic musical elements (pitch, duration, loudness) and conventional constructs (density, meter, tonal chords, keys, and phrase boundaries) are heard.<sup>8</sup>

Machines can serve as both simulations and extensions of the mind, in many contexts. It is primarily through its simulating capability that a machine extends the faculties of the mind. Typewriters, telephones, telescopes, microscopes, cameras, video recorders, air-brushes, blow-torches, satellites, MRI, the internet, as well as pianos, organs, and clarinets are all machines designed and built or used as tools for discovery or expression, or both. They are, in this way, extensions of the mind, and it is in this spirit that a computer (computing machine, software program, computational simulation) can be understood as a cyber-being, an extension of the mind that enables or enhances communication, in a fashion that is both similar to, and slightly different from, how music theories have traditionally addressed listening (which is explained in reference to Peles (2007) above).

Here is how the proposed cybernetic phenomenology advances aesthetically *adaptive* (critical-aesthetic) and epistemological goals. For aesthetic adaptation, what is needed is for the interpreter analyst to 'point at' and 'point out', directing the reader-listener's attention appropriately so that the flux can be experienced first hand. Temporal dynamic form theory (Mailman 2010a) proposes: this can be done by using the concept of a computing machine and its output to represent the interpreter's cognition and thereby serve—like a demonstrative word (such as 'this', 'that', 'these', or 'those')—to 'point at' and 'point out' features in music.

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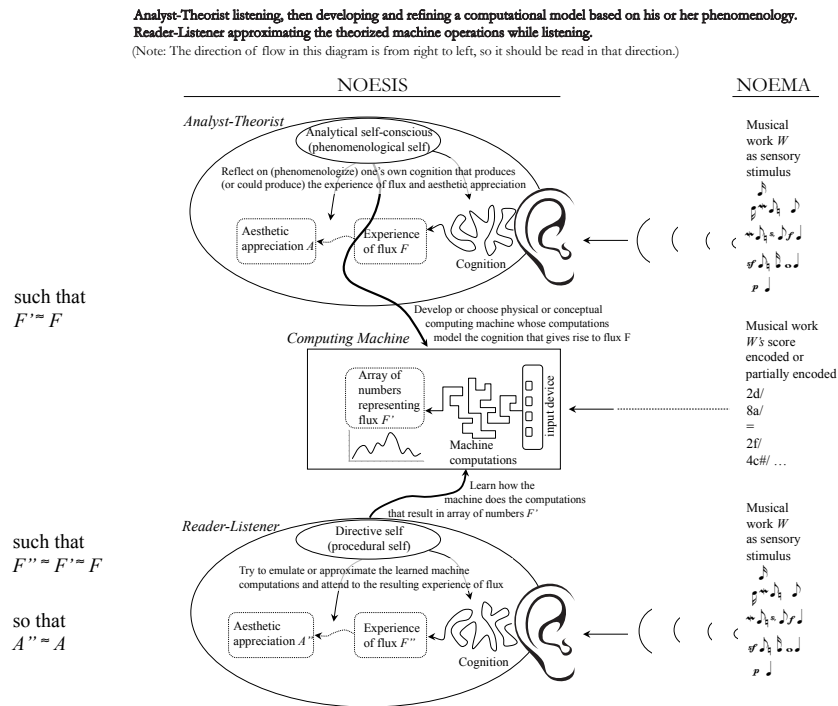
<sup>8</sup> In addition to 'machine listening,' Rowe's (1993) *Cypher* software system does 'machine improvisation' and

Two presentations may be provided by the interpreter-analyst: (1) explicit specification of the computing machine's operation (how it processes its input) and (2) the computing machine's output (which may be in the form of a series of numbers realized as a contour graph) as produced from the specific musical work as input. Awareness of the computing machine's operations guides the reader-listener to tune his or her focus similarly to that of the interpreter-analyst; the computing machine's output serves as a guide for the reader-listener to fine-tune or sharpen the focus of his or her cognition. These two presentations together prompt the reader-listener to mentally construct a procedure that simulates what the interpreter-analyst perceives as the mental processes that give rise to his or her own experience of expressive flux in the music. Thus linking the audible to the expressible, the computing machine and its output *represent* the interpreter's cognition in an intersubjective space. By providing this information in an intersubjective space, the interpreter-analyst can give the reader-listener a tangible insight into how he or she hears flux, from which form and expression in the music can be experienced.

Figure 1 illustrates how this cybernetic phenomenology works.<sup>9</sup> (The diagram is read from right to left as indicated by the direction of its arrows.)

Figure 1

*Cybernetic Phenomenology*



<sup>9</sup> The ears in these diagrams should not be taken too literally; music enters the mind not only as sound waves through the ear, but also through sight and physical vibrations as well—for instance consider the deaf percussionist Evelyn Glennie, for whom 'hearing is basically a specialized form of touch.' See Glennie, Evelyn (2008) 'Hearing Essay'. [http://www.evelyn.co.uk/Evelyn\\_old/live/hearing\\_essay.htm](http://www.evelyn.co.uk/Evelyn_old/live/hearing_essay.htm).



The top depicts the analyst-theorist<sup>10</sup> (*noesis*) listening to musical work  $W$  (*noema*), cognizing it, experiencing some sense of form-bearing flux  $F$ , which contributes to aesthetic appreciation  $A$ . (This simple model does not address anything like the complexity of all that goes on while listening to, cognizing, and appreciating music; rather it only addresses the aspect of aesthetic appreciation that arises from the experience of sensing some form-bearing flux during the act of listening to music.)

As depicted by the thick arrow running from the top to the middle, to sharpen his or her own mental processes, the theorist-analyst develops—or chooses appropriately from those already developed—a machine whose computations model the cognition that leads to experience of flux:  $F$ . The machine may be physical or metaphorical, an actual computer software program or merely a defined series of rules, an algorithm, or equation that produces an array of numbers  $F'$  as output from an encoded or partially encoded version of the musical work  $W$ 's score as input. To the extent the theorist-analyst is self-regulating and successful in this activity, the machine's output array  $F'$  approximates the analyst-theorist's experience of flux  $F$ , thus:  $F' \approx F$ . A beneficial side effect is that the output, array  $F'$  (taken in the context of the algorithm that produced it) constitutes robust knowledge of the repertoire (work  $W$  in this case) that served as input. (In this way it contributes to the feedback processes of knowledge development.) Since this data relates, albeit indirectly, to the connection between a musical score and the thought processes of a listener focusing on form, it may be relevant to the development of new compositional strategies for projecting form. As depicted by the thick arrow from the bottom to the middle, because the analyst-theorist has specified the operations of the machine he or she has designed or chosen, a reader-listener can learn how the machine performs these computations.

As depicted at the bottom, after having learned of the machine computations, the reader-listener (his or her 'directive-self') can try to roughly emulate or approximate the learned machine computations and attend to the resulting experience of flux; for this, the reader-listener may require use of the score and a contour graph of the computing machine's output. To the extent the reader-listener is successful in this adaptive listening activity, his or her experience of flux  $F''$  approximates the machine's output array  $F'$  (thus  $F'' \approx F'$ ) which in turn approximates the theorist-analyst's experience of flux  $F$ , thus:  $F'' \approx F' \approx F$ . The reader-listener's experience of flux  $F''$  contributes to some aesthetic appreciation  $A''$ . Insofar as the experience of flux  $F$  contributes to the analyst-theorist's aesthetic appreciation  $A$  in the first place, and insofar as this connection is intersubjectively realizable, the reader-listener's aesthetic appreciation  $A''$  then approximates the analyst-theorist's aesthetic appreciation  $A$ , thus:  $A'' \approx A$ . Such a process—that which results in  $A'' \approx A$ —is none other than an instance of aesthetic adaptation: being guided on how to *tune in* appropriately to maximize aesthetic appreciation, which is what the philosopher of aesthetics Arnold Isenberg (1949) calls *critical communication*.

Granted, such aesthetically directed adaptation (critical communication) is taking place indirectly through a network of asserted representations. Sometimes, however, this may be the optimal way for listening adaptation to be enhanced by discourse. As Reddy (1979) persuasively argues, communication is not as simple as just the transfer of information from one mind to another; communication is not an effort-free system, neither on the

<sup>10</sup> The interpreter-analyst is not necessarily distinct from the analyst-theorist or theorist-analyst, as all three activities are interdependent. For instance the theorist-analyst and analyst-theorist are potentially the same person, at different times focusing on theorizing for the sake of analysis or analysis for the sake of theorizing. Likewise analysis is pursued for the sake of interpretation and vice versa.

transmitting, nor on the receiving end. The usually and tacitly assumed conduit metaphor for linguistic communication is inadequate.<sup>11</sup> The more accurate assessment, Reddy explains, is rather that language helps one person construct ‘out of his own mental stuff something like a replica, or copy, of someone else’s thoughts’ (Reddy 1979: 167). This is the *toolmakers paradigm*. ‘In talking to each other, we are more like people isolated in slightly different environments’ (1979: 170). Participants (communicators) have different ‘repertoires’. Each person is as if permanently confined to a separate sector on a wheel. They cannot visit each other or exchange physical objects. Machinery connects each sector to every other sector. The machinery, when mastered, allows the inhabitants of the sectors to ‘exchange crude sets of instructions [blueprints] with one another—instructions for making things helpful in surviving, such as tools, perhaps, or shelters, or foods, and the like... The people only know of one another’s existence indirectly, by a cumulative series of inferences’ (1979: 172). Reddy calls the mutual isolation ‘radical subjectivity’. He tells a story involving four people using the toolmakers paradigm. Through several iterations of exchanging and executing various sets of instructions about rakes and other related tools, they learn more and more not only about making tools but also about each other, each other’s environment, and each other’s past sets of instructions. Precisely specified representations of thought serve as tools and machines in communication, including communication about listening, such as how to *listen-in-readiness*, beyond one’s usual habits.

As Moreno (2004: 6-7) puts it, in his explication of the music theories of Zarlino, Descartes, Rameau, and Weber: ‘Representation encompasses the link between the expressible and the audible, although...what “the audible” may be is itself constructed in representation.’ The intersubjective space of music is built on such learned conceptual representations. ‘Listening...may entail deciphering according to learned code signs intercepted in hearing, or it may point to the source of sound on the basis of which the listener develops an “intersubjective space”’. Thus the *noema* (the experienced) is partly molded by *noeses* (one or more experiencers). By definition the ‘intersubjective space’ is available to more than the *noesis* (experiencer). So it may be drawn upon as well as contributed to by any number of *noeses*. In this way *noeses* individually or jointly influence their own *noema* through the representations they develop.

The role of computation in representational tools may be less obvious. It is natural that many such tools are quantitative because not all aspects of critical communication can be achieved verbally. Feigenson’s (2008: abstract) cognitive psychological research finds: ‘Adults can represent approximate numbers of items independently of language. This approximate number system can discriminate and compare entities as varied as dots, sounds, or actions.’<sup>12</sup> Some of these mental representations might be those ‘whereof we cannot speak’—except awkwardly. In some contexts, such as those to which Feigenson refers, precise or estimated measurements might communicate even when words fail. As Whitehead (1978) observes: ‘plotting changes on a common scale helps surmount their privacy.’ As remarked above, the computing machine and its output *represent* the interpreter’s cognition in an intersubjective space, linking the audible to the expressible. Spitzer (2004: 9) explains

<sup>11</sup> Reddy also remarks: the more that conduit metaphor frames are already ingrained, the more one resists change to alternative frames. In light of this we might consider how ingrained is the notion that the neutral, objective, or abstract aspect of music is its ‘structure.’

<sup>12</sup> ‘In psychological measurement, the individual is the measuring device; he plays the role of the pan balance, the meter stick, or the thermometer,’ as Coombs (1983) puts it in his essay on psychology and mathematics.

*bearing as* as ‘a technical procedure that can be prompted’.<sup>13</sup> A computational model is, among other things, a non-verbal (or partly verbal) mode of prompting. Thinking of listening as computing helps us negotiate communication about aspects of listening that are non-verbal; computing enables certain flexibilities of representation that are inaccessible through words alone.

Based on Whitehead’s pithy epithet, Reddy *toolmaker’s paradigm* theory of communication, Feigenson’s empirical findings, and the ongoing project of *cybernetic phenomenology*, it should be clear that *logos* can work in the service of achieving *legein*, because it enables communal discourse to be bolstered by technical ingenuity. The broader goal of adaptation is thus served by the powerful flexibility of computational representations: *legein* through *logos*; *listening in readiness* enhanced by multiple ways of *listening for*.

### Listening as Digestion

That listening is a kind of digestion derives from its inherent temporality, from the fact it is in a sense tactile—being a generalized form of touch involving the whole body, as Evelyn Glennie (Glennie 2008) calls it<sup>14</sup>—as well as its direct parallels with the processes of literal digestion, such as its filtering and nourishing functions.

Consider the inherent temporality of listening. Sound is ephemeral but one’s memory of it is not. Can listening be separated from one’s memory of it? Can it be equated with it? The elements of a visual scene may, prior to interpretation, be regarded in a *paratactic* sense (content without regard to order); one’s memory of a visual scene need not incorporate any *sequential* ordering information. By contrast, that which we listen to, sound (and its content), is presented sequentially; only through interpretation can it be regarded paratactically. It is ephemeral, yet its qualities linger. What we listen to can only be ontologized (recognized as quality, entity, or process) through our memory of it. Listening is in a sense inseparable from its flow.

Yet also, during the time we are listening to some quality, entity, or process, there is a present, which we subsequently regard as the past moment in which it occurred. This is, as William James (1890) puts it, the *specious present*, the short duration of which we are immediately and incessantly sensible. Ushenko (1953: 120-63) calls it the *protensive present*, noting that in aesthetic experience, it expands to take up more natural time. This makes a given amount of natural time seem shorter when experienced aesthetically—perhaps because one’s absorption in the total aesthetic experience (as one, or few, longer specious presents) dwarfs the sense that time is passing. This does not necessarily imply that ‘time flies’ in the usual sense. As suggested in Thomas Mann’s novel *Magic Mountain*, a duration full with events can in retrospect seem longer than a relatively uneventful duration of equal length.<sup>15</sup> The point is that ‘the practically cognized present is no knife-edge, but a saddleback...’ as James (1890: 609-10) puts it. This counters the naïve view of the ‘now’ as a mere point separating past from future. The ‘now’ is a duration of indefinite length. It is in the moving ‘now’ that listening occurs.

<sup>13</sup> Spitzer’s discussion actually pertains not to hearing alone, but rather more generally: ‘That perception might be based on the ability to execute a technique was the burden of Wittgenstein’s (1953) famous rabbit/duck illusion...[For instance] seeing *as*...is a technical procedure that can be prompted. One can decide, or be instructed, to see the drawing in a particular way.’ (Spitzer 2004: 9) Seeing, Wittgenstein argues, is an amalgam of seeing and thinking.

<sup>14</sup> See also Meelberg (2008), who remarks that, of all the senses, hearing is most closely related to touch.

<sup>15</sup> See also Pearsall’s (2006) account of discursive and non-discursive time in his ‘Anti-Teleological Art: Articulating Meaning through Silence’.

Beyond this, however, what we listen to stays with us, nourishing our consciousness. As we ingest food or drink, we are left with the taste for only an instant, and ingested material passes through us, though the memory and nutrients from them may linger or accumulate for an indefinitely longer time. That is, there are two ways in which what we listen to exceeds the ‘now’ in which we hear it. The first is in that it lingers, being gradually metabolized, fading in intensity and bulk as it recedes into the past. (This is accounted for in some respects by Husserl’s (1964) phenomenology of time and duration.) The second is that it may accumulate in our memories for an indefinite time.

All of the following characterize that which we listen to: (1) it is ephemeral in that it flows through in such a way that it is at some point ‘gone’, accessible only through the memory of it that is left behind; (2) at some point, some of it is in, on, or of our perception, taking up the ‘present’ of our consciousness as we attend to it; (3) aspects of it are left with us (in us), fading in intensity, as the moment of their physical vibration recedes into the past; (4) aspects of it are left with us (in us) indefinitely, accumulated, even long after its sound ceases as physical vibration; (5) whereas in some respects we ‘hear’ all sound that occurs as a continuous flow, in other respects we filter out sound that is beyond our hearing range or comprehension; we may group sounds into useful units (or *sonic strokes*, see Meelberg 2009) such that incompatible information is filtered out. The framing function of perception ‘...is a subjective act [in which] the body takes relevant precepts from the unfiltered flux of perception’ (Meelberg 2008: 64). In one way or another all of these five characterizations of listening’s temporality also characterize the temporality of biological metabolic systems, that is: *digestion*.<sup>16</sup>

Listening, like digestion, may be characterized by various *flow systems*, which account for the variety of ways we experience its temporality. Previously (Mailman 2010a) I have written about the role *flow systems* play in various *vessels* of dynamic form and expression. These suggest the digestive nature of listening. Often the perception of form and expression arises from the flux of qualities emerging somehow from all events within each span of time, that is, statistically from the totality of the span’s events. In other situations, however, only certain segments or elements (called *occurrences*) of sound contribute to form and expression—for instance insofar as form and expression arise from the status of a musical motive, or from imitation, or even from spoken words.

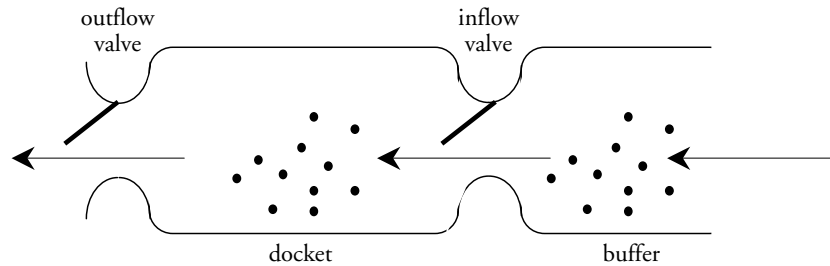
So, primarily there are two kinds of flow through a vessel: unfiltered and filtered, diagrammed in Figure 2.

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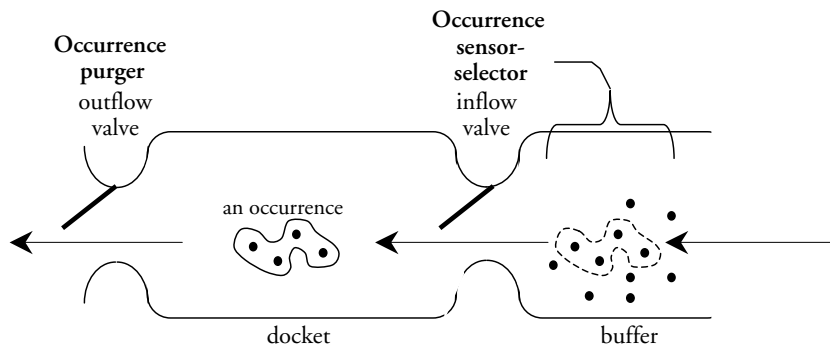
<sup>16</sup> More literal affiliations between music and gastronomy are documented light-heartedly by Braus (2007).

## Figure 2      Unfiltered versus filtered listening *flow systems*

a. Unfiltered flow system:



b. Filtered flow system:



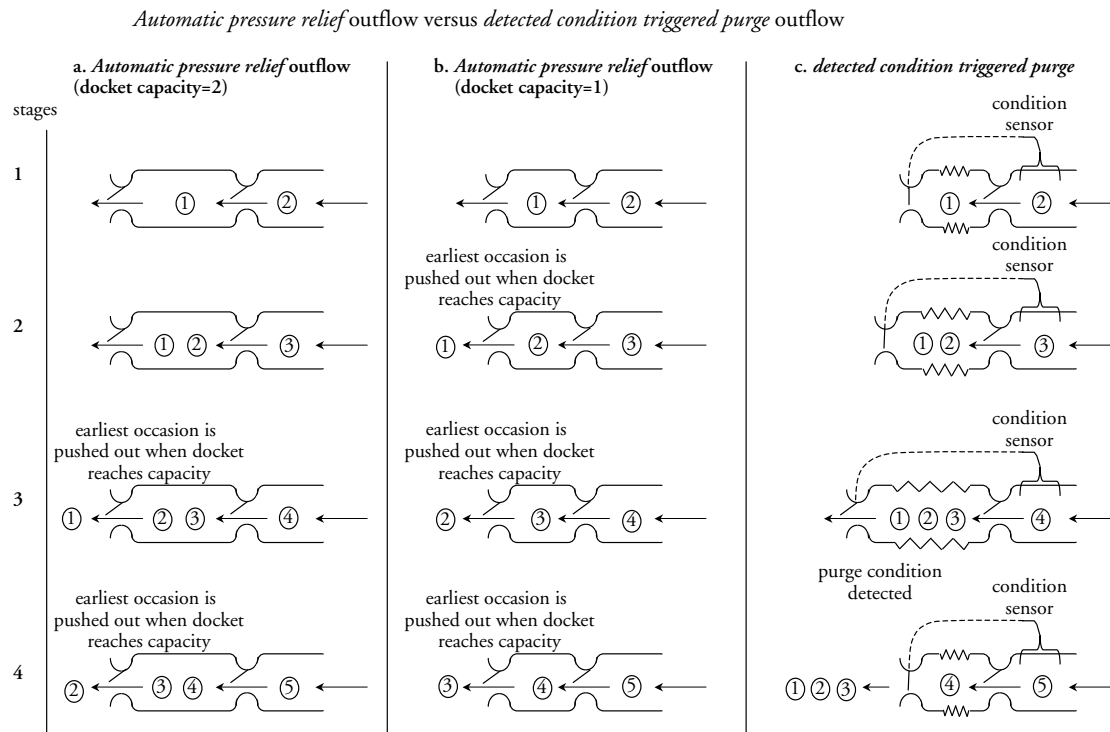
*Unfiltered flow* means the entirety of each span of sound is evaluated (Figure 2a). By contrast, *filtered flow* means only certain segments or elements (*occurrences*) within the flow are selected for evaluation (Figure 2b); the modeling of musical form and expression through filtered flow is necessarily *selective*; it involves the detection and selection of *occurrences* (referential segments or groupings of events) out of the total flow of all events in the stream; only the events within these selected occurrences contribute to the quality gauged and thus the meaning that arises from it. Similarly, with digestion, in certain respects anything can enter the process and pass through it (*unfiltered flow*); in another respect, however, certain aggregations enter as wholes and their wholeness is sustained throughout the process, while other entities—for instance those that are too large or which are unpalatable or poisonous to digestion—never enter the digestive process (*filtered flow*).

Another way to distinguish how the sonic stream flows in our consciousness is in the way its individual occasions are pushed out of the mental docket that we continually evaluate, or in other words, what prompts them to be pushed out of consciousness. They may be pushed out because of the pressure of new occasions going in (under the assumption that our evaluative docket has a limited capacity), or they may be pushed out on the basis of a specific condition detected in the stream (under the assumption the our evaluative docket

has elastic capacity). In some respects, the continual presentation of new events in a sonic stream pushes older events out of consciousness, so that they eventually cease to influence the stream's quality. In another respect, however, the continual presentation of new events may accumulate indefinitely (not ever forgotten) in the listener's consciousness until something triggers their release from immediate consciousness; and in this respect they may accumulatively contribute to the gauging of quality until a condition is obtained that relinquishes them. *Automatic pressure relief* outflow from the docket and *detected condition triggered purging* outflow from the docket correspond to these two aspects of listening.

This can be imagined in terms of *valves* controlling flow, which are akin to parts of our digestive tract that regulate the flow of digestion. For instance, the difference between *automatic pressure relief* outflow and *detected condition purging* outflow is diagrammed in Figure 3.

**Figure 3** Three types of listening *flow system* outflow as controlled by valves



Automatic *pressure relief* means that for each occasion that enters the docket, the events of some earlier occasion are forced out; that is, the docket's outflow is controlled by a *pressure relief* valve (shown in Figures 3a and b). By contrast, *conditional purging* means that each new event is retained in immediate memory, and thus on the docket, to contribute to each new gauging of quality, until some specific condition is met, at which point all events are relinquished all at once (shown in Figure 3c). This is by no means an exhaustive account of the variety of *flow systems* relevant to listening.<sup>17</sup> It merely suggests some of the ways listening is a kind of digestion, through its varieties of temporal flow and its qualitatively nourishing potential.

<sup>17</sup> See Mailman (2010a, chapter 4,) for a fuller account of *flow systems*.



### Listening as Meditation

I will not dwell long on the meditative aspects of listening since they are well known and familiar to many through first hand experience. That listening is a kind of meditation derives from the fact that it can be an object of intense focus and prolonged concentration. Recently, an incident at a New York Philharmonic concert brought heightened attention to listening's meditative function. As occasionally happens, an audience member's mobile phone started ringing (a loud marimba sound) during the performance. In this particular case it was near the end of Mahler's Ninth Symphony, and the ringing—coming from the fourth row—persisted for five minutes, ultimately intruding upon one of the movement's final quiet passages. So egregious was this that, in an unprecedented move, conductor Alan Gilbert halted the performance; audience members cheered him and went into an uproar, demanding the offender be ejected from the concert for ruining the listening experience for all the rest of the attendees. The incident was reported in national newspapers, radio, and web blogs for over a week following the event.<sup>18</sup> That concertgoers were 'baying for blood' attests to the value placed on focus and concentration in music listening; it is an intense experience of *tuning out* all else and a disappointment when that fails to be accomplished.

Previously, composers have drawn attention to the meditative aspect of music listening. Boretz (2002: 142) for example has described 'experiencing music [as] bringing into being a singular time-space identity, received from a singular perspective of location...The psychic time and space and occasion of a music experiencing are fully contingent upon the specific coincident physical times, and physical spaces and real-world occasions within which that music experiencing occurs'. Most famously Pauline Oliveros (1990) developed the interrelated concepts of *deep listening*, *sonic meditation*, and *sonic awareness* which are the basis for a meditatively immersive approach to improvisation, which Von Gunden describes as 'a synthesis of the psychology of consciousness, the physiology of the martial arts, and the sociology of the feminist movement,' involving both focal and global attention (Von Gunden 1983: 105-7). Morris describes the meditative aspect of listening as an attention to qualitative experience without reference to knowledge, calling it 'suchness'. 'Suchness is what we perceive when there are no thoughts about perception, before we recognize something as X.' Beyond listening, he also draws parallels between the attention-focusing aspects of musical discipline (such as breath control, bowing, scales, and even counterpoint) and the capacity for pure attention developed to advance on the path to enlightenment as prescribed by various spiritual belief systems such as Buddhism (Morris 2002: 324).

### Listening as Transport

The transportive nature of listening forms in some ways the opposite of its meditative capability but derives equally from its focal nature. Specifically it derives from the extremely powerful *referentiality* of sound, a referentiality that is exploited to an unprecedented degree as a result of the latest technologies of sound creation and reproduction. For instance, Ashby (2010: abstract) notes the way the iPod has utterly transformed sonic literacies and listening habits, arguing that 'recordings are now the primary way we hear classical music, especially the more abstract styles of 'absolute' instrumental music... mechanical reproduction [recording technology] has transformed classical musical culture and the very act of listening, breaking down aesthetic and generational barriers and mixing classical music into the

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<sup>18</sup> For instance the event was chronicled by Daniel Wakin (2012) in the *New York Times* <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/13/nyregion/ringing-finally-stopped-but-concertgoers-alarm-persists.html>

soundtrack of everyday life'. He further argues that the depictive nature of, for instance, Mahler's music is so imagistic that it rivals that of photographs. Mechanical sound reproduction allows the depictive power of sound to be deployed in physical situations that are utterly unrelated to that which is depicted, thus realizing the transportive potential of listening: thanks to the iPod, we can soak in the soundtrack of a sunset while surfing the subway.

Besides the affectively evocative nature of traditional classical music, such as Mahler's, the latest *musique concrète*, sonic art, and sound sampling exploit the nuanced level of sonic literacy that is now arising, to great transportive effect. The ability to combine sampled sounds *en masse* has even been developed into algorithms called *soundspotting*, as Michael Casey (2009) explains. The internet enables almost any sound to be available from any place at any time; and the opportunities to combine these into 'mash ups' and hear such sonic results are legion. It might be argued, therefore, that *sonic literacy* is gradually displacing older types of musical literacy which dominated, for instance, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As Landy (2009) puts it, sound-based music connects life to art. Yet the way in which it does this is to use sound to transport the listener to a time and place in life that is different from the time and place one is currently in when listening: the listener is transported via the sound she hears. Robert Morris's *Thunder Spring Over Distant Mountains* (1973) transports the listener on a futuristic tour through Asia by way of its processed samplings of Balinese, Japanese, Korean, and Tibetan musics.

[Program Notes for Morris's *Thunder Spring* (1973) are found here:

<http://yankgulchmusic.com/DETAILSFILES/06CDThunder/ThunderDETAILS.html>

Audio files of excerpts of Morris's *Thunder Spring* are available as follows:

opening prelude:

<http://yankgulchmusic.com/DETAILSFILES/06CDThunder/Thunder.I.00.00.mp3>

Excerpt based on *Eb-Fan Chu* from Taiwan:

<http://yankgulchmusic.com/DETAILSFILES/06CDThunder/Thunder.I.6.20.mp3>

Excerpt based on *wayang kulit* gamelan music from Bali:

<http://yankgulchmusic.com/DETAILSFILES/06CDThunder/Thunder.I.13.26.mp3>

Transition section to *Sinrili*, bardic song from Celebes:

<http://yankgulchmusic.com/DETAILSFILES/06CDThunder/Thunder.I.22.42.mp3>

Excerpt based on *Gaku* (Japanese noh play music):

<http://yankgulchmusic.com/DETAILSFILES/06CDThunder/Thunder.II.1.47.mp3>

Excerpt based on the Tibetan Buddhist, *Offering to the Guru Drakmar*:

<http://yankgulchmusic.com/DETAILSFILES/06CDThunder/Thunder.II.7.04.mp3>

Excerpt based on *The First Wine Offering* from Korea:

<http://yankgulchmusic.com/DETAILSFILES/06CDThunder/Thunder.II.15.02.mp3> ]

Trevor Wishart's *Globalalia* (2004), a '29 minute piece [which] uses syllables taken from 26 different languages, to create a series of elaborate variations on the sounds of language itself' transports the listener to every corner inside the human mouth.<sup>19</sup>

[An excerpt from Wishart's *Globalalia* (2004) is here: [http://www.gruenrekorder.de/?page\\_id=1898](http://www.gruenrekorder.de/?page_id=1898) ]

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<sup>19</sup> My attention was first drawn to this piece by Jon Forshee, who probes the pleasant strangeness of his phenomenology of listening to it, including an "amphibious mode of listening, enabling the slip transition from the whole to the parts and back again." (Forshee, 2010-11)



In *Canto di Malavita*, *Red Carpet*, *Psalmus XIII*, and *Gotterdammerung* by Noah Creshevsky, the virtuosically dense stream of samples provides a dizzying whirlwind tour of musical styles and genres, transporting the listener at the speed of light back and forth through a series of totally separate musical situations, by virtue of the extreme *affective* particularity of each sample. Creshevsky calls this *hyperrealism*. It transports the listener sonically in a way that would be physically impossible to achieve through actual physical transport.

[Audio files of Noah Creshevsky's music are available online as follows:

Creshevsky's *Canto di Malavita*

<http://player.soundcloud.com/player.swf?url=http%3A%2F%2Fapi.soundcloud.com%2Ftracks%2F46713898>

Creshevsky's *Red Carpet*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMSvWnwST9s&feature=related>

Creshevsky's *Psalmus XIII* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkvnQ27zvfU>

Creshevsky's *Gotterdammerung*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdjfaOJT0UQ&feature=related> ]

Environmental sounds are used in music and sound art not only for their sonic richness but also for their transportive capability—though the two are not mutually exclusive. What is interesting is the way processes of environmental sounds suggest not only distant location but also the process of transporting through time or space. The gradual crescendo of crickets in Luc Ferrari's *Presque rien* No.1 (1970) transports the listener closer and closer to the crickets or deeper and deeper into the night.

[An excerpt from Ferrari's *Presque rien* No.1 can be heard here :

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r--Oq7SzwIU> ]

In *Mahamud Ali and the Crickets* (2004), Alan Licht combines the crickets with various sampled urban sounds, transporting the listener to a highly specific hybrid soundscape utterly different from Ferrari's.

[An excerpt from Licht's *Mahamud Ali and the Crickets* can be heard here:

<http://www.allmusic.com/album/a-new-york-minute-r660071> ]

Other tracks on Licht's album *New York Minute* (2004) are soundscapes which deliberately evoke specific locales in New York City. Eno brings us *Music for Airports* (1978), but Licht brings us New York without the air travel. Such listener transport is not always achieved by presenting sounds sampled from the transport destination. A passage near the end of my own *Heracleian Dreams* (2008) uses mostly computer generated sounds to evoke the 'great buzzing confusion' of being deep inside a swamp, live with unfamiliar swarming creatures.

[An excerpt from Mailman's *Heracleian Dreams* can be heard here

[\[http://player.soundcloud.com/player.swf?url=http%3A%2F%2Fapi.soundcloud.com%2Ftracks%2F45901688](http://player.soundcloud.com/player.swf?url=http%3A%2F%2Fapi.soundcloud.com%2Ftracks%2F45901688) ]

Different loudness levels of streams within the soundscape are meant to suggest the depth of space of a physical scene the listener might find herself in.

Listening can transport in time as well as in space. Licht (2007: 83) notes Wishart's *Viking Museum* (which re-creates a lost Viking language) and Hans Peter Kuhn's installation at the closed steelworks Volklinger Hutte (with sounds recorded when it was still operating) and Ron Kuivila's Mass MoCA installation (re-creating sounds of the factory it once housed). Brad Lubman's electroacoustic composition *I Herd Voices*, 2 (2003) 'suggests the nostalgia of old dusty records combined with the suspense of hearing depth charges from inside a submarine' (Mailman 2003).

[Lubman's *I Herd Voices* can be heard here:

<http://player.soundcloud.com/player.swf?url=http%3A%2F%2Fapi.soundcloud.com%2Ftracks%2F45901727> ]

Thus, self-referentially, listening can even transport one specifically to listening situations of the past.

One of the most fascinating aspects of *listening as transport* is the way its potential is increasingly exploited both as a result and a cause of the enhanced *referential sonic literacy* enabled by audio technology. As evolutionary biologist Mark Pagel explains, scientists now distinguish between physiological evolution (which operates by principles of gene selection) and *cumulative cultural evolution*, of which he cites language as a 'social technology' that allows humans to engage in *social learning*.<sup>20</sup>

[A video of Pagel discussing *social learning* is available here:

<http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/15/is-the-web-selecting-for-copiers-over-creators/> ]

Social learning enables the evolution of *ideas*, which persist beyond the lifetime of the individuals that produce them. The ease of use, the high fidelity, and the transportability of mechanical sound reproduction now enables the listener to partake in a kind of *cumulative cultural adaptation* involving sound and sonic literacy. It allows the details of sounds to persist beyond the individual lifetimes of human minds and now also beyond the obstacles of geographic proximity. We may find that mechanical sound reproduction is to musical evolution what *ideas* are for human evolution, because a composer or sound artist a hundred years from now will be able to employ sound samples exclusive to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, and her early 22<sup>nd</sup> century listeners will likely recognize them in all their specificity because of their own highly developed sonic literacy. They may be able to transport sonically to our time in a way we cannot do in relation to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Conclusion

Sound may be a physical phenomenon; hearing may be regarded as a physiological process involving sound. Listening, however, is an abstraction. Like any other abstraction, listening has no essence. It is best understood pluralistically, in terms of its facets. These facets are not reducible to each other. In fact, though no systematic procedures governed the selection of these particular metaphors, the complementarity of some of them was a consideration. The *meditative* and *transportive* facets of listening in some ways complement one another, by stressing immersion on the one hand and escape on the other hand, though each in some ways also entails the other. The *digestive* and *recording* facets—by no means mutually exclusive—stress the ephemeral versus persistent effects of listening, while neither denies the reality of the other. The *adaptive* and *improvisatory* seem to complement each other by stressing either subjugation of the will to circumstance or imposing of the will on circumstance. Yet both suggest responsiveness to circumstance. The *computational* nature of listening, though

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<sup>20</sup> Revkin, Andrew (2011) 'Is the Web Selecting for Copiers Over Creators?' *New York Times*, December 15.

See also

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2504810/>

[http://www.ted.com/talks/mark\\_pagel\\_how\\_language\\_transformed\\_humanity.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/mark_pagel_how_language_transformed_humanity.html)

seemingly rigid, actually underlies, enables, and enhances the *adaptive* and *improvisatory*, while it also may operate according to either or both contrasting temporalities of the *digestive* and *recording* facets. A future study might explore such intricate complementarities and interdependencies, which are not crucial to my present purpose.

Especially in a discursive landscape that sometimes favors reductionism, what is crucial is to keep the various irreducible facets of listening in mind, to maximize listening's experiential value. To this end, the seven metaphors encourage an actively pursued flexibility of listening, prompted by a plurality of ways to conceptualize it. Consider once again the facets of listening as discussed above: Its particular temporality and flow, its ephemerality and persistence in our consciousness reveal it as a kind of *Digestion*. That it is a way of precisely preserving what happened reveals it as a kind of *Recording*. That it involves adjustments to our thinking in order to absorb what is happening reveals it as a kind of *Adaptation*. That it is a way of tuning out and focusing attention demonstrates it as a kind of *Meditation*. That the referentiality of sound directs our consciousness to locations and times other than the ones we are in reveals how listening is a kind of *Transport*. That it demands a spontaneous readiness and permits agency of interpretation shows it as a kind of *Improvisation*. That it may involve systematic processes of parsing and calculation reveals it as a kind of *Computation*. Listening may be yet much else, but much of it is *DRAMATIC*.

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## Arthur Margolin

### Personifications 3

Of the things that matter  
many have spoken as one.  
What glitters and has luster in its heart  
is fool's gold. Or may be real.  
The foolish make paste with paste  
the wise are suspended in bliss.  
I remain here  
thinking of you  
and your lovely  
personality  
which does not reek  
does not smell  
does not waft an aroma  
of blissful sweat  
into the room  
where it is being revealed  
spoken of in earnest  
to those who are getting a clue  
from the cognoscenti  
at the podium.  
The far, middle, near --  
all points  
equidistant  
from the truth  
blossoming here  
tonight.  
Our love makes us one  
he said smirking cautiously  
she never more aflutter.  
Idiot, she thought.  
At the podium he said--  
Clearly they were  
made for each other.  
Clearly may precede what I say  
because it smoothes the way  
a patina on the platitude  
without it we are all  
lost in the wilderness  
saying this and that to one another  
without precedence in our thoughts  
without propriety in our discourse.

Are you in tune with me she asked.  
Who said that the personage  
demanded to know.  
I was mum, our alibi  
a transcendent quietus.  
Too precious you said.  
too rare, too this too that.  
I agreed of course, because that is my  
nature, attending to the hand feeling  
for loose change for the parking meter  
which I knew would soon violate us.  
That was all I cared about at the time if I may be honest with you.  
Afterward something important was said, but we left  
Could have read about it, but forgot  
Moved on.  
Got a life.  
Lives I mean, together  
Pardon my slip madame.  
No I am mademoiselle, you jerk.  
they're different you see.  
Not just polite.  
Married. Unmarried.  
One for one, one for the other.  
It's the French. Their culture.  
their language. So we must  
Follow it.  
Yes I see I said. And I meant it.  
As between us that is.  
There's nothing between us  
you said.  
But how could you know?  
I wondered.  
"But how could I know?  
You wondered."  
It was truly preternatural.  
It was so this and so that.  
Like a flash of light  
Call it lightning  
and thunder at the same time  
knowing in our hearts  
that one must precede the other.  
That is what's called a fucking  
mystery and we are better for it  
you said. And I agreed of course, but was unsure  
of whether I was laughing to myself

or not  
which worried me, the uncertainty-  
and made me wonder:  
do I really love her after all?

Your words have such poignancy,  
how your questions do resonate.  
I am so smitten with your knacks --  
how you nail down the ineffable,  
that I want to have your children,  
and bring them up ineffably.  
Neither seen nor heard  
a preternaturally peaceful household.  
It struck a chord, and  
called to mind a movie: concerning her maturity,  
the man in the elevator saying --  
I want to lick you all over.  
She didn't share his pangs, and I don't want your spectral children  
Either.  
There is a lesson to be learned here said the cognoscentum.  
A moral not only for our time, as well for all the future,  
how the past will reveal to us its essential proclivities  
which are us, as we understand ourselves now.  
He hit the high notes, rubbed our noses on them.  
No escaping a confrontation with the self.  
You grimaced. A existentially momentous gesture.  
I became somewhat unhinged, ravished you as we ascended to the penthouse  
Spilling over onto the parquet floors.  
Going at each other like baboons in a bordello.  
How outré. How spiritual. What a low-life.  
" You prognosticate the near and the far but the meanings  
of the middleground elude you."  
Like a pickpocket stealing lint.  
Go for the big bucks. Plastic. Cyberspace. Secret numbers.  
Endeavors proliferative.  
And you will find, in the end, that the unspeakable is in your own key.  
Otherwise, you are mouthing the words but not hearing the tune.

What an estrangement at this crucial moment.  
A concrete block right there in the mittelgrund.  
So that's truth for you.  
Your imagination exceeds your capacities.

Arthur Margolin

It runs away, and returns from afar, bites you in your arse.  
You go to the doctor. It hurts. Please, something, anything.  
But not too new, or experimental. Tested and shown to work.  
From the podium: your slush fund is unbounded. Simply open yourself up to it.  
Place yourself in the middle of it. Imagine what it's like to give it away to others.  
And then keep it all to yourself.  
What a philosophy!  
All I know is that I am bound to you in  
a servitude elegiacal. Or perhaps not.  
We desire a portion of each other's wisdom, and rue the result.  
This is when I go out west, to big sky or is it sur,  
and cogitate upon rectitude and near misses.  
I will arrive at a place I did not know, and know it for the first time.  
How this, how that, take your medicine, and consider that fortune didn't take too much of a  
dislike to you.

In this world  
he said  
warming up.  
Some were riveted  
Others looked around  
nervously for a means of  
egress  
I stopped breathing,  
became dizzy  
but didn't pass out  
lest I draw attention to myself.  
And I knew by all this,  
things that happen and things that don't,  
that I was in control, but under pressure  
might be given to qualifications, revelations  
by degrees  
at certain times  
etc, etc.  
This is not really what I am thinking

*dedicated to [names withheld]*  
**“I AM NOT MAKING THIS UP”:  
DAYS, NUMBERED  
Barbara White**

One hunter said it was the sound of a stag belling across the lake. Another said it was the sound of rain falling on leaves. The laughter of a young girl, suggested one of them. The sound of dogs yelping during the chase, or water falling over stone, or the wind in the grass. Each hunter had a candidate for the finest music in the world. Then they asked Finn what he thought it was. He answered, “The finest music in all the world is the music of what is happening.”

—Tom Cowan<sup>1</sup>

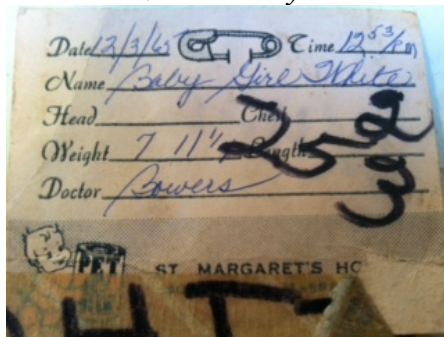
... the Taoist story of a farmer whose horse ran away. That evening the neighbors gathered to commiserate with him since this was such bad luck. He said, “May be.” The next day the horse returned, but brought with it six wild horses, and the neighbors came exclaiming at his good fortune. He said, “May be.” And then, the following day, his son tried to saddle and ride one of the horses, was thrown, and broke his leg. Again the neighbors came to offer their sympathy for his misfortune. He said, “May be.” The day after that, conscription officers came to the village to seize young men for the army, but because of the broken leg the farmer’s son was rejected. When the neighbors came in to say how fortunately everything had turned out, he said, “May be.”

—Alan Watts<sup>2</sup>

... obstacles as teachers ...

—Pema Chödrön<sup>3</sup>

*December 3, 1965. Day one.*



*December 25, 1965. Day twenty-three.*



Barbara White

*December 25, 1970, 1971, and 1972. Five, Six, Seven.*



*January 1, 1973. Family. Twelve-year-old to five-year-old:*

"It's all your fault. It'd be better if he left, but he stays because you are too little."

*October 18, 1975. Family. Nine plus one.*

Absence unexplained. Pancakes for dinner, unwashed hair matted in what we call a "sna(r)l."

Shipped out to the Silvias': they, with nine children, cavort in a Partridge Family-style decommissioned school bus, and so Lorraine can surely take on a tenth and untangle me. Number eight says, "I know why your mother is in the hospital. She had her breasts removed."

*August 26, 1978. Family. Five streams and the center pool.*

First flounder, with the Galvins at Salisbury Beach:



*September 3 (or thereabouts), 1983. Approaching eighteen.*



*It was over in a moment.*

*It seemed it would never end.*

*A scream, a shudder, a splitting open.*

*Parting.*

*December 25, 1983. Eighteen. Used once or twice.*

Splitkein wooden cross-country skis. Repurposed, old, inefficient. Therefore, special. Earthy. Pine tar. Color-coded wax, Swix, with cork to apply. To glide at any temperature.

*April 26 (or thereabouts), 1987. Twenty-one. First.*

John Knowles Paine Traveling Fellowship, to study in Paris the following year. The Square, walking, anxious, unsettled.

*December 3, 1991. Twenty-five. Professional engagement.*

"Happy Birthday," sung by 400 undergraduates along with teaching fellows and professor.

*October 10, 1995. Family. Thirty-four-year-old to twenty-nine-year-old.*

*"Mom died this morning."*

*"I'll be there as soon as I can get a flight."*

*"Don't worry about it. We don't need *you* here."*

Seventy years plus a bit, minus forty = almost thirty.

*First cry, last breath.*



*December 3, 1995. Professional engagement. Sixty-year-old to thirty-year-old.*

Seminar on film music. Visiting faculty member, cutting cake:

“This is for you, on your birthday”:

It’s a long way from May to December.

But the days grow short when you reach September . . .<sup>4</sup>

(Who was singing? Frank Sinatra? Tony Bennett? Not Ella Fitzgerald. It’s a long while and I have forgotten the performing forces.)

*December 25, 1995. Religious observance.*

Unitarian Universalist Introit: Tibetan bowl sings. Congregant reads parodic stories from that year’s Barnes and Noble book-candy-aisle stocking stuffer. Lips purse. “That spoiled the whole mood!”

*October 12, 2000. Family. Second ending.*

Tuesday morning: I leave my father’s deathbed to attend a rehearsal with Boston Musica Viva. I began writing my new piece in Maine while visiting my sister as she recovered from her mastectomy. My father started out with breast cancer years earlier, progressing later to prostate, bone, and brain. He’s been in a coma for a full week, longer than the hospice nurse said he could survive in that state, and we five children have been taking turns, along with the aide. He breathes, and his heart beats.

I arrive at the Longy School, and the cellist says, “I left my parents in my kitchen drinking their coffee before I came to rehearsal. They have a flight in an hour. It’s a strange feeling to think it might be the last time I see them.”

Later that afternoon, I attend the première of a film presented by my sister-in-law and her partner, concerning the ethics of marketing cigarettes to children in developing countries. During the film, my father stops.

*No breath, no skin, no thirst, no tongue.*

*October 13, 2000. Professional engagement. First.*

Boston Musica Viva gives the première of *Learning to See* at Longy. One of the other composers on the program didn’t finish his piece. I wonder what held him up.

*April 24, 2004. Professional engagement. Mentoring.*

“She wants to make you her bitch. Don’t let her make you her bitch.”

*July 18, 2004. Family.*

*The well will go dry, and our bond will be broken.*

*December 3, 2004. Family. Forty.*

*We were broken, beaten, spent.*

*December 18, 2004. Family. Forty-seven-year-old to thirty-eight-year-old.*  
“Has he made any advances to you since then?”

*December 25, 2004. Family. Macha speaks.*

*Is there not one among you whose blood flows warm within?  
Have I no sister? No brother? No one?  
Your roaring silence carves a hollow in my heart.*

*March 19–20, 2005. Spiritual work.*

Tom guides us through the burning forest, the quaking bog, the icy sea.

I wonder about concocting a trial for my everyday corporeal self, to challenge and foster my mental and spiritual strength. (The man I am leaving later tells me it would be good for me to push myself in this way, to toughen up.)

Perhaps Tom tells us about the music of what is happening.

*December 23, 2006. Volunteer work.*

“Each of the women has a budget to buy necessities like toiletries and makeup from our in-house store; it helps them to take back control of their lives.”

*January 27, 2007. Reconciliation work.*

“I am a predator.”

*March 24, 2007. Spiritual work.*

Tom is teaching. We're in the woods in Western Massachusetts, where it has just snowed, though I had thought I had seen the last snow of the season. We perform a divination, outdoors, seeking information on our desires and the future. I turn around, perform my invocation, and open my eyes to see a sawed-off tree trunk in front of me. Second turn: a workshop classmate who has the same name as someone I am trying to forget. Third: a dumpster.

Perhaps Tom tells us about the music of what is happening.

I return home overly invigorated, overtaken with Goddess energy. I wonder whether I need to see someone.

*April 3, 2007. Corporeality.*

At Whole Foods, my heart is beating loudly. It's amplitude, not frequency. At the ER, Dr. Harrison says, "We see a dozen people every day with this."

*April 4, 2007. Professional engagement. Who's counting?*

Carla and I attend Blair's performance of *Reliquary* at the Casa Italiana. He caresses the repeated notes of my impressionist impersonation and stabs at my matricidal teepee accents; I learn a few days later that Anthony is "entranced" and finds that I "dare" and am "confident" in my "strong ear."<sup>5</sup> Thank you. I feel fortunate to have had so many crackerjack, soulful—as well as inquiring, receptive, flexible—pianists tend my reshaping of Ravel's sad birds and my transformation of mother's deformed rendition of "Tain't No Sin," which connects me so tenuously to the earlier generations I scarcely met. Thank you, Blair.

*May 7, 2007. Professional engagement.*

Aspen, second residency visit, working with lively fifth graders. Yawning at midday, struggling to summon my energy. I confess I am waiting for test results, and Deb says, "I'm sure you'll be fine."

Connecting flight on micro-plane is cancelled, though the skies are clear. "Weather" means underbooked, apparently. I hitch a ride to Denver in a rental car with some perfect strangers from Florida. They own a fruit company. My brand-new cell phone rings with a call from Dr. Penupatruni, and I tell her we'll have to talk later, because I do not want to discuss medical matters in my new companions' presence.

11 p.m., Newark. All I want is to collapse into my bed an hour away. Vista Parking has lost my keys. I tend to be accepting of everyday human error (others', at least), but—it's about all they have to do, right?—keep the keys in order. The unapologetic and unhelpful gentleman suggests that I search the board myself and I do, and people start to come in asking me for their keys. The gentleman suggests that I should have my car rekeyed, and when I tell him I have no intention of paying for the week's parking, he balks.

Oddly, my car is nearby and unlocked, so I stretch out in the back seat and siphon an Internet connection from the hotel nearby, writing to the man I am trying to forget. I remember that I have been wanting some undisturbed, unscheduled time to read that book of Ryokan's poems, which I found by accident in St. Mark's bookshop when I was looking for Kay Ryan's latest. I write a waka:

*Journey's end. Key lost!*

*Eight o'clock searching. No luck.*

*Nine o'clock battle.*

*Wait for locksmith. Almost twelve.*

*Ryokan brings peace. (Bullshit!!!)*

Finally the locksmith shows up. I pay him, drive home, fall into bed at 4 a.m. It's Sunday, so I have to wait one more day to talk to my doctor. It's Epstein-Barr Virus.

*May 18, 2007, 5:00 p.m. More.*  
(And cancer.)

*May 31, 2007, 8:30–10:00 p.m. Spiritual Work.*

At Fat Ram Tattoo in Jamaica Plain, Andrew inks my inner arm with a Newgrange spiral. It's the body modification I do not need, and I can take it into the operating room where I'll receive the other one.

*August 1, 2007. iCal.*

12:00, YWCA: Young Women's Breast Cancer Support Group.

1:00, Dissertation Defense: Alan Tormey, *Music and Other Music: Strategies of Work-Identity, Appropriation, and Narrative in the Contemporary Listening Experience.*

5:45, Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn: Lina, Salon Des Courtiers. I still have hair to cut. "Would you like to try a little color?"

"You can go back to work within a week or two" means socks in my bra, uneven, a month later. Healing first, then fitting.

*August 11, 2007. Professional engagement.*

Back in Aspen for an all-White concert. The breakfast café is busy, and the owner offers to match up solo diners for efficiency's sake. My companion just lost her husband, and she is mournfully peaceful. She says, "He was doing what he loved, rock climbing." She is a trauma nurse.

Still red, irritated, sore. Still no fitting. Ripped-up t-shirts work better than socks, I have learned. Still uneven though.

*2007-09. Corporeality. Spiritual work.*

Considering how common illness is, how tremendous the spiritual change that it brings, how astonishing, when the lights of health go down, the undiscovered countries that are then disclosed, what wastes and deserts of the soul a slight attack of influenza brings to light . . . it becomes strange indeed that illness has not taken its place with love, battle, and jealousy among the prime themes of literature.<sup>6</sup>

*August 16–17, 2008. Spiritual work.*

Tom reads Marie Heaney's text, and I meet Macha, the goddess who assumes human form; at once I know she will be the protagonist of the opera I have been engaged to compose for 2012:

One day as [Crunchu] was resting alone in his house, a tall young woman came into the hall where he lay. She was richly dressed and stately and there was a great confidence about her. She walked into Crunchu's room as if she owned it. . . . And so she became Crunchu's wife and they lived happily together for many years."<sup>7</sup>

Questions for Macha: Why choose a mortal man and assume human form in order to love him bodily? Why relinquish your power? Why insist he keep silent about it? Why, after being exposed by him, threatened by the one appointed to lead, and abandoned by the community—why . . .

Perhaps Tom tells us about the music of what is happening.

*March 14, 2009. Corporeality.*

Before heading to see Andrew at Fat Ram for the last time, I take a video camera to my scar.

*Radiant insult, brutal peace.*

*October 29, 2009. Family. Green Line, B Train: Harvard Ave. at Commonwealth.*

I have just played the memorial piece *Tamuke* on my shakuhachi at my parents' plot at Holyhood Cemetery in Brookline—which, they never failed to point out, is within "spitting distance" of Joe Kennedy's grave. There are Celtic crosses everywhere, and the names (Murphy, Murdock, McHugh, Monaghan) reflect my parents' upbringing even more than my own.

Driving through the neighborhood where I lived from 1989 until 1992, past the Dunkin' Donuts and my old Green Line stop, I furiously, unthinkingly, inadvertently run my Focus into a Lexus—not the one who cut me off, however. I see white, smoke, and think I am beyond this life, but it turns out to be my airbags, and a lot of dust. We pull our cars around the corner and take care of business. A few police cars pass by during the next half hour, but none stop. The next day, I fill out, not a police report (they have bigger things on their minds), but an accident report, for statistical purposes.

I wait five hours at the clinic and have no right to complain. I am reading Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion*, a favorite of my physical therapist, who is also, perhaps not coincidentally, a Glenn Gould fan. Dr. Perez sees my scar and says, "Poor you!" And later, "Inflammation is God's way of helping us. But I'll give you some ibuprofen to reduce the swelling." Dr. Perez is my favorite.

Julia's father, Jim, says, "That was a dangerous intersection in the 40s." I think, it's even more dangerous now, under the influence of my unmediated road rage.

*Hag and hero, honored foe.*

I make a \$6000 insurance profit on the incident and buy an Insight.

[A month later I have an abnormal mammogram. Six months later, another. I am released each time after additional scans. Finally I realize that it may be due to the accident. Scans normal ever since. Note to self: you're overdue for your early mammogram.]

*January 23–24, 2010. Spiritual work.*

Tom is teaching us about sovereignty, about the importance of being in charge—not to be confused with being in control. He reads Heaney's story again; again Macha is exposed and overpowered and depleted:

"One of you, please help me," she cried. "A mother gave birth to each one of you so remember her and help me now!" No one moved. The frantic woman turned back to the king. "Have pity on me!" she pleaded.<sup>8</sup>

I am reminded, every time, of Joseph Nye Welch speaking to Joseph McCarthy: "Have you no decency?"

The young man next to me observes, "I know what it is like to be unable to speak when it is necessary and to speak when it is fatal." An hour later, he gives me a Claddagh pendant. (I can no longer remember my Claddagh ring.)

—Why rescue the man who betrayed and disappointed you? Why plead for pity instead of defending yourself? Why accept the role of scapegoat and endorse your own execution? Why leave your children in the care of a father whose verbal incontinence led to their mother's captivity, torture and death? Where is the virtue in sacrificing yourself for the sake of one who is unable to

rein in his impulses? What is accomplished by putting him first, by leaving your children in his incompetent care? Why deny them your presence, and why abandon yourself too?

*October 7, 2010, 3:24 p.m. Professional correspondence: "Still Resounding."*

I am writing to say that this is probably the best I have felt after a big project—or a small one, for that matter—and to thank you all, once more, for making that possible.

*October 10, 2010. Family: Fifteen years. Spiritual work: two-year program.*  
On the anniversary of my mother's death, I graduate. Thank you, Tom.

*December 3–4, 2010. Spiritual work.*

Susan is teaching about the old wise wild woman. Sedna says:

Broken pieces wash away.  
What remains, descends.  
And moves the seas.

Tangled, burdened.  
The debt has been paid.  
And paid again.

No more!  
Push the waves.

*March 7, 2011. Professional Meeting: Dances With Scones.*

Blocking:

Stroke knee.  
Tease baked good.  
Giggle.  
Display.  
Collaborate.  
Collect commission fee.

*March 19, 2011. Professional meeting: revision.*

"OMG, you didn't think I was *undermining* you, did you? Or *flirting*?"

"No, of course not; why would you think I thought so?"

What music? What luck? What teaching?

*September 11, 2011. Domestic experience:*

Returning a day early from North Shore Inn, Barnegat Light, New Jersey, in order to continue editing opera score: utility closet floor is swollen from small leak in hot-water heater.

*Well flows full, thirsty.*

*September 15, 2011. Domestic work.*

Russell gives me an estimate for mold remediation: \$11,000.

*Open wide.*

*October 16, 2011, 1:01 p.m. Professional correspondence.*

Recording session booked. Hall confirmed, as are engineer, assistant, and six musicians. Percussionist writes to say, "I would love to play this other show with a number of New York greats. Is there a possibility that we could make this work and change the date? You hold the master schedule. Hope this works out!" I say, sure thing; enjoy yourself with the greats! And thanks; it turns out Dominic is free, and he'll do a better job anyway, especially with the middle-aged quarter notes.

*October 24, 2011, 10:48 a.m. Professional correspondence.*

So, having been explicitly instructed to say less in the creation of my own project . . . I found it strange that you then gave me no opportunity to say anything about, or even witness, the next step. That is a position I should not be in: wondering what is happening in my own project and fearing I will seem overbearing for requesting to be included. Like I said when we met last, it seems the shape of the story is affecting the shaping of the story.

[Dec. 25, 2012, note to self: Think about the words "instructed," "gave," and "requesting."]

Perhaps it is time to mention that the opera is called *Weakness*, an abbreviation of the traditional title "The Weakness of the Ulstermen." It's sometimes referred to as "The Curse of Macha." We shudder at the idea of ending with a curse.

*December 24, 2011, 11:27 a.m. Professional correspondence: casting.*

I was really just asking whether you want to consider proceeding, not initiating another round of email conversation, which can so easily be misunderstood or confusing. You did not really answer my question about whether you feel able to prepare the performance. Would you please write back by Tuesday evening to let us know whether you want us all to consider moving forward? And then, if so, we can make a time to discuss any remaining ambiguities on the phone after you return.

What music? What luck? What teaching?

*January 3, 2012. Cast.*

Thank you for being so difficult! As a result, Michael has talked to Gabriel who has talked to his girlfriend who has recommended Sarah. She sings a few breaths' worth in my studio, and Michael and I are rapt.

Nice to meet you, Sarah. You shall be our Goddess.



*January 8, 2012. Spiritual work.*

"It's a story about trauma—and healing."

*January 28–29, 2012. Spiritual work.*

Tom is teaching. Taliesin says:

I have been in many shapes  
Before I assumed a constant form.  
I have been a narrow sword,  
A drop in the air. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Taliesin has also been a boat on the sea, a string on a harp, has passed nine years in enchantment.  
There is nothing in which he has not been.

*February 18, 2012. Professional engagement: rehearsal.*

I replace a chilling line, dark and true, learned from Tom, because my collaborators have pointed out that it reads like a non-sequitur in my libretto. I figure it'll work its way back in somewhere else.

*February 26, 2012, 6:36 p.m. Professional correspondence.*

I remain worried and stymied about how to manage the next five weeks. . . .

When I expressed concern it was resisted with great impatience by the group as if it were petulant personal opinion, rather than the wisdom of the highest-ranking person in the room (that's the first time I have parsed that fact—not how I think, really—but a woman in my position has to from time to time), the *Artistic Director*, who oversees the budget in question. I felt as though you were trying to overpower me and silence me so that you could have your way. . . .

I am tired of seeing the narrative bleed offstage. It breaks my heart.

*I can win, but the price will be too high.*

*March 25, 2012. Professional engagement: rehearsal, with meltdown.*

Pushed out of my (yes) workplace, bodily, in an exact replica of the movement onstage. Though I do not permit myself to be exiled, the attempt on the part of the visitor—whom I hired, whom I am paying—is enough.

*The well runs dry.*

*The end begins.*

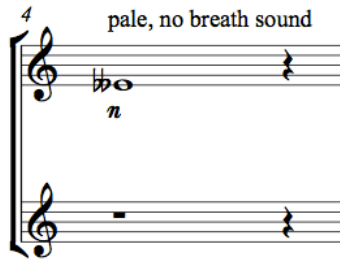
*Wisdom makes a bloody entrance.*

Question for Macha: Is it a cautionary tale or a how-to manual?

What music? What luck? What teaching?

*March 27, 2012. Niente.*

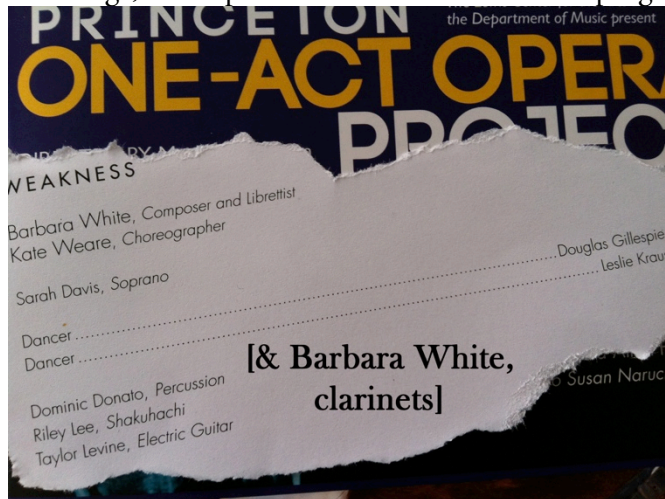
Riley and I are rehearsing Dave's *To One*, for shakuhachi and clarinet. I delight in Riley's unbreathy *dai meri niente*—an American-Japanese-Italian “pale, doubly bent nothing”—which I can drink in, fully, since I have a rest in that measure:



*March 30, 2012. Weakness.*

A première. The opera, *Weakness*, opens with a bass clarinet solo, not overly difficult, but dripping in nuance, requiring healthy, full, strong breaths. Beginning the second phrase, I think to myself, “I’m sounding great!”—and just then I drop unexpectedly down to the low register—a first for *that* particular pratfall. Still on the first page of my part, I glance up at the title, bemused at the correspondence, and continue without a hitch. More alarming than the error is that it did not show itself to most listeners. Julia and Riley heard it though, and Riley says, with a twinkle, “You were playing *otsu* when it was supposed to be *kan*!”<sup>10</sup>

Backstage, Sarah points out an omission in the program:



The program also fails to list the two Artistic Directors (Michael and me). Oopsie! Like I said, I tend to be accepting of others’ errors. Another member of the team proofed the program, and I asked to see it too before printing, but no one replied. Oh, well, these things happen. No hard feelings.

*After a while, I told him my name.*

*April 1, 2012, 9 a.m. Professional engagement: rehearsal.*

We've completed our two nights of opera, and Riley has agreed to rehearse early on Sunday morning to prepare for Tuesday's solo concert; I am joining him in several pieces. Hunting down Cenk's fragile sixth-tones on my neglected shakuhachi and teasing out multiphonics on my clarinet alongside Riley's exquisitely rendered sound is about the only thing I can imagine doing after the drama known as the opera project. In my moments free of *Weakness*, over the past ten days, I have written a duo for us called *Chisoku Reibo*, which means something like "Yearning for Just Enough." We rehearse Cenk's piece, then mine, and when we play Dave's *To One*, Riley plays that pale doubly bent nothing even softer than before.

I recall how, when Riley was in residence for a semester in 2009, I could hardly walk down the street, though I did not tell him that at the time. Now, he is recovering, still, from having been hit by a car a year and a half earlier. I am inspired by his resolve, his enthusiasm, his devotion to running, and I feel fortunate to work with him again. Thank you, Riley.

*April 3, 2012. Professional engagement: rehearsal.*  
(And softer.)

*April 3, 2012. 1.8: Shakuhachi Master Riley Lee Performs New Works by Princeton Composers.*  
Dress rehearsal. I notice us breathing in sympathy. I prefer to synchronize this way rather than by visual cue. Riley's nothing is even less than before.

7:45. Program Note: Even before he arrived from Australia two weeks ago, Riley Lee has been an integral part of the seminar, offering suggestions and input from afar. Over those first weeks I did my best to pass on Riley's impeccable understanding of his instrument and its tradition; his open-minded and soulful musical sensibility; and his generosity, indefatigability and unfailing good will and curiosity. But boy, was I glad when the real Riley showed up; he plays his part better than anyone else could. It is always a joy to work with him, and I am deeply grateful for the gifts he has offered us this semester.

8 p.m. Performance: Riley begins with Wally's piece for shakuhachi and recorded sound. He enters stage right, takes his place, prepares and—stops to say he left his timer upstairs. This is not an opera. The fourth wall may be broken, and we may speak the truth about what is happening in this room.

I join Riley onstage for Dave's *To One*. When we get to that nothing, Riley plays *the softest sound I have ever heard*. Can the audience hear it? Can Riley? I can. I have the best seat in the house.

[December 11, 2012: a reading session with an orchestra. I am glad for my students and impressed with their output, but I myself have little interest in such a contraption, however well oiled it may be. I want more understanding, sympathy, even soul connection, with the people I perform with and write music for. I want pale, doubly bent nothings, not displays and tangles and tantrums. I want respectful straightforwardness, not devious charm. I know that is a lot to ask for, but there are those who are up for it. You know who you are.]

*April 16, 2012. Domestic work.*

I return from Washington Heights to an impotent tap.  
Paperwork, finances: not my forte.  
I pay online, a big sum, and it flows again.

*When they were thirsty, the well would run dry.*

*May 14, 2012. Audiovisual content: imitate life.*

“Talk like a hippie; act like a mobster.”<sup>11</sup>

*June 3, 2012. Two months, five years: in the shady bamboo grove.*

Music Camp on the Canal, St. Peter’s, Nova Scotia: I play my shakuhachi with four guys, aged fourteen to sixty, all of whom play various plucked string instruments and can sing harmony on a moment’s notice. Gord has a special talent for forgetting the lyrics. They introduce me to a tune, “Shady Grove,” which I have never heard but which I gather is the Beethoven’s Fifth of Cape Breton. Playing Japanese bamboo flute in a multigenerational bluegrass band on Brigadoon is about the only thing I can imagine doing after *Weakness*. In the battle of the bands, we come in second. Out of two.

[June 16, 2012: Leo talks about his kids’ tattoos. He monitored and supported their tattoo adventures in what I find to be charming example of attentive and boundary-respecting parenting, but he explains in depth that he just doesn’t want one himself. I tell him he is not obliged to modify. He mentions faddishness and I tell him the story of my spiral. Dawn, wearing long sleeves, smiles.]

*June 5, 2012, 10:30 a.m. Correspondence, professional and personal: reconciliation.*

Meantime, here is the entirety of the Druid Vow of Friendship. I don’t expect to be capable of performing it in its entirety until after I take in my final breath, but I shall endeavor to rehearse it devotedly until that day comes:

*I honor your Gods.  
I drink from your well.  
I bring an unprotected heart to our meeting place.  
I hold no cherished outcome.  
I will not negotiate by withholding.  
I am not subject to disappointment.*<sup>12</sup>

[Update: October 22, 2012. Disappointed. Deeply.]

What music? What luck? What teaching?

*June 7, 2012, 2:40 a.m. Ingonish, Nova Scotia. Family.*

Great to hear from you! Hope you're staying warm out there in the far east (of North America)! As you know, musical talent and a love of music runs in the Whelton family, especially in your branch. I still remember my Aunt Anna, your grandfather Fred's younger sister, telling me about your grandfather going to NYC in hopes of selling his songs to Tin Pan Alley. His older brother Frank used to put on minstrel shows (my father saved Frank's tambourine from the Whelton family attic in Jamaica Plain, and on the tambourine were written various rhythms ("shuffle shuffle bang bang shuffle bang bang") for their performances. My father loved to sing and dance, though he was somewhat shy about it. My grandfather, Mayor Whelton, loved to attend the theater, but I don't know if he played an instrument or was musical in any way. The music gene may have come from my grandmother, Fred's mother, Ellen Caffrey Whelton, whose sister Theresa Mabel Frances Caffrey sang and danced on the Vaudeville stage under the name "Theresa Jordan." Anna remembered Aunt Fanny, as she was called, singing and dancing in the Whelton family kitchen on Allen Street in Boston. She lived with the Wheltons for several years. She died in 1950, and has descendants in New Jersey.

*June 9, 2012. Two months, five years, seventeen more: The Gift of the Maji's Elephant.*

They might have chosen to keep it to themselves, but Debbie and Mel have built an eight-room motel on their hill. They call it the Sunset Oasis. They both have other jobs, since the motel does not make them a living. Mel cooks a lobster in the shed out back and brings it to me in exchange for \$10. I wonder whether he notices the lack of a breast/facsimile on my left side—not that I mind; I just wonder. He sparkles and says something appreciative about having an appealing young lady around, and I tell him I am forty-six. Debbie drives up the hill from their house below and tells me, "I try to take a photo of every sunset." That would make seventeen years of sunsets. Later, I tell Mel I am celebrating my fifth year after cancer, and he says, "Heeeeey!" and shakes my hand.

[Earlier, en route to the Oasis, I had stopped at Cabot Landing to digest the latest professional correspondence, an attempt at reconciliation. I was skittish, edgy, fearful that the letter would poison my enjoyment of my expedition. And it does, much. I wake up at four in the morning and record the ocean sounds, not knowing yet that I am doing so in order that I may weave them into the CD that documents the score of the opera that caused so much damage and distress, to prod the story onward into the future, to allow it to reshape its identity. What is that tolling?]

The next day, Mel chats me up over morning coffee. Just when I start to wonder whether he might be embroidering in the slightest about being abducted into the military at age fourteen and more, he says, "Something must be wrong with me today; too much of what I am saying is true." Later, in the afternoon, he tells me that he has lost his vision: "I just drive up and down the hill now, no farther." There is a steep drop-off where he parks. As there is on my chest. We watch the sun set, and we listen to the tolling; Mel tells me it is the harbor buoy, and that it works like an accordion, expanding and contracting in synchrony with the ocean's breath and calling out when stirred, and I tell him its sound will be part of my next CD. Debbie captures the sky from her car. I wonder what Mel sees.

Second night: another lobster. And another.

*June 12, 2012, 9:27 AM. Correspondence, professional and personal: reconciliation.*

Do you see how a story that goes, "I behaved responsibly, but you failed to trust me and breached protocol, perhaps out of ignorance, thereby compromising my work even as I served yours," however carefully worded, is a self-protecting and other-blaming story, not a reconciliation story? I also remind myself as I write that this is a process, so maybe there is more to come from you.

If we can reconcile, wonderful, and if we have to unplug, I can accept that in peace. I am prepared to accept whatever teaching comes my way.

*June 16, 2012. The High Road.*

On my last full day on Cape Breton, I make a short drive to Isle Madame. I stop at a tourist information both, which is closed, to admire the beautiful map of the island, observing the local habit of indicating place names with formulations such as "West Arichat Ouest." It seems far left to me. Hungry, I pass two takeout spots. Later I learn those are all there is for food. I ask directions back to one and an obliging resident replies, "Well, you can take the High Road or the Low Road, but they both end up at the same place." I stick to the High Road and later learn that Charles has been mowing his lawn down by the ocean. Too bad I did not get to say hello, but I'll see him tonight.

*June 21, 2012, 9:18 a.m. Personal correspondence (pink typeface).*

Dear Friends,  
Please come by my place Thursday, June 21 for a celebration of the earth's Zillionth Solstice and my 5th Rebirthday (5 years since life-saving cancer surgery). Family members & loved ones welcome; I'm not planning to show any X-rays or lab reports, just to celebrate that I am still here, still breathing, and still able to enjoy the pleasure of your company.

I have been practicing a sort of avant-garde conceptual Twitter project, called "pink noise," which aims to embrace the pink ribbon, if in a somewhat idiosyncratic and unconventional manner. So, \*if\* you are inspired, feel bring to bring/wear something pink, or not pink, or an object or device that might invite us to contemplate or comment on or swim in pinkdom in some way. Perhaps this can be a homeopathic healing or instruction for me so I will finally feel I can do my part next October.

6 p.m. Marty, Wendy, Jack, Olga, Maria, and Geoff arrive. They all bear pink (Geoff and Maria dressed, stylishly, in black [the new pink].) We eat the pink-frosted cupcakes with jelly-bean nipples. I am rebirthed once again.

8 p.m. My new Cape Breton friends call and sing "Happy Rebirthday" over the speaker phone. Charles asks whether we are playing tunes for my party. I say, "Of course not; we're musicians."

A month later I will learn that some time ago, Charles's father rescheduled his own date of birth: "He changed it a few years ago; I don't know why, and now I am not sure which one we are supposed to celebrate." How interesting! Another person with two birthdays. (Facebook does not have a provision for this, I learn the following week when I join belatedly.)

*July 1, 2012. Canada Day.*

I like the way he says “Charles” on his answering machine, the delicate extended “r” making up for all the ones I missed—in my own name, especially—growing up. On the other hand, “Chuck” and, more so, “Chu-ckie” exemplify his rhythm-guitarist identity, stressing the downbeat the way he does so well. So, I’ll have to ask what he prefers.

*July 10, 2012. Zero, one: empty cookie, lobster roll.*

On my way to meet Dean for the first time, I listen to his *From Square One* on the train. It is not, he has told me, an audio book, but a musical composition. He says, “Time ruins everything. Because of it, food spoils, breasts sag, loved ones die.”<sup>13</sup>

(Yes, a breast sags, sometimes.)

Later: “Whether focusing our attention on *om* or on 6-Down, we take control of that part of the brain that is normally hijacked by the voices telling us we’re not good enough, smart enough, attractive enough.”

And later: “There are so many nonnarrative ways to engage the mind, and still our culture puts stories front and center. We are drowning in stories, whereas poetry subsists in the margins.”

He also speaks of loss, of longing, of compulsion, of limitation. Of Manhattan, of Brooklyn, of Vermont, of Brigadoon. His avowedly unpolished rendering of Joplin’s “Solace” is more engaging and touching than a rehearsed performance.

I stop at Ollie’s for lunch. I remember coming here—that is, the one near Columbia—for the first time, in 1996.



**Barbara White** @iamnotmakingup

10 Jul

Why do I never remember that Ollie's is not what it was in 1996? Of course it was not what it was in 1996 in 1996 either. #iHopEffect

While I eat, I chew—as I often do—on Mark Epstein’s discussion of the ever-receding pleasure of the lobster roll, of the interrelationship of experience, memory, desire, and experience again. Epstein is a Buddhist as well as a therapist. Lunch is completed, and my check comes:





There is nothing inside.

Ollie's has bestowed upon me The Fortune Cookie of True Emptiness. Such luck!

*July 19, 2012. Alignment.*

I can't quite align my tire with the rail at the car wash. The gentleman in charge gesticulates wildly, agitated. When he comes over to scold me, I say, "Thank you; that was hard to see." He looks puzzled. On my way out, I stop next door at Honda:

"How can I help you?"

"I hope I don't need your help."

"Oh, I can never get in that groove either. Nah, no bubble. Tire's fine."

"Whew."

*July 24, 2012. Once more: The Low Road.*

I'm back on Isle Madame. Greg says, "Welcome home."

*July 28, 2012. Macha on the Low Road.*

The festival has a bake sale, sprinkled with a few miscellaneous pieces of jewelry from a nearby Celtic store that recently closed. I spy a set of earrings decorated with a Celtic knot and a horse. I don't quite love them, but the tag in the box says, "Horse: Sovereignty, Guidance," identifying Epona and Macha as Goddesses who "guide and protect mortals on their journeys through life."

*August 1, 2012. Marshall McLuhan and the Whycomogaugh Simpsons.*

Driving back from Ingonish, I listen again to Dean, on my iPod: "McLuhan has sobering things to say about *why* we relate to technology and media as we do. It's how we manage trauma. We're in shock."<sup>14</sup>

Dean reminds me of the terror of the turtleneck and of the crisis of the plumed hat left behind on the way to a band competition. Speaking of his father, he mourns, "He once photographed me



wearing a band outfit suitable for the time—a white turtleneck and a burgundy blazer—playing each of the instruments in my arsenal. Then he cut away everything outside my silhouette and made a diorama: an orchestra of me, playing with myself.”

As Dean’s simulacrum, his trace, fixed, speaks, I drive by this home:



*August 4, 2012. Folded.*

I had never thought I would commingle laundry again.

*Shadow’s skin, reknitted.*

*August 15, 2012. A few firsts.*

I thought I was “better,” “stronger,” “healthy” now. But once more I am struggling, fatigued, managing to do about half of what I would like. I would *like* to do more, at least; that is an improvement from five years ago. Nevertheless, whether I like it or not, my energy is in short supply, and much of what I do have I must devote to navigating my limitations, prudently.

Fortunately, my internal weather clears enough for me to go to the Hawg and Hen Barbecue in St. George’s Channel, across the Bras d’Or Lakes. It’s my second time on a sailboat, my first time on one this serious—26 ft., the Misty Cat—and Captain Greg invites me to steer, something I have never done before, while he and the others advise and encourage.

All goes smoothly until the ever-composed, graceful, considerate Greg suddenly darts over and pushes me out of the way, exclaiming, “Move aside!” He swiftly and expertly turns the Misty Cat right around, so that we are heading back where we came from. What could have inspired such urgency? Oh, the wind grabbed up his three-peso straw hat and dropped it in the lake, and not for the first time. The nautical code for this emergency is HOB: hat overboard.

Sombrero recovered, we turn back again toward the channel, complete our journey, and land alongside several other boats. After a few brief introductions, I find myself packing six big grownups into my sedan to drive a mile from dock to hawg. I doubt this is legal and, having been pulled over by the RCMP two weeks earlier for driving too slowly—I am not making this up!—I hope no one has any marginally illegal substances in their pockets. (Of course, they do.) I am the designated driver, but once ashore, I figure I can handle a bit of substance myself; there are hours of music to come, and one pint will have metabolized by the time we go home. And to go with it? It's good that I fell off the veggie wagon, for there's not a grilled Portobello in sight; it's either pulled pork or . . . hen. Newly carnivorous, I am not sure whether the hen preparations involved any pulling.

I'm a lightweight, where alcohol is concerned, and so I am pleasantly doped up from pork and hops when the jam session starts. Greg, in his soggy straw hat, darts over and asks Charles if he wants to play a set in the open mic. I am eager to invite myself along but do not want to be a hawg; after all, they have a trio already, the Diasporados, and I'd be subbing on Paul's whistle part. And I have never in my life performed in public after drinking a beer. Or after steering a sailboat and welcoming six middle-aged Nova Scotian yachtspeople into my Honda. On the other hand, I don't want to be a hen either: the urge to breathe into my flute is strong, so I overcome my hesitation and join them in a building out back to play a bit. It's the first time my woodshedding has taken such literal form, and I suddenly fear I have forgotten how the airs and jigs go, so my Caper brothers talk me through them. This is the closest thing to a rehearsal I have experienced on Cape Breton. There are loudspeakers but no monitors, so I can hear Greg and Charles, but not myself. We play the G major airs, which I first heard just two months ago at Music Camp. Now, I swim in the tunes, joyously, sending ephemeral sounds into the aether with my cherished wooden flute. Then comes "Parlez-Nous à Boire," one of the Cajun tunes Greg has brought North from Louisiana, and I grab my clarinet. For months I have been politely complementing Greg's wailing fiddle, but, feeling a bit exhibitionist up on—well, not quite on stage, but standing in front a group eating and drinking and paying scarce attention to the music coming through the inadequate sound system—I have asked for and have received permission to let loose tonight. And I do, a bit: envious as ever of his wild, woozy double stops, I play as many Es as I can, bending and winding my air around and inside his fiddle strings.

Finally, I pick up my tin whistle, and we turn to "Frieze Britches"—"frieze" meaning "priest," and britches . . . well, let's leave the title aside for now. Anyway, it's a doozy, a five-part jig, and there's no hope of an in-breath until we're done. I still can't see the others, nor can I hear myself, but Charles is right behind me—or, yes, it is the trochaic Chu-ckie, laying down the rhythm on his guitar, everything in its place, downbeats secure, phrase endings punctuated. He shapes the low notes, fills them in, with fluidity, so that the melody players—the Canadjun Gregoire and the flutist from away—can sail, perfectly out of tune, on top of his waves. The guitar's steadfast chording—sounds a bit like "courting," huh?—is at once unassuming and confident, unfailingly secure, with the welcome surprise of a syncopated gust here and there. I am enchanted by this tight circle of mutual attention, care, and generosity, by the freedom to keep close or to venture out, to play with or against, trusting that we'll all meet up again. Together we three drive 'er, as I am learning to say, and yes, buddy, it's "'er" you drive, even when it's 'is britches you're friezin'.

It is my first “gig” as a guest with the Diasporados, and though I later make sure to inform my buddies that, should this go any farther, the straw hats are not for me, meantime I am honored to be puffing along with the guys, thrilled to be playing this intoxicating, habit-forming jig. Still, I miss Paul, who gave it to me. Yes, gave. But he still has it too; he gave it without giving it away. Rather than inviting one another to “play,” Cape Bretoners say, “let’s have a tune”—“a” meaning a night’s worth—or, while having “a tune,” inquire, “Do you have ‘The Frieze Britches?’” “Have” seems to indicate not so much possession or dominance or control as stewardship and nurturing and cultivation.

After we’re done, I inhale, and we sit back down to listen to some extraordinary Irish musicians from the Valley. They have “The Frieze Britches” too! Down South we’d say they “nailed it,” or “tore it up,” or perhaps “slayed it,” but here at St. George’s Channel we’re talkin’ drivin’ again. As I observe to one of my companions, “They’re rockin’, eh?”—and then realize with a start that for the first time, I have just appended an “eh?” without self-consciousness or scare quotes. I figure the next step will be to utter it without catching myself afterward. And then, a bit later, I’ll “drive ’er” back “home” to Nova Jersia, where I’ll remind myself to say “huh” instead.

*September 13, 2012. Professional meeting: criticism.*

I describe my “Prose Writing for Composers” seminar to the assembled graduate students and faculty, explaining the focus on three kinds of writing: review, analysis, and first-person essay. In regard to the review, I mention the curious habit our culture has of critiquing—even disdaining—figures while they live and honoring—even idealizing—them after they die, and I say that I want to probe the potential contributions, but also the pitfalls, of critical writing, and to consider whether there might be a middle way between derogation and adulation. The chair of the meeting summarizes: “We have a great selection of seminars: he can teach you how to write the right notes, I can teach you how to write the wrong ones, and she can criticize us.”

*Like most things in his time and place, the horses belonged to the king.*

*October 9, 2012. TV12 Mystery Show.*

Viewing a television documentary, I learn that I created my opera under the auspices of an educational program across town. I did not realize this at the time, but it must be true, because the producer/narrator says so, and, as a scholar, she is well schooled in the necessity of accuracy in representation. It was she who specifically invited my co-author and me to offer a course through that program across town, and it was she who informed us both of the firmly established policy that we *not* set our own work on students but rather nurture them in creating their own art—which of course we did, because we would not dream of defying institutional protocol. In fact, the program’s attorneys and I spent hours fine-tuning contractual language to ensure that my co-author, a freelancer, not overstate her relationship with the institution, and now, one year later, I discover, watching the video, that her thirtyish, professional employees are . . . undergraduate students . . . in

that institution. While I thought I recalled that not one moment of class time, in that educational program across town, was spent on our own professional collaboration, that not one of the students in the course participated in our opera, and that our third co-author never set foot in said classroom, I must have misunderstood, because now that there is a documentary, it must be true that the opera was created in the classroom by us three co-authors and that the students we thought we were not to use are the performers in our opera and that the thirty-year-olds are instead nineteen. It's all so bewildering! I'm sure I must be missing something, because the producers and narrator of the documentary would not have made all this up in order to arrogate credit for others' work.

I'll have to ask Stacy about it. She's a feminist theater scholar and is likely to have some insight into this mystery.

*October 15, 2012, 8:40 a.m. Professional correspondence.*

I could not be more sorry to say that I think it will reflect poorly on all our fine work should we disseminate this document any further: the misrepresentations are significant. Yet I understand that you may find the document useful for your purposes. Perhaps some of us can brainstorm on how best to proceed so we are all comfortable with a next step?

[Update, December 25, 2012: No reply yet.]

[February 15, 2013: Still nothing.]

*Who among you will not hide in silence?*

*October 17, 2012. Obamita debates.*



**Geoffrey Burleson** @GeoffBurleson

17 Oct

Critics: Obama too passive last time, too aggressive this time. Clearly they won't be satisfied until he's passive-aggressive.



**Barbara White** @iamnotmakingup

17 Oct

@GeoffBurleson Oh! They're just treating him like a woman! It all makes sense to me . . .

*October 22, 8:42 p.m. Professional correspondence.*

Perhaps it will be useful for me to make explicit, rather than assuming it to be obvious, that my intention has been to keep communications simple and straightforward, somewhat more on the professional side.

*November 7, 2012. Professional correspondence.*

7:02 p.m. As I said when we met, I am not interested in blame or intention; I am interested in remedying the problem. I'm also very uncomfortable with the currency of guilt and emotion; saying one is contrite and meant no harm does not do anything to solve the problem. Wouldn't "feeling bad" about something inspire one actually to *do something* about it?

8:46 p.m. Hearing that someone feels guilty but has no plans to remedy things is not a solution for me. . . . I don't want to be thought ungenerous or uncollegial for persevering in wanting this fixed; it's not personal; it's professional and ethical.

*November 14, 2012, 12:42 a.m. Professional correspondence.*

We have auto delivered the following item to your Kindle or other device:  
**Toxic Workplace!: Managing Toxic Personalities and Their Systems of Power**  
[Kindle Edition]\$15.37. Sold By: Amazon Digital Services, Inc.

*November 15, 2012. Question.*

Does *The Gaslight of Dr. Caligari's Snakepit* have an intermission?

*November 16, 2012. Wisdom of the chef.*

"If he wishes it would just go away, he could actually make it go away."

*November 22, 2012. Brigadoon.*

Scotia: "It's a magical island."

Jersia: "For you too? Even though you live there?"

*November 29, 2012. Professional engagement: knowing enchantment.*

It's a book release party. Riffing on her colleague's titles, Wendy lauds Scott as "a hero" and "graceful" and reads from his lovely new book; we appoint her the official Elicitor of Tears, quite a role to master in parched academia. Here is a different passage, one that crystallizes something I have been trying to put my finger on:

Though such an analysis may serve to demystify some aspects of Mozart's music, I have no interest in disenchanting the experience. Quite the opposite: I would rather enter into a kind of knowing enchantment.<sup>15</sup>

*December 3, 2012. Forty-seven.*

I treat myself to a trip to the post office to return runner-up parkas, followed by a trip to the Bank of America™ to open a new checking account, since I have given up on balancing the old one.

I put on the curb my wooden cross-country Splitkein skis, which now have two numbered stickers from different moving companies attached (2005 and, earlier, 2000). Alongside are a floor lamp and painting that were given to me—or, rather, placed in my house on days of observance. I've forgotten those who placed them there.

Cleansing. My best birthday ever.

By chance, I find my crib tag, which tells me what time I was born. My mother never told me. Maybe she forgot.

*December 5, 2012, 10:40 a.m. Professional correspondence.*

I am surprised that my concerns have been so misunderstood, that my commitment to professionalism, equity, and integrity has repeatedly been distorted into something personal, adversarial—and disposable. How is it those who has stole my and others' work for their gain are described as embodying contrition and good will, while my making a simple request to those I work with is described as humiliating? Where's the good will? And who's humiliating whom?

*December 5, 12:40 p.m. Professional correspondence.*

First off, I understand that you intend what you have written here as an apology. But for me a satisfactory apology would include an understanding of my experience, a promise never to let this happen again, and an offer to make amends.

*December 5, 12:40 p.m. Audiovisual content: imitate life.*



**Barbara White** @iamnotmakingup

5 Dec

"You're a bully, you know that?" "I wouldn't do it if it didn't work so well." #GreysAnatomyOfTheUniversity.

*December 6, 2012. From Management Optics: Verbal Tools Targeted to Maintain the Appearance of an Equitable Working Environment in the Marketplace of Ideas (Snower and Crusher, 2015).<sup>16</sup>*

1. The "Paul Ryan Saves Medicare" Method, a/k/a/ the "Coke Cares About Your Health™" Method: No matter the issue or the events at hand, keep the focus on yourself, and describe yourself as working for the good.<sup>17</sup> It is imperative to *play the role of good guy*. Quick replies are useful, as speediness helps to create the appearance of responsiveness. (Stick to "I" statements here; for third person formulae, see No. 5 below.) Verbal Tools:

- “I am going to be generous and let this go.” “I am trusting.” “I am contrite.” “I feel bad.”
- “I am sure he means well. He’s a good guy.”
- “I’ll do everything I can to help.”
- ☺

2. The Dayton Moore/Hank Moody Method: a/k/a the “OMG, Too Cool for School, LOL” Method<sup>18</sup>: Deride standards as confining, divisive and “negative.” When a target calls for consistent policies and protocols or for what she peevishly insists on calling “professionalism,” advocate instead a casual, improvised approach. When a target refers to “bullying” and “scapegoating,” instruct her to relax and to practice compassion (for the so-called bully). Note how great things are (for you). On occasion, complement the target on her performance; this serves to create the illusion of collegiality and appreciation, as well as to inspire confusion and guilt. Verbal Tools:

- “True, he has not completed the requirements we set out, but I would not want to punish him for being talented.”
- “I’m sure he did not intend to copy his paper out of Wikipedia without attribution. Let’s be compassionate and give him another chance.”
- “I don’t see why we need a policy. We’re fair.”
- “Really, we have it so good here. There’s nothing to complain about. Think of all those poor people out there without health insurance.”
- “Great job!”

3. The “Mark Zuckerberg ‘We’re All Friends™’” Method: Uphold your own personal feelings and whims as professionally pertinent while ensuring that the target’s professional evaluations and observations are, contrariwise, interpreted as personal and parochial. For maximum efficacy, ensure that the inversion is as acute as possible. When the target gives up in exasperation and decides to join the party, finally adopting syntax less formal than the ultra-professional lingo she had previously been described as “uptight” for espousing, yet still falling short of the vulgarity and abuse she receives on a daily basis, scold her (only) for inappropriate behavior. Verbal Tools:

- “Here’s a picture of my wife breast-feeding! You won’t believe how much the baby poops!”
- “He’s an asshole.” “She’s crazy.” “Who wrote this letter of recommendation? Oh, *her*. Never mind; she’s a pathological liar.” “Well, you know his accent is fake.” “Oh, he was such a prick when we were in grad school together twenty years ago.”
- When the target insists on being included in discussions regarding matters under her purview: “Why are you pissed at me?” Or, “I don’t like being told I did something wrong.” And, “You are humiliating the staff.”
- When the target expresses concern for another’s performance, suggesting that, say, a student may need support in understanding professional boundaries: “So, you hate her.”
- When the target expresses surprise at the behavior of a visitor and says to you, in sympathy and solidarity, “Wow, why would they presume to set their own schedule and fees—WTF?”: “That is inappropriate behavior in this professional context.”

4. The Judith Herman “Forget the Target! Perpetrators Ask Nothing” Method: Apply judgment exclusively to targets who advocate for equity and clarity. Verbal Tools:
- When a target is bullied in front of the entire team: “You two handle this on your own, in private.”
  - When a target requests assistance in addressing the bullying behavior: “Just ignore him. It’s better not to engage.”
  - When a target objects to the bullying and demands action: “You’re making me feel bad.”
  - At any point: describe the target as “angry” and explain that she must not allow her personal feelings get in the way of her work. This one word, *angry*, carries untold power: it shows that you can divine her emotions, that your professional ambitus encompasses said emotions, and that her fury at being treated as “less than” is the violation. (Remember, instruct her not to express emotion, but interpret her factual contributions as emotions, and *your* emotions as facts. *Whatever her actual behavior*, it is your responsibility to identify her as “angry” or otherwise “emotional.” Your *beliefs* about what she *feels* are the gauge of her workplace performance.)

5. The Paranoid Projection Method, a/k/a the Fictionalization of the Other Method: translate others’ words into paranoid fantasies, and then insist that they have uttered your translation. This reflex comes quite naturally for many, but if an unconscious psychopathology is not forthcoming, this method may be adopted as a conscious and deliberate strategy. Verbal Tools:

- In place of “accountability,” insert “blame.”
- In place of “professional,” insert “fussy.”
- In place of “request,” insert “attack.”
- In place of “authority,” insert “control.”

(To support others in this method, simply agree with them and ignore the target’s actual statements.)

6. The Carol Gilligan “Rights or Responsibilities? You Choose!” Method. Select, according to personal preference, which obligations to fulfill; this is the *wisdom* to follow your *gut*. In order to be effective, you must accept power but not obligation and must exact respect *from* others without offering it *to* them. Verbal Tools:

- “I’ve been so busy with my own deadlines. Just send a ‘gentle reminder’ if I do not get back to you. Sometimes things take a few months.”
- “It’ll work itself out.”
- “I can’t make it, so I’ll delegate this to you as a special opportunity to practice having more responsibility.”
- “Perhaps we should think about reconfiguring her responsibilities to help her out.” (Very important: to be uttered by individual of equal or lesser rank, in the third person, and in the presence of the target, and to be tacitly approved by the supervisor. Especially effective in tandem with other methods—say, when she has just explained to the team how they might facilitate their work together and has been treated to the Paranoid Projection above. Example: when the target says, “In order to serve you in my administrative role, I will need you to provide the following. . . .” Reply: “I don’t like being silenced. Guys, let’s help her out by taking on some of the planning.”)



7. The “Toyota Takes Full Responsibility” or, alternatively, the “Gutted, Shattered, Heartbroken Middleton Pranksters” method. (Currently contested by Todd Akin as the “On Second Thought, Rape is Rape” Method and informally called the “Oopsie” Method.)<sup>19</sup> Best delivered an hour or two after a call from a superior, itself following two months’ inaction—and *only* as a last resort. When all of the above fails, deliver an excessive, self-dramatizing apology detailing how terrible *you* feel about mistreating the target; detail *your* personal weaknesses, which prevented *you* from acting sooner, about all the challenges *you* face, about how painful it is for *you* to have failed. Remember, it is about . . . *you!* Verbal Tools:

- I feel so terrible about how I have treated you.
- My behavior is unforgivable, but I hope you will forgive me.
- I take full responsibility.
- I have learned from my misbehavior.

(Don't be duped into reconciliation work or amends, often proposed by those mired in resentment and victim identity and who *can't let things go*.)

*Suggestions for Further Reading.* The following are excerpts from resources that may prove instructive. Note that although the intended audience for “feminist” and “progressive” writing addressing “discrimination” lies elsewhere, you may glean useful pointers from these spoilsports’ complaints.

- “Don't become involved in any office political battle without first asking yourself, ‘What's in it for me?’ and then ‘What's in it for them?’” (*The Mafia Manager*).<sup>20</sup>
- “Place women at a disadvantage, infantilize or stereotype them, and treat them in such a manner as to deny them equal access and opportunity” (*Microaggressions in Everyday Life*).<sup>21</sup>
- To succeed at management it is imperative “to slide into decisions without allowing oneself to realize that one’s making any, to feel dimly that one is enjoying advantages without trying to become clearly aware of what these advantages are (and who hasn’t got them), to accept mystifications because they’re customary and comfortable, cooking one’s mental books to congratulate oneself on traditional behavior as if it were actively moral behavior, to know that one doesn't know to prefer not to know, to defend one’s status as already knowing with half-sincere, half-selfish passion as ‘objectivity’” (*How To Suppress Women’s Writing*).<sup>22</sup>

*The Takeaway.* These five principles all offer a high rate of return and promise to reward you handsomely:

- Once you *say* it, it becomes *true*. Remember, this is the *marketplace of ideas* and you are promoting and growing *concepts*.
- *Simulacra* of equity and respect are essential in creating harmoniously functioning workplace. They are *cost-efficient* for you to construct and advertise.
- Requests, suggestions, and complaints offer rich opportunities for critique *of the speaker*.
- The statements “I feel bad” and “you are angry,” used in alternation, are most effective in maintaining *collegial balance*.
- Trust your instincts. Make it up as you go along. Remember, *you* are the *good guy*. And you are *fair*.

[I am making this up—sort of.<sup>23</sup>]

*December 12, 2012. Questions for the chef.*

What does your manual say about the following circumstances?

- If your sous-chef departs for the parking lot to rant about politics and health care, leaving the vegetables unprepared, do your coworkers insist that the diners' plates have been filled and that they are in the midst of enjoying a delicious, nutritious meal?
- If the sommelier brandishes a cleaver at you, and you ask that he be stopped, does your supervisor say, "He's a good guy; let's be trusting"?
- If the *maitre d'* adds drain cleaner to the soup, does the owner say you should not let your "anger" get in the way of your work?
- If you prepare a seven-course roast turkey dinner, does the greasy spoon down the street, which declined your offer to cook in their kitchen, produce a television documentary including footage of you in your own five-star restaurant, saying that indeed you prepared this feast in their train car, and identifying the others in the frame as their summer crew of high school students rather than your trained, experienced, seasoned (no pun intended; LOL!) professional colleagues? When you call attention to the inaccuracy, do they reply that you should be grateful to see your work being promoted?

*December 13, 2012. Macha answers a question.*

"WTF?"

"To one who does damage, you owe *nothing*."

*December 16–18, 2012. Family, travel, drivin'.*

*Sunday.* Ten hours feels like ten minutes. SleepyPeopleWanted.com is a dream—literally.

*Monday, 6 a.m.* I wake in Maine on the Cross Bronx, my front and rear chassis gently tapping, caressing two others. Then I see that one of them is Michael in his Prius, and miraculously we are all unscathed. Last Starbucks of 2012 is ten miles in the wrong direction, so it's Dunkin' for me; no big loss. Wondering whether the dream is significant, I drop the precious Belgian saison in the Sleepy People driveway, and it foams up; *that* hurts.

*8 a.m.* Approaching the border, remembering the inopportunistically placed curb of the previous evening, which I met while trying to *avoid* an inopportunistically placed curb. I remember tire bubbles. I stop at Cracker Barrel. 20<sup>th</sup>. A bubble.

10 a.m. At the border, I find I need to pay \$8 tax on linens; if I had described each pillowcase as a separate gift, I would have been spared. Displaying confusion over the customs regulations, I am pulled over for an inspection by a very polite official who looks to be about fifteen. He even waits for me, unlike the Americans of August who quizzed me on Klezmer music (I am not making this up!), so I can watch him open my clarinet upside down. I ask about household items and purchases. The lampshade, he points out, should be taxed also—"though, assuming it'll cross back over in a few years, that should be ok." (I guess he can predict my future.) What about my parents' eager-to-be-shaded lamp from 1968? And my old parka to stay North as a backup? Fortunately the black onyx cocoa powder ("alkalized to the extreme") and herbes de Provence do not give pause. I wonder about the assemblages this youth must see on a daily basis. When is the last time someone passed through with a bass clarinet, pink Himalayan salt, Vampire Killer Kale, Café du Monde French Roast, a blue enamel fondue pot from the 60s, Velcro ankle weights, four pocketed post-surgical bras, a furry toy otter, and Scott Burnham's *Mozart's Grace*? Tuesday, probably.

11 a.m. After a nerve-wracking drive, with blustery snow, which seemed to be falling upward from the asphalt, I reach the legendary Canadian Tire—Maritimers know their tires—in Saint John, New Brunswick: "I've never seen a tire like this. What is it? How big?" I ask, "Is there a Honda dealership nearby?"

11:30 a.m. Fundy Honda. In the waiting area, I read about the history of Soichiro Honda and wonder whether he lived long enough to hear this serendipitous, euphonious name. "Fundy Honda," I repeat to myself, enchanted.

Mark Black, with whom I create a virtual grey area, agrees with Charles and Greg that I really do need those winter tires. They'll be in tomorrow, weather permitting. He helps me get my bearings. I say, "My friend in Cape Breton hates when I say this, but people are so considerate here in Canada." The staff jog up and down the stairs and from desk to desk, stopping periodically to say hello.

I feel fortunate that I knew even to look for a bubble. Perhaps I have avoided a deadly blowout, though I'll never know for sure. Rothesay Avenue looks like New Jersey, and I spoke too soon about the conclusion of the year: there is a Starbucks right next door. I try to find Montana's, which is supposed to be in the same complex. But I drive for a half hour, to no avail. Now I am irritated, even as I observe that I can navigate that better than in the past. But I fear my pulled pork and ice cream are cooling and melting. When I arrive, after another nerve-wracking drive, they have kindly replaced the ice cream, which makes up for their forgetting a spoon. My hotel is 50 yards away, behind some clothing stores.

6:00 p.m. I decide to walk back there for dinner, so I do not have to drive on the bubble at night. I approach Montana's, thinking again how fortunate I am to have learned about bubbles from that pothole on the 158<sup>th</sup> Street exit, even though it did not seem fortunate at the time. And I think, I was not murdered last week, and I am not personally mourning a gunned-down six-year-old, or the mother of the gunman, or the gunman himself.

I later learn that the official tally of the dead omits the first casualty, Nancy Lanza.<sup>24</sup> Even later I receive a petition at my university email with this same tidy body count, describing the petition writers as "stricken." What does it feel like to declare oneself "stricken" by someone else's loss? I notice, too, how often the commentators use the word "innocent"; what does that imply?

Leaving Montana's, I notice the desolate mall landscape, and I look around to see a man, meandering and zigzagging, shouting and rambling. I consider returning to the restaurant for a taxi but choose to walk a distance behind him, slowly. He turns in the other direction, eventually. Am I "innocent?" And what about him?

I do not yet know that three days later, four young people will skid off an icy road into the Tracadie River nearby in northeastern New Brunswick, close to the route I will follow tomorrow on my new safe tires. Are they "innocent?"

I will think, "traîtresse." And "l'Acadie."

*Tuesday.* To reach Starbucks, I stroll down Fashion Drive.



I wonder whether I am the first Princeton professor ever to enter the Fundy Honda service area with a lampshade and a shakuhachi in hand. A mechanic asks, "Are you feeling light in the head?"

Mark Black invites me to stop back by anytime I need more service. I tell him I'll drive up from Jersey to Fundy next time I need an oil change.

When the car is done, I see they have piled the old tires—which I had thought they would discard—on top of my spices and Christmas presents. Good thing I tended to my fragile items.

*December 19, 2012. Professional correspondence.*

My error. Unforgivable. I feel really crappy.

*December 22, 2012. Professional engagement: documentation.*

A draft of the edited video shoot of *Weakness* arrives via email. I have yet to see my opera, really, since I was seated with the band behind most of the action on stage. The last thing I want to do is look at it.

I make myself watch it, and I weep.

What music? What luck? What teaching?

*December 23, 2012. Breton Masala.*

Walking along the Low Road, passing the John Paul Jones cannons, and Notre Dame de l'Assomption, built in 1837. I pop my head in to see whether there is a notice giving the time of midnight Mass (that's right). I hear, "do you hear what I hear?"—children's voices with an electric guitar.

Earlier in August, I had asked Charles whether he had ever tried Indian food, and he'd said, "Yes, once, but it was terribly bland." Today I am making tomato soup with coconut, coriander chicken, red lentil dal, basmati rice, and spiced tea (from scratch). Greg and Dawn are bringing gulab jamun, and we'll play some jigs and ragas—I mean, reels—after. I am sitting on the sofa with my iPad and Charles asks what I am doing. I say that I am writing the essay I have been aiming to complete on Christmas Day. He replies, "Well, you'll have to drive 'er then." And I say, "I'll have more to tell you about her later." And he says, "Her?"

Greg and Dawn arrive, various treasures in hand, Greg sporting his lake-seasoned straw hat. Greg gives us copies of the Isle Madame map I had admired in June. I had met him just a few days earlier but did not realize at the time that he had designed the map. Now I can put it in my Nova Scotia home, in the space cleared out when I removed where the painting from those I have forgotten. Thank you, Greg. (Greg also had the brilliant idea to festoon Caper Gas with the logo "Drive 'er," which I also admired before I knew he was responsible. I wonder what else I am admiring that I'll later learn he cooked up.)

Greg proposes that we perform as "Baby X and the Diasporados." I object. Some things just can't be remedied.

*December 24, 2012, 11 a.m. Ma coop. Ma communauté. Ça m'appartient!*

"I just want to say Merry Christmas to all my favorite grocers, cashiers, and every one else here."

"Don't forget the brain surgeons!"

"Right, the brain surgeons."

[In my other neighborhood, hybrids sport bumper stickers that proclaim, "My Congressman is a rocket scientist!"]

Charles Forest Co-op Values: “self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equity, equality, solidarity, honesty, openness, social responsibility, caring for others.” (There’s a second sign with a French rendition.)

Next door, NSLC:

“Jost Ceilidh Maréchal Foch: Cape Breton character—this wine has loads of personality without being pretentious.” Remembering Avenue Foch in Paris, within walking distance of my maid’s room on Boulevard Flandrin, I puzzle over why this wine has been named after a World War I hero. Ah, it’s the name of the *grape*. I ask, “Can a grape be pretentious?” Julia says, “Maréchal Foch is indeed unpretentious, but not Maréchal Ney. There should be a grape named after him.”

*December 24, 2012, 12:00 noon. Seventeen thousand, one hundred eighty-eight and beyond.*

A wise one writes, “You deserve retreat, sanctuary, and time away from this. The beauty and delight within you . . . no one can take that from you. . . . Perhaps it is time to revisit Macha’s final song from the end of your opera.”

I resolve to reclaim *Weakness*—to “have” it again, in the Cape Breton sense—and wonder whether it is possible or desirable. It’s an extraordinary artwork, but perhaps my opera needs to withdraw into silence and invisibility. Perhaps my own Macha, like the Goddess herself, could only touch down briefly in this human realm and can only find sustenance in the Otherworld. It may be true that the best work I have done—rich, wise, harrowing, imaginative, soulful, and, I am told, incandescent, mesmerizing—cannot survive in these circumstances, in this climate. Maybe I cannot either. At long last I realize that my sadness is not an illness to cure or a defect to overcome, but the healthiest response imaginable: how else could I continue but with a bottomless well of unresolved grief? I wonder at and lament over a recuperative process gone so wrong, over a trust so misplaced, over an optimism so unfounded, over a heart so wounded, over a cherished friendship so painfully sundered. I ask whether my urge to excise the Goddess’s vengeful curse on her tormenters—to replace it with a song of oneness, compassion and understanding—was a mistake. I miss my innocence, my trust, my enthusiasm, my willingness to believe that it must be I who is wrong, that if I can only find the right course of action things will improve. I miss my unfounded belief that we all meant well.

I think of Joseph Nye Welch and Joseph McCarthy, again and often. I wonder what it feels like to be unencumbered by decency.

I wonder, too, what it feels like to do harm while proclaiming one’s own virtue, to blame the person one has injured, to protect oneself so mightily from self-scrutiny. I wonder what it feels like to disregard another completely and to decline responsibility for so doing, to claim one was “violated” by the person one failed in one’s own irresponsibility and vanity. I wonder what it feels like to describe oneself as “stricken” by the suffering of unknown victims two hundred miles away while denigrating associates down the hall. My unfamiliarity with such feelings is no sign of purity or righteousness; my weaknesses are simply of a different flavor.

*They say that I cursed them, but no, they cursed themselves.* [Or perhaps they just amplified their press packets.]

I know what it feels like to seek healing and to find instead old wounds re-opened, past traumas re-enacted. I know, too well, what it is like to see one's generosity and humility rewarded with selfishness and egotism, to renounce faith in a loved one, to see the enchantment in another's companionship turn to allergy, to learn the hard way to distinguish between the pretense and the practice of respect and compassion, to develop the dismaying capacity to detect bad faith, the unpleasant but necessary habit of listening with suspicion. At times we joked about breaking taboos, about tempting fate by christening my retelling with the title *Weakness*, about whether the story of abuse and abandonment might be misinterpreted as an invitation to replay it, about later making an opera about the making of the opera. It seems unfunny now. The well is dry. Dry as a bone.

"It's not me; it's you." This is not the song, gift, or lesson I have been seeking. I mourn, still, and expect to continue for some time.

A month later I will see this:

Sorry, we can't find what you're looking for.

The document you requested does not exist at this address — it may have moved or no longer exists. If you used a bookmark or favorite, use our "search" at the top of the page to find the page you want, then be sure to update your bookmarks for next time.

—but it'll make little difference. Sorry, indeed.

What music is happening? What luck may be? And what is the teaching in this moment?

What might one learn in the distillation of and reflection on an experience *that never should have taken place*?

7:00 p.m. On Facebook, a colleague I have never met, in his sixties, posts a close-up of his fiancée's breasts—her long hair fetchingly covering the forbidden spots.

3:00 p.m. Julia tells me, "You were in my dream!" You were playing a—is it a bell tree? You know those things they have in school?" I ask, "The thing we used to call a glockenspiel, that wasn't a glockenspiel?" I picture multicolored metal bars. "Yes, you were playing the glockenspiel that is not a glockenspiel, along with these Norwegian musicians, who were playing what in my dream was Norwegian music. So you see, you make music even in other people's dreams."

Julia tells me of a loved one recovering from a car accident: "He was overwhelmed by guilt and shame for having injured someone, even though it was entirely inadvertent and unavoidable." We talk about the distinction between unhelpful shame and a possibly useful shame. Might there be another word—something like accountability? I think of all the public figures who apologize for saying hurtful, thoughtless things, or who say "I take full responsibility." This speech act always perplexes me. Wouldn't it be more efficient to "take full responsibility" before saying the hurtful, thoughtless (or, perhaps, thought-out) things, to kill two birds with one stone? "I take responsibility for the death of these birds, which I shall cause . . . now!"

6:00 p.m. Midnight Mass. At six. It's kids' Mass, it turns out. (Charles later tells me that he too was reminded of the children struck down earlier in the month.) The priest says "we are one in Christ," and I think: more like three thousand, as we burst at the seams, right up to the choir loft, to the flimsy hand-written sign on a rope that cautions, "No access beyond this point by order of the Fire Marshall." There is another, paper sign, resting unattached on the ledge: "low railing, keep back." A very young boy picks it up, toys with dropping it down through the slats. His listless mother occasionally corrects him, perfunctorily. The priest speaks of the spiritual lessons of the Grinch. This is not the contemplative idyll I expected, and it is difficult to maintain my devotional resolve, but I reflect, not for the first time, that perhaps it has always been this way, the noise of the day offering a worthy challenge to contemplation, the mundane weaving together with the marvelous. I wonder—again, not for the first time—whether for some this may be a task on the checklist to be completed before heading home for dinner—a temporal tithe to the divine. Assuming the inhabitants of Easter Island really believed in their cosmology, whatever it was, maybe their statues were akin to our paying taxes and need no mystification from us today.

I am reminded too that this is a feast of youth and its promise, of light piercing darkness, as it promises to do on the shortest day, and so the exuberance is fitting. I have never seen so many glamorous six-year-old girls in one place. Velvet, taffeta, bows, shiny tights, high heels. Though the story of the child of promise is not their story. Do they know yet that this place is not for them?

*I confess to almighty God,  
and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have sinned through my own fault,  
in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done,  
and in what I have failed to do . . .*

It's a long time since this place has felt like mine, but I squint hard, looking for something that holds, something that I can reach back to and carry forward.

Oh—I had forgotten about the "sign of peace." I look over to the sign-mangler's mother who has so irritated me, and we join hands, tentatively.



December 25, 2012. 8:00 a.m. Today the wind comes from the South. Charles told me so. It's my seventeen thousand, one hundred eighty-ninth day. So far.



2 p.m. *O we like sheep.* Even after all these years away from it, I cannot abide Handel's *Messiah*.

4:15 p.m. *Beyond.* It was wise to advise me to revisit Macha's Boast. I steel myself to open up the video file once more and to transcribe my own words as it plays. It's impossible to watch while I type, which helps. I will recommence weeping daily once I return home and begin editing the CD, but for today I stay dry. These are the words the Goddess gave me a year and a half earlier:

*I am mist in the palm of the dawn.  
I am hawk and breeze, boat and sea.  
I am ebbing tide and returning wave . . .*

*I am shelter and I am storm.  
I am your first cry and your last breath.  
I am lover and loved one, mother and child, stallion and mare.  
I am the harper, the shudd'ring string, the silence.*

*I am water, well, and thirsty mouth.  
Five streams and the center pool.*

*One year enchanted in a foam of water . . .*

*Hag and hero, honored foe.  
Spark of hardness, nameless, known.  
Radiant insult, brutal peace.  
Shadow's skin, reknitted.*

*Empty ocean, fire sings.  
Patient thunder, stone flows.  
Seven winds, nine waves,  
ten thousand stars, one sky, no end,  
now, again, always, beyond, here, once more . . .*

*5:30 p.m. First Christmas.*

Tomorrow I will learn that an elderly man I have not seen in many years has a few months to live. I remain fond of him from afar; his son is an old college friend. The months compress into a week; he departs on January 4. Goodbye.

Charles places my mother's deep-burgundy crackle-glass vase on the windowsill above the sink. It seems at home there. A few weeks later, we'll be on the phone and he'll tell me he is trying out my mother's slow cooker, which I left behind as well. I like to think of Charles and Ruth spending time together, even though they'll never meet.

It is time, now, for this, at last, I think:  
*I honor your Gods.  
I drink from your well.  
I bring an unprotected heart to our meeting place.  
I hold no cherished outcome.  
I will not negotiate by withholding.  
I am not subject to disappointment.*

*January 1, 2012. One year enchanted in a foam of water . . .*

I think it's time to put Macha to bed.

*January 6, 2013. Just another ordinary Epiphany.*

No special insights today, but there is a stunning sunset on Isle Madame, overlooking Jerseyman's Island. The picture wouldn't really read here, but I hope Mel and Debbie are given something equally beautiful. You too.

Greg and Dawn are coming over again tonight. Later we'll enjoy *purée d'haricots blancs et d'ail*, which I have not simmered in a few years, and popovers, which I have not baked since childhood. The popovers, too, seem at home here, if a little less puffy than I remember. We'll drink hard cider and rum and have a tune. In the morning there will be snow on the ground, and the following day I will depart. I don't know this yet, but I will make it home safely. I'm relieved I have those new tires.

*January 30, 2013. Up and down.*

One more time I proofread my article concerning good fortune and misfortune and the music of what happens and determine to send it off to Ben. Later, though: it's unseasonably warm: worrisome for the planet, but conducive for my running. Parking my Insight at the canal, I notice a somewhat shifty-looking (why?) guy; I size up the situation as best I can, pronounce myself safe, and head for the trail. In order to ensure I don't overdo it, I run three minutes exactly and then make myself turn around to run the three minutes back. I feel blessed to visit my favorite spot in town and to reorient myself at last toward running, another intangible possession, alongside *Weakness*, that I want to reclaim after the bedlam of the previous year. I lament that I cannot run my desired forty-five minutes yet, but I feel lucky to be starting again, and I am uncharacteristically relaxed as I approach my car. There is no reflection in the driver's side window. Could I have left it down? Unlikely. But I must have; what else would explain what I see? As I approach my car, the guy in the truck drives off, and I realize that my window has been smashed in; I might have been able to catch him, but it's too bad I was so blissful and unsuspecting. On the other hand, it's a good thing I was unable to run longer, since I seem to have interrupted him by returning so soon. It's also unfortunate that I am without a phone: when I run at the canal, I always leave it at home with my purse just in case my car ever gets violated, even though I know the likelihood of that happening is small. So, on the other hand, it's a good thing I have foregone my phone, for if I had brought it, I would likely have lost it. Feeling grateful that I'm strong enough to run another few feet, I race off and ask a stranger in the furniture store parking lot to call the police for me. Somehow the police have never heard of the furniture store, which is on—Main Street. Gabby kindly offers to walk me back to my car to inspect the damage. I am kicking myself for being slow to perceive a problem and for missing my chance to chase after the “perp,” but Gabby reassures me that it may be better that I did not run after the pickup truck—“what if he had had a gun?” I observe, bemused, the safety whistle on my lanyard, designed for the trail—“good thing I am so careful!”—but not much use against a getaway pickup truck. Unfortunately, the police are slow—an hour, perhaps longer—but luckily, Gabby's name suits him in the most delightful way. He describes his work as a upholsterer and laments youngsters' attraction to new and rickety furniture, but he brightens when I tell him mine was fashioned in Denmark in 1960. He tells me about swimming across Lake Carnegie, down the road: “that was not so smart; what if there had been alligators?” We agree that people in this region are proportionally pushier than in some other places and wonder together whether that may be because there are proportionally more people to push: “it's just one God, why fight over black or white or different religions?” We ponder the relative advantages of more homogeneous and more heterogeneous societies. He talks about raising four children on his own after his wife left without explanation, and he wishes we would all treat one another better. He never solved the mystery of his wife's departure, but he observes that one finds a way to keep going even when difficult things happen, that it's all just part of life, and somehow he sounds more wise than denying, more philosophical than macho, more Pema Chödrön than Ayn Rand. I wonder whether his vocation nurtures his ability to recover things; to join and stitch and seal; to render a dispersable object contained, connected and whole. Having learned that he emigrated from Thailand at age fifteen, I wonder aloud whether a Buddhist consciousness may nurture his ability to practice acceptance, and he says yes. Marveling at how fortunate I am, since I almost never leave valuables in my car, even though my friends tease me about my caution, I suddenly remember that I was so organized earlier

that I remembered to change out of my expensive eyeglasses with their canal-unfriendly Transitions® lenses, trading them for the spare pair I keep in the glove compartment. How lucky I am to have an extra pair—but the extra pair is what I am wearing, and so the thief has taken off with my “real” glasses. What a loss! They are only three months old, but I realize that fortunately the turn of the year has just rendered me eligible for a new pair through my insurance. However, it is unlucky that I will be unable to use that benefit for the new reading glasses I also need. At least, though, I’ll be able to decline the unappealing Transitions® option this time around. It’s an expensive revision, to be sure, but I feel fortunate that I have a vision plan at least. Then, when Officer Mohan arrives and asks for my license and registration, I explain that I tend to leave my purse at home when I run, that therefore I have only a photocopy of my license to offer, and I am grateful that he accepts that. But I notice, unfortunately, that my registration and insurance card appear to be missing. I remember that there may have been a spare house key in the glove compartment (or was it to someone else’s house?), next to the eyeglass case, and I begin to worry that I have spent the last hour contentedly chatting with Gabby while the thief may have been availing himself of the possessions I so wisely left safe at home. I ask officer Mohan to help make sure my cottage is secure. He suggests that I call the Princeton police, but I remind him that I am fortunate to be phoneless, and so he calls them for me, and within ten minutes, when I arrive home, they are standing guard at my front and back doors. When I escort the officer inside, I gather the mail, which includes a replacement credit card, which I am happy to see arrived so quickly after I learned yesterday that someone stole my information to buy video games. (I felt lucky then that Citibank texted me about the anomaly.) I apologize to the officer for the untidiness of my house and explain that the pile of rocks just about blocking the front door is part of my work, and he replies that he has four kids and that this mess is nothing. Then he asks how the rocks are part of work, and I explain that I am a composer and I am recording them. He asks, “How do you record a pile of rocks?!” I say, “Oh! I have to *play* them. I don’t record them at rest.” After the officers depart, I realize that it is two o’clock and that I have not yet had breakfast, so I am feeling light-headed, but I am grateful to find a locksmith who can come by three, though I am disappointed to have to wait even longer to shower, though it’s just as well, because when I finally get warm and wet, enthusiastically soaping and scrubbing, a virtuosic runaway pinky gives me my first ever hygiene-induced nosebleed. Bummer; but once that is attended to, I am pleased to wolf down my sandwich, and the doorbell rings. I’m in luck! But wary: this is not the first time I have entrusted my safety to men who—knows how to change locks. The Second Locksmith—who, if it were not inappropriate, I would describe as “played by James Purefoy,” who also made a compelling Mark Antony —inspects, and I worry that he is casing the joint. After a while, he says, “cute”; and I ask, “The house?” “Yes.” Later I tell the two, “I’ve been trying to hear what language you are speaking—Arabic?” They reply, “Hebrew.” I say, “Well, I was close,” and they smile indulgently. I am grateful that they have not gouged me (the window and nostril were enough slashing for one morning), though I have meantime learned that my car window will not arrive for four days, unless I pay extra, which I do, since I am fortunate to be flying to Cape Breton in a week. However, I did not know I would have all these expenses when I booked my flight last night, and although I have yet to rent the car that will cost more than the plane ticket, I begin the process of feeling insolvent. Window, locks, eyeglasses, planes, hotels, rental cars, upgrades to four-wheel drive in anticipation of a blizzard. (A week later I will find my insurance card and registration and reflect that shelling out for new locks was unnecessary, but I am pleased to have one key for both front and back doors at last.) In any case, as I watch the locksmiths tend the boundary between outside and in, I feel lucky that my person is unharmed and that I have nothing planned for my car for a few days. Later I will

observe that over the course of a few hours, I have interacted with six considerate men—and this isn't even Canada! There were three very professional and helpful police officers, two very professional and considerate locksmiths—and, of course, Gabby, who is at least as reflective as my lost window. (If I include remote interactions, there is also the very helpful Jeff at Honda.) The Second Locksmith says, “I really like the lavender in that vase on the mantel.” I thank him. He says of the vessel, which is made of glass and rests in a rustic iron housing, “It would look even better if you put rice in the bottom to fill in the space.” “What a good idea!” I exclaim, tickled that he has continued to case the cute details of my once-again protected joint; and I explain that the lavender has followed me from home to home and predates my good fortune in owning a cottage with space for a perennial outdoor lavender garden. The First Locksmith interrupts to say that I’ll have to pay 10% extra if I use a credit card, and I have \$280, so I am about twenty short. Oh well. I hand him my card and say, “Next time my car gets broken into unexpectedly and I have to change my locks on a half hour’s notice, I’ll make sure to plan ahead and have three hundred dollars in cash on hand.”

By a stroke of ill fortune, a severe storm is predicted for the night, but I am relieved that, while my outer tarp, weighed down by bricks and paint cans, flies across the yard, the car’s vulnerable opening is successfully sheltered by the garbage bag and painter’s tape underneath. A few days later, I drive through my neighborhood, noting another breath of early spring, and I feel fortunate to be able to lower the newly installed window. Later, when I press to close, it rises toward its destination, arrives, and—bounces off the top of the frame and lowers again. Up. Down. Up. Down. It’s unwilling to rest in the closed position: it’s as if my Insight insists on remaining porous, open to the elements. This machinery seems to have a mind of its own, to discern what is appropriate for a given moment, even if it is neither what I expect nor what I request. I’m transfixed by this automated convenience gone awry, like Jean Tinguely’s mechanized paper-demolishing pen, or the Sorcerer’s Apprentice’s broom. I play my window, marveling at its utterly consistent uselessness, experimenting with varieties of tempo and pressure. Up, down, up, down. U-u-u-p—DOWN!—up, up, up, up . . .

Maybe I won’t bother with a repair this time.

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I am grateful to all those who shared their experiences with me as I prepared this essay: no confidences were broken in the process, and although a surprising number of dates are verifiable, a handful have been fudged to preserve the illusion of temporal continuity.

<sup>1</sup> Tom Cowan, “The Finest Music in All the World,” Ch. 33 of *Yearning for the Wind: Celtic Reflections on Nature and the Soul* (Novato: New World Library, 2003), 160.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Watts, *Tao: The Watercourse Way* (New York: Pantheon, 1975), 31. Watts cites two sources for his telling of this story.

<sup>3</sup> Pema Chödrön, *The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness In Difficult Times* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), Kindle edition.

<sup>4</sup> Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson, “September Song,” [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September\\_Song](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_Song); accessed Dec. 23, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Tommasini, “‘Goldberg’ Variations Galore by New Music’s Torchbearer,” *New York Times*, Apr. 6, 2007. [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com); accessed April 6, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Virginia Woolf, *On Being Ill* (Ashfield: Paris Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Marie Heaney, “The Weakness of the Ulstermen,” in *Over Nine Waves: A Book of Irish Legends* (London/Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), 65.

<sup>8</sup> Marie Heaney, "The Weakness of the Ulstermen," in *Over Nine Waves: A Book of Irish Legends* (London/Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), 67.

<sup>9</sup> Taliesin, "Song of Origins" (*Cad Goddeu*), as taught by Tom Cowan.

<sup>10</sup> In shakuhachi terminology, *otsu* refers to the first (lower) octave and *kan* to the second (upper) octave.

<sup>11</sup> A line from an episode of the television program *Criminal Minds*.

<sup>12</sup> "Druid Vow of Friendship," as shared by Susan McClellan; she credits the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids as her source.

<sup>13</sup> Dean Olsher, *From Square One: A Meditation, with Digressions, on Crosswords* (audio book), (New York: Random House, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Marie Heaney, "The Weakness of the Ulstermen," 67.

<sup>15</sup> Scott Burnham, "Invitation," in *Mozart's Grace* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ben Zimmer, "On Language: Optics," *New York Times*, Mar. 4, 2010. [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com); accessed Dec. 23, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> "For over a hundred and twenty-five years, we've been bringing people together. Today, we'd like people to come together on something that concerns all of us: obesity," Coca-ColaCo, "Coming Together," Youtube, <http://youtu.be/zybnaPqzJ6s>, published Jan. 14, 2013; accessed Jan. 14, 2013. For a predictable reaction, see Mark Bittman, "Coke Blinks," *New York Times* "Opinionator," Jan. 22, 2013; [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com); accessed Jan. 22, 2013. See also Jeff Stier, "The Obesity Police Turn a Solvable Problem Into a Needless War," *Forbes.com*, Jan. 15, 2013; accessed Jan. 15, 2013. These rigid and reactive commentaries choose either to demonize the soft drink industry and patronize the ample, or to defend Coca-Cola as purveying truth and wholesomeness. Policing is in full view, but there is very little discussion of respecting the food choices of others. Coca-Cola's commercial, however, does trade in a curious sort of "avant-pop": while the voice-over details the corporation's concern for health and its many healthy and low-calorie offerings, the persistent presence of the distinctive red can makes this viewer crave a . . . Coke! Full disclosure: I am ample, but Mark Bittman could not discern my nutritional input from a glance. Fuller: I partake of a Coke now and then. This is none of Mark Bittman's concern. Fullest: At a professional event this week, I was honored to be one of four professors who broke through the class divide and braved the food police by together finishing off a two-liter bottle of Coke as we completed a grueling professional obligation.

<sup>18</sup> Dayton Moore is a character in Jane Harvard's *The Student Body* (Brooklyn: MayaLuna Books, 2000). Hank Moody is the protagonist in Showtime's *Californication*. I am grateful, I think, to Julia Sullivan for introducing me to these characters. For commentary on "cool" academic professionals, see also Dunstan McGill, "Seven Uncool Ways to be the 'Cool' Professor," *The Tangential*, Mar. 20, 2012; <http://thetangential.com>; accessed Dec. 23, 2012; and "Adrienne Pine, American University Professor, Starts Controversy After Breast-feeding During Her Lecture," *Huffington Post*, Sept. 12, 2012; <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>; accessed Dec. 23, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> In fact, there is considerable competition for the branding of this method; focus groups are now in session to determine which name will be most profitable, and other possible sponsors are sure to present themselves while this volume is in press. See, for example, former General Stanley McChrystal's "acceptance" of "responsibility" for the comments made by his staff and reported in *Rolling Stone*: National Public Radio, "I Accepted Responsibility: McChrystal On His 'Share Of The Task'," January 13, 2013; [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org); accessed Jan. 13, 2013. The Toyota Responsibility is reported by Micheline Maynard: "An Apology From Toyota's Leader," *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 2010; [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com); accessed Jan. 31, 2012. In regard to Mel Greig and Michael Christian, who deceived a nurse, Jacintha Saldanha, into releasing private information about Kate Middleton (and who later spoke publicly about Saldanha's ensuing suicide), see Mark Duell et al., "We're both shattered. My first thought was: Is she a mother? Radio hosts at centre of prank give self-pitying interviews," *Globe and Mail*, Dec. 10, 2012; [www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk); accessed Dec. 10, 2012. Finally, controversy ensued in Aug. 2012 when Missouri Representative (and then Senate nominee) Todd Akin claimed that pregnancy was unlikely to result from rape: "If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down." Within a few days, Akin stated, "In reviewing my off-the-cuff remarks, it's clear that I misspoke in this interview, and it does not reflect the deep empathy I hold for the thousands of women who are raped and abused every year" (John Eligon and Michael Schwartz, "Todd Akin Provokes Ire With 'Legitimate Rape' Comment," *New York Times*, Aug. 19, 2012; [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com); accessed Dec. 25, 2012). This observer cannot help but be intrigued by how frequently such a controversy over a provocative statement is so quickly followed by an apology; the rhythmic profile suggests a canny pre-compositional process in which one prepares the apology simultaneously with the provocation, speaking a conspiratorial truth to one's allies while following up nearly immediately with the act of contrition to appear to appease the expected—(nearly manufactured)—outrage.

<sup>20</sup> V., *The Mafia Manager: A Guide For the Corporate Machiavelli* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997), back cover.

<sup>21</sup> Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 11.

<sup>22</sup> Joanna Russ, "Bad Faith," in *How To Suppress Women's Writing* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1983), 18-19.

<sup>23</sup> Thanks to all who so generously and trustingly shared their experiences with me.

<sup>24</sup> Lionel Shriver, "The Scapegoating of Nancy Lanza," *The Guardian*, Dec. 23, 2012; [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk); accessed Dec. 23, 2012.



## Magnetised.

### On “An Encounter”: A Composition Lesson

Matthew Crain

James Joyce they should call him. Do his words come up from his gut or down from his brain? He's in no hurry, he has all the time in the world, he doesn't push, he pulls. Or he lets it pull him. He's *possessed*. With what, language? a muse? plain old ordinary patience? Whatever it is it flows like slow music, like the *Tristan* Prelude (that came to Richard Wagner in a dream, remember). And so is this story a dream so delicate it would tear at the slightest tug, shatter at the tiniest pop, but at the same time is sturdy as a work boot laced tight.

What *sound* and what *words*. “Joe Dillon's war dance of victory.” “We banded ourselves together, some boldly, some in jest and some almost in fear: and of the number of these latter, the reluctant Indians who were afraid to seem studious or lacking in robustness, I was one.” “I knew Fatty'd funk it.” “Swaddlers! Swaddlers!” “He gave me the impression that he was repeating something which he had learned by heart or that, magnetised by some words of his own speech, his mind was slowly circling round and round in the same orbit.” “I say! Look what he's doing!” “He ran as if to bring me aid. And I was penitent: for in my heart I had always despised him a little.” Even read silently, the sound of the words makes me feel the boys' wildness after school, their terror in Latin class when Leo is caught with the paperback: the narrator gives only the teacher's words and the words make the picture. Words are the star of this show, words and the moment they aren't things to parrot back but become dangerous, dark, dirty, and real.

When I started reading this story the other day, I thought, This is the one about the boys and the old weenie wagger! Since scenes of boys seeing adult penises excite me to no end, I was disappointed that the pervert keeps his pants zipped. Nevertheless, I'm happy to note some things that make this “Encounter” so great.

First, the story. Two boys skip school for an “adventure” and wander around Dublin. In a field by a river they run into an old man who makes a creepy speech about girls, and then the boys leave.<sup>1</sup>

Also, just as in “The Sisters,” a voice starts speaking, a voice known only as “I.” You'd think that patter-happy Mahony who calls Leo “Fatty” would call his cohort by his moniker, too. Sensibly, the narrator tells Mahony to give the old man the aliases “Murphy” and “Smith,” but why is this “I” so careful not to tell us his name? We're not going to hurt him. To me, just as a

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<sup>1</sup> You want unprepossessing? This is unprepossessing. The boys are like the people you see in old paintings: at the side table by the tavern wall while the prince gambles away his fortune, or working in the hayfield while the countess laughs and kicks up her heels on the shade tree swing: whatever they're doing, it's nothing of note, they're strictly background. But James Joyce sets them center stage. I love that there's nothing “big” at stake, but their escape means the world to them.



story can have only one title, and just as each person could only have the name he was given when he was born, so every character, main or minor, has one and only one name: it expresses all that he is doing, has done, will do, and not until you find that name do you have that character's core (and even then it is a mystery). But here, in no way is this particular personality dulled by its anonymity: the boy keeps himself sharp by his *voice*.

As for what I believed but now know better, I had thought that the narrator tells the story as it happens. But listen to how he describes the pervert: "He was shabbily dressed in a suit of greenish black and wore what we used to call a jerry hat with a high crown." If the story is happening at the same time the narrator is telling it, he would say "wore." "What we used to call" puts the story earlier in time than its telling. Listen to the first sentence: "It was Joe Dillon who introduced the Wild West to us." "Joe Dillon introduced the Wild West to us" equals "as it happens." But "It was" puts the story *back then*. Thus, what follows is memory. Listen to this: "[W]e wandered through the squalid streets where the families of the fishermen live." Telling this as it happens would demand the verb "lived." "Live" means that the fishermen families still live there and the narrator knows this for a fact, and it may even imply that he never left Dublin, which would give a bitter tone to his remark that only those who have real adventure are the ones who escape.

Also, since the narrator "sounds like" a boy and "since it's James Joyce and that's how they wrote back then," I had let his vocabulary dazzle me. But I don't care how precocious he is, a boy doesn't say "incredulous," "diffused," "immobility," "solemnity," "sedulously," and "escaladed"; a man says such words. And now I see that the story's dreaminess comes from its joining opposites: the narrator is anonymous and he is particular, he is a man and he is a boy, and since his story is happening now and it is a memory, it is sound and at the same time silence.

About that silence. Remember Betty Edwards's *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*? To see a thing as it is, she has you draw its "negative space," because if you draw the space between two things, you necessarily draw their contours. What are the two things in this story? Then and now. What is the negative space between them? "I" the narrator. What are the contours; in other words, who is this "I"? Well, let's start with who he was.

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them," Jesus says in Matthew 7: 20. All right, if fruits are works and works are acts, what does the narrator do? He hatches the plot to skip school. He holds the other boys' money. He sleeps badly. He beats his hands on the bridge in time with the tune in his head. He is indifferent to Mahony shooting cats with a slingshot. He lies that he has read the books the old man mentions. He can't decide whether to stay or leave. He fears the old man will grab him by the ankles. Mahony the brute is all for attacking the "ragged boys" who called them "swaddlers," but the narrator, whose conscience was awakened when Leo was chastised for wasting time with the paperback, feels his conscience again: "I objected that the boys were too small" (Joe Dillon played too rough for him, remember). "I" is timid, hesitant, reluctant; he goes through the motions of being a wild Indian while his true nature is opposite. His noticing the pervert's "good accent" shows us a dangerously innocent boy. The pervert pecks along with a stick and couldn't catch the narrator if he tried, so why doesn't the narrator flee sooner? Because boys are taught to listen to older men (some teacher this guy is: he's talked himself into a froth about girls, and you can just feel his old dirty dick hard and aching in his filthy

trousers), and whereas Mahony's rambunctious stupidity serves him well in sending him off to chase the cat again, the smarter narrator fears the old man and stays, keeping his "gaze towards the foot of the slope." Why doesn't he look when Mahony shouts, "Look! What he's doing!"? Because the boy is disappointed with their adventure; because he really doesn't like Mahony (notice how he calls him only by his last name); and because he's embarrassed, ashamed, and frightened at what the old man says about girls. Suddenly, words have become real to him, and a pervert's musings take their place in this boy's head full of Indian yells and Latin drills.

Who is the narrator now? All I have to go on is what he says. With such a vocabulary, he could be a writer (and he writes *beautifully*). But he is secretive. No hint if he's married or single. Or if he agrees or disagrees with what the old man said about girls being often not what they seem. Or if he still prefers American detective stories for the same reason he read them then, namely, for their "unkempt fierce and beautiful girls." One thing is sure: he is still so upset at what the old man said that sultry day by the river that he won't repeat the words but will only allude to them.

Some things are unspeakable and make you go around all bottled up inside. Like negative space, what a person refuses to say reveals his contours, gives a vivid picture of the speaker (and you'd think such a smart man/boy would know this). Words that have stuck in my mind since early childhood, say, from that Saturday morning in the tenant house up next to the knob when Uncle Roger said what he did to Pug Jones lying on a burnt mattress and reading a dirty paperback, I mean to remember those words exactly, because when I tell about that day, I want people to get Uncle Roger's notes and his tune. If it were me, I would tell every word the pervert said to make my readers feel that they are sitting beside him—not this "I": the only things he lets us hear directly of the old man are what he thinks of the boys ("Ah, I see you are a bookworm like myself. Now, he is different; he goes in for games" and "Every boy has a little sweetheart") and the narrator summarizes the rest, and only twice he lets us hear him speak directly to another character ("And his sixpence...?" "Murphy!"). So, what does the narrator telling the old man's talk reveal about his reaction to what he heard? If his summary is meant to communicate, say, shame, or lust, or a mix of the two, why, for the sake of "the reader getting the point," doesn't he come out and say, The old man's talk about warm whippings gave me an erection and I was ashamed? (Is this under the scene but James Joyce—even if he could write it and get published in 1907—wouldn't say it because it would make the narrator out of character?) Here is the narrator: "He described to me how he would whip such a boy as if he were unfolding some elaborate mystery." The old man said more than the narrator is willing to tell us, he leaves out the juicy parts, the detailed descriptions of the warm whippings the old man would relish giving lying boys. Why does he "tell the talk"? Because morality determines what words you choose. The narrator couldn't say those words even if he wanted to, he's a lot like people who say "s—," or "stuffing," or "shick" when they really mean shit. When our narrator hears a dirty limerick in a pub, does he blush? Laugh? Snicker? Complain to the barman that this is no place for "such language"? If a character in a story tells the story, may we not ask, Why is he telling me this? The answer may be in the title. "An Encounter" expresses something almost too much for the narrator to talk about. Yet, what the old man said has plagued him, because, now a man, he's still talking about it. Note the title's curiously neuter tone: it is the result of a compromise, of

putting the best possible face on a thing that has caused no end of grief. Whoever tells Leo about the “queer old josser” they met on their adventure, you can bet it won’t be the narrator.

To continue the riff of “I used to/but now”: writing this book has shown me how wrong I was about the stories in *Dubliners* being “plotless.” In no way are they “plotless” (how obsessed I was with that word in the early 90s!): they have plot with a capital P, are dramas with a capital D, and something significant is always happening. This business of you-don’t-need-action-to-tell-a-story boils down to my case of hives at hearing the word “plot,” which from the moment I began getting serious about writing fiction was another way of saying “rules.” On the one hand, I refused to be told what to do, no one could tell me anything, especially some “writing teacher”—see what a bind I put myself in? On the other hand, I desperately wanted my stories to be reckoned *real stories* (stories you wouldn’t expect from a student, and, oddly, destructively, this craving for praise caused me not to trust myself). I was about to turn thirty, I was pumping gas at the Gulf station in Montpelier, and more than anything I wanted to make my living by telling stories; more than anything I wanted to answer the question, What do you do, Matthew? with a glance over my shoulder and reply, Writer, and that would settle that. And despite agreeing with John Gardner that “[w]hen one begins to be persuaded that certain things must never be done...and certain other things must always be done, one has entered the first stage of aesthetic arthritis,” I set myself to learn those certain things and follow the rules. Why? To try to guarantee that every story I told would be published, praised, anthologized, learnt by heart, but most of all so I could give my one-word answer and remind the questioner of just who I am. This campaign didn’t jibe with the wild side of me. Thus, I divided myself (the wild side helped only under protest) and this is why to this day my stories feel halfhearted.

As for “An Encounter,” I don’t know why I ever thought it doesn’t have plot, because it is right at the bottom of page one: after Joe Dillon leaves to become a priest “[a] spirit of unruliness diffused itself among us...,” and then on the next page, “I began to hunger again for wild sensations, for the escape which those chronicles of disorder alone seemed to offer me.” If plot is the Why, here it is and it’s a big one: to escape routine, to feel alive. Who hasn’t wanted this?

To tell a “perfect story”<sup>2</sup> that no one in the world not even my Lord and Saviour James Joyce could criticize (and to get in *Best American Short Stories* again), I ran to Plot, narrowing Cause and Effect down to “A must cause B that must cause C” *in every story you tell from now until the day you die*. John Gardner’s “plot backwards from the climax” seemed to guarantee success, but it only made my stories dull. (These days, I think it cowardly to know the end: when I’m really writing I’m just as surprised as anyone else at what the characters do. I don’t know how James Joyce composed his stories (what if he too plotted backwards from the climax?), but I do know that this one seems to be listening to itself as rapt as we are, and it’s this *pull* or *listening* that gives the story its power.

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<sup>2</sup> You want to get confined? Perfectionism—*this* is confined!

The “spirit of unruliness” causes the boys to skip school but it does not cause them to meet the pervert, nor do they cause him to say what he does. A causes B, but C happens, and this makes the pervert more vivid and dreadful. Surely, this must have been what it was like meeting John the Baptist. A prophet doesn’t wait to be invited; rather, he marches up and tells you you are going to Hell. Prophets and perverts prey on good listeners.

Somehow (and this is another example of James Joyce joining opposites) the old man coming up by chance makes the encounter seem fated. Isn’t it weird that he gives his speech about girls to the very boy smitten with “unkempt fierce and beautiful girls,” as if the old man knows the boy’s heart? And isn’t it odd that the old man seems to dismiss Mahony or look down on him as does the narrator? And isn’t it odd that the old man has green eyes just like the sailors the boy has “confused notions” about? As for tips on plotting stories, the old man is a good teacher: he starts innocently enough with the weather, meanders his way to books and uses Lord Lytton to slide onto the subject of girls and then to what he’s been dying to say all along: boys need whipping, *especially* boys who lie to him about not having sweethearts. (You can bet these aren’t the first boys he’s made this speech to.) And he is determined to make the boy admit that he lied about not having a sweetheart. How serpentine.

My petty resentment demands that James Joyce resolve his dissonances. Did this episode by the river break the narrator of wanting escape and adventure and erase the spirit of unruliness? How did Mahony turn out? Will his slang lead him to talk dirty like the pervert? Shouldn’t the narrator tie things up for us? “[T]he confused puffy face of Leo Dillon awakened one of my consciences.” Which one? He has more than one? And how about James cleaning up those patches of threes in paragraph sixteen, and greens in paragraph eighteen, and biscuits in paragraph nineteen he repeats for no reason; I mean, as the guy in the Talking Heads song says, “Say something once/why say it again?” What’s going on with the green stem the narrator chews “on which girls tell fortunes”? Why does he let his narrator explain why the ragged boys and girls call him and Mahony “swaddlers” but clams up about his “confused notion” about sailors having green eyes? Mustn’t a narrator be consistent? Mustn’t a *real* story answer either explicitly or implicitly every single question any reader could ever have? But wouldn’t explaining everything make for tedious listening and be the very thing that destroys this story’s dream?

And so my little orbit returns to the “rules,” and I cry, “Teacher, James Joyce is breaking the rules!” I sound as shabby as Old Cotter in “The Sisters” mouthing off about what young boys should do and then spitting into the grate. My big mistake has been thinking that every dramatic situation has only one way it must proceed; in other words, a right answer. But there are as many stories as there are storytellers, wouldn’t you agree? From the moment “Penance” got in *Best American* I told myself that from now on every story I tell must be perfect,<sup>3</sup> and perfection depends on rules, and I set out to master each one. God only knows why I would think that, since nothing thrills me more than what the black cook sang when asked how she made such good biscuits:

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<sup>3</sup> Perfection is the penance to make up for the terrible, amateurish flaw in “Penance”’s plot.

*Of course I'll tell the rules I make the biscuits by.*

*But you might not make the biscuits same as I!*

*'Cause cookin's like religion is, some's elected and some ain't,*

*And rules no more make a cook than prayer makes a saint!*

According to her, biscuits are best made by trust, by a kind of happy faith, wouldn't you agree? *It may work, it may not, it may work later, and I won't know until I jump in.* That's not so hard, is it? Then why can't I do it? Or why won't I do it? Because, like Father Flynn leading mass, I've made telling a story an act of all or nothing. I shun my wife, family, and friends, I turn the phone off and plug my ears, I lock the door and piss in a jar all to stay in this chair and *follow the rules and hope I don't fail*. And then later when I reread what I wrote, it doesn't astound me like Karlheinz Stockhausen says art must do; it doesn't make me shake my head in awe and say, like I do of James Joyce, Wow! That guy told the truth! No, once again, it's a good start that got off the track, and ain't no use in looking for the track 'cause the track's *gone*. And so I put it on the pile of good starts on the floor. And because right next to that pile is 502 pages and seventeen years sitting nice and dead in its Express Mail body bag; and because I hate having nothing to show for going all-out, for betting my heart and losing, I hate my spirit of unruliness that made me pick up my pen in the first place. And so I stick to rules, and the rules stick to me, and we're both just goddamned *stuck* with each other.

## 30 4 5 + 97.9

(essay version)

This version has the complete text - the DeWayne Readus part of this has been excised from the lecture version because I use an audio-visual aid making the written reference unnecessary. The part excised from the lecture is highlighted in "**Marker Felt font**" in the version here. The lecture version is, of course, much more complicated b/c of the numerous A/V aids used.

I *1st remember* hearing about John Cage when my 9th grade music teacher taught the class about "4' 33'" (aka the Silent Sonata) in 1967 or 68. I thought that was interesting. The 1st music I *remember* hearing of Cage's was that recorded on the wonderful double record Cage set entitled "Keyboard Music - 1935-1948" as played by Jeanne Kerstein. I *remember* myself being about 18 at the time. However, in contradiction to my memory, my chronological list of records that I've been keeping since an early age indicates that the actual 1st record I acquired by Cage wd've been the much more revolutionary "Variations IV - Volume II". It was in 1973 & I wd've been 19 or 20 at the time & it wasn't 'til a few mnths later that I heard the "Keyboard Music". My memory of this is a bit strange to me because "Variations IV" has been ultimately much more important to me than the keyboard music. I *do* remember being slightly disappointed by the keyboard music because I was expecting something more 'extreme' - wch might hint that I'd been excited by "Variations IV" & expected the keyboard music to be as spectacularly outside the realm of everything that I'd heard before (wch it wasn't).

It must've been in my senior yr of high school that my fellow students & I had an assignment to lecture about favorite pieces of music. I gave a report on Frank Zappa's song "Flower Punk". I recall realizing that my selection was the only one including (what I wd've probably only later thought of as) Musique Concrete. Although listening to it again over 34 yrs later I hear the musique concrete aspects of it as being little more than slightly sped-up sarcastic commentary (nonetheless meticulously organized), etc.. Lest one think that I might've continued playing thru to the *more* concrete "Nasal Retentive Caliope Music" [the spelling of Calliope is minus the 2nd "l" on both the LP & the CD so I've stayed faithful to that here] that "Flower Punk" flows into via "Hot Poop" on the CD, I note that "Hot Poop" ended the side of the record & wd've probably, therefore, ended my selection. For those of you who might find such juvenile reminiscences less than fascinating, please bear w/ me: I'm trying to both give credit where credit's due & give an historically accurate & detailed background to the piece ultimately under discussion.

Like most young people I knew at that time, my engaged entry point into





A part of the significance of this latter was that it is a piece designed to be easily performable by almost anyone & that what wd distinguish one performance from another cd just as validly be the performers' incompetence or other foibles as well as their skills & strengths. This was an important 1st step for me in stepping outside of the disciplines of classical music into what I usually now refer to as "Low Classical Usic".

I don't know what yr I wd've compiled my 8 cassette tape volume set of Cage's music organized chronologically but it must've been no earlier than the early '80s because I cdn't afford a duping deck before then. Whenever it may've been made, the retrospective began w/ the "Sonata for Clarinet (Solo)" from 1933 & ended w/ 1971's "62 Mesostics re Merce Cunningham".

Regarding the former piece, it's perhaps noteworthy that when Alex Sidorowicz introduced his performance of it at Towson State University on [March 16, 1993](#), he told the audience something to the effect that it was either being performed &/or recorded for the 1st time. Being the stickler for accuracy that I sometimes am, I pointed out that Phillip Rehfeldt had recorded it on an Advance Recordings LP. Rehfeldt, as I recall being informed by composer/pianist Franz Kamin, was also the precocious author of an advanced clarinet playing technique bk. I promised Sidorowicz that I'd send him the 1st volume of my Cage retrospective so that he cd hear Rehfeldt's playing of the "Sonata". I did so but never even got the courtesy of a reply. Perhaps he didn't get it. I've always suspected that Sidorowicz resented being publically revealed to be a deficient scholar by a freak w/ a brain tattoo on his head wearing pants made entirely from zippers. How humiliating! After all, a big fear of classical musicians is that of *not being taken seriously!*

Regarding the "62 Mesostics..", it's definitely noteworthy that it marked the beginning of my being less-than-enthralled w/ much of Cage's later work. For me, the "Mesostics" were of minor interest - as have been many of the spoken word pieces that followed & the number title pieces of his later yrs. *Then again*, there's still so much I haven't heard yet!! I don't think Cage's mind ever got dull. It's probably no coincidence that I started losing interest in Stockhausen's work, another favorite composer, around the same time - w/ his 1972 >>Am Himmel Wandre Ich...<<<< - another vocal piece. I was probably feeling that I was the mushroom growing off my d composition of their work & that I'd absorbed enuf of them for my own accomplishments to be more self-compelling.

I don't think David Revill's bk, The Roaring Silence, John Cage: A Life, is very good. Being a Pittsburgher, this excerpt from the opening paragraph of Chapter Nine is enuf to annoy me: "Cage lectured to the Outliners' Club at



Carnegie Tech, Oakland, in the Bay Area of California; among those present was Andy Warhola, a second-year student soon to abandon his concluding vowel." Like, duh, dude, Carnegie Tech (now called Carnegie-Mellon University or CMU) is in an area called Oakland alright - but it's in Pittsburgh: the city that Andy Warhol's from. Nonetheless, it's the only Cage bio that I've read & that I have handy & I'll find quoting from it useful in this essay.

In one mention of Cage's piece for 12 radios, "Imaginary Landscape No. 4" (1951), Revill incorporates a Cage quote in the following: "'My thinking,' Cage claims, was that the work could further his abandonment of preferences, 'that I didn't like the radio and that I would be able to like it if I used it in my work' (although he had used radio before, in *Credo in US* and the *Concerto*)." Less 'chance' oriented, perhaps, was "Credo in US" (1942). This purported dislike of the radio will be important later.

Elsewhere, Revill writes: "*In the Name of the Holocaust* [...] Cage's appreciation of war, and a belief in personal relationships as its antidote, were uppermost in his mind as he wrote; there is disillusionment, if not a slight bitterness, expressed in the punning title, invoking as it does not only the holocaust but a receding Holy Ghost. [...] *Credo in US* had also been a wartime piece (a note concerning the use of the radio recommends that the player 'avoid news programs during national or international emergencies'), 'a kind of satire on America'; the 'US' of *Credo* concerns not just the first person plural but also the United States, the tendency to think in nationalist terms or in terms of any external crutch."

Hhmm.. I wonder if Revill's onto something here w/ his capitalization of "US" in the above. In the only recording I have of "Credo in US" (the EXCELLENT performance by members of Ensemble Musica Negativa conducted by Rainer Riehn from the Music Before Revolution vinyl box-set published by Odeon) in 4 of the 5 written mentions of the piece all of the letters are capitalized (the one exception has written "us" written all lowercase) for emphasis purposes - so one can't tell what the original capitalization is. Same thing in the EDITION PETERS catalog of Cage's work published by them that accompanied the score to "DREAM" (the title of wch is in all CAPS in Cage's handwriting - contrarily, in my copy of the score to Cage's "Concerto for Piano (prepared) and Chamber Orchestra (in 3 pts)" the title's capitalization is written as reproduced here w/ typical caps relations: showing that Cage *did* use multiple caps at times rather than all emphasis CAPS). Furthermore, in the "John Cage List of Works" that I downloaded from <<http://www.emf.net/~mal/cageworks.html>> & in the "John Cage Discography" provided by mode record service (a primary publisher of recordings of Cage's music), it's written in the conventional

capitalization as "Credo in Us".

If Revill's correct about the capitalization, then it reinforces his claim of Cage's political purpose. I certainly have no problem w/ agreeing that Cage was against war & nationalism. However, I *do* have a strange memory seemingly contradicting this. I remember seeing what I took to be an *advertisement* for the Navy on TV. This was a longish (by TV commercial standards - perhaps 5 or more minutes?) black & white movie of Navy ships shooting guns w/ the soundtrack being Cage's marvelous prepared piano piece "The Perilous Night"! Now, maybe it was really just an odd film being used as filler on TV, but I'm reminded of something I read somewhere by Cage, perhaps an interview, in wch he sd something to the effect that he wasn't responsible for how his music was used after he made it. Whatever the case may be (upper or lower, etc.), a different spin on "Credo in Us" is provided by Heinz-Klaus Metzger's "ESSAY ON PREREVOLUTION-ARY MUSIC" (from the Odeon set). In it he writes:

"Certain traits in Cage's CREDO IN US (1942) offer a salute to the first striking composer in North American history, Ives. It is well known that in his most significant compositions, Ives achieved bold simultaneous and successive collages of often radically different kinds of music. Cage's **Credo in us**, [...] is ingeniously laid out for 2 muted gongs, 10 tin cans, an electric buzzer, 2 tom-toms, piano, radio and phonograph; referring to the use to be made of the last-named instrument, the composer suggests "some classics", and on closer consideration proposes Dvorák, Beethoven, Sibelius or Shostakovitch: this expressly as part of the list of instruments which prefaces the score. As these divers implements are primarily occupied in producing an unholy din of relentless metre and rhythm, the piano leaping about unrestrainedly from time-to-time, while the ill-fated 'classical' record undergoes every humiliation that one composition can inflict on another, through barbaric control settings and abrupt lowering and raising of the needle - the dynamic and rhythm of the part is exactly notated -), the result is a work of the most extreme ferocity, and the pleasure any listener unfailingly experiences on hearing it must inevitably be interpreted as a confirmation of his own sadism. Clearly the desecration of a great name - and that is what it boils down to, as is proven by the incommensurately unequal quality of the list of composers nominated by Cage as the potential victims of his musical attentions: all they have in common is their 'fame' - is, at bottom, an act of merely Oedipal rebellion, not a revolutionary one, even in inherently musical terms; the ambivalence of the whole undertaking, in the strictly Freudian sense, could not be more clearly betrayed than it is in the score's final fermata, where the final triumph is given over to the previously murdered 'classic'."

Whew! I suspect that Metzger enjoyed expostulating this bombastic take - but I find it so riddled w/ assumptions & unstated 'standards' that it's far from convincing to me. The uses of such phrases & words as "unholy din", "ill-fated", "humiliation", & "barbaric" are all judgements that I find completely irrelevant. As for his claim that "the pleasure any listener unfailingly experiences on hearing it must inevitably be interpreted as a confirmation of his own sadism", I find that entirely too sweeping. It implies to me that most or *all* humor is sadistic insofar as humor often or usually involves surprising juxtapositions - as does "Credo in US". While I might accept the idea of humor as a form of class 'warfare' because of its 'levelling' effect between concepts that might ordinarily be hierarchically organized, I'd be more inclined to call "Credo.." a case of Psychological Playfair. Humor isn't necessarily sadistic because it's just as likely (if not more so) to be relaxing & good-will-inducing than it is to be harmful. Methinks Metzger overly Freudianizes because his own classical hierarchy is threatened. I think it's interesting that both NURSE WITH WOUND excerpt from "Credo in Us" as a part of their 1980? "Ostranenie 1913" piece possibly released 1st on the To the Quiet Men from a Tiny Girl LP & that a group that I cofounded w/ Neil Feather whose name changed continuously but wch I'll refer to here as "The Official Project" *also* used an excerpt from "Credo in Us" on our "Atavistic Electronics" & other "Official" Tour/Tures 1992 cassette release.

I finally met Cage in the spring of 1979 when he performed his "Empty Words - Part IV" at U.M.B.C. (University of Maryland - Baltimore County campus). At the time, 2 friends of mine & I were anonymously running the 1st of our "phone stns": TESTES-3. We advertised that # (TESTES-3 is equal to 837-8373 on the phone) by putting graffiti around Baltimore such as: "For a Good Time, call TESTES-3". The idea was to get people to call the # & to then record them on our answering machine so that we cd make outgoing tapes from their messages that they might hear if they'd call again. A mystery catalyst designed to get the general public more *actively* involved w/ an inexpensive form of mass media.

Cage was reading on stage in an auditorium that had a small balcony at the back. No-one was sitting in the balcony so the anonymous TESTES-3 crew went there & hung a large graphic of a telephone dial w/ TESTES-3 written on it off the balcony's railing. We hoped Cage wd look up & see it or, at least, that someone in the audience might. Then, after Cage's performance, we attended the small reception (very few people went) & talked w/ Cage. In an oft-recounted anecdote, it's sd that Cage guaranteed Schoenberg that he wd devote his life to music in exchange for free lessons. It's further sd that

Schoenberg claimed that Cage had no feel for harmony & wd come to a wall thru wch he cdn't pass as a result. Cage is sd to have replied to the effect of: "In that case I will devote my life to beating my head against that wall." Keeping this in mind & given that Cage wd've been 66 yrs old when I met him, I asked him if he wd ever consider changing his occupation from composer to something else. He replied NO. I told him that that was a shame because I thought he'd make a great football player. Obviously, I was trying to be absurd but I've since wondered if Cage simply thought I was trying to insult him. I certainly suspect that he wd've had no reason to think that my comments were referential to his dialog w/ Schoenberg. As my friends & I talked w/ him, we (perhaps not so) discreetly stuck TESTES-3 stickers on him - on his back thru a back-pat & on his shoe. We were hoping that he'd see them & get curious & call. However, if he did, we found no trace on our answering machine tape. What a missed opportunity! Of course, we cd've just told him about TESTES-3 & explained it in terms relevant to the history of experimental music but that wd've been contrary to our *modus operandi*. Not surprisingly, this encounter w/ Cage reminds me of the famous story about Nam June Paik cutting off Cage's tie as a Fluxus performance/prank when he 1st met him. I can identify w/ Paik's trickster spirit. But is it Oedipal? Again, as in my response to Metzger's criticism of "Credo in US", I think not. Does a *real* anti-authoritarian want to be treated as an authority figure? I respect Cage enormously - but that's no good reason to be obsequious to him. After all, we were both anarchists.

Over the yrs, I've heard recordings of *at least* 131 of Cage's pieces & attended many live performances. Cage performing for Jackson MacLow's 60th birthday celebration on [September 12, 1982](#) in NYC (coincidentally, Cage was born 10 yrs before MacLow); the *enormously ambitious* & marvelous Cage-Fest at the Strathmore Hall Arts Center on [May 5, 1989](#); the Towson State University "Tribute to John Cage" where the "Sonata for Clarinet" was performed; etc..

On [October 10, 1993](#), I participated in "But What About the Sound...", the Baltimore Composers Forum (& friends)'s Cage tribute, by performing "Radio Music". On [February 11th](#) & 12th, 1994, I performed "Theatre Piece" & "Radio Music" at the 14 Karat Cabaret in Baltimore. "Theatre Piece", in particular, was a profound experience for me. Starting in 1997, I was lecturing/performing to students in Michael Pestel's "Sound Art" class at Chatham College in Pittsburgh (& elsewhere) on "(M)usic from 1885 to the Present" - including a section on "Credo in Us".

Of course, during all this, my own work was developing &, for my own

purposes, *superseding* what I'd found most valuable in Cage's.

Explaining *that* in detail is beyond the scope of this essay, however - since I'm mainly trying to focus on my relationship to Cage's work & how that relationship developed into "30 4 5 + 97.9". One aspect of a brief summary of that superseding is that I self-consciously operate *outside of* the authority that the classical music world gives its participants & wch Cage used to such great effect to further his career. The result, of course, being that my own Low Classical Usic (explained elsewhere in an essay of mine w/ the same name) is rarely taken seriously. So be it. As usual, the truly thoughtful are open to information & ideas *outside of* what the established filters for determining what's valuable allow thru. These are the people I hope to reach & befriend.

As related earlier, 2 of the most important entry points for me into Cage's work were the live audio montage of "Variations IV" & my own attempt to perform a playing of the "HPSCHD" record by following the "PROGRAM (KNOBS) FOR THE LISTENER" instructions. Both of these pieces put forth the, to me, very important idea of an *ACTIVE* relationship to one's soundscape (&, of course, one's *life* in general!). "Variations IV" involved both mixing prerecorded material *and* live microphone pick-ups from inside & outside the gallery that the mixing was both being performed in & received in. "PROGRAM.." encouraged a person that might be ordinarily a somewhat passive *consumer* of a product the opportunity to become a performer *w/ that product* too. Further relevant pieces along these lines are the already mentioned "Credo in US", "Imaginary Landscape No. 4", & "Radio Music". Then there're the great mixes: "Williams Mix" (1952), "Fontana Mix" (1958), "Rozart Mix" (1965), etc (wch might include "Newport Mix" (1967) wch I've never heard).

Cage wasn't alone in this area of investigation. A huge world of recontextualization was opening up. Stockhausen's "Hymnen" (1966) certainly deserves mention - as does *all* Musique Concrete! &, of course, Charles Ives, Erik Satie, & Spike Jones & the City Slickers are important precursors.

For me, this emphasis on turning what had been made as *consumer* items - especially phonographs (& records) & radios (& their programs) - into *instruments* for *re-creating* (*Playing as Re-Creational*) the audio environment was an act of what I call "d composing" - the separation of the letter "d" from "composing" w/o the joining "e" of the usual spelling being a personal reference to my own rebellious high school history & my (barely) graduating w/ a "d" average. These days, "deconstructing" might be a more common term. Culture Jamming. It was this (sometimes critical) retooling of the passive to the active that was a springboard for much of what I've



done since. Eg, from 1984 to 1988 there was my "booed usic" project wch involved, more or less by definition, the use of prerecorded material & special playing techniques thereof - mixed w/ more conventional instruments. My 1st "booed usic" was at the Telectropheremoanin'quinquennial (the 5th anniversary of the BalTimOre Underground Telephone Network) at the Galaxy Ballroom in the Congress Hotel in B-More on [January 24th, 1984](#). In addition to my own playing of tapes (8-tracks & cassettes), Mark Harp played tapes & radio & percussion, Ron Cummings played records on a specially modified turntable of his own design (& other things), & Leroy Keltner & Craig Considine played trombones. Something that I did that I suspect Cage wd've *never* done (that's a significant indicator of differences between our philosophies) was incorporate live phone sex into the event. Just as I had no intention of uncritically consuming the information/disinformation & tools available to me, so I had no intention of uncritically following in the philosophical footsteps of Cage. I prefer a philosophy of engagement to a philosophy of detachment.

Now, let's jump into the time of the making of "30 4 5 + 97.9". It's December, 2004, & I'm temporarily the only person running the (somewhat) collectively founded pirate (unlicensed) radio stn: Pittsburgh Pirates, Stealers of the Airwaves - broadcasting on 97.9FM. Why a pirate stn? Most people I 'know' wdn't 'need' to ask. BUT, just in case someone encounters this text someday for whom the answer isn't obvious, I'll explicate a tad: radio stns, like all mass media, are generally controlled by big money interests - either big business or universities. The big businesses control the radio for the sake of controlling the marketplace & for propagandistically putting forth their version of 'reality' thru so-called 'news' & talk-show hosts who're little more than bullies. Believe-as-I-do-or-I'll-humiliate-you types. Universities provide a more open forum but are still beholden to vested interests & to FCC regulations.

FCC regulations, like any rules made w/o direct input from those they effect, are *imposed* on a subject body. I have no intention of being *anyone's* subject body. To quote a press conference given by DeWayne Readus who ran a Liberation Radio stn called Zoom Black Magic Radio, WTRA (107.1FM), in Springfield, Illinois in the late 1980s & early 1990s: **"When communication laws were designed, we were still sitting in the back of the bus. We wasn't privy to the initiation of those laws, the writing of those laws, the passing of those laws - but we fell only victim to the enforcement of those laws - & this is our challenge today: is to our right to have access to the airwaves, to conduct our communication for our people in the manner we see fit."** In an MTV News interview Mr. Readus said "No, No, we don't consider ourselves to be a pirate radio station & we don't consider ourselves needing a license. It would almost be kinda like a runaway slave asking the

**master for a pass, y'know?"** Right on!

In the liner notes of the 1987 Hungaraton record release of Cage's 1981 "Thirty Pieces for Five Orchestras" as performed by the Szombathelyi Szimfonikus Zenekar (Savaria Symphony Orchestra) under the direction of Péter Eötvös, it's stated by András Wilhelm that in performance:

"Outside the auditorium one or more radio sets should be placed (each of them tuned to the same programme), their sound being audible clearly but very softly in the pauses of the orchestral performance. The role of the radios is on the one hand to make more complex the special musical perception, on the other hand to mark Cage's silence-conception as well: every unintended sound coming into being independently from our will is considered as silence (c.f. e.g.: 4' 33"). The piece begins by switching on the radios and finishes by switching them off (0:00-30:15).

The radio programme is not recorded here. When listening to the record this layer of the composition should be created by the listener: in the next room (or a room independent from the listening room) a radio set should be switched on, whose programme can be heard very softly but clearly audible in the pauses of the orchestral performance."

Even though in the above notes the composition time is indicated to be 30:15, the recording is marked on the record sleeve as being 29:54. It's this recording that's incorporated into "30 4 5 + 97.9". *SO*, "30 4 5", of course, is the abbreviation for "Thirty Pieces for Five Orchestras" & "97.9" is the frequency of the pirate stn. Quasi-following the "30.." instructions by combining the 2 together produces the piece in question. The dynamic relations called for are *stretched*.

The 1st & 2nd recordings of "30 4 5 + 97.9" were made on [October 16th](#), 2004EV. At this time, Joy & Babz were hosting the stn. Their programming primarily leaned toward punk, hip-hop, folk - probably w/ a smattering of jazz, world music, & soundtracks - & w/ a predominance of anarchist & black liberation radical political lyrics. Added to these were the freshly made Stn IDs that featured such commentary as:

tENT: "I love 97.9FM, Pittsburgh Pirates, Stealers of the Radio because.."

Babz: "I can fall asleep to it at night. I love 97.9FM, Pittsburgh Pirates because.."

Joy: "The Patriot Act makes good toilet paper. I love 97.9FM because.."

tENT: "I can fall asleep at night while wiping my ass with the Patriot Act & dreaming about George Bush's head *elongating* into the shape of a *GIANT* banana that's dangling from Carmen Miranda's.. dingleberry."

The 3rd take was made [December 29th](#), 2004EV. I was running the stn by

then. On this day, I played mostly spoken word material:

Electric Newspaper Issue 4 edited by Genesis P.Orridge & Larry Thrasher & featuring a multitude of sound-bite tracks featuring such things as a one-time Pittsburgh radio announcer named Brother Love & voices saying *SATAN* in various dramatic ways.

RATical RATio - pRAT 2 - my own publication & featuring a selection of 'radical' radio programs from several cities.

a CD of 60 stn IDs that I'd made.

Sound Bites from the Counter Culture w/ sound-bites from Hunter S.

Thompson, Eugene McCarthy, Bob Guccione Jr., Dr. Timothy Leary,

Abbie Hoffman, Henry Rollins, Jello Biafra, Danny Sugerman, & Jim

Carroll. a local sampler assembled to benefit the anarchist info book store:

The Big Idea?

a CD by local somewhat Fugs-influenced political group T.B.A.

**December 30th**, 2004EV brought along take 4. I chose the 5 volumes of my "troAc Fragm" set - "troAc Fragm" being an abbreviation of "ElectroAcoustic Fragments" - mostly excerpts from longer pieces I've made from 1976 to 2004. These wd've included bits from the afore-mentioned era of phone stns + early Concrete Mixing performances in wch I improvised using prerecorded materials, etc.. I reckon that I also played a stn IDs disc but no excerpts from it are heard in this version of "30 4 5 + 97.9".

Some of the 97.9 recordings I made to quasi-document the radio while I was its main programmer have a buzz - caused mainly by the bad reception in my cheap receiver but also by poor broadcasting conditions.

The morning of **December 31st**, 2004EV brought along take 5. It also brought along the biggest, loudest, *baddest* buzz so far. If Cage cd base a piece around the "imperfections" in a piece of paper & otherwise accept & embrace happenstance, I can accept & incorporate this dominating buzz.

This was the day I chose to play mostly Cage discs:

In a Landscape - Stephen Drury, keyboards: "In a Landscape", "Music for Marcel Duchamp", "Souvenir". "A Valentine Out of Season", "Suite for Toy Piano", "Bacchanale", "Prelude for Meditation", "Dream".

The Lost Works: "The City Wears a Slouch Hat", "Fads and Fancies in the Academy", & "A Chant with Claps".

I'm not sure what the remaining 3 Cage selections were but they wd've been picked from this selection:

Singing Through - Joan La Barbara, voice + Leonard Stein, piano + William Winant, percussion: "A Flower", "Mirakus2", "Eight Whiskus", "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs", "Nowth Upon Nacht",



"Sonnekus2", "Forever and Sunsmell", "Songbooks: Solos for Voice 49, 52, 67", "Music for Two (by One)".

Music of Changes - Joseph Kubera, piano

The Piano Concertos - Stephen Drury, prepared & bowed pianos; David Tudor, piano & live electronics: "Concerto for Prepared Piano and Orchestra", "Concert for Piano and Orchestra", "Fourteen".

Cheap Imitation - John Cage, piano

Fifty-Eight - Pannonisches Blasorchester, conducted by Wim Van Zutphen

Litany for the Whale - Theatre of Voices, Paul Hillier: "Litany for the Whale", "Aria No. 2", "Five", "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs", "Solo for Voice 22" (from *Songbooks*), "Experiences No. 2", "36 Mesostics re and not re Marcel Duchamp", "Aria", "The Year Begins to Be Ripe".

John Cage at Summerstage w/ Joan La Barbara, William Winant, & Leonard Stein:

"Music for Three", "Eight Whiskus", "FOUR6".

The final, non-Cage CD, wd've been my own 60 stn IDs.

By way of preface to describing take 6, I shd note that 97.9's technical set-up is hardly fancy. At the time there were 2 multi-disc CD players - both probably trash-picked. One of these played 6 discs. The other was a part of a multi-unit that additionally contained a turntable, a duping cassette deck (w/ one of the doors stuck open), & a radio. The tray that held the CDs didn't open, so the side of the unit had been unscrewed & was left dangling, still attached by wires, to enable the 3-disc tray to be (barely) reached. I used this thing mainly for the radio - wch was the main way I cd monitor what was being played. It wasn't very handy for much else because it had no line-outs - to use its outgoing signal we had to plug into the headphones jack - & then I cdn't monitor the radio.

During the afternoon of the 31st I recorded the 6th version of "30 4 5 + 97.9". To the already playing CDs, I attempted to mix in the 2 CDs of "A Chance Operation - The John Cage Tribute" by playing them on the broken multi-unit & putting the headphones output into the same mixer as the 6 CD player. There may've been a 3rd CD too. Accidentally, I set this particular CD player to REPEAT only ONE track - as it turned out track 65: a 54 second fragment of Meredith Monk's fabulous performance of "Aria". This created another level of nonintention to be added to the (pseudo-)RANDOM REPEAT of the 6 CDs & the buzz of the poor reception.

If Cage didn't like the radio, as mentioned earlier, was it the typical narrow-mindedness of it that he didn't like? & what was the radio that he wd've heard *like* in 1951 when he composed "Imaginary Landscape No. 4" for 12

radios? It's not important enuf to me (or beyond me) at the moment to research what radio wd've been like leading up to 1951. My assumption is that the programming wd've been far less adventurous than what Cage's interests wd've embraced (as it still wd be [today](#) for the most part), that there wd've been more radio plays (of a fairly conventional nature) than there are [today](#), & that the news wd've been even more tightly propagandistically controlled (not that it isn't horribly so now!).

In James Pritchett's liner notes to the mode release of Cage's 1942 music for the radio play by Kenneth Patchen entitled "The City Wears a Slouch Hat", it's written that Cage was told by a CBS sound effects engineer that "anything was possible" & that Cage then wrote a *250 page* score of such massive detail that the radio stn personnel *then* told him it was impossible to play. Cage *then* rewrote the piece much more simply & it was performed & broadcast. Unfortunately, this led to no further Columbia radio gigs & Cage's fledgling career in the extensive use of sound effects was squelched. Surely this played a role in Cage's dislike of radio.

But did Cage ever envision the era of *unlicensed radio*?! I doubt that it ever occurred to him that someone like myself might come along & *bypass* the 'need' for cooperation from corporations for the use of radio as I hear fit! The 'need' for popularity thru the Lowest Common Denominator need not restrict my programming *either* as it wd have CBS's!

Cage composed "Imaginary Landscape No. 4" for 12 radios, but did he ever imagine it as a piece most importantly to be played live *on the radio*? It's this step in the direction of further deconstructing the mechanisms of centralized media control that's of special interest to me & of special relevance to areas that Cage may not've gone into either by choice or by lack of access, etc..

My own piece from January, 1983, Station Identification - For Radio Play Only was simply a recording of stn IDs w/ 'silence' (tape hiss) in between.

Its 1st attempted airing was repressed by legal intervention. It's since been played on pirate radio, at least. For me, its intended effect of disorienting radio listeners from a concrete sense of the false security of a world of cut & dried capitalist market boundaries is an example of the application of the philosophy of engagement mentioned earlier. It's also an example of my preferred push 'beyond' the *MUSICAL* to the *USICAL* - in wch the sounds are more important for their *subverted* conceptual/perceptual/social *function* than they are for their (irrelevant) 'aesthetic value'.

Wch brings us to (what might not really be) the final version of "30 4 5 + 97.9". I took the 1st 6 versions & made CDs from them - each broken into 12 evenly-timed tracks. I chose 12 tracks instead of the more obvious 6 so that in 'RANDOM REPEAT' mode there was more likelihood of a minimum of

at least one extract from each CD being played per half hr period - w/ the additional likelihood that more than one track from one or more of the CDs might be played. These CDs were then played on the radio while I recorded them simultaneously, once again, w/ Cage's "Thirty Pieces for Five Orchestras". 2 takes were made. Thus, this mix involved not only fragmentation of all of the work mixed in in the 1st 6 takes *but also* fragments of those 6 playings of "Thirty Pieces..". Wd Cage have imagined *this* on the radio?! I think not. But his work certainly led up to it.

Sometimes, I get the impression that after Cage died there's been a movement of sorts to rehistorify him into a borderline New Age composer. As if to say: "Oh, NO, Cage wasn't *only* a *noise* composer! He composed *pretty* music too!" Take, eg, the back cover notes from the 1994 CD release In a Landscape: "Revel in the gentle ambient works of John Cage-from his exotic prepared piano music to his most ethereal meditations." Nyuk, nyuk. Who's there? Market-niche speak. *No*, Cage wasn't *only* for anarchist eggheads & *other such difficult people!* Relax to his ZEN GARDEN sounds **TODAY** - you can even buy it NOW on-line! {Key word search: AMBIENT (see also: POPULAR, Brian Eno); EXOTIC (see also: POPULAR, Martin Denny).}

Now.. Don't misunderstand me. I find most of Cage's music interesting. He's by far one of my favorite composers - in part because of the far-reaching diversity of his ideas. I *like* "In a Landscape". After all, one of the 1st scores I got by Cage was the similar "DREAM". Of course, I partially chose that one because, as a fairly unskilled pianist & person barely able to read conventional notation, I *cd play it*. But, the point is that I seriously doubt that it was ever an important intention of Cage's to compose '*pretty music*'! This common preoccupation w/ "consonance" & "aesthetics" is too low-level conceptually to cage John into. As I've been trumpeting about for more than 30 yrs now, *consonance* (the prerequisite of '*pretty*') is little more than what people feel comfortable w/ because it's so familiar they take it for granted & don't bother to question it. How often have we heard some musically ignorant & thoughtless person compliment a musician's 'skill' & 'beautiful playing' because they play piano, eg, in major & minor scales w/ the sustain pedal down?

I even like '*ambient*' & '*exotic*' music. After all, I conducted (as a human clock) "Very Quiet Village" at the Marstall Theater in München, Germany as part of the group KBZ 200 (Klauhütte Bangzeit 200) in 1994. This "excavated jewel[..] of ersatz exoticism" (to quote from the "OFFICIAL CONTROL FREAK SCHEDULE" from that event) was a hybrid tribute to Cage's "4' 33'" & to Les Baxter's archetype of what's come to be known as

"exotica": "Quiet Village". This 'silence', of course, was performed at 4:33AM. *BUT*, keep in mind that such a conflation of Cage w/ exotica & popular music has a *sense of humor* to it & is completely *self-conscious* in its twistedness.

Another example of the Cage rehistorification: I attended a concert entitled unCAGED 3 at the Great Hall of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore on Sunday, [February 21, 1999](#). The program consisted largely of what one might call some of the '*less challenging*' works, the ones that aren't dense & noisy, the ones that have easily discernible rhythm & melody. There was "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs", "A Flower", "Experiences II", & "In a Landscape". These may've been somewhat 'balanced' by "ear for EAR (antiphonies)", "Solo for Voice I", & "Sculpture Musicales / Writing for the Second Time through *Finnegan's Wake*". What struck me at the time was that one of the male vocalists introduced his singing by saying something to the effect that his performance was going to set the record straight about Cage's vocal music. He claimed something like that previous performances of this music was sung as if the vocalists had frogs in their throats - in other words, that previous vocalists had made the music gratuitously noisy or some such! Who on earth cd he have been referring to?! Some of the primary interpreters of Cage's vocal music by that time had been Cathy Berberian, Joan La Barbara, & Demetrio Statos!! Fantastic, fantastic performers all!! Ironically, this 1999 performer then went on to give what was, for me, the worst Cage performance I'd ever witnessed. After his pompous intro, he, literally, had a "frog in his throat" & was largely unable to even produce the clear tones he had seemingly promised. As far as I cd tell, there was no intended irony there!

It's the partial intention of "30 4 5 + 97.9" to counterbalance this non-noisy rehistorification of Cage. Furthermore, if, as Revill claims, "Imaginary Landscape No. 5" uses mostly jazz records partly to circumvent Cage's aversion to jazz, then think of "30 4 5 + 97.9"'s incorporation of HipHop (eg) as following both a similar motive *and* as a tribute to the political savvy of HipHop's sampler culture's recontextualizing of previous musics & political speeches. As for whether Cage wd've liked my having any *intention at all* in relation to his music, let's just say: *OH WELL..*

**- tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE**

Sunday, [August 7th](#) to Sunday, [August 14th](#), 2005EV (etc..)

## **WHY ME? ANOTHER BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN CAGE**

Richard Kostelanetz

I've written before about my recurring inability to evaluate standard biographies of cultural figures. From commercial publishers they appear in roughly the same size, I guess contractually prescribed, 6" x 9", 500-plus pages, indexed, its prose stylistically undistinguished, with perhaps 50 to 80 pages of footnotes and a signature or two of photographs. Even about major cultural figures commercial publishers evidently prefer such books over criticism, even though the latter might finally become more valuable and respected.

Over the years I've reviewed these thick books mostly to say something critical about such subjects as Dwight Macdonald, Edmund Wilson, Virgil Thomson, Frank O'Hara, Glenn Gould, and Leon Theremin. About their measure as biographies, I have little substantial to say. Usually I'm glad that such books appear, especially if they reveal much about someone whose life was previously unknown (e.g., Albert Ginsky's extraordinarily informative *Theremin*). One omission I find curiously common is any report of the subject's last will and testament, which is usually public information.

Only one struck me as a disaster, for a reason missed by most reviewers and apparently even by some judges who gave it some monikered award, I guess impressed by its conventional acceptability. Virgil Thomson was not just an important American composer; he was also among the wittiest men who ever lived, less in print than in conversation. Nonetheless, his biographer Anthony Tommasini completely misses Thomson's monumental jokes (that can curiously be found a certain biographies of Thomson's friends, such as Brad Gooch's on Frank O'Hara). Precisely because Tommasini's book was accepted as "definitive," Thomson's achievement as a cultural personality was reduced; but, since Tomm's disaster was acclaimed, no corrective biography will ever appear. Though Thomson had no direct heirs, his admirers and executors should be permanently pissed.

With these thoughts in mind, I read Kenneth Silverman's *Begin Again* (Knopf), the second major biography of John Cage. (The earlier one, by the British music writer David Revil, was an embarrassment I demolished long ago.). As a sometime professor of English at New York University, Silverman had published earlier biographies of Samuel F. B. Morse, Harry Houdini, and Cotton Mather, two of which he sent me after we met as he was beginning his project. Each Silverman biography runs over 500 pages; one copped a Pulitzer Prize.

Silverman also ran a biography seminar at NYU, where he taught for decades. As a biographer, Silverman was a pro who knew from the start how to finish what he would begin, in contrast to some amateurs I know who have been promising their Cage biographies, in one case for decades. Several years were spent on *Born Again*.

When Silverman kindly sent me a copy of his new book, inscribed by his hand no less, I noticed that I was credited among his informants in the book's preface but then, since he never

interviewed me again, only once in the index. Following the index into the book itself, I found myself cited as the source of a single quotation wholly Cage's.

No mention is made of my writings about Cage, both journalistic and critical, dating back to 1967. I'd published and edited several books of and about Cage (1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1989, 1991, 1993 [2], 1994, 1996 [2], 2000 [2], 2002), as well as several other anthologies and articles incorporating him, sometimes with ideas uniquely mine--e.g., polyartistry, constraint, trust. None of those key critical epithets appear in Silverman. For decades my first *Cage* book (1970, reprinted several times) was for many people a favorite introduction to his radical activities.

I felt slighted, inexplicably slighted, though I had no extended contact with Silverman beyond our first meeting and accompanying exchange of books. Did I offend him or some Svengali handling him? Should I have offered to help more? These are, I suppose, questions that any informant similarly slighted must ask himself. An early version of my criticisms here went to Silverman, who initially introduced himself to me, don't forget; but he didn't reply.

I then checked my own name in Silverman's bibliography. The nine entries on me turned out to be a mess, three of them crediting me as editing books actually authored by me. A reference to me in his notes on his page 429 goes nowhere, acknowledging a chapter from a book of mine not identified by name. Don't scholarly publishers hire copyeditors whose job it is (or was) to make sure such references have sources? Other books of mine featuring Cage weren't listed.

That scarcely ends the errors that a conscientious copyeditor, not to mention the veteran author, should have caught. The Fluxus anti-king George Maciunas still alive on Silverman's page 194 actually died decades ago. Since Maciunas was a major avant-garde figure, his death is scarcely a secret. The composer Fred Rzewski's name is misspelled on page 225. Fred Grunfeld was less a musicologist than a cultural journalist.

Other corrections should have been made by someone long familiar with Cage. On p. 122, Silverman speaks of Cage's house in Stony Point, New York, as "half of a small house." In fact, it was two rooms, each perhaps 20' x 10', with a utility core in the middle that shared an extended wall with a much larger neighboring house. I wrote about it in 1967 for the *New York Times Magazine*, which is a source that biographers rarely miss.

Too often Silverman inexplicably uses language unnecessarily tentative, for instance speaking on page 134 of Dick Higgins as "probably not yet twenty years old" when he took Cage's course at the New School in 1956. No, Higgins, born in 1938 (scarcely a secret), was undoubtedly less than twenty at the time. In *Begin Again* are other statements unnecessarily tentative about details easily confirmed, in sum suggesting that Silverman might be a beginning biographer, rather than an old pro.

I made fun of David Revill for his Englishman's mistakes about New York City geography; but since Silverman is a New Yorker who went to Stuyvesant High School and then Columbia College, I was surprised on page 277 to find Cage's residence at 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Sixth Avenue identified as "Greenwich Village" (rather than Chelsea or the Flatiron District) and then his friend William Anatasi's as "Washington Heights" when it was around 137<sup>th</sup> Street and Riverside



Drive! How can New Yorkers get so *farblundjet* about their home town?

On page 258 Silverman declares that Cage “had published more [writing] about music than any other twentieth-century composer,” which is scarcely true if Ned Rorem or Virgil Thomson count. What would be true, though the distinction escapes Silverman, is that Cage published more poetry and unclassifiable experimental texts than any other composer.

Since I felt my own involvement with Cage slighted, I thought to check other names whom I knew to be important to Cage. What good company I find myself almost in. Among those *completely* omitted are Klaus Schoning, who commissioned several *major* Cage compositions for the Horspiel (earplay) department of Westdeutscher Rundfunk (while refusing Cage’s weakness for offhand meanderings); Daniel Charles, the French philosophy professor who produced the first Cage books in France; and Sean Bronzell, a young American, almost a surrogate son, often seen at Cage’s apartment during the 1980s.

I found no mention at all of the critic Jill Johnston, an early prominent advocate of Merce Cunningham dance and thus Cagean esthetics, particularly in her writing for *The Village Voice*; the musician Paul Hillier who, in addition to performing Cage, published a book of mesostics directly reflecting Cage’s poetic influence. Though Silverman frequently credits Cage’s principal posthumous record producer, Mode Records, earlier sponsors of the composer’s recordings are forgotten. The most courageous was Teresa Sterne, a legend in her time, whose Nonesuch release of *HPSCHD* (1969) includes a printed sheet of Cage’s instructions for manipulating home transducer dials— no less now an innovation than it was then. Aside from escaping Silverman, these six have nothing else obviously in common.

One dimension of Cage’s achievement missed by Silverman was the effect of his visits around the world. Simply, he was a great guest artist. Around 2007 I heard in Iceland, of all places, about Cage’s passing through Reykjavik perhaps two decades before, where he not only talked but had his sponsors generate audacious events that were remembered. In dozens of other places his appearance had comparably memorable influence. Though Silverman acknowledges a George Maciunas documentation of Cage’s early travels, there are no first-hand reports in this biography. Perhaps this subject didn’t occur to Silverman.

More than once I sensed that Silverman who never met Cage was misguided by people who hadn’t known Cage for long, sometimes making the biographer appear unnecessarily stupid. Whereas David Ulin in the *Los Angeles Times* judged that Cage was too rich a subject for Silverman to grasp, my sense was that, in dealing for his first time with someone recently deceased, Silverman was necessarily dependent upon self-important informants with peculiar agendas. Nonetheless, whoever vetted this typescript should retire.

The book to do, which I thought about decades ago but won’t do now, is a double biography of Cage and Cunningham, certainly among the most fertile couples in modern art. Though identifying a gay couple is no longer problematic, not to mention no longer libelous, it was to these men, both born before 1920, something they did not publicly acknowledge. Over the years I heard and personally witnessed all kinds of subtleties in their interactions that others must have observed too. Jill Johnston broached this territory of gay esthetic fertility before her recent death

as did Jonathan Katz in his extraordinary portrait of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns first printed in *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* (1993). Now that Cunningham has passed as well, no one can object.

Whether or not *Begin Again* is a good biography or bad I cannot in truth tell. Silverman certainly uncovered biographical episodes previous unknown to me, especially about personal relationships that weren't so interesting. What I do know is that this book has serious deficiencies that should have been corrected before appearing in public print. About Glenn Gould, a figure equally rich, whom I also knew, several biographies have appeared, each new one adding to its predecessors. May Cage, now an historic figure, benefit from the same progress.

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Richard Kostelanetz





**Alvin Lucier: I Am Sitting In A Room**

photo: Lovely Music, Ltd. [www.lovely.com](http://www.lovely.com)

## *Music 109*, by Alvin Lucier

Chris Golinski

Alvin Lucier's *Music 109* invites you into his classroom at Wesleyan, where he has lectured for over forty years on American experimental music. The book's text, culled from his lectures, covers many of the important works of the last fifty years, as well as Lucier's creative concerns. While intended for the classroom, the informal and conversational tone of the book lets readers feel that they are sitting in a room - [sic] - alone with Lucier while he recounts tales of the birth of American Experimentalism. The material seems almost unedited. Happily, this adds depth and color not often seen in more academic writing. For instance, Lucier opens a chapter by announcing that "it just started snowing outside so let's listen to *Three Voices* by Morton Feldman" (177). However, the informal approach and intended student audience should not discourage those familiar with these topics from delving into the book, for within these pages one finds both entertaining anecdotes and enlightening revelations about a movement that forever changed our understanding of music.

Lucier devotes most of the book to specific works and concepts, both his own and those of his fellow composers. His insights into the music of John Cage, who Lucier first encountered while on a Fulbright Scholarship in Rome, are particularly illuminating. In a striking passage on indeterminacy and personal creative expression, Lucier states:

Indeterminacy gets personal preference out of the compositional process. Isn't that a shocking idea? Weren't we always taught that art was about self-expression? What have Cage's pieces to do with self-expression? Nothing. They've got everything to do with discovery. People sometimes say his work is nihilistic; they think he just throws things together. In fact he's extremely meticulous with his scores. He doesn't cheat, either. I know he doesn't because I've worked with him. (11)

Intended to address the critique of Cage's compositional process as haphazard or lazy, Lucier's comments also shed light on the ongoing debate regarding Cage's relationship to improvisation and his possible indebtedness to jazz as a source for his ideas. Cage criticized improvisation and jazz; yet indeterminacy in Cage's music is today often discussed concurrently with improvisation. The assumption is that certain traits shared by improvisation and Cage's indeterminacy imply an equivalence or affinity between the two practices<sup>1</sup>. Further complicating the matter, as George Lewis points out in "Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," is that "the historical timeline shows that Cage's radical emphasis upon spontaneity and uniqueness - not generally found in either American or European Music before Cage - arrives some eight to ten years after the innovations of bebop" (Lewis 223). The implication being that Cage's work was likely to have been influenced by the innovations of bebop, even as he disparaged the music publicly in interviews. Lewis

<sup>1</sup> Highlighting the way in which these two concepts have become intermingled over time is a recent "improvisation week" at the Music University of Freiburg in honor of the John Cage centennial, which consisted of improvisations, performances of Cage's works, as well as other works concerned with performer indeterminacy.

also cites the writings of Anthony Braxton and Georgina Born, who take the argument further to state that the discourse surrounding American experimental music utilizes a terminology intended to mask the music's indebtedness to the "other," and that the use of terms such as indeterminate or aleatoric disguises the fact that Cage and other American Experimentalists relied upon improvisation.

Returning to Lucier's passage, however, the relationship between Cage's indeterminacy and improvisation appears more problematic. Because if Cage's music has nothing to do with self-expression, improvisation has everything to do with it. It is precisely the element of performer subjectivity that is the *raison d'être* of jazz and the later free improvisation tradition. It is not about playing "My Favorite Things" or "So What" to realize the vision of the composer, but about using those pieces as a vehicle through which an improviser's own vision is realized. In this sense, improvisation is largely about the self and maintaining a sense of unique identity within the collective. At the time that he began to explore using chance operations and indeterminacy, however, Cage was becoming interested in Eastern Philosophy and in particular the variant of Zen Buddhism promulgated by D.T. Suzuki. In this philosophical tradition Cage would have encountered a concept that appeared to him to run contrary to both the ethos of improvisation and that of much of Western art music: no-self. As Sabine Feisst notes in her essay "John Cage and Improvisation - An Unresolved Relationship," Cage was also

influenced by the Indian art scholar Ananda Coomaraswamy and his book *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1934), [he] became fascinated with the idea of art as 'the imitation of Nature in her manner of operation' and opposed to art as an expression of emotion. He began to reject artistic self-expression. (3)

What we see happening, therefore, is not Cage appropriating improvisation and labeling it indeterminacy, in order to avoid acknowledging the contribution of the "other." Rather, he is embracing an intellectual tradition that is very much *from* the "other" (Eastern philosophy) and this influence leads him to reject the emphasis on self-expression found in both jazz and the Western art music tradition. As noted in another section of *Music 109*, both the intention behind his music and the results for the listener are strikingly different from those of improvisation:

Cage doesn't want you to improvise. He doesn't want you to rely on memory and habit. If you were improvising, you might not choose the proportions that the lines and shapes offer you, particularly the silences that might happen to be longer than playing time. If we perform *Cartridge Music* accurately we'll directly experience the lovely and unexpected proportions that chance gives us. (60-61)

These ideas are echoed in another section of the book, in which Lucier states:

John Cage is interested in letting sounds be themselves and be expressive in their own right. If a performer wants so many loud sounds here and is determined to make them simply because she wants to do it, she's being self-indulgent and that's not what this piece is about. (132)

One senses that Lucier also shares Cage's suspicion of performer subjectivity, indicating that a performer's intentions (both well-meaning and self-indulgent) can inhibit a correct interpretation of the music. The emphasis, according to him, should not be on the composer's or performer's narrative, but on the sounds themselves. As a result the listener is presented with music that departs significantly from the traditional Western canon. The suspension of composer and performer narrative also allows

the listener to construct his or her own narrative, enabling a higher level of engagement with the music. Writing about James Tenney's *For Ann*, Lucier describes this type of listening:

As you listen your focus constantly changes, that is, your attention switches back and forth from one ascending gliss to another as they fade in and out from below to above audibility. Your mind is extremely active; you become an active participant in the performance. It is perhaps this attribute that distinguishes experimental music from more conventional avant-garde music: the form doesn't lead you around but invites you to participate more closely and personally. (97)

A similar idea is echoed in one of the most memorable passages in the book, describing the premiere of Tenney's *Koan*, in which Lucier's otherwise congenial tone gives way to frustration:

A well-known composer sitting in front of me was looking around all upset, grimacing and showing the rest of the audience how baffled she was by this work. I became angry because she was interfering with my perception of the music. Her antics were driving me crazy. I wanted to hear Jim's piece! I didn't want to see her acting as though she couldn't understand what was happening. She was acting childish. They then played a piece by a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer...it was a skillful work...there was never a dull moment. The focus changed every few seconds. My mind wandered. The inexorable flow of Jim's piece had me riveted, whereas this one bored me to death. (194)

The listener's construction of his or her own narrative is equally important in Lucier's music. Relating the interaction of pitches played by the orchestra with the continuously rising sine tone glissando in Lucier's *Crossings* to the experience of light entering through Venetian blinds early in the morning, Joshua Mailman writes:

While listening to Lucier's *Crossings*, we imagine our protagonist gradually waking, then lying in bed, anticipating the events of the big day, the decisions to be confronted, the crucial choices to be made; this imagined context occurs while we experience the musical processes signaling, through the inevitable elapsing of a natural process, the ever approaching events—all of which is rich with narrative potential because the possibility of choice, the exercise of volition, carries such narrative resonance. Although deterministic process music lacks narrative interest when considered purely in isolation, through its role as preface to, consequence of, or transition between junctures of volition, it is infused with narrative interest similar to that of the deterministic processes in everyday life. (39-40)

In the opening of *Music 109* Lucier recounts his college years, during which he and his fellow composers "thought that American classical music wasn't as good as European music" and "all had inferiority complexes" (1). But we see from the preceding that the American Experimentalists created an equally valid tradition and one that departs radically from the concerns of the European music in which they had been educated. One of the biggest accomplishments of the movement was the subverting of the performer/audience dichotomy that dominated Western classical music for hundreds of years. Instead of presenting music to a passive audience, experimental music creates a space for audience involvement. It does this not through multimedia, spacialization, altering the performance space, or other techniques meant to create an "immersive" environment for the audience, but instead through a much more straightforward means of leaving space so that the listener is given the opportunity to enter

into a dialogue with the music. Such a performance is therefore a two-way street requiring an engaged audience and an active mind, and it rewards those willing to participate in it.

Looking at space in a completely different sense, that of the performance space in which the music is presented, we find another major contribution made by Lucier and his compatriots. In the last several decades a disconcerting trend has appeared that aims to negate the influence of acoustics on the realization of musical works. In rock and pop music this is achieved by close-miking, recording the direct sound of an instrument and then creating an artificial, desired space through the use of artificial reverberation, both on recordings and in live performances. We may believe that acoustic art music is somehow immune to this trend, but in fact it also seeks to negate the influence of acoustic space by privileging a highly detailed form of notation through which the composer attempts to assert their will over what is in fact a highly unpredictable and non-linear process of sound creation. Kyle Gann elaborates on this trend in his excellent essay "The Case Against Over-Notation," in which he describes the current expectation that a "professional" composer should know exactly how one's music is supposed to sound (99). In addition to the many flaws that Gann points out with this logic, it does not take into account the fact that a substantial component of how a piece sounds is determined by the space in which it is performed. In fact, in most concert halls the audience is sitting at a distance at which the proportion of reflected sound is greater than direct sound, meaning that they are hearing the space as much as the instruments themselves. By not allowing the performer a substantial amount of interpretive possibility, the composer of highly notated music constrains the ability of the musicians to respond to space and embrace it as an extension of their instrument.

What is so wonderful about Lucier's work is that it directly challenges this trend and uses space as an equal partner in the creation of his music. Nowhere is this more evident than in what is perhaps his most famous piece, *I Am Sitting in a Room*, in which the composer recites a text beginning with the words "I am sitting in a room" into a tape recorder. The recording is then played back and re-recorded multiple times so that over time the resonant frequencies of the room begin to overwhelm the speech. Lucier describes it thus:

Imagine a room so many meters long. Now imagine a sound wave that fits the room, which reflects off the wall in sync with itself. It will be louder (constructive interference). This is called a standing wave. If the wave doesn't fit, it will bounce back out of sync and dissipate its energy (destructive interference). This is a simplistic model of what happens in *I Am Sitting in a Room*. All the components of my speech that are related to the physical dimensions of the room are reinforced; those that don't, disappear. (90)

How the composition will sound is completely unknown, because it depends on the resonant frequencies of the room in which it is performed. The space is therefore as responsible for the sound of the music as the composer or the performer of the piece. It is also interesting to note that *I Am Sitting in a Room* uses technology to bring the space into the forefront rather than attempting to manipulate or modify it in some way. Acoustic space (or in this case, spaces) is also addressed directly in his composition *Chambers*:

You find, collect, or make small resonant environments that you would put a sound in somehow, and hear the sound of the environment that the sound was originally made in in this new environment, and you would hear the change in the sound. (91)

The piece is an unapologetic exploration of the acoustic properties of a space, both on a micro scale (i.e. the small teapots, cans, pots, etc. in which the sounding objects are placed) and also in terms of

the larger space in which the piece is being performed. It is also a piece about discovery, the term that Lucier applied to Cage's music, as the performers will hear the sound they are creating in these chambers and will respond in a way that creates multiple feedback loops between a performer and the rest of the ensemble, the chambers they use, the sounding object, the performance venue, and the audience. Lucier's description of the process of preparing for the performance of *Chambers* also gives us an insight into what it was like to work with him and may elicit strong reactions from those who approach music performance with a different aesthetic:

We had brought along suitcases, boots, bags, lunch boxes, vases, pots, pans, and other small, enclosed chambers. All we needed were sound sources that functioned by themselves. In a couple of hours the players came back with toy airplanes, trucks, sirens, whistles, radios, and electric shavers. Anything that was battery-operated or that you could wind up and would sound for a couple of minutes. Up until two hours before the concert we didn't know exactly what we were going to do. That's what you did in those days. You'd get an idea, go to the performance space, and execute it. You didn't rehearse or practice your part. (92)

It is easy to dismiss any performance described thus as not serious or lacking in professionalism. First, there are the sound sources themselves, toys and everyday objects, not proper musical instruments. Appearing even more egregious is the lack of rehearsal and the idea that the performers did not know what they were going to do prior to the concert, which is complete anathema to many with conservatory training. At the time that new music was still new, such accusations of frivolity were in fact often made, both by members of the audience and by prominent figures in music. Lucier describes a performance of *Music Walk with Dancers* by John Cage and David Tudor with dancers Merce Cunningham and Carolyn Brown. At one point during the performance, "a man strode down the aisle with a cane. He hit the piano and said, 'Now I am a composer!'" (5). In another chapter, Lucier recounts the performance of Cage's *Atlas* by the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Leonard Bernstein:

During the performance there was the biggest walkout in the Philharmonic's history. It was as if somebody had exploded a tear gas bomb inside the hall. Most of the audience came back after the intermission, though, to hear a Tchaikovsky symphony. At one point in the concert, Bernstein improvised with the orchestra. He went through all the clichés you've ever heard in symphonic music - crescendos, climaxes, abrupt startings and stoppings, dramatic pauses. He wanted to prove, you see, that he could accomplish the same results by improvisation. (Dumb.) (22)

A performance of *Section III* of Christian Wolff's *Burdocks* elicited similar responses:

It is often played by pianists as a series of tone clusters. David Tudor performed it at Darmstadt in 1961, however, by hitting a cymbal on the floor with a drumstick over three hundred times...the audience was shocked that a pianist of Tudor's renown would get down on the floor and do such a thing. Pierre Boulez was standing on a chair looking on incredulously. (122)

These examples highlight the notion that music that is "serious" has certain requirements regarding its presentation as well as an implied hierarchy - i.e. the music could not be performed by just anyone and requires a certain level of training and virtuosity. This is not to imply that any of the music discussed in the book could be performed or composed by anyone, but the transgressing of certain Western musical

conventions by Cage, Wolff, and others creates the appearance to those who do not understand the music that it does not require skill (hitting a cymbal repeatedly with a drumstick) and lacks seriousness (using chance procedures). Part of the misconception stems from the fact that much of the music of Cage and his fellow composers puts a greater onus on the performers in terms of approaching the music and the choices they make within the performance with a strong sense of responsibility. This has to do with Cage's views on anarchy:

Cage claimed to be an anarchist. By that he didn't mean that everyone simply does whatsoever they want to or does things in a shoddy manner. If everybody did whatever they did as well as they could, there wouldn't be the need to appeal to a higher authority. (Lucier 23)

Writing in a later chapter about Cage's *Thirty Pieces for String Quartet*, Lucier imparts the importance of each musician performing with a sense of seriousness and dedication:

As you sit and listen, you hear a beautiful representation of anarchy. The players are not cutting corners; they're not playing anything they want, hoping nobody will know the difference. They're playing their parts to the best of their ability. (196)

As noted by Christopher Burns in his essay "Interpreting Alvin Lucier: Process, Economy and Perception," this applies to Lucier's music as well. Discussing *Still and Moving Lines of Silence in Families of Hyperbolas*, he writes:

The challenge of this work lies in negotiating its abundance. Which of the possible activities should be used, in what combinations, and in what sequence? Because of the extremely open nature of the score, performers bear an enormous amount of responsibility for the meaningful presentation of the work. Both broad outlines of the performance and the specific details of the event are left to the performer for interpretation (if not composition).

At a time when we are often separated from the composers and contexts in which these works were created, it is crucial to readdress performer responsibility and the importance that it has to a successful interpretation of the music. Too often in my experiences I have found that musicians will use the opportunity that open/indeterminate material presents to showcase their technique or to do something deliberately silly. Perhaps a Freudian ego defense mechanism is at play: if the musicians are not confident in the work or their interpretation of it, doing something funny or demonstrating technique allows a detachment from the piece and any potential criticism of the performance. The same tendencies exist in less experienced musicians in the field of free improvisation. This shows a lack of commitment to the music, and it is especially important now for those who lead ensembles, as well as educators in the field, to impart the importance of treating this music with the care and attention that it deserves.

While Lucier describes a sense of responsibility and seriousness, it is his palpable sense of enthusiasm for the art that is communicated most clearly throughout the book. It is likely this quality that has lent a legendary status to his lectures at Wesleyan, for above all the most important attribute of a teacher is the ability to impart a sense of passion and dedication to the students. When Lucier talks about the "glorious noises" he and others created for Cage's *Rozart Mix* or refers to La Monte Young's choice of a particular overtone series as "an amazing idea," one clearly senses his love and enthusiasm for this music. (54, 138)



While *Music 109* makes an excellent text for a course covering American Experimentalism, it offers much more. Within its pages we see into a time and a musical movement that changed musical history forever and are regaled with fascinating stories that show the human dimension of the mythical figures we encounter. We enter the mind of the composer and as artists are forced to re-evaluate elements of our own creative processes. I can attest that the stories and ideas presented within this work were fodder for many excellent late-night conversations with fellow musicians and sparked insights into my own work that would not have arrived otherwise. My only wish is that the book were accompanied by recordings of all of the music mentioned, so that as we read and are invited by Lucier to listen to Feldman's *Three Voices* we can join him as guests in the classroom his book has created for us.

Sources:

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## THUMBNAIL REVIEWS

Daniel Goode

### **Bells and cells in Tully Hall atrium February 22nd**

It can't be the first audience-does-cell phones in a high art chamber music event, but was my first, and it's got to be one of the best. Nathan Davis, the new percussionist/ composer with ICE, was commissioned to compose for the recently opened atrium on street level at Lincoln Center—a glassy, high-frequency resonant, flashy, bar-friendly entrance to the concert hall. On entering we were each given a card saying "Please unsilence your phone. When you hear bells, dial the number on the reverse and enter any one of the access codes..." Circulating the space was like being in a forest of chirping industrial insects. It reminded me of those burbling short wave radio sounds that accompanied global communications before the internet and cell phones. With flute, piccolo, clarinet, 12 spatially traveling players of crotales and triangles, the composer above us on a glassed in balcony adding more percussion and a huge gong agung—it was a lovely twenty-five minutes. Cap your ear and you got another, filtered composition. Walking among the speakerphones, I greet a friend, listen to what her cell is broadcasting, drink a coffee.....

### **Buckner's, the only "inter-racial" new music audience**

That's because, since he came to NY from SF (Arch Records was his great new music label in SF), he started performing (baritone), commissioning and premiering Black artists from the AACM (George Lewis just did that big book on them, "A Power Greater Than Itself"—hope Musicworks reviewed it). They came and so did their audience. Unique in NY. Roscoe Mitchell, the talented wind player/composer was represented from that original AACM group at Buckner's Interpretations Series, March 10th. Peter Garland, Michael Byron, and Fred Ho were the others on the program. Joseph Kubera pianoed. Sold out house in Soho. Tom Buckner is the "George Soros" of new music. He puts his money where his mouth is: into progressive causes. More power to them both. All the pieces were interesting, urgent vocal/instrumental essays. Peter Kotik's Buckminster Fuller/Gertrude Stein setting was from 1971. Peter Garland's "Smokey the Bear Sutra" setting of Gary Snyder was from 2007, clangorous, conch shells, bass drum, singer, marimba, smokin' in a minimalist way of layering. Michael Byron's Anne Tardos setting ("Pure of Heart") was brand new.

Notice there were no women composers on the program. There were a couple in the audience. It's still a mystery why that bulge of women composers that came in the '70's seems to have disappeared into business as usual. Something to explore. Maybe it's less true in Canada than the U.S. —hot from NY

**Byron and Polansky, maximalist piano music at Interpretations in Soho**

Maybe it is or is not Kyle Gann's definition of maximalist. But intensity of piano composition, played brilliantly by Kubera and Nonken, could qualify. Both composers winged into the air as Minimalism was fading into the sunset while flaccid Post Modernism rose in the East. They each took some major ideas from high minimalism: Polansky is one of the most versatile algorithmic composers, often using his own software inventions. Byron started out with some idiosyncratic "spacey" non-pulse related clouds of sounds and has become a rigorous modal moto perpetuo composer of a non-down beat variety. In fact in both Larry Polansky's Three Pieces for Two Pianos and Michael Byron's Book of Horizons (for piano solo) met in a kindred world of non-pulsed, two (or more in Polansky)-part counterpoint, rhapsodic, stretching toward but never reaching a cadential moment. They've been friends since they met in Toronto in the mid-1970's. Christian Wolff's Exercise 20 (Acres of Clams) was also played brilliantly by Nonkin and Kubera. Piano in a world of internet and virtuality? Think again about what's important. The object, the piano object, the former center of classical music composition, is back, never left, always inspiring new work. Larry links up to Jim Tenney. Michael seems sui generis to me, but at one time was part of the California minimalist scene, as was Peter Garland and a host of others, a master of it was Harold Budd. Sunset seems a fitting atmospheric, a tonal, sometimes romantic use of harmony put in new repetitive structures, not at all formalist as was Steve Reich. And on and on. Try an adjective, or an analytic: "not-New York." That was then.

**Monodramas @ NYC Opera, 4/8/11**

Zorn, Schoenberg, Feldman (interesting that all three are Jewish). I hope the NYC Opera prospers in its Lincoln Center home, refurbished courtesy of David H. Koch, billionaire buster of Wisconsin unions. In every way, the "David H. Koch Theater" is just as ugly as its former, named New York State Theater, but he gave it an extra aisle in the orchestra. These are not really operas, but female vocal one-act arias. Big trouble in directorial concept: gratuitous staging and choreography—the wheels grinding away with shiny descending cubes, ascending bodies, comic-book balloon flats for elaborate projections (Zorn opera), but without binding force on the music. Zorn's *La Machine De L'Etre*, an homage to Artaud, sounded like the early non-triadic score of Schoenberg's. Amazing how in 1909 during Mahler's last symphonic composing, Schoenberg had a whole vocabulary of orchestrated, free and easy colorful non-tonalism. Feldman's 1976, minimalist *Neither*, setting a Beckett text, sung on high notes by Cyndia Sieden was also over-staged, tainting the music with its pretentious stage-craft. Funny how Feldman ended up being more of a committed minimalist than those famous brand-makers we all know so well. Standing on the subway platform, I heard a sound reminiscent of the high, heterophonic, bell-like string tones towards the end of the final piece: the Feldman. What was it? Oh, yes, the sound of each individual subway rider as the turnstile acknowledges their card swipe. Doppler effects bringing microtonal resonances to our ears. (Thumb-nail review.)

Daniel Goode

**Goebbels (H.) does Gertrude (S.) at the new Tully Hall this eve.**

Estonian conductor Anu Tali's platinum ponytail over her musician's-black uniform beating a metronomic 4/4: was mesmerizing. Heiner G. said in an interview that he knows he'll always be confused with Joseph G., Hitler's minister of propaganda. So he's inoculated himself from this by setting passionate cantorial singing, sampled in his Sampler Suite, from Surrogate Cities. It began with a lighting blast on a male bass drum player smacking the instrument, two handed, with giant switches. It did take the breath away. Was the piece, as a whole, brilliant imagination or crap with brilliant lighting?... He "micromanages" the lighting according to one orchestra member. The whole stage dramatically changes its illumination at apt musical moments. In the Stein piece, it is in the score that the downstage part of the orchestra is all women (dressed in solid colors), who recite on mic and also play the orchestral instruments, while at the back are the men players dressed in black, who never recite. Stein's World War II text, "Wars I have seen" was Goebbels 2007 homage to her 1943 observations of everyday life in her adopted France. A friend in the audience, a holocaust survivor, was revolted by Stein's line that "you could always get butter." He said butter was unobtainable, and he only tasted peanut butter after the war. He fried it with an egg; called Stein "superficial." I suggested that maybe in southern France she had a neighbor with a cow. Butter was next door. Spectacular playing by the London Sinfonietta, and a newer ensemble, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. The latter (women) did the Stein aided by the men from the Sinfonietta. Not like American, Canadian, or even most European music said another friend. Orchestra as theater. Not since Fellini's hilarious, "Orchestra Rehearsal." But Goebbels is suitably serious, even "germanic." And NOT boring. Interesting that both orchestras were 20th Century versions of the 16th-17 century "broken consort." (Approx. one of each instrument.) The festival of the new hall ends, demonstrates that the social redesign of this high-art temple is successful: the new Tully Hall is fun for mingling, and for listening to music. Some eating and drinking too. Thumb-nail review. Spring means music overload.

**Christian Marclay**

Zaidie Smith's luminous review in a recent NY Review of Books of his apparently amazing 24-hour film, The Clock (which I missed) didn't make one very important distinction. In showing clips of films with the narrative moment fixed on the clock time shown, Marclay must of course erase the critical tension imparted to that film-moment by its maker. But that's why we can call Christian Marclay "post-modern." According to the reviewer, however, there was a huge increase in audience excitement as The Clock approached the film's midnight hour. Thumb nail review of a review.

**Peter Garland, solo piano @ the Stone**

Last night, two sets, all his music but for Terry Jennings' "Winter Sun" (1966), and Michael Byron's "Song of the Lifting Up of the Head" (1972). Peter, anti-establishment from a very establishment Maine family, transposed to Cal Arts in 1971, was part of the important Southern California minimalist school, mentored by Harold Budd, so gracefully and fully a minimalist himself. David Mahler, Tom Nixon, Jim Fox were some of the others, as a group more "minimalist" —if that has meaning—than anyone else except, arguably, La Monte Young or Philip Corner on the East Coast. Probably "more minimalist" doesn't have much meaning, let's scratch it. The Stone is a hard-to-cool, windowless storefront tucked into corner of the Lower East Side, paid for by John Zorn, and curated by a constantly changing bunch. This month it's been Steve Peters. Next month it's Paul Tai of New World Records. Garland was also important in the 70's and 80's for his periodical, "Soundings" (subsidized by philanthropist, Betty Freeman) which published a host of important compositions and composers (full disclosure: one piece of mine was published there). With Byron's "Pieces," and the trail-blazing 60's "Source," these must be remembered as the era of hard-copy, beautifully looking bound objects, continuing a small but crucial tradition going back to Cowell's "New Music Editions" of the 30's. Remember these hand-held, caressable things, oh, you internet mavens of the 21st Century! Unrepeatable, unscannable. So the music was uncompromising, beautiful, simple, resonant, even redolent of a time of ideological fresh air blowing out the dust of a tired Modernism. In the third movement of four commissioned by Sarah Cahill, titled as a whole "After the Wars" (2007-08), Peter hid the attacks of the melody note under a full chord, building up long phrases of such timbrally unique "after-tones"—soft, little magic lights-in-sound, an antidote to the car horns, the drunken catcalls, bangings of all kinds which leak into the avant sound world of the Stone. Thumb nail review.

**We've been demoted**

The Stone is is a cramped, windowless, airless, former storefront on a Lower Eastside corner without public transit nearby, secured for the new music community by composer/entrepreneur, John Zorn. A piano (not always in top order), a polite young man to take your ten dollars, some unidentified jazz greats and others in 60 black and white photos on one wall, a john through the stage area, a committed audience of friends and associates of the artists, and recently: notice of some concerts by the New Yorker, the NYTimes, and, I've been told, the Village Voice. The composer or performer does their own publicity with no mailing list from the Stone—though its website has the full schedule. The composer/performer takes the entire gate, which at ten dollars a pop multiplied by the randomness of attendance scarcely helps the composer/performer hire associate musicians, pay cartage, transportation or any of the usual NewYork costs for what one needs to put on a show.

Ah, remember those romantic former industrial spaces called lofts with their various but always capacious acoustics and interesting visual aspects? Remember how you could set up the seating from floor, cushion, or chair in interesting ways that made the space lively and part of the performance itself? Remember that some lofts were already galleries with an infrastructure suitable for concert use? And a mailing list of significant lovers of the arts? Or just lovers! Remember that one of these spaces was called "the Kitchen" on the second floor at 484 Broome Street, with poetic noises outside of trucks over potholes and and over metal plates covering potholes? And with not only an elaborate printed schedule, press releases and printed programs and bios, but also a budget with money for yourself and to hire a reasonable number of other performers? And a recording engineer with a tape for YOU at the end of the run, which might be more than one day. And even sometimes a New York Times reviewer officially slumming; certainly a fabulous reviewer from the Village Voice (no longer such a reviewer, even online).

And the music at the Stone? First rate, which only proves my point: We've been demoted. Thumb-nail review.

**We've been demoted, Part 2**

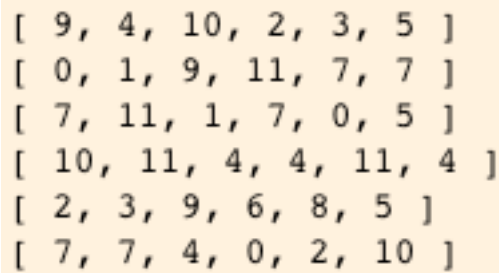
I don't blame John [Zorn re: The Stone]. Also, the current curators are certainly well-meaning, and I understand that New World [Records] did some actual promotion, which is what is necessary to get beyond the composer-only-fueled concert. I don't even feel my usual righteous indignation. More in sorrow. Larry [Polansky] noted the undeniable fact that there is a raft of new music chamber groups out of various schools and conservatories, made up of crack performers, getting big coverage and big bucks relative to us. The nub of it is that we all BECAME new music performers to get our own music out, while also expressing our interest and passion for new music and our composer friends' work. Now that the virtuosi are taking up new music and are such good practitioners of it, our down-home DIY style is pushed into limbo. But just having done a Sound/Text program upstate twice this weekend with the DownTown Ensemble, I know that SO percussion or ICE or ACE or whatever—they would never do such a weird mixture of things, one of which was erotic verging on porno text by Richard Kostelanetz requiring no standard virtuoso instrumental techniques but rather speaking sensitivities and some clever well-motivated playing, would certainly never be chosen as a repertory number by any of these crack groups. Bill [Hellermann] made that general point. And Anne Tardos's quirky, odd, non-virtuoso songs for voice and two instruments: they'd never do that either. Nor Jackson Mac Low, nor Daniel Goode's text, "Misdirection of the Eye" about Wisconsin politics with free improv using "On, Wisconsin." So composer-driven groups are still important counterweights to virtuoso performer driven groups. And we're still poorly funded. It's that awful circus virtuosity problem in music culture since forever.

On, Composers, On, Composers, fight fight fight fight fight!. I felt I was attacking my very "base" when I wrote that humble report on the current Stone series. Felt guilty, but it was as plain as the nose on our new music faces—what I noticed. Thumb nail review. [A reply to composer, David Mahler]

## Composing with Noise

**Eric Lyon**

For the past few years, I have composed extensively with computer-generated white noise. Averaged over a large number of samples, the power spectrum of band-limited white noise is nearly flat. Nonetheless, shorter segments in the time domain exhibit a pleasing variety. Consider the hexachords shown in figure 1, all generated with the SuperCollider code shown in figure 2.



```
[ 9, 4, 10, 2, 3, 5 ]  
[ 0, 1, 9, 11, 7, 7 ]  
[ 7, 11, 1, 7, 0, 5 ]  
[ 10, 11, 4, 4, 11, 4 ]  
[ 2, 3, 9, 6, 8, 5 ]  
[ 7, 7, 4, 0, 2, 10 ]
```

Figure 1 Randomly generated hexachords

```
6.do({ x = Array.fill(6, {12.rand}); x.postln });
```

Figure 2 SuperCollider code to generate random hexachords

Each hexachord is a little snippet of noise, and each is quite different. I find these bits of noise already musically suggestive in their raw form. Further layers of random selection can bring such noise snippets closer to a fully articulated musical surface. In fact, the entire process could be automated with no further compositional intervention. When composing with noise, I generally apply noise processes that bring me close to the musical surface, but with a certain amount of compositional discretion. For example, a particular passage might be completely noise-determined with respect to dynamics and rhythm; but the pitch material might then be completely invented by the composer. In an adjacent passage, the pitch material might all be noise-determined and the rhythms left to compositional discretion. With this mode of composing, considerable effort is given to determining how the division of labor between the composer and random numbers will be distributed. Then one is left free to compose directly with the surfaces, so that a thin layer of music is painted atop complete randomness.

### Form

Despite the compositional focus on musical surface, larger formal elements assert themselves. These elements are outside the volitional control of the composer. Consider generating a random number of sections for a composition, each of a

constrained random length (code for this is shown in figure 3; output is shown in figure 4). The large-scale formal shape of the piece will be dramatically affected by which random sequence of durations is employed.

```
6.do({  
    x = Array.fill(rrand(3,6), {rrand(3,300)});  
    x.postln  
});
```

Figure 3 SuperCollider code to generate a random number of section durations

```
[ 264, 142, 239, 257 ]  
[ 198, 102, 128 ]  
[ 11, 90, 60 ]  
[ 100, 151, 139 ]  
[ 274, 84, 13, 62, 242 ]  
[ 136, 92, 53, 88, 216 ]
```

Figure 4 Output from the duration generator program

### **Why Randomness?**

Why not compose the formal dimensions along with the surface details? Alternatively, why not make all musical decisions at random and generate the entire piece with a single button push? For me, it is a question of emphasis. I avoid total automation because I want to be involved with compositional shaping of the piece. Relegating larger-scale compositional decisions to random choice directs all compositional energies to the musical surface. The result is a series of local, sometimes rather unusual compositional problems that I find invigorating to work through.

### **Prior Art**

The approach described above is closely related to several 20<sup>th</sup> century projects. The rule-based articulation of individual elements in a musical texture owes much to integral serial techniques developed by such composers as Boulez and Stockhausen. The use of noise as a generative element draws on Xenakis's ideas for stochastic music. The use of various techniques to sidestep ingrained habits draws on John Cage's indeterminacy. The challenge issued to performers with impossible-to-play scores bears similarity to the work of New Complexity composers such as Brian Ferneyhough.



### Three Noises

My first piece composed according to articulated noise principles is *Three Noises for Violin and Piano*. The entire score is found at the end of this article. The movement titles allude to the use of white noise in the first and third movements, and pink noise in the second. In practice, I did not notice much difference between white and pink noise when working with noise at such a low level of granularity. In the first movement, meter and time attack points are automated. Code to generate time signatures is shown in figure 5. Sample output is shown in figure 6.

```
(
  var num, denom;
  var ds = #[4,8,16];
  50.do({
    num = rrand(1,13);
    denom = ds[ rrand(0,2) ];
    ("time signature: " + num + "/" + denom).postln;
  });
)
```

Figure 5 SuperCollider code to generate a series of time signatures

```
time signature:  4 / 16
time signature:  1 / 4
time signature: 10 / 8
time signature:  9 / 16
time signature:  3 / 4
time signature:  2 / 4
time signature: 13 / 16
time signature:  8 / 8
time signature:  5 / 16
time signature:  7 / 16
```

Figure 6 Randomly generated time signatures

In the first movement of *Three Noises*, there are four basic types of violin behavior: tacet, random, minor third centric, and scalar. The sequence of behaviors, along with behavior modifications was selected at random. The code to select behaviors is shown in figure 7, and output from this program is shown in figure 8.



```

(
  var mytype, transform, beats;
  var types = #[tacet, m3, scales, random];
  var m3tf = #[none, big_transpose, interval_deformation, permanent_transpose];
  var randtf = #[none, no_last_subdivision, tight_middle_octave, extremes_only];
  var scalartf = #[none, repeat_attacks, reverse, scramble_order];
  10.do({
    mytype = types.wchoose([1,2,1,3].normalizeSum);
    transform = rrand(1,4);
    transform = mytype.switch(
      \tacet, {"none"},
      \m3, {m3tf.choose},
      \scales, {scalartf.choose},
      \random, {randtf.choose}
    );
    beats = rrand(1,11);
    ("<type:" + mytype + "<trans:" + transform + "<beats:" + beats).postln;
  });
)

```

Figure 7 SuperCollider code to generate violin behaviors

```

<type: m3 <trans: big_transpose <beats: 11
<type: random <trans: no_last_subdivision <beats: 5
<type: m3 <trans: big_transpose <beats: 4
<type: m3 <trans: none <beats: 10
<type: random <trans: extremes_only <beats: 11
<type: random <trans: extremes_only <beats: 1
<type: scales <trans: scramble_order <beats: 8
<type: random <trans: extremes_only <beats: 5
<type: random <trans: extremes_only <beats: 7
<type: scales <trans: repeat_attacks <beats: 1

```

Figure 8 A sequence of violin behaviors

Further random programs were used to assist in producing the specific interpretations of each instance of a behavior. For example, the minor thirds are centered by default on the dyad F-sharp/A, but this dyad can be transformed either slightly or with large transpositions. Note for example in bar 10 the deformation to F-natural/A, and then the large registral displacement of the baseline F-sharp/A dyad. Despite being a main structural element in the pre-compositional schematics of the movement, as it turned out, the random use of the minor third dyad became marginal in the musical realization, and barely noticeable as a feature beyond the first bar. This is a good example of how random implementation of a scheme may distort that scheme beyond recognition, and trace very different patterns in the resulting music.

I won't detail implementation details of the second and third movements of *Three Noises* here, but a cursory view reveals that their disparate stylistic profiles are all quite amenable to noise treatment. In the second movement, the time structure is

randomly determined. The piano chords are designed at random, and the violin line selects notes from the piano chords, again at random. Some aspects of registration are left to the composer. The interstitial non-harmonic melodies are constructed from a small group of randomly selected interval sets. In the third movement, the piano attack patterns are randomly determined, but the actual materials are compositionally selected from a group of pre-determined chords, conditioned by randomly determined guidance on transformational attributes. The violin melodies are constructed as behaviors, where each individual note is randomly determined, compositionally determined, or randomly conditioned and then compositionally determined. It is practically impossible to determine from the musical surface how each individual note was chosen. However, overall, the movement displays a high degree of coherence and directionality. If not previously informed, a listener might easily assume that the piece was entirely composed with no recourse to noise processes.

### **Future Work**

When composing *Three Noises*, I thought that it might be a one-off experiment. Instead, noise techniques have found a prominent place in my compositional toolkit, and I have extended the use of noise to computer-guided improvisation as well. Large amounts of noise seem to be completely compatible with many forms of musical expressivity. In the present situation, noise may function less as an irritant than as a plausible principle for structural organization.

*for Mary Dullea and Darragh Morgan*

## ERIC LYON

The complete score for *Three Noises for Violin and Piano* is at [the-open-space.org/lyon-noises/](http://the-open-space.org/lyon-noises/)

# SONO-PSYCHOLOGIZED: THE MAGNIFICENT GALACTOPHONIC ODYSSEY RIDDEN HUMMINGLY BEFORE THE SIREN CAPTAIN ALICE

)-(U||!c]< for Gary.

(james hullick: university of melbourne)

O  
 sa  
 sss  
 snamit  
 ssfellingsss  
 ssssiilimmaann  
 skorneeeelasssee  
 ssskalinafinaaaamewo  
 ssreeessammee  
 sssnooo  
 ssma  
 mama  
 nna  
 na  
 nnno  
 no  
 no  
 my  
 moo  
 WHACK FOL' THE DAH WILL YA DANCE TO YOUR PARTNER  
 ROUND THE FLOOR YOUR TROTTERS SHAKE  
 ISN'T IT THE TRUTH I TOLD YA?  
 mulk  
 ooworder  
 ssssor  
 ss ssdark  
 cat:  
 :the ungainly musicianlessness so painted in  
 sculpting selfsounder ah ha as black artful as a  
 podatus and dumbfounder oh ho oaproariose as ten canons in  
 skelterfugue: (Joyce 1973, 121).  
 mama  
 nighnigh  
 ROUND THE FLOOR YOUR TROTTERS SHAKE  
 or so we grow from non: that un talk not yet but instinctive mindrun  
 borning riverts sing-len hirth the catch of light across the sill. This place thus maketh the asking: why am this  
 what are the mind? Or then strike out this fog lorne. Dashingfall toward the input: for mind is blended perception  
 processing filigrees of wokenness. Or that harmloss the musical tin ting tong is my bag and if sound is what I do,  
 then what is sonic psychologized goin' down to the rivah? A composer no less. A musiciansat he's been saying.  
 Or ssssoundss artissstss he bees happeningssss.

sssoch  
 har oowet  
 noooooobah  
 WHACK FOL' THE DAH WILL YA  
 mmmmmmmmmmmmm eeeat  
 mmmmmm my m, och  
 aye order nnnna mama, maMA!  
 maMA!mmmmmmmmMA!mmmma-oud!oud!mmout!

*Thus grew the tale of Wonderland:*

*Thus slowly, one by one,*

*Its quaint events were hammered out* intellectualising the rain of waveflickered audio-like in air – a question: So what, then, is the place for sound art in the field of music psychology? So what? or then a question I asked, in a talk I gave, in room that gaped, at a University of Melbourne thinga-me-jig for somewhat likening toward an Australian Music Psychology Society series. Midtimes 2012. Then expanded out into waterflowed statement: I ask this question about sound art and music psychology, not because there is a definitive answer, but rather crawling through the dark-lit Minatoured end or journey to map the currents through the mind-linked-ear unknowing. Or poetry in science: testing that said proposition becoming now the teacher. *(Or, in this case, fall into a black hole.) But if these light rays were swallowed up by the black hole, then they could not have been on the boundary of the black hole (Hawking 1989: 106).*

Hithertoforeshoweverpossiblymaybeasamatteroffact, in asking about the position of sound art in psychology, I am not merely asking about definitions or the shapes of lettermaking words to mean an objectphysical, but also about the shimmerings of culture and philosophy: Towards the circuitry pragmatic mechanisms through community life. But words are a good place to start.

Vaclav Havel – borning, outworldling, 1936. Elected last President, Czechoslovakia, 1989. Elected first President, Czech Republic, 1993. Post desperation years in activism: a playwright – an intellectual lockloaded against totalitarianism. 1989: Havel, as last Mr. President, wrotespoke:

*At the beginning and end of everything is the word.*

*It is a miracle to which we owe the fact that we are human.*

*But at the same time it is a pitfall and a test, a snare and a trial.*

*More so, perhaps than it appears to you who have enormous freedoms of speech, and might therefore assume that words are not important.*

*They are.*

*They are important everywhere...*

*Responsibility for and towards words is a task, which is intrinsically ethical. (Havel 1991, 388-9).*

So I would like to discuss the words **sound art**, and the concepts they frame, before I question their place in music psychology although *ISN'T IT THE TRUTH I TOLD YA?*

*ROUND THE FLOOR YOUR TROTTERS SHAKE*

*LOTS OF FUN AT FINNEGAN'S –*

nnno bagh

mmmammadada

eeoooww

mmm

ee oo!

sorrrs oooooowWhen! I perform

sonically, or create sonic works, I don't really thinking uponst throughning the act in wordsmadeout. This is possibly to Havel's disappointment. There is a large part of my helixdoubled entwined with my sonic weaved fallen into practice that is non-verbal much. Maybe this is because I first learnt to play the ribbonflown of an instrument when I was a littling 5-year-old lad heard [Alice!] of *a childish story take,*

*And with a gentle hand*

*Lay it where Childhood's dreams are twinded for a boy*

whatzis hands smallest shrunken too iddy-biddy for the neck of his maMA!'s guitar. [[[There was--nesting a coiled story wound that guitar within:

I was born on a reserve where maMA! and the Dad were social workers  
mingled-like to learn out the bridge.

The Koori people roundabouts loved playful the tickle-belly-um guitar.

A couple of the local stags had been want for fightin' Finnegan-style:

And thus-or-withaltherefore there became a hole intrusted threw the maMA!'s scratch-plated strung

Or while-ing one of these figthin' fellas farling but inches knifed for his rival

liddle-um-belly-um-tickling midst gestrum.

Somewhere betwixt shoveling dead a nest of birthsnakes in tumbleswept out dust blown back backyard;

Dad lumbering through sticking window frame with snags<sup>1</sup> on plate at the witching hour;

And the knife throwing episode,

maMA! up-and-atomed from agony-reserve for Gogh Whitlam's Canberra-bound.

I think I would have been six month old 'bout then.]]] Or a littling 5-year-old lad whatzis hands smallest shrunken

too iddy and biddy and tickelum for that thing. Language unraveled wound sound in signifier notation was still

new to me then, and my mind was full of the child-galactic's glinting wordlessness *in Memory's mystic band,*

*Like pilgrim's wither'd wreath of flowers*

*Puck'd in a far-off land* or maybe my life's pursuit of the

sonic rabbit (all neon and white!), 'cross continents and seas turning out lessonshardest known of the cottontail

as slippering likened the bar of soap with fistfuls in fluff: When you think you know a word like **music** or

**psychology** you're left clutching

this

miraculescent

expanding

sweet ef ay-ness

of

air

as *if the rays of light that form the event horizon, the boundary of the black hole, can never approach each other, the area of the event horizon might stay the same or increase with time but it could never decrease – because that would mean that at least some of the rays of light in the boundary would have to be approaching each other. In fact, the area would increase whenever matter or radiation fell into the black hole* (Hawking 1989: 106-8).

And so it is with the phrase **sound art**. While I don't listen to someone's sonic creation and think – "oo uh-huh, that's a neatest bit of **sound art**" or upon the otherhandles, "yes, that's **music** with the hotnesting;" and while I don't name the sound making act in the practiceflesh alived lad about town, I have had to interrogate these words so that I can communicate verbally with other people about the work that I do. For the purpose of this intersecting sapien twined, I use the term **sound art** to delie fellenstratum 'any arts practice where sound is of significance and used in implementation of arts projects' or then repeated in his secondmouth

language as

many of the bigtimer's verbaten words

which he could balby call to

memory that same kveldeve,

---

<sup>1</sup> [sausages]

ere the hour of the twattering of  
 bards in twitterlitter between Druida  
 and the Deepsleep Sea – (Joyce 1973, 37).

I adhere to this broad definition of **sound art** in communicating sapien entities the nature of my work such that it is said term I therefore utilize to summarise my own arts practice: A fleshing foremotion covered unto the widening range of activities herewithoutlain:

## )-(u|||!c|< SOUND ARTIST

SCORE COMPOSITION;          IMPROVISATION;          ACOUSTIC AND ELECTRONIC SONIC PERFORMANCE;  
 SOUND SCULPTURE;      SONIC INSTALLATIONS;      INTERACTIVITY;          AND OTHER STUFF TOO;  
 AUDIO SAMPLING ACTIVITIES;          AND OTHER STUFF TOO;          LARGE-SCALE SONIC MEDIA EVENTS;  
 MECHANISED INSTRUMENT BUILDING;          SPATIALIZATION OF SOUND;          FIELD RECORDING;  
 AND OTHER STUFF TOO;

Lor di dor di dah

myke dad DA

buths sslor noliighhhh

mmmm

na na

eat

aa orm

sors      not

mmm      sors

eee oooooo      ooowarder

*There have been no attempts to assess*

*infants' memory*

*for the songs that mothers sing at home, but there is evidence*

*that infants retain some aspects of music heard regularly. When*

*infants*

*are*

*exposed to a Mozart sonata*

*periodically during a 2-week period,*

*they subsequently distinguish it from another Mozart sonata.*

(Trehub 2009, 229).

### Or other forms of infant sonic waterboarding.

My currentbestfornowregardingthestuffthatIdo-type definition of **sound art** is in agreement with English sound artist and Professor Simon Emmerson. Borne 1950. Working now? De Montfort University. Emmerson, in an interview transcribed out the text with hidden *The Fundamentals of Sonic Art and Sound Design* (2007), talkness his own understooden tall on learnt mountainsfold of gornled then **sound art**:

I'm interested in how sound *signifies* and that's a larger field than music. So I think that music is a subset of sound art and sonic art is a subset of soundscape and soundscape is really the world around us, virtually complete (Gibbs 2007, 64).

In the context of this **sound art** perspective and the one I offer through my busyness chased in tail, the term **sound art** includes categories of sound making covered by the term **music**, alaskinned as pop songs, classical works, world music, musicals, opera and filmic sizzended soundtracks. Or for heavenzis forsake us then let the Irish sing:



TIM FINNEGAN LIVED IN WATLING STREET  
 A GENTLEMAN IRISH, MIGHTY ODD  
 HE HAD A BROGUE BOTH RICH AND SWEET  
 AND TO RISE IN THE WORLD HE CARRIED A HOD  
 YOU SEE HE'D A SORT OF A TIPLIN' WAY  
 WITH A LOVE FOR THE LIQUOR HE WAS BORN  
 AND TO SEND HIM ON HIS WAY EACH DAY,  
 HE'D A DROP OF THE CRAYTHUR EVERY MORN'

Tony Gibbs, [authorish: *The Fundamentals of Sonic Art and Sound Design* (interviewnorologist forning {Professor} Emmerson)], resists offerending his mouthed outed precision-fall definition than **sound art**: “finding a definition of a newly formed art form is rarely an easy process” (Gibbs 2007, 8). He explains that sound art as a “form itself is often unclear,” and that such a form might “encounter resistance to its own existence” (Gibbs 2007, 8). My view is contrary to Gibbs’, in that I do not consider sound art to be a new form, but rather a new verb-battled spaken for to degrind the age-old activity of sapienzees makening sound from purposes artistic expressionwise. Gibbs delies critical in his point fracture, though, that a consolidated definition of **sound art** has not yet emerged. So opinions here stand-us fluidity-midst the lipped vortexted running inescape-ability toward the event horizon or sonic boom.

In his bounded textophonic *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2006), sound artist and sonic intellectual Brandon LaBelle associates our preciousness sound art with activities that emphasise the relationship between auditory catalysms and space:

Engaging the dynamic of sound and space initially leads us to a number of observations and realizations, which may at first open up perspective on sound art (LaBelle 2006, x).

This is a crevenance-narrower position than my own, as I do not agree that the emphasisism of sonic and spacement should be a prioritism of activities transtrunculated as **sound art**. Another common usage of the term **sound art** is homilized by Bernd Schultz in *Robin Minard: Silent Music* (1999), where Schultz bespoked such forth,

The unfortunately somewhat inexact term of Sound Art has established itself for the hybrid forms that have developed at the boundary between music and visual art. Sound Art generally means sound installations that intertwine visual and acoustic phenomena. Most of the protagonists of this form of art trace lines of tradition reaching from Futurists through Dada to the artists of the Fluxus movement, but especially to John Cage and his radical concept of treating noise and sound as equals...(Schultz 1999, 25).<sup>2</sup>

It has been my experience when presentifying sonic installations form chrystalinical gallerisen thunk whitebox communities tend to beframe sound art in similar ways to Schultz.

But wait: Swing and lo: It could be argued that **music** might have been a better term than **sound art** for defining the parameters of my practice.

[[[Melbourne sound sculptor Ernie Althoff expressed this view to me whilst loadful tetras blockened his car post gig. I had curated a show forth our sound machines within it and Ernie was offering me-too, me-too some saged insights: I remember now backendedly Ernie speak-something sensitized that he had taken to only creating sculptures and installations that could fit in the boot of his car. He must’ve said this to more than one few peopled, as I hence post-reading this same wisdom in something article somewhere, sometempo-relational bit. Curiously – and returning to our talking when the gigging was done – the boot of Ernie’s car didn’t initially strike me as something that would contain the

<sup>2</sup> The text *Robin Minard: Silent Music* is a collection of writings edited by Bernd Schultz about the sonic projects of Canadian sound artist Robin Minard (b. 1953).



work he had just shown (titled *Trade 10* and presented in the JOLT Concert at Trades Hall Melbourne 2007). An image of *Trade 10* explains what I mean (see last page). And yet, just like the Tardis, his work neatly evaporated infinite spaceunfullen out the vehicle's backside while done we spoke.]]]

However[andwithallmannerofrespectforErnie&colleagues]ortherewithin, I consider the term **music** to be limited, as it does not comfortably encompass sonic activities such as sonic based gallery installations, noise art, field recordings and interactive computer based projects.

Sonic practitioners might argue that the term **music** should be malleable enough covering entertain the all fullment of sonic practice; that the term **music** should apply to all sound-making effortness. The *Macquarie Dictionary* definition of **music** is a less optimistic construct:

**music** *n.* 1. an art of organising sound in significant forms to express ideas and emotions through the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony and colour (Moore 2007, 795).

Words are like the  
ebb  
and flow  
of  
the wind-blown seas: the purpose of  
them  
can become overwhelmed . The wind and seas are  
easily stirred,  
and what was attempted  
can be swamped  
and lost  
(Tzu 1996, 31).

This definition of the word **music** covers standard usage, as would be expected of an English dictionary, and, in my experience, applies to the more traditional forms of sound making. For example, the definition does not cover much of the experimental sonic post 1950, or rather challenge-thought round be revolutionary American composer, textifier and thinker John Cage (1912-1992), who thunk aloud with paperperformed in 1958:

If this term 'music' is sacred and reserved for eighteenth and nineteenth-century instruments, we can substitute a more meaningful term: organization of sound (Cage 1961, 3).

Fifty years later the term **sound art** seems spillingswum over **organised sound**. Could it be that **organised sound** doesn't include **disorganised sound** or **non-organised sound**? But then more thinklings suggest that humans are only capable of making **organised sound**. That we can only achieve the "image" of **disorganisation** via **organising** means as Ben Boretz pointed out email-style around this article made floweringly. Or furthersome flawling down myriadic rabbit-holes rushing cottontailed questions that perpetually remainst unlocking for sapien debate. If I seen him bearing down on me now under whitespread wings like he'd come from Arkangels,  
I sink I'd die down over his feet,  
humbly dumbly,  
only to washup. Yes, tid.  
There's where. Gulls.

Far calls. Coming, far!  
End here.  
Us then.  
Finn, again! Take.  
Bussoftlhee, memormee!  
Till thousandstheee. Lps.  
The keys to. Given!  
A way a lone a last a loved a long the  
(Joyce 1973, 628)

But buttingly in to certain flows – aren't humans fabulosity disorgansers? [be-lying to me I've known many.] Just as we build things borning, so too we fuck them up. And is it not *non*-sapien sound art sonic ecology-style when the Caged wroteness (?):

I have spent many pleasant hours in the woods conducting performances of my silent piece, transcriptions, that is for an audience of myself (Cage 1961, 4)?

Or is this some kind of sonic colonialism where one individual stamps their branding iron on silence for sounds of the woods witherall buck and doe leapfalled to entropy? Thunkstill in this splacement, the mind considers silence as the pinnedpunkt where individual ownership departs from sonic creativity; a becoming where all sound makers merge into one unified sono-spirit form.

And yet Cage's 4'33" is a work that I dearly love and conceptual-sonistically witnessed product notunderlikened before monumental scientific. Or; *the nondecreasing behaviour of a black hole' s area was very reminiscent of the behaviour of a physical quantity called entropy, which measures the degree of disorder of a system. It is a matter of common experience that disorder will tend to increase if things are left to themselves. (One has only to stop making repairs around the house to see that!)* (Hawking 1989: 106).

In the context of my broad definition of **sound art**, JC's following prediction [also from 1958] criticismist the plight form done-ing the contemporary twenty-first-century sound artist:

The present methods of writing music, principally those which employ harmony and its reference to particular steps in the field of sound, will be inadequate for the composer, who will be faced with the entire field of sound (Cage 1961, 4).

A liberation from **music** via broader definitions of **sound art** having super-massively nova-style increased the fullfathom array of possible decisions when maketh tiz art. Suchling thus contemporary sound artists must find their own way of limiting the breadth of sonic possibilities withall each artwork – non ather than rely-a-hiding on some standard set of strict stylistic rules [with exemplified between Classical music cannonised or contemporary techno-based pop forms idolised. Working underbroad **sound art** defining can purpose immense challenges to the one who shall be named **sound artist**. Certainly, there have been pressures in galacticifying sonic adventure-made where overloading potentials have baked the oneself noodle – all of which I consider to be a symptom of living in the information age.

Or maybe the previous generation just has to give up their terms and conditioning so that subsequent generations can create their own language borning culture. Thinkingly shot straight as such, the communities who practice sonic creativity have a right to name and to identify their sonic likeness. As the director of **JOLT Arts**,<sup>3</sup> I am particularly sensitive to languages contemporary-cutting-edge sound artists use midst describble themselveling sapiens. With annual migratory skills I program multifloorious events, and so-betwixt whither likening it (or never) I must make judgments about what sort of work is to be presented and how that sonic work is framed for audiences. Here, then (not there, though) the definitions befalling to my me-mind through research matter directly to artists-plus-audiences said my motioning mustly serves. My experience has taught me firsthand that identity in sonic cultures is intrinsically built through relationships that arise around modes of public presentation and creation of work. Being relational, then, the identity and thus the definition of sonic cultures remains in always flux negotiated interability ways with the community.

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<sup>3</sup> [an organisation dedicated to presenting and developing sonic art works and events internationally]

# This Splacementalist Music Psychologized

[And here I falling out into the more likened text to that given in presentation to Australian music psychologised sapiens:]

BIT THESE NESSERS THENST. YET MUSIC PSYCHOLOGY IS A VERY YOUNGLINST DISCIPLE. AND HERE-ISN WE SHOULD BE MINDS FULL OF CARE, AS THE FIELD IS STILL FORMING ITSELF FROM WORDS INTO THINGS AND BETWEEN THINKLIGHTS. SO THIS IS NEW LANDS FOR SHAPING HENCE THE CONVERSATION WITH MUSIC PSYCHOLOGISTS BEING FRUITFUL WHEN PARLANCING THE NARROWNESS OF MUSIC OR EXPANSE OF SOUND.

With this perspective in mind, I propose that the term **music psychology** might just be past its used by date. The term **music psychology** is one that may ostracize any sonic practitioner or community that doesn't adhere to what are potentially narrow constructs regarding sonic creativity. While I am not trained in psychology, I would have thought that cultural ostracism is counter to the basic tenets of psychology. Here I am reminded of Vaclav Havel's perspective; where "responsibility to words" is "intrinsically ethical" (Havel 1991, 389).

Allow me to demonstrate how the use of words around **music psychology** can be problematic. In 2009, the impressive tome *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* was released, edited by Susan Hallam, Ian Cross and Michael Thaut. Being a comprehensive and up to date publication, with over 60 contributing expert authors, the work presents as a useful cross-section of the conceptualization of music and psychology.

In Chapter 2: *Universals in Music Processing*, of *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology*, Dr. Catherine Stevens and Tim Bryon write:

Music here refers to temporally structured human activities, social and individual, in the production and perception of sound organized in patterns that convey non-linguistic meaning (Stevens 2009, 14).

This conception of **music** is a vast improvement on that offered by *The Macquarie Dictionary* – cited earlier. But the reality is that if a study is proposing to explore 'universals,' then the premise of such universals – i.e. the definition of the word **music** – becomes of heightened importance, and something to scrutinized very closely.

In daily practice the term **music**, as defined by Stevens and Byron, contradicts the agenda of many sound artists, particularly with regards to the use of terms such as **patterns** and **organised**. For example, my teacher, Australian German composer Felix Werder (1922-2012), in his later compositions sought to remove all patterns and sequences from his music. Werder aimed to do this forling sono-expressively more openly driven by his unconscious mindwings rolling upheavens widely tingling, rather than by conscious formalistic decision making. Felix's motivation here was founded in his profound connection with the psycho-logged abstractive expressionism. *Or what has dictated the substitution is not the resemblance*

*between the things denoted but the sameness of*

*the w*

*ords used to express them.*

*Where the two - word and thing - do not coincide,*

*the formation of substitutes in schizophrenia deviates from that in the transference neuroses (Freud 2005, 171).*

Werder's father, Boaz Bischofwerder had been a cantor at a synagogue in Berlin the rabbling man frobnicked the gantly fires of warring. Such and hooved the expressionist composer Arnold Schoenberg had spent many warbling clock's a tickin' with Felix's father learning the sacred mists Jewish in music. Dadda mama. Arnold Schoenberg was a galactic Alice influenced out on lad Werder, particularly Schoenberg's pursuit of the networked intermode mind, sound and artistic craft. ooowada

nnnighs  
kohkoh  
non  
nooon  
mmmyke  
mm mmm  
cayke mm

papa  
noo

Or in Schoenberg's words:

Nevertheless, the desire for a conscious control of the new means and forms will arise in every artist's mind, and he will wish to know consciously the laws and rules which govern the forms which he has conceived 'as in a dream.' Strongly convincing as this dream may have been, the conviction that these new sounds obey the laws of nature and our manner of thinking...forces the composer along the road of exploration (Schoenberg 1975, 18).

[Note that Schoenberg doesn't use the word **music** here *a precise statement of this idea is known as the second law of thermodynamics. It states that the entropy of an isolated system always increases, and that when two systems are joined together, the entropy of the combined system is greater than the sum of the entropies of the individual systems* (Hawking 1989: 108). As mountlining John Cage is a rathersome enigmagnetted exponent of the desire to remove **pattern** from sonic art works – particularly through his use of chance operations whent composition-borning. "Composition then," writes Cage, "I viewed...as an activity integrating the opposites, the rational and the irrational." (Cage 1973, 18). This compositionologos philosophic was midwifed by Cage in his first fully indeterminate work *Music of Changes* (1951) for solo piano. As well known through sono avantists, *Music of Changes* Cage used ancient coin tossing wishfulfillment flung fornature Chinese wordness spiraled from divination: the *I Ching*. And the even Cage – composer of said work – could not preforknown the work detailed in whole, "until the final chance operation, the last toss of coins affecting the rate of tempo, had been made" (Cage 1973, 20).]

[[[[Or Schoenberg's earlier statement has premarkenated, both Werder and Cage twined visceral in the psychology, aural perception and science of their sonic art making for purposity then stepped beyond the human normals of music making practitions.]]]]]

That music psychologists are highly aware of the difficulties in scoping out the terrain of the word **music** is something of an undercurrent of **music psychology**. This is perhaps partly because the appropriate analysis of the findings from **music psychology** research demand that the research leave the question, "What is music?" open ended. Indeed, it might be true to say that the final glinting and unattainable bastion of **music psychology** is this very question: "What is music?" as much as it might be also "What is the mind?"

The editors of *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* are blatantly aware of all this nickalized crikling fringalest. Dr. Ian Cross, one of the editors of *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* and author of the first chapter *The nature of music and it's evolution*, observes that:

For those engaged in understanding music as it manifests itself across different cultures and historical times, 'music' appears to be protean, and its identification in any consistent manner seems particularly intractable (Cross 2009, 6).

Posing the question "What is Music?" is not meren the dominion nation of music psychologists. In Melbourne town there is an annual fest'o'art-like sonickisms that bears the title, "What is Music?" And, furthermore, it is probalistical that sonica sapiens have pondered whatness of the auditory or the science sono since before all recorded historalysis. The oldest known musical instrument is arguably a bone flute found at the Geissenklösterle caves in Southern Germany, and dated to 42-43 thousand years before present. The Geissenklösterle flute has finger holes that were used to change pitch. Stop there in pause for thinkwhistling: Someone has thought that through. Sapien forminded the mergent with sound and reasoned: "If I put more holes in this hollow bone I can play more notes." Or sono-psychologised?

WHACK FOL' THE DAH WILL YA DANCE TO YOUR PARTNER  
ROUND THE FLOOR YOUR TROTTERS SHAKE  
ISN'T IT THE TRUTH I TOLD YA?

Undigressing the returned herv I learnt about this interplay between sound and mind from Felix Werder, mentioned earlier, and from another highly influential composition teacher in my life, James Tenney (1934-2006). Jim old cowboy Silver City riven, then somewhat managed to chase the neon in rabbit through Galactic Wonderlands sprinkled with New York in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Tenney was very active in the Big Apple

community of sonic arts, and by 1961 had written the first iteration of his seminal composition theory titled *Meta Hodos*. The text reveals Tenney's close affiliation with psychology, thus based his sproutinglong compositional theory on tenets of Gestalt Theory – particularly on Max Wertheimer's 1923 paper "Laws of Organization in Perceptual Forms." 1961: Tenney makes observitat withall:

In general, the Gestalt Psychologists' studies of perception have been directed primarily to visual problems, probably owing to greater directness and immediacy with which visual forms may be presented, perceived and described. Nevertheless many of the principles of organization of visual forms may be shown to be involved in auditory perception, often with no more than a simple translation of terms (Tenney 1992, 28).

*When we think in abstractions*

*there is a danger that we may neglect the  
relations of words to unconscious thing-presentations, and it  
must be confessed that the expression and content of our philosophizing then  
begins to acquire an unwelcome resemblance to the mode of operation of  
schizophrenics (Freud 2005, 171).*

1961-1964: Tenney was a composer in residence at Bell Laboratories. New Jersey. USA. Twas 'ere done Tenney did formulation ones viewsinc that such sonic art making and the perceptu-laws o' sound could be articulated oncefors-all intergratiated. This view billowing into full maturity with 1978 when Tenney statuized from that he interested been in sound [and I quote]:

For the sake of some perceptual insight – some kind of perceptual revelation. Somehow it seems to me that that's what we're all doing – searching to understand our own perceptual processes. In a way, science is about the same thing, but its enterprise seems to understand the nature of reality through thought and intellection. It seems to me art is about understanding reality to the same extent, and as singularly, but though a different modality – through perception (Polansky1984, 195).

At Bell Labs Tenney was able to create the sonic embodiment of this in a variety of pieces. He was surrounded there by veracious scientific minds, and melting plot such ideas poured like so was key to the laboratory successing. One particular eminent experimental psychologist was Tenney's associate at Bell – Roger. N. Shepard. In response to Shepard's research, Tenney created the early electronic work *For Ann Rising* (1969), with the goal of framing Shepard's theory of the illusion of a constantly rising glissando tone in a work of art. As Larry Polansky [another older Tenney student] writes, "This is a sound that, like an Escher woodcut, seems to continuously rise" (Garland 1984, 174). The illusion of continual rise [thus Shepard Tone] was achieved by replacing the attack of a steadily rising sine tone with a gradual crescendo, which is matched equally with a decrescendo at the decay stage of the sound's envelope. The overlaying of rising tones, and systemic mathematical displacement of the tones also aids the illusion. While Tenney's delivery of this illusion may not fully eliding arouse, the resultnict work is hailed in floating skyline special contribution to the [minimalist?] or bebetternis the perceptualist sonic [music?] canon lost twentieth century. *And so the rabbit trap is used to snare rabbits, but once the rabbit is captured, the trap is ignored. Words are used to express concepts, but once you have grasped the concepts, the words are forgotten. I would like to find someone who has forgotten them so I can debate with such a person (Tzu 1996, 31).* The combined guru-shapenest of Tenney/Werder led me out focus fellen on nature of mind: perception: sound: interfiligree net twined. Such axiomatic cloud of brain; – or, I have composed a number works as part of a suite of pieces titled *What it's not* that have sought to explore non-linked isolated gestures, separated by widely varied amounts of silence. Alternate tuning systems been using in some of these works fink ensure that there is no repetition of pitch relationships in any octave. These works were created in response to Bob Snyder's book *Music and Memory* from the year 2000. Snyder contribunation nalso to *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* mouthed out earlier in mize paper. In his chapter *Memory for Music*, Snyder writes: "Short term memory is said to exist on a time scale of seconds, ranging from

approximately 4 - 30 seconds, though it is usually on the order of 4-8 seconds" (Snyder 2009, 107). So mize silence-filling-works play with the interthong between short term withall long term aural memory. Excerpting thus one such piece for chamber orchestra, titled *What it's not no.3* (2008).

**WHAT IT'S NOT NO.3**

(concert pitch score)

$\text{♩} = 60$

6 4      air T 19 8      38 4      15 8      3 4      5 5

flute

oboe

bass clarinet

contralto clarinet

machines

violin

viola

cello

d.bass

+68.8

+2.8 p

+17.0 mf

+0.0 pp

mf

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WELL MICKEY MALONEY DUCKED HIS HEAD, WHEN A BOTTLE OF WHISKEY FLEW AT HIM. IT MISSED, AND LANDING ON THE BED, THE WHISKEY SCATTERED OVER TIM. BEDAD REVIVES, SEE HOW HE RISES! TIMOTHY RISIN' FROM THE BED! SAYIN' "THROWIN' YOUR WHISKEY AROUND LIKE BLAZES, THANUM AN DHUL! DO YE THINK I'M DEAD?" TO ARTICULATE HERE FULL STAR MAPPED OUT DETAILONG OF KNOWN SONIC UNIVERSE IS BEYOND THE SCOPE: BUT TWO EXAMPLES OF THE META METAHODOS OF SOUND CAN REVEAL JUST HOW FAR WE SHOT HITHERFLUNG IN EXPLORINOADED SONIC CREATIVITY. &%(\*\$H@NNMK, THERE IS MASAMI AKITA AKA MERZBOW. Borning1956. MERZBOW BELONGS TO THE FOUNDING WAVE OF JAPANESE NOISE ARTISTS EMERGENT LUNGS BREATHE GAS OUT THE LATE 70'S AND FOUND FOCUS RUNNING WATER THROUGH NOSTRILS THEN INTO 80'S SOME HITHERTO TIME THAT MERZBOW THREW OUT REFERENCE TO FORMAL CONCEPTIONS OF **music**. OR ABANDONED SOME EARLIER **music** CAREER EATING POTATOES AND HELLHEAVED IN NEON RITES AS WELL AS HIS CONSTRUCTS OF SKILL OR ABILITY DIVORCED AND GOT STUCK INTO FULL THROTTLE, FULL VOLUME ELECTRONICALLY PRODUCED NOISE.



8 30.6525 2 1 3 31.6312 5 5 5  
4 4 4 4 4 4 4

flute

oboe

bass clarinet

contralto clarinet

machines

violin

viola

cello

d.bass

pp +76.5 mp pp

mf

+2.0 pp

+70.8

pizz. wide, slow vib. arco

+94.1

+55.2 sfz

+66.9 f

air

IT IS SONIC OF EXCESS – BUT ALSO OF BEYOND EXCESS (HEGARTY 2007, 155): OF HUNTING THE PLACE OF TABOO AND FINDING NEW WORLDS AND PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCES WITHIN THAT PLACE. THEN RIVETING THE FUNNEL OF HATS WORN WIELDING SOUND ART MORE THAN IT IS MUSIC – AND PROBABLY MORE THAN IT IS NOISE. WITH THE ADVANTAGE OF EXTENDED LISTENING, MY FINDINGS RING EXCRESCENT EACH TO EACH BLOWN BACK THE LINGEYEGVFVS^N OI SE. OR WAT ABOUT AMERIKAN KONSEPTOOL ARTIST PAUL KOS' (B. 1942) SOUND INSTALLATION *SOUND OF ICE MELTING* : 1970. MICROPHONES RECORD A BLOCK OF ICE MELTING IN A GALLERY SO DIS THE NOT FOR NONING TOMORROWS. WHILE THE ACTUAL SOUND OF THE ICE MELTING MAY THE CONCEPT OF THE ICE MELTING IS POWERFUL. SOUND BECOMES PLACE IN MIND, PSYCHOLOGY OF SONIC POTENTIAL. IT SEEMS CHAPTERS THAT MISSING FROM *THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF MUSIC PSYCHOLOGY*; WOULD BE TITLED *HOW SONIC PSYCHOLOGY HAS FED INTO THE CREATION OF SONIC WORKS*. \$\$\$%\$@#IN THE HOPE OF PURIFYING THE EMPIRICAL METHODOLOGIES. BUT HOW CAN METHODOLOGIES INTERROGATING CREATIVE AUDITORY PERCEPTION HOLD ANY EMPIRICAL WEIGHT IF ONE CAN'T TAKE THE EXPERIMENT TO ITS ULTIMATE CONCLUSION?: @@!!@!@))@(\*\*#(\*^(@# THAT NEST THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH DELIVERY COMPELLING THE SONIC ART. SO THE OLD BOY JIM TENNEY – FABULOUS DRAWLING OF COWBOY SLIPPED SILVER CITY USA – GOT JUMPED ON US ALL BECAUSE HE TURNED THE THEORY INTO A PERCEPTUAL CREATIVE EXPERIENCE. IN TENNEY'S WORK I LEARN THAT THERE CAN BE NO MUHUMIDA MUSIC PSYCHOLOGY WITHOUT LIVING AND BREATHING WHAT EVS SOUND CREATING THUS BECOMED – CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL. WE KNOW THAT WHEN PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCHERS TAKE THE VIEW THAT [AND I QUOTE] "ULTIMATELY, HOWEVER, MUSIC PSYCHOLOGY CANNOT BE EXTENDED BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF ITS EPISTEMOLOGICAL BOX," (OAKFIELD 2009, 550) THAT WE ARE MOUTHING WORDS WITHOUT MEANING. BUT LIKE I SAID. I DON'T REALLY THINK OF SONIC ART MAKING IN TERMS OF WORDS WHEN I AM MAKING IT, SO EVEN THESE CONSTRUCTS I OFFER HERE SEEM INTRINSICALLY EPHEMERAL AND FLUID. I AM HEARTENED, HOWEVER, BY SOMETHING VACLAV

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Dr. Ian Cross, one of the editors of *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* and author of the first chapter

*The nature of music and its evolution*, observes that (2009):

Oxford University Press(Hallam 2009, 6). *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* + (HALLAM 2009 [OAKFIELD CHPT 50])

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*OPEN LETTUCE: Havel, Vaclav. 1991*

(HEGARTY 2007, NOISE/MUSIC): 155 something something something

Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. New York: The Viking Press. 1973

*The relation which unites the concept of the myth to its meaning is essentially a relation of deformation. We fin here again a certain formal analogy with complex semiological systems such as that of (Barthes 2000, 122)*

(LaBelle 2006, x). *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2006)

The *Macquarie Dictionary* definition of **music** is :(Moore 2007, 795).

(Polansky 1984, 195). Article action something in The Music of James Tenney. *Soundings* 13 I thinks

Schultz Bernd *Robin Minard: Silent Music* (1999)

In his chapter *Memory for Music*, Bob

Snyder writes (2009)

In Chapter 2: *Universals in Music Processing*, of *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology*, Dr. Catherine Stevens and Tim Bryon write:

META HODOS (Tenney 1992, 28).

Trehub Sandra E. Music Lessons from Infants. In: the Handbook of Music Psychology. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009: 229-234

(Chuang Tzu 1996, 31): Likening Harper Lee: only writed one book. Not likeness Harping: Didn't finished it either. *Photos: Warren Fithie 2007*



## The Ear Is Not A Camera: The Divide Between Visual And Acoustic Perceptual Habits In Finnissy's *The History Of Photography In Sound*.

Augustus Arnone

In most photography, unlike painting or drawing, the view is disconcertingly blinkered, directly ahead. Everything is completely still. The camera and its lens (its eye) do not move. This fixed-perspective immobility is haunting and unnatural. In writing music, both my ears, and their accompanying brain and hand, have to remain mobile, alive. Acknowledging the fluidity, movement and characteristics of sound, discovering and exploring, getting the hands dirty and relishing it. Not putting 'already musical' sounds on a pedestal, and admiring them from a safe or discreet distance ... The ear is not a camera ...<sup>1</sup>

This passage, drawn from Michael Finnissy's introductory program note to his massive eleven movement cycle of solo piano works, *The History Of Photography In Sound*, gives much more than background and context on the creative premises underlying the whole. He has here described two entirely different modes of perceptual orientation, the awareness of which is critical to anyone seeking insight and a more profound level of engagement with this work. On the one hand, we have the faculty of sight/vision with its attendant characteristics of the single fixed viewpoint and detachment or removal from the scene or environment before us. The medium of the photograph encapsulates this manner of apprehension by presenting the frozen moment in time and locating the viewer at the fixed position of the camera lens, at some distance to the scene. On the other hand, we have the auditory faculty with its directly opposite characteristics of immersion, awareness of a field of unconnected activity in opposition to linear/spatial concepts such as focus and vanishing point, and the intense degree of participation necessary to make sense of that field.

This distinction between the perceptual habits pertaining to the eye vs. the ear echoes a fundamental premise developed by media theorist Marshall McLuhan.<sup>2</sup>

The ear favors no particular "point of view." We are enveloped by sound. It forms a seamless web around us. ... Where a visual space is an organized continuum of a uniform connected kind, the ear world is a world of simultaneous relationships. (*The Medium Is The Massage*, 111)

One of the central hypotheses in McLuhan's work is that the prominence of printed media following the invention of the Gutenberg Press resulted in an overwhelming perceptual bias towards visual/spatial orientation, with its particular set of associative

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1 Introductory program note, Michael Finnissy, *The History Of Photography In Sound* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

2 This is a central topic running through, for example: Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is The Massage* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 1967); Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964) and Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1962).

habits; a development reflected in every imaginable political, social, scientific, and cultural sphere of the Western experience. However, the explosion in electric media throughout the Twentieth Century was and is reversing those effects, compelling and reinforcing psychological habits of total field and an experience of the world and its varied environments as a “simultaneous happening.”

This provides a most useful framework for understanding musical developments in our recent past, and in many ways Finnissy's *History Of Photography In Sound* is the ultimate musical exploration of the new sensory world that McLuhan argues has been made inevitable by electric media. If the perceptual faculties germane to visual vs. acoustic space represent opposite poles of the spectrum of our imaginative capacities, Finnissy's music is situated far towards the extreme auditory end of that spectrum. James Joyce writes, in *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man*, “the first step in the direction of beauty is to understand the frame and scope of the imagination, to comprehend the act itself of esthetic apprehension.”<sup>3</sup> In this spirit, the focus of this article will be to gain insight into the aesthetic environment of Finnissy's *History* by relating its salient musical features to cognitive habits of total field awareness, implosion of a complex of disparate musical events into composite perspectives, and the patterns of memory and reference by which those composites are formed. These are areas of the mind traditionally referred to as “right-brain” awareness. The discussion will focus on the manner of apprehension compelled by the manner of composition and presentation, the perceptual habits that are as central to the creation of the work as they are to the reception of the work. Furthermore, the cycle features pervasive use of allusion to historical specimens, a panoramic recall of diverse areas in our musical past and their fluid re-emergence in new musical contexts over the entire course of the work. This is a musical analogue to a literary technique traditionally understood as *myth*, and is most relevant to the discussion of right-brain aesthetics. Early twentieth-century pioneers of the panoramic recall of history through allusion include Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and James Joyce, and their comments on mythic awareness offer substantial illumination of the underpinnings of Finnissy's work. In particular, reference to topics developed in Joyce's *Ulysses* as well as an understanding of its overall formal technique provides an illuminating parallel to the Finnissy work.

### **Rhythmic Complexity And The Fixed Perspective**

Finnissy's *History Of Photography* cycle features pervasive use of triplets that simultaneously present conflicting metrical orientation. This is an obvious surface feature that poses great challenges to performers being able to accurately realize the work and to listeners attempting to ‘get their bearings.’ His use of multiple metrical orientations is entirely consistent with the distinction he draws in the introductory program notes between the fixed perspective of the camera lens and his characterization of the auditory experience. “The ear is not a camera” precisely because, unlike the eye, it is capable of awareness of multiple perspectives simultaneously. As such, it requires a great degree of participation to sift through the complex field of unconnected, independent sounds happening around us, and therein lies the source of Finnissy's commentary about the apprehension of sound: “remaining mobile, alive ... discovering, exploring.”

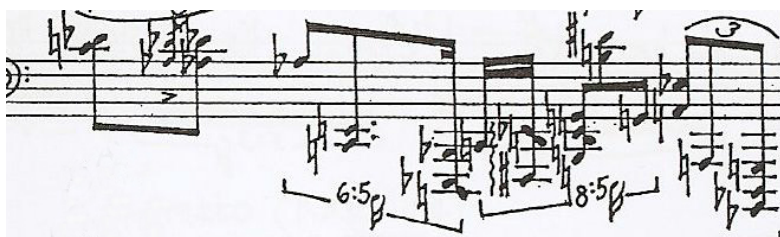
<sup>3</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 210-211.

The use of proportional tuplets in even a single auditory stream (eg. 7:5) already compels awareness on multiple levels. The first being awareness of the tempo of the basic unit, the second being awareness of the temporal span enclosing the specified number of that basic unit, and the third being awareness of the tempo of an entirely different division of that temporal span.



**Example 1.** *The History Of Photography In Sound*, Vol. 2, p.195: "Eadward Muybridge □ Edvard Munch"

The ear and its accompanying perceptual faculties must indeed remain mobile and alive coping with such an auditory stream as the temporal spans enclosing the tuplets are apt to vary in quick succession, as are the new divisions of those spans.



**Example 2.** *The History Of Photography In Sound*, Vol. 2, p.153: "Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets"

However, the number of perspectives called into play positively explodes exponentially with Finnissy's simultaneous overlay of numerous independent auditory streams exhibiting conflicting proportional tuplets situated within conflicting time points. **(Example 3)**

These are obvious features of the musical surface, though the fact that they plunge us into a completely different psychological environment than conventional rhythmic practices where all divisions of beats are easily reducible to a common *uni*-fying temporal perspective is easily taken for granted. Less obvious is the relationship between overlaying contradictory metrical orientations and the use of non-metrical spatial notation, which also plays a prominent role in this cycle. **(Example 4)** A comparison to John Cage's commentary on one of his own well-known works utilizing spatial notation, *Etudes Australes*, offers an avenue of insight into that relationship. **(Example 5)**





**Example 3.** *The History Of Photography In Sound*, Vol. 3, p.352: “Etched Bright With Sunlight”



**Example 4.** *The History Of Photography In Sound*, Vol. 3, p.327: “Unsere Afrikareise”



**Example 5.** John Cage, *Etudes Australes*, Etude no. 28

Though the following commentary has to do with the parameter of amplitude, rather than duration(rhythm), it does identify the fundamental aesthetic/perceptual objective of multiplicity, in opposition to a unified, centralized perspective.

Musically, it's finding the dynamic, actually, the amplitude of each separate sound. Not having two in succession with the same dynamic, or closely related dynamics that would suggest either getting softer or getting louder. ... You would want to have each note at its own center with respect to amplitude.<sup>4</sup>

These dynamic shifts are neither notated nor even alluded to in the score, though it is apparent in the conversation from which they are drawn that they are something he wished performers were able to intuit. Moreover, he acknowledges that the habit of thinking in terms of a complexity of multiple autonomous centers is an entirely different mode than classical musicians are traditionally trained to think in, and as such represents the primary difficulty.

The principle of multiple centers is just as relevant to the handling of duration in that work, and in fact in any spatially notated work, such as Finnissey's. Rather than relating all phenomena to a common central temporal unit, one is to consider the distance between notes each independently, without recourse to a common, universal counting paradigm. Again, reference to writings by Marshall McLuhan provides a most illuminating framework for appreciating the psychological impact of such a medium.

In a chapter of *Understanding Media* devoted entirely to the influence of the mechanical clock on patterns of thought and behavior, McLuhan emphasizes that the adoption of a uniform succession of repeatable units (minutes, hours, etc.) compelled a habit of experiencing disparate, unrelated events in quantifiable, thus relatable, terms. He contrasts this, on the one hand, with the experience of time in historical cultures that didn't use clocks to measure time, for example the Hopi Indians: "Time for them is not a uniform succession or duration, but a pluralism of many kinds of things co-existing. ... as many kinds

<sup>4</sup> John Cage in Conversation with Joan Retallack, *Musicage*, ed. Joan Retallack (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 202.

of time exist for them as there are kinds of life." Beyond that, as the primary hypothesis of McLuhan's work is that the effects of instantaneous information retrieval brought about by emerging electric media have been to challenge and reverse many of the psychological habits germane to mechanical/literary man, he argues that contemporary man is once again able to experience time as a pluralistic field of events without connecting them to a common sequential continuum. "This ... is the kind of time-sense held by the modern physicist and scientist. They no longer try to constrain events in time, but think of each thing as making its own time and its own space." (*Understanding Media*, 147-148)

This commentary, of course, rings strikingly similar to Cage's conception of each note creating its own center in the *Etudes Australes*. In a non-metrical, spatially notated work, whether by Cage, Finnissy, Xenakis, or anyone else, all musical events do create their own center simply by virtue that they're not all related to a common temporal unit proceeding at a uniform tempo. When one understands the medium in these terms then it becomes apparent that spatial notation and the simultaneous overlay of conflicting proportional tuplets share a fundamental relationship, the difference perhaps being mere granularity. Whereas spatially represented unstemmed noteheads represent a plurality of centers evident in each separate note, in conflicting tuplets the plurality of centers is implicated in groups of notes. Though the notes within the tuplet are related to a common center, the duration of the enclosing time span and the tempo of the divisions within that span, the group itself operates at a different time orientation than the master tempo itself, and at a different orientation than other simultaneous or successive tuplets which themselves imply independent centers.

Considered in this way, the relationship of both spatial notation, and layering of complex tuplet relationships, to Finnissy's depiction of the visual experience in opposition to the aural experience becomes evident. The fixed-perspective of the viewer as camera lens inherent in the photograph is itself a very powerful center-to-margins experience. The sense of uniform linear space and perspective that emerges in a photograph, which is an inescapable feature of sight itself, arises out of the perception of all things in relation to a common vantage-point. McLuhan's clearest example of a Modern era visual form that trades in the fixed vantage point for the simultaneous field is perhaps the Cubist painting, which shows the top, front, back, and sides of an object, without linear continuity, all in the same scene. The linear discontinuity of shifting temporal orientations in single musical strands, or simultaneous presentation of numerous strands with conflicting orientations, provides a close perceptual analogue to such a non-linear form. Considered in this light, Finnissy's contrasting his own music to the "blinkered" view of a photograph is most revealing.

### **Lost In Translation – The Reliance On Familiar Perceptual Habits**

The discussion so far has focused on the rhythmic aspect of the music, though Finnissy's use of complex pitch fields, dense multi-layered polyphony, simultaneous overlay of non-uniform phrase structures, and montage as a formal technique, all exemplify models of organization based on multivalence rather than a unifying fixed perspective. Moreover, all of these features taken together, along with the rhythmic practices, have naturally had the effect of shaping analysis and reception of this music to a large extent in terms of

‘coping with complexity.’

However, to merely designate these features as ‘complexity’ is to imply a more intricate expression of familiar musical means. More specifically, it is tied to the attempt to understand a non-linear psychological environment in traditional linear/spatial terms. Many of the familiar musical descriptive paradigms that scholars have relied on with great success for contextualizing and theorizing music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries have persisted in the study of more recent music. This presents a problem, as many of the perceptual and analytical habits relevant to the former can be ineffective and misleading in approaching the latter. The shift from linear-sequential logic to simultaneous field awareness, and from the singular fixed view to the shifting web of multiple conflicting views, which is so integral to music like Finnissy’s, represents an entirely different kind of imaginative apprehension. The attempt to explain the music from a linear perspective may bring us closer to listening habits that are more familiar, or even natural, to many listeners steeped in the classical tradition, but we should be concerned about what is lost in the translation, and whether we are embarking on a verbal/literary exercise that is at odds with our listening experience.

This is precisely the type of situation that led McLuhan to declare, “We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future.” (*The Medium Is The Massage*, 75) In saying this he simply meant that the high speed of information exchange in our time thrusts us into an overwhelming field of global awareness that is quite unlike the experience of a pre-television generation, for example. The problem is that emerging media may change our sensory experience of the world far more quickly than it does the analytical habits with which we are used to dealing with it. Thus, we may find ourselves attempting to understand modern realities using tools that were relevant to another time, but are no longer. Likewise, intuitive psycho-ecologists such as Finnissy or Cage may have developed compositional media that all of a sudden created environments where ideas relate to each other in radical, non-linear ways, but the bias towards a musical response based on the sequential connection of ideas, and preference for organizing musical events analytically into center-to-margins hierarchies was certainly not going to lose its influence immediately as a result.

A convenient representative example of the attempt to explain total-field music in linear terms can be drawn from the analytical literature pertaining to the music of Milton Babbitt. The common problem acknowledged by theorists dedicated to detailing and illuminating the stupendous technical artifice behind Babbitt’s work, which is itself a most imposing endeavor, is subsequently relating discussion of those technical practices to a discussion of aesthetics and to the attempt to use this understanding to gain a more insightful listening experience.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph Strauss, for example, acknowledges, “The relationships described by most analyses of Babbitt’s music are hard to hear. They require listening abilities that few people possess in any large measure.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, the article from which these statements are drawn strives to serve as a kind of “listener’s guide” for the music examined. Specifically, to “take a listener-oriented, not a composer-oriented approach,” for Strauss this means not

<sup>5</sup> The problem is perhaps compounded by the fact that Babbitt’s own writings on the subject of his compositional practices are focused almost exclusively on detailing the intricate technical applications underlying the music, with little apparent concern for relating the discussion to more general aesthetic concerns.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Strauss, “Listening to Babbitt,” *Perspectives Of New Music* 24, no. 2 (1986), 11.



merely exposing lots of technical errata but rather using the details to “provide a relatively accessible way of hearing a path through Babbitt’s music.”

Comparison to another analytical essay by another leading Babbitt scholar, Joseph Dubiel, reveals a kindred outlook. For example, in his “Three Essays On Milton Babbitt”<sup>7</sup> he proposes to advance a theoretical model that will be more than just “a matter of getting down to the compositional particulars (as good as that in itself may be.” Instead, it will address

to do what Babbitt’s music often seems strenuously to resist, namely relate sections to one another as stages in a large movement, and not just as demarcated vessels of undifferentiated minutiae. The transition into a new section of a textural design, for instance, may determine a way of hearing the entire section in relation to its predecessor - in a relation more particular than that of sheer succession, which both affects and depends on the perceived content and progress of the section. (Dubiel, “Three Essays On Milton Babbitt,” Part Three, 85)

Obviously, both writers are concerned with using discourse to facilitate the experience of these works in a musical and satisfying way, though at a first hearing and without context they may immediately present themselves as difficult if not impenetrable. More pertinent however, is the fact that both writers idea of an enhanced listening experience is dependent on being to make sense of the music in linear-sequential terms. The following passage, by Dubiel exemplifies the attempt to explain some of Babbitt’s music in terms of a linear trajectory and progression:

heard as continuing the clarinet’s final outburst, the trio proceeds with a gradual loss, or at least redirection, of its acquired energy. Very soon the tremolandi of its first few measures subside a minor relaxation; eventually the action slows to a level below any heard so far, while sustained loudness still suggests modulation, rather than simple loss, of the impulse. The subsequent thinning of texture to a short flute solo seems part of the same subsidence. (Dubiel, comp four instruments)

Notice the way this description asserts a singular viewpoint towards the action. — a gradual loss, its energy, a relaxation, the action, the impulse, etc. The above description arrives at its picture of a unified sequential progression by virtue of relating all simultaneously occurring phenomena to *one* central action, or purpose at a time. The linear experience of music is dependent on the singular perspective, a center-to-margins hierarchy of detail, just as the perception of uniform visual space in a photograph is dependent on viewing all the varied facets of a scene from the single, fixed position of the camera lens.

Likewise, as is evident from the remarks included above, Dubiel proceeds from the notion that the analytical discourse provides an opportunity to arrive at a linear

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph Dubiel, “Three Essays on Milton Babbitt,” *Perspectives Of New Music* 28, no. 2 (1990)(Part One), 29, no. 1 (1991)(Part Two), 30, no. 1 (1992)(Part Three).

understanding of the unfolding music that is difficult to arrive at through listening. For Dubiel, the problem of listening to Babbitt's music is that there is an overwhelming abundance and rapid presentation of highly variegated content that resists relation to a larger unifying linear continuity, out of which familiar musical impressions of development, progress, and closure would depend on to become evident. Following from this, Dubiel sets out to formulate ways of hearing the work that such features are accessible behind all the detail.

Another point of view however, is that these are characteristic features of linear media, which stem from a strong visual perceptual bias that is in many ways anathema to the music. Babbitt's music surely does strenuously resist linear relation of successive, adjacent musical materials. Rather than view this as a grave challenge posed by the degree of complexity one might instead embrace the experience of a rapid succession of myriad viewpoints that do not lead one to the next in linear fashion, looking instead for patterns of relation and recurrence *across* the work. Sifting through a complex static field of information, and using *peripatetic* faculties of association to draw connections among music that does not progress along linear continuums, represents precisely the kind of immersive participation alluded to by Finnissey in his characterization of the auditory experience. The compositional media that Babbitt manifests in his music plunge us, like Finnissey's *History Of Photography* cycle, far into the world of total-field awareness and multi-dimensional inter-connectedness.

This is a world that McLuhan heralds as one awoken to us by degrees by electric media such as the telephone, television, and radio, which, having brought with them a new speed of information retrieval, are systematically retraining our sensory habits. Music by Finnissey, Cage, or Babbitt, considered within the framework of McLuhan's theories of media as extensions of our own innate sensory tendencies, provides purposeful counter-environments that explore and reveal the impact on our perceptual faculties by the modern high-speed field of information flow we find ourselves in.

Our electrically-configured world has forced us to move from the habit of data classification to the mode of pattern recognition. We can no longer build serially, block-by-block, step-by-step, because instant communication insures that all factors of the environment and of experience co-exist in a state of active interplay. (*The Medium Is The Massage*, 63)

It is precisely this world of peripatetic association of musical materials that Finnissey's *History Of Photography* cycle brings to life with a scope that sets it apart from most any other contemporary musical work.

### **The Disembodied Spirit: *The History Of Photography* As A Study In Myth.**

It is evident by now that the main thrust of this article is to begin to relate how escaping the "blinkered" experience of the singular point of view, which Finnissey drew

attention to in the introductory program note to the *History*, is a fundamental aesthetic and perceptual principle dominating the work. Awareness of the critical differences between total field awareness and the fixed point of view can save the listener from the frustration of trying to follow a singular path in the music where so many concurrent threads asserting non-uniform temporal orientations render the reduction to a central thread incoherent. Many listeners would doubtless object that relating all phenomena to a common, master thread or understanding music primarily in terms of its sequential trajectory is an unavoidable, natural fact of the human psyche. They would be mistaking their own deep engrainment in this particular perceptual habit as an immutable law of musical cognition. Meanwhile, composers such as Finnissey, Babbitt, and Cage, among others, have engaged in rhythmic practices that thrust both listener and performer into a world where they have to attempt to grasp many temporal relationships at the same time. Moreover, the rhythmic aspect is merely one domain in which the preference for multivalence takes shape.

The metaphor of 'having to be many places at once' would be just as applicable to a discussion of many other aspects of Finnissey's work, harmony and phrase structure among them, though it is beyond the scope of this article. However, it will be useful to the current discussion to connect the above commentary to what is perhaps the defining feature of *The History Of Photography In Sound*: the pervasive allusion to historical specimens and their combination in fluid montage. Reference to the writings of Marshall McLuhan will be most useful for providing insight into the aesthetic outlook behind Finnissey's panoramic recall of the musical past, as well. Furthermore, as the weaving together of historical specimens through pun and collage was also a defining feature of the literary technique of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce, reference to comments by both authors on the subject provides further inroads into understanding the effects.

In a critical review of poetry by Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot called particular attention to Pound's panoramic grasp of an extraordinary range of literary history, and his ability to endow an instant of modern awareness in poetic utterance with a special potency and charge by imbuing it with a long-reaching multitude of reference and meaning far beyond its local context:

Most poets grasp their own time, the life of the world as it stirs before their eyes, at one convulsion or not at all. But they have no method for closing in upon it. Mr. Pound's method is indirect and one extremely difficult to pursue. As the present is no more than the present existence, the present significance, of the entire past, Mr. Pound proceeds by acquiring the entire past; and when the entire past is acquired, the constituents fall into place and the present is revealed. Such a method involves immense capacities of learning and of dominating one's learning, and the peculiarity of expressing oneself through historical masks. Mr. Pound has a unique gift for expression through some phase of past life.<sup>8</sup>

This passage could just as easily have been Eliot's reaction to Finnissey's *History Of Photography*, had he the opportunity to hear it, as the work is loaded with a diverse range of samples drawn from across our musical past. Many of the samples are listed in the introductory program note, but they are also labeled in the score.

<sup>8</sup> T.S. Eliot, "The Method Of Mr. Pound," *The Athenaeum* (1919), 1065.



**Example 6.** *The History Of Photography In Sound*, Vol. 1, p.97: "My parents' generation thought War meant something"

The use of allusions or quotations in a musical work is not in and of itself necessarily of consequence, though the recognition of them may satisfy a certain antiquarian relish. However, the encyclopedic montaging of diverse samples that Finnissy engages in with *The History Of Photography In Sound* represents the composer himself interacting with musical history as a static whole, via memory, which itself is an example of precisely those auditory habits he alludes to in his program note. The musical moments from our past that he brings to life in the *History* become more than frozen moments in time, as he characterizes photographs. Instead, they are continuously re-animated in the present, much like Eliot's comments on Pound. Consequently, by not viewing the sources as frozen in their own time and place in history, his view of history itself transcends a simply linear conception, namely one that looks at history as a procession of separate moments with causal or responsive relationships to the events surrounding them. He abandons this rational habit in favor of simultaneous awareness of wide-ranging periods and utterances from that past in a composite field view. In doing so, as a creative mind he manages to even himself not be a frozen consciousness in his own time and place, the exact opposite of the prototypical Romantic artist visionary with its prejudices towards private expression and singular vision. It calls to mind a statement that McLuhan emphasized in many contexts throughout his career: in the electronic age man becomes a kind of *disembodied spirit*, not necessarily corporeal in one time and place but with the ability to be everywhere at once. McLuhan argued that through electric media, such as telephone or television, with their powers of instant recall and the ability to implode distances of time and space, man is not confined to his own living room, for example, but may communicate with or attain awareness of many different places across the globe in the same evening. This characterization of modern consciousness, deftly summarizes Finnissy's global musical consciousness and provides the best possible model of apprehension for anyone confronting the many simultaneous overlaid fields of melodic and rhythmic strands competing for attention in the music itself.

It's worth noting that Finnissy's weaving of quotations into complex polyphonic textures doesn't resemble anything like the ironic transformation of powerfully recognizable iconic motives represented by allusion to Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* in Ives's

*Concord Sonata*, or allusion to Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in Crumb's *Vox Balaenae*. It's not simply because the references in Finnissy's work are far more obscure and likely to be missed, though the fact that Crumb and Ives used samples meant to be recognized is already telling. In fact, tracking down the sources referenced by Finnissy to the point of familiarity and recognition in a hearing of the work would still not lead to a kindred effect. The effect of the Crumb and Ives allusions depends entirely on *content*, as it pertains to musical character. Specifically, the transplant of that particular content, with the memory of its signature instrumentation, setting, declamatory style, harmonic color <sup>¾</sup> in short, all the characteristics which give it a specialized character <sup>¾</sup> to an entirely different instrumentation, setting, declamatory style, etc.

Allusion in *The History Of Photography In Sound* is of an entirely different order, being concerned not in the slightest with specialization of content, which of course is nothing more than the habit of specifically choosing each of the possible musical parameters to combine together into a particular character or topic. This is the dominant mode of music throughout the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. By contrast, allusions in Finnissy's work are woven into polyphonic textures with many competing layers, each asserting their own harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic content. Rather than narrowing down the content to a clear melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic center, with the effect of a recognized quotation displaced to an unfamiliar setting, the quoted materials are woven into a latticework of materials, each establishing their own patterns of association and differentiation. The globalism of this interplay is the diametric opposite of specialization. **(Example 7)**

This recalls the McLuhan passage referenced earlier, namely that an environment where "all factors co-exist in a state of active interplay" forces us to abandon the habit of data classification and instead look for patterns among a field of simultaneous threads. The move away from isolated specialization (class) of content also drives home the central concept behind McLuhan's most well-known aphorism <sup>¾</sup> that focus on the particular content a medium might carry can often blind us to the perceptual effects released by the way the content is presented: *the medium is the message*.

The "message" of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs. ... "the medium is the message" because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. The content or uses of such media are as diverse as they are ineffectual in shaping the form of human association. Indeed, it is only too typical that the "content" of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium. (*Understanding Media*, 8-9)





**Example 7.** *The History Of Photography In Sound*, Vol. 2, p.239: “Kapitalistisch Realisme (mit Sizilianische Männerakte en Bachsche Nachdichtungen)”

It is precisely in the resistance to specialization of content, and to the *summing* of all concurrent musical phenomena to a single common character, that the music transcends the sequential continuum in favor of the total field. One is led not to be aware of each melodic strand, each rhythmic mode, each harmonic set, in its own turn as it gives way to another, but to consider at any given moment all of them together as a dynamic composite of non-uniform information.

The difference between considering each thing in its own turn and considering all things together as a static whole is a prominent thread running through James Joyce's *Ulysses*. It is not only a covert principle, being the primary organic source for Joyce's signature prose style, which is based on combining constellations of ideas into loaded utterances in the form of puns. Beyond that, it is an overt topic developed in conversations among characters and at times figuring in their private trains of thought.

At the beginning of the *Proteus* episode, which is by and large concerned with the protean, fluid life of ideas, we find the main character, Stephen, walking and musing to

himself about the nature of sequence vs. field and their respective relationships to the “ineluctable modalities” of sight and sound.

Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wrack and shells. You are walking through it howsomever. I am, a stride at a time. A very short space of time through very short times of space. Five, six: the *nacheinander*. Exactly: and that is the ineluctable modality of the audible. Open your eyes. No. Jesus! If I fell over a cliff that beetles o’er his base, fell through the *nebeneinander* ineluctably. I am getting on nicely in the dark.<sup>8</sup>

There are a number of significances in this passage that are pertinent to the present discussion and to the perceptual modes at the heart of Finnissey’s *History*. To begin with, like the Finnissey, we are drawn into a present, immediate setting that is endowed with extra charge by being suffused with references beyond the present context. In just this short passage already are contained references to Aristotle, Shakespeare, and Lessing. Because of these allusions we are invited to participate in something much more than the mere passage of this one moment on its way to the next, but rather we are in contact with a vast range of literary history, experienced *together* as a static whole in the short space of this short scene. The reference to *nacheinander* and *nebeneinander* recalls the eighteenth-century German dramatist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s writings on this very subject. He used these terms to distinguish modes of presentation akin to the visual arts vs. the poetic arts:

In the one case the action is visible and progressive, its different parts occurring one after the other (*nacheinander*) in a sequence of time, and in the other the action is visible and stationary, its different parts developing in co-existence (*nebeneinander*) in space.<sup>9</sup>

Joyce’s auto-biographical character Stephen is obviously thinking partly of sequence as he walks, a stride at a time. At the same time, he is closing out the sequential progress of his steps and his procession along a spatial continuum simply by closing his eyes. He displays a marked preference for the total field experience of acoustic space — *I am getting on nicely in the dark*.

This, of course, presents a striking parallel with the passage quoted at the outset of this article from Finnissey’s introduction to *The History Of Photography In Sound*, which itself demonstrates a marked aesthetic preference for the acoustic modality. It is the propensity to look at a range of material in the same glance, the *nebeneinander*, which unites works like *Ulysses* and *The History Of Photography In Sound* in relying so heavily on a rich network of reference combined in fluid montage. Ezra Pound, described an essential aspect of his own method as the technique of presenting “an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.” Such is the technique of *myth*, which McLuhan declares our modern world has made a natural mode of thought:

myth is the instant vision of a complex process that ordinarily extends over a long period. Myth is contraction or implosion of any process, and the instant

speed of electricity confers the mythic dimension on ordinary industrial and social action today. (*Understanding Media*, 25)

T.S. Eliot lauded its presence in *Ulysses* in favor of linear narrative:

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. ... It is simply a way of controlling, or ordering, or giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. ... Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art.<sup>9</sup>

Allusion in both *Ulysses* and *The History Of Photography In Sound* has so far been related to the respective authors themselves re-animating history as one giant, static *nebenainder*. It is here though that the inseparability between the compositional outlook and the manners of apprehension the resultant works compel reveals itself. To a certain extent, recognizing the references and their own native context falls upon the listener or reader of these works, plunging them into the same web-life edifice of associations that the authors were working from. However, to understand the re-cognition of historical samples as the primary effect of recall is to ignore the idea that *the medium is the message* and to let the specific instances of recall blind one to the larger psychological habits from which they spring. Both *Ulysses* and *The History Of Photography In Sound* allude to *themselves* just as much as they allude to historical samples. Because of this, the true task of apprehension for either is to attempt to grasp the works themselves as a giant *nebeneinander*, a static whole.

In *Ulysses*, concepts and themes are developed not by devoting separate discrete sections to their unpacking and in-depth detailing, but rather continually emerge across the whole work in a succession of varied contexts. For example, the concept of *metempsychosis*, which is a reference to the Ancient Greek notion of reincarnation, or the transmigration of the soul. It is a compositional concept central to the work, naturally, as Joyce's use of allusion is a kind of reincarnation of ideas in a contemporary setting. But the term itself is also referred to directly in the work in over a dozen instances spanning the whole.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the reader must maintain a kind of running catalog, each further treatment of the theme contributing to a composite impression of it. This composite impression is arrived at *peripatetically*, making connections between non-adjacent materials. In other words, the reader must consider many instances gleaned from the whole at the same time to arrive at an impression of their overall significance. Again, the disembodied spirit, who may not focus from the fixed vantage point of where he currently is in the text but instead must turn his attention, within memory, to many places at once. Analogous treatment is focused on further concepts such as *consubstantiality*, literary analogues such as Hamlet, and even the characters themselves, who continuously re-emerge in disparate scenes and settings. Thus, insight into the development of ideas in the work emerges through a myriad network of association chains, presented simultaneously.

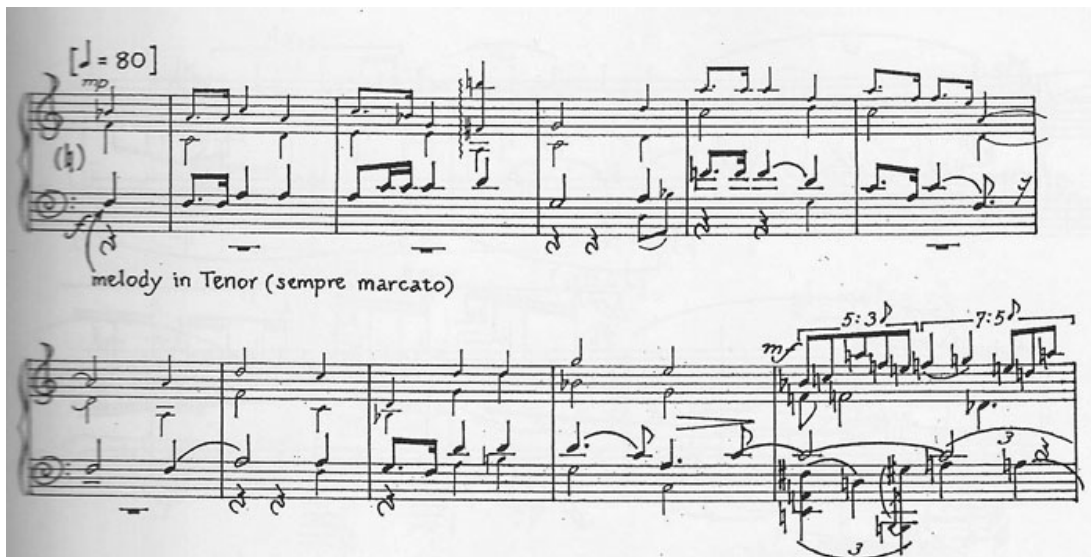
<sup>9</sup> T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, ad Myth". *The Dial*, 1923.

<sup>10</sup> For a complete list of references to *metempsychosis* in *Ulysses* see Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated*, index entry.



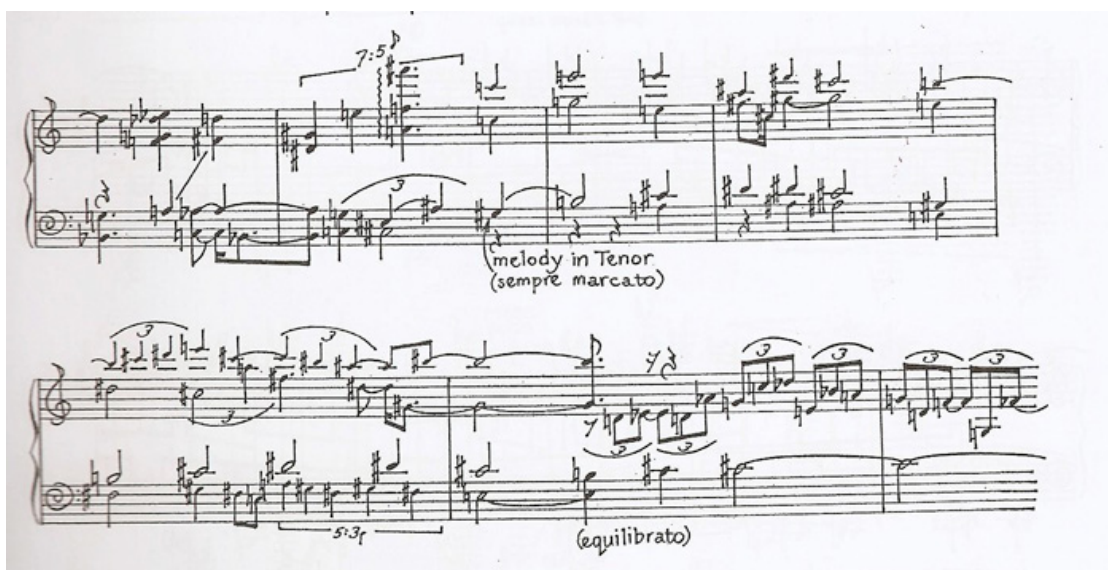
This is precisely the mode favored in *The History Of Photography In Sound*, as extensive self-allusion and numerous incarnations of musical matter appearing in disparate scenes and settings spread out across the entire work establish webs of association analogous to the technique of *Ulysses*. Instances of shared materials inviting comparison both across and within discrete movements are too numerous to list and it will suffice here to give a few demonstrative examples. One musical texture that shows up in a number of movements is a hymn-like texture with one predominant melody, indicated by notehead size. In the context of the entire cycle, we associate this texture most strongly with the “North American Spirituals” movement, where the recall of spirituals and hymns is the primary source of ‘found objects,’ and these textures play their most prominent role.

(**Example 8**) Textures like this appear in a number of other movements though, including “My parents’ generation thought War meant something” and “Etched Bright with Sunlight,” shown in **Example 9**. Interestingly, though the texture is established most firmly in the “North American Spirituals” movement, it makes earlier, more fragmentary appearances in “Le réveil de l’intraitable réalité,” where it is blended into other textures that also show up in many other settings dispersed throughout the cycle. (**Example 10.**)

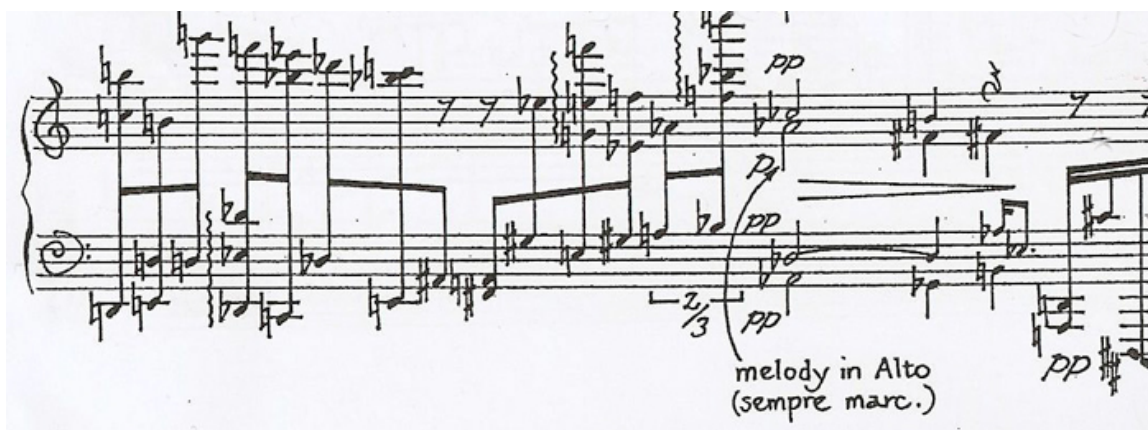


**Example 8.** – *The History Of Photography In Sound*, Vol. 1, p. 55: “North American Spirituals”

# The History of Photography in Sound



**Example 9.** – *The History Of Photography In Sound*, Vol. 3, p. 361: “Etched Bright With Sunlight”



**Example 10.** *The History Of Photography In Sound*, Vol. 1, p. 42: “Le réveil de l'intraitable réalité”

This is but one of many recurring musical items intertwined with other latticework webs of interconnectedness taking shape within the cycle. Another prominent recurring texture is the non-metrical, spatially notated texture shown in **Example 4**. This texture, like the hymn textures, seems to have a 'home' movement in "Unsere Afrikareise," where it receives its most extensive treatment, though, as that movement comes rather late in the cycle, it appears in numerous contexts before it. It also shows up in fragmentary splashes in "Le réveil de l'intraitable réalité," but makes more substantial appearances in "My parents' generation thought War meant something," and "Wachtend, op de volgende uitbarsting van repressie en censuur."

## Concluding

The purpose of the present article has been to draw a distinction between two oppositional perceptual habits, both of which we rely upon in our daily life and which are traditionally understood as "left-hemisphere awareness" (causal sequentiality) and "right-hemisphere awareness" (forming non-linear connections among a field of information). The distinction between these two modes of apprehension is the very subject matter of Finnissy's introductory program note to *The History Of Photography In Sound*, and thus understanding the distinction, and appreciating the extent to which Finnissy moves away from linear connectivity in favor of global interrelation should be an important basis at the heart of any inquiry into the work. The work of media theorist Marshall McLuhan is largely concerned with these very same perceptual habits and his writings provide a most illuminating framework for approaching the psychological effects of Finnissy's musical environments.

The discussion has ventured only cursory introductory commentary on two of the more salient surface features of Finnissy's work: rhythmic complexity and extensive use of allusion, both on a global historical scale and within the local dimension of the work itself. The primary concern here has been to show that both practices grow out of Finnissy's overall aesthetic inclination towards total-field awareness and resistance to establishing the fixed vantage-point as an organizational center. This is the aesthetic stance taken by early-twentieth-century Modernists James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot, and there commentary on the subject is relevant to discussions of total-field and simultaneous panoramic recall in many forms of art since their time. A kindred aesthetic approach can be found in the music of many of the most important composers of our modern electric age, reference to music by John Cage and Milton Babbitt being drawn into the present article. However, understanding the psychological perceptual habit of field awareness can be an avenue of insight into many signature musical developments of the past century and may be the very thing which separates contemporary music most acutely from music of the Industrial Age.

## Not Toward, but Away”

### One Perspective on an Asian Influenced Future Music

(A Lecture)

Steven Kazuo Takasugi

#### "Critical Intimacy" (Preliminary Remarks)

Firstly, I would like to qualify one point in regard to the title of this lecture. When I say “not toward, but away,” it certainly does not mean that I begin with a retreat or a repulsion away from ethnic, nationalist, or exoticist identity, for example, through a deracination or purging of an Asian instrument from its tradition (say via the scaling of timbre as an abstract parameter). I only now emphasize the “away” because the “toward” has already been firmly established as the curtailing of distance from an “Asian ancestral locus.” This “going toward” imbued with nostalgia (“nostos” - “algia,” pain or pining for the return to the original house, due to the lack of positive representations for the construction of identity) was deemed at one point necessary by individuals, such as myself, born into the condition of the Asian diaspora. (I am Sansei, third generation Nikkei or person of Japanese ancestry.) I also acknowledge that I cannot generalize over an Asian-American compass, the Nikkei community, nor across generations, geographic locations, and socio-economic groups. While Nikkei are confronted by what I believe is a persistent fictional homogeneity of Japanese culture, along with the stigmas associated with the crisis of misrepresented issues of loyalty exacerbated by the concentration and internment camps in America during the war, other Asian-Americans and also other Nikkei may or may not experience something similar, and possibly something radically dissimilar. In my case, the appropriation of Japanese instruments (beginning in 1978) was an important step in the antecedent “going toward.” The “away” attempts not to resolve or overcome the binary between deracination and nationalism (or geographically placed exoticism), but rather to sustain and discover the multitude of *useful* frictional energies emanating from a dialectic from such a polarization. I will nonetheless concede that if this is true, “not toward, but away” must make inexorable appearances of “not away, but toward.” However, *this* “toward” can never be the first “toward” because it is hopefully imbued with an awareness and self-consciousness that the “away” has afforded it. This is, for me, the most fascinating going toward a culture’s traditions, as it resembles the paradoxical notion of a “critical intimacy.”

Secondly, I must say that specific inquiry into ethnicity is but one of many domains of my thinking and involvement with music, nevertheless always interrelated with these other domains. Many of my assertions might appear strangely distant, but they are the product of superimposition,

and this would seem expected. Nevertheless, since this is a forum whose theme is specifically issues of ethnicity related to music making, I have taken it upon myself to focus on ideas, which in the end, find passage back to this theme. However, let me begin by offering some very specific statements.

### **Exploding the myth of the “model minority”**

In Japan as well as Nikkei culture, the adage “the nail that sticks out, gets hammered down” reveals a conformist social code and is more frequently heard than one might wish. It is a notion that is intimately bound with the concept of *wa*, harmony of community, and the more notorious idiom, “shikata ga nai” roughly translating to “nothing can be done,” that is in the face of adversity. These perceptions and self-perceptions of Nikkei as they germinate and develop on American soil have encouraged the racist stereotype of Nikkei as the so called “model minority,” obedient and uncritical before dominant American culture. This was exemplified most ardently in the lobbying of Mike Masaru Masaoka, official of the JACL (Japanese American Citizen’s League) and perhaps the most famous Japanese American of his time. During the years of incarceration into concentration camps, Masaoka was “one of the prime supporters of allowing Nisei [second generation Nikkei] into the American armed forces, viewing military service as the best way for Japanese Americans to ‘prove’ their loyalty. . . . He once proposed the formation of a “suicide battalion” of Nisei whose actions would be guaranteed by Issei [their parents] being held as hostages by the U.S. government. He and the JACL also advocated the turning in of those Japanese Americans deemed “disloyal” or dangerous to the FBI and other authorities.”<sup>1</sup> Many Nisei soldiers returned after the war as heroes, including members of the 522nd who assisted the survivors at Dachau. On the other hand, the draft resisters of conscience associated with the Fair Play Committee at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming, willing to be drafted on the condition that their rights as U.S. citizens were restored, were imprisoned, ostracized by much of the community, accused of cowardice, and their histories repressed. Their actions are exemplary particularly because their civil disobedience comes decades before the civil rights movement of the sixties which redefined the duty of citizenship for the American mainstream, as well as at a time when racist paranoia and hostilities against Nikkei were at their zenith. A formal apology by the JACL to these and other individuals came last year, 12 years after redress and reparations by the United States Government, 19 years after Frank Chin’s article entitled “The last organized resistance” uncovered the story after close to four decades of disregard. This and other incidents of resistance, riots, lawsuits, and escapes, along with their reassessment by a number of recent documentary films, have helped and are helping to explode the myth of Japanese American consensus, obedience, and fatalism, and has set the course for a new direction for perceptions and self-perceptions of a very fractionalized Nikkei community. It is a prime example of the disruptive power of revisionist history on petrified assumptions that have sustained a community’s identity for decades.

### **Lecture proper**

I predict that the future of the Japanese culinary arts lies with the latest biotechnological advances, or more specifically, with the current practice of hybridizing species through radical recombinant

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<sup>1</sup> Niiya, Brian, editor. *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History*, (New York: Checkmark Books, 2001), p. 269.



DNA engineering. This time, not with a *Drosophila*, but perhaps, with something more tasty, such as a tuna (one of the last left in the sea) and that workhorse of transgenics, the bio-luminescent jellyfish. You see, with glow-in-the-dark sushi, diners, such as yourselves, will be inspired to dim the lights, the practice of which, after all, was once recommended by that expert of things Japanese, Tanizaki Junichiro (in his aesthetic essay, *In praise of shadows*). This was to properly discern the “countless layers of darkness”<sup>2</sup> of traditional lacquer ware. Outside the tatami dining room, beyond the shoji screens, flickering in the “always-to-be-revered Japanese garden,” the summer fireflies will mimic your meal. Recall, that “almost self-conscious” hand that designed and carved these garden paths might still rely on a trail’s inevitable receding into distant hills of “pristine” forest. Ahhh, saved . . . rescued, when the artisan’s hand-crafted nature and the “wild” merge into that one seamless continuity.

But let us return to our glowing things, for one brazen yet entirely justified firefly invades the dining room and attempts to copulate with your meal. In this single event, we recognize that scientific progress may accompany a dissolution of natural relationships as we know and assume them to be, and lo and behold, our musing is akin to a “self-retracting or self-canceling”<sup>3</sup> musical discourse. It is simply that we didn’t arrive there via the normative route, that is, past the ruins, wreckage, and debris of humanity. Unfortunately, the authentic nihilist, once rare and prophetic, has become rather commonplace. However, by appropriating the dialectic of enlightenment, we can bypass much of this “trickling into nothing,” the residual narcissistic operatic whimpering or the last breath of a loitering romantic subjectivity.<sup>4</sup> And so why should one’s relationship to ethnicity take exception. By the way, it was again Tanizaki who extolled the aesthetic virtues of dark houses while never considering to actually live in a dwelling that he himself was advocating. Does that suggest that we should create a music to which we ourselves would not wish to listen? But in order to gain such a footing, we would need to leave ourselves, to discover ourselves only vestigially recognizable, though somehow reserve observational abilities if not some degree of communication with our altered selves. We could begin with a neurological understanding of musical hallucinations to discover the mechanisms in which curious realities are placed before cognition. Take for instance this case study.

A most remarkable association between visual impairment and musical hallucinations was reported by Patel *et al.* (1981). A lady of 86 with impaired vision developed vivid visual hallucinations with a clear sensorium. She would be pleasantly surprised by the presence of the vision which mainly occurred in the evening or dark or dim conditions. She would see children at play but when she tried to speak they never replied and if she tried to approach they disappeared. Soon she also started to see a circus with a tent, lights and acts which she could vividly describe and brought back memories of her childhood. Later, she began to

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<sup>2</sup> Tanizaki, Junichiro. *In praise of shadows*, translated by Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker, (New Haven: Leete’s Island Books, Inc., 1977), p.13.

<sup>3</sup> Paddison, Max. *Adorno’s aesthetics of music*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 171.

<sup>4</sup> Nihilism may well be the ground, no rather, the abyss of our being. Nonetheless, what I will call “iridescent uncertainty” is a project toward auto-luminescence. Its primary aim is always to thwart that which is certain, and nihilism is always less than uncertain. Still, nihilism must be worked through if there is to be anything at stake for whatever is affirmative in our being.

hear the music which accompanied the acts and spent her evening enjoying the “circus.”<sup>5</sup>  
(Quoted from *The neurological boundaries of reality*.)

Conceivably, a brain-machine interface could be utilized to stream signals to these hallucinatory centers. The source of these signals could originate from other individuals also implanted with similar brain-machine interfaces. The streaming could be multidirectional allowing for shared consciousness. These brain signals could be transmitted over the internet, much as the recent work of Miguel Nicolelis at Duke University, whose mere 96 implanted electrodes allowed monkeys to control a robotic arm 600 miles away.<sup>6</sup> Multiple consciousness could be shared among different individuals divided by vast geographical distance, including the distances between nations and continents.

The implications for music and identity are far reaching. The traditional musical object which required exhaustive transformation and which now approaches the collapse of its rotation, will pass its dance to the subject, which in turn will find himself/herself/itself, not fixedly observing, but hurling through a prism of multiple consciousness. It is prismatic because it does not necessitate a destruction inherent in syncretic formulation. It preserves distinction. It allows what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls the “letting-be.”<sup>7</sup> When the interfaces are multidirectional, the act of talking to oneself takes on new meaning, possibly in an array of languages.

Now, if you will allow me one aside.

On March 18, 1942, and March 24, 1942, [Fred Toyosaburo] Korematsu, [the first candidate to become the subject of a test case to challenge the mass forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast in 1942], had plastic surgery on his nose and eyes in an attempt to disguise his racial identity. His plan was to marry his Italian American fiancée, Ida Boitano, in Arizona and then move to the Midwest. By having plastic surgery, Korematsu hoped to blend in with European Americans and be allowed to live peacefully with Boitano. According to an FBI agent who questioned him, Korematsu “feared violence should anyone discover that he, a Japanese, was married to an American girl.”

On May 9, 1942, Korematsu’s parents and three brothers reported to the Tanforan “Assembly Center”; he did not join them. Three weeks later, on May 30, 1942, Korematsu was arrested in San Leandro, California, for violating the “exclusion order.” When questioned about his identity, Korematsu gave the police a draft registration card with the name “Clyde Sarah” on it and attempted to claim he was of Spanish-Hawaiian origin. His story quickly disintegrated when the poorly altered draft card proved to be fake.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mitchell, J. D. “The nature of music and musical hallucinations,” *The neurological boundaries of reality*, edited by Edmund Critchley, (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1995), p. 200.

<sup>6</sup> See Miguel A. L. Nicolelis’ “Actions from thoughts,” in *Nature*, 409, (January 18, 2001), pp. 403-7.

<sup>7</sup> See Fred Dallmayr’s *Beyond Orientalism*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. xii.

<sup>8</sup> Niiya, *ibid.*, p. 251.

## Epiphany

With this case in the context of racist conditions, the adage, “the nail that sticks out, gets hammered down” becomes inverted: this, ( \_ \_ \_ \_ T \_ \_ ), becomes this, ( T T T T \_ T T ). Let us now evaluate the second condition of “the nail that sticks out, gets hammered down.” Korematsu, by being of Japanese ancestry, was branded as an unassimilable alien, despite his American citizenship. His act of eyelid and nose disfigurement, as an attempt to pass as assimilated, was his own self hammering, which was not permissible. The product of this condition inverts the adage, which now must read: “the nail that is hammered down, gets wedged up.”

Within the previous rumination dwells only one example of the abundant quirks and ironies one comes across existing in diasporic conditions. This leads well to my music and a further explanation of the conceptual material underpinning governing the thwarting of assumptions and prediction in what I have been naming “iridescent uncertainty,” and its extension into what I call a useful condition of “musical myopia.”

## Concluding remarks

However, with my concluding remarks, I must zoom out, or the myopic vision will become fixated and lose any claim to the factual, the historical--it will derail its derailing. This is not sleight of hand, to claim again the domain of ethnicity and music, after having funneled microscopically into the microstructure of derailed assumptions. The zoom in and zoom out is what I have called the iridescent nature of uncertainty, and with this oscillation, this shimmering, so to speak, the movement will precisely resemble the vibrating nature of the negotiating and renegotiating of the sense of self (identity) and other. Thank you for listening.

Encinitas, California 2001



# Introduction to Reframing

## augmentation and diminution of extended just intonation frequency ratios 1.0.

Douglas C. Wadle

### Introduction

This paper explains the mechanics of “reframing” (intervallic augmentation and diminution of extended just intonation frequency ratios), introduces some basic musical operations on reframed ratio sets, and presents a tripartite model for describing the ratio sets involved in reframing. Reframing occurs in an open context, by which I mean that there is no predetermined limiting factor as to which pitches or pitch classes may appear. In other words, in the augmentation or diminutions of frequency ratios, one is not primarily concerned with a preexisting, closed set of pitches comprising a scale, a closed subset of pitches (scale) chosen from a closed set of pitches comprising a tuning system, or even a closed set of pitches comprising a tuning system. This is a significant difference from such traditional musical theoretical approaches to pitch transformation as pitch-class set theory and neo-Riemannian theory, both of which treat pitch classes as integers modulo 12. By contrast, under reframing a new frequency ratio, indicating a pitch or pitch interval, which was not found within the source material (that which is reframed) or in some closed set of available pitches or pitch-classes, may well be introduced. The paper is concerned specifically with the reframing operation and assumes a working knowledge of frequency ratios as a musical resource, though a brief review of basic transposition and inversion of frequency ratios is included (section 2.1.)

### 2.0. Introducing Reframing: Terms and Equations

The process described herein was first conceived as the projection of some musical interval, expressed as a frequency ratio, onto a bounding interval, or “frame” (hence “reframing”), to be denoted by “ $f$ ”. In other words, the goal was simply to divide the span of some interval other than the octave according to the same proportions as an existing division of the span of an octave occurring in a bit of music in just intonation. In the course of compositional explorations<sup>1</sup> of reframing, some limitations of this conception were noted (and were, in some cases, exploited for aesthetic ends), resulting in a re-description of the process as it appears below.

The reframing of a frequency ratio is accomplished through a simple linear function that can be represented graphically by plotting the original frequency ratios along the x-axis and the resulting frequency ratios along the y-axis (see Fig. 1). The graph of the resulting line has a slope equal to  $f - 1$  and intersects the point  $(1/1, 1/1)$ . So, for the  $2/1$  frame, the slope is  $1/1$

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<sup>1</sup> See (and hear) Douglas C. Wadle, *Cognitive Disjunction* (2006), *Cognitive Congruence* (2007), *Cloister Walk, No. 2* (2007), “Systema” (2008), “Systema (with linear distortion)” (2008), “After ‘Ohio Impromptu’” (2009), and “Systema II” (2010).

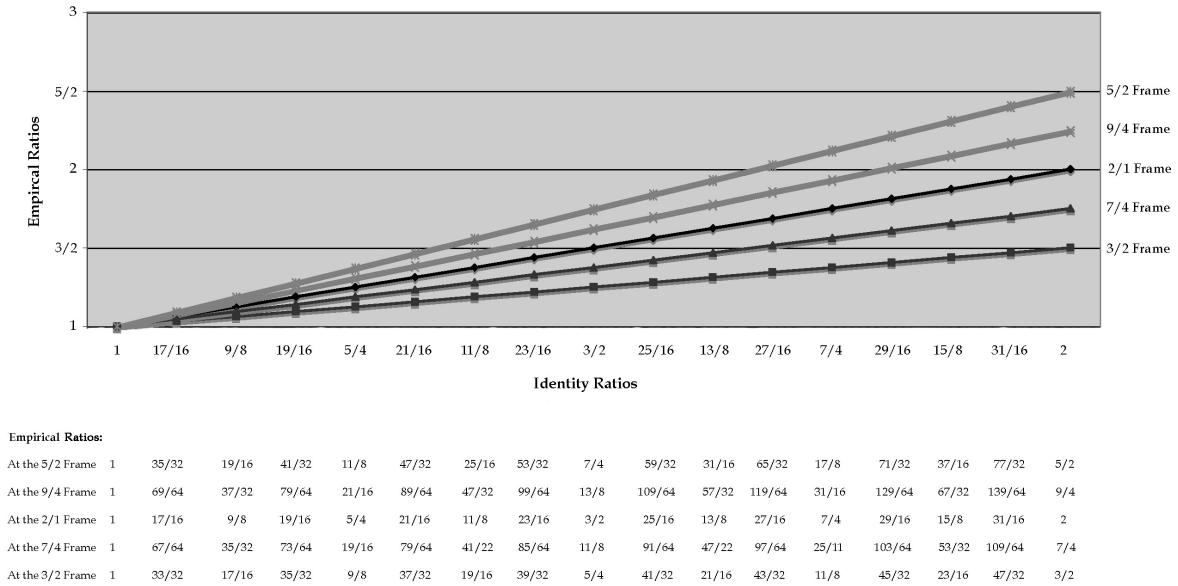
and all resulting ratios map directly onto the original ratios (making this the identity function) whereas, for the  $\frac{5}{2}$  frame, the slope will be  $\frac{3}{2}$  and the resulting ratios will be altered to fall along this slope. Frames less than two will result in diminution of frequency ratios. A frame greater than two will result in augmentation. A frame less than one gives a negative slope, meaning that successive ratios increasingly greater than  $\frac{1}{1}$  in the original ratio set will result in (diminished) ratios successively less than  $\frac{1}{1}$  in the reframed set.

The introduction of some terminology should help maintain clarity in the following discussion. In addition to the “frame”, we have an interval that expresses the original pitch interval to be reframed, which I refer to as the abstract ratio, or abstraction (to be denoted by “ $a$ ”). The ratio resulting from the process is termed the “empirical ratio” (denoted by “ $e$ ”). This language allows us to state, “The empirical ratio of the  $a$ -abstraction at the  $f$ -frame is  $e$ ”. It also allows us to keep track of abstract ratios across frames, as it may be useful to conceive  $e$  as the (empirical ratio of the)  $a$  (abstraction) of (the)  $f$  (frame) in comparison with various empirical ratios of the  $a$ -abstraction in other frames. The function for determining the empirical ratio,  $e$ , at a given frame,  $f$ , is:

$$g_f(a) = [(a - 1)(f - 1)] + 1 \quad .$$

When the resulting values,  $e$ , are plotted against the corresponding values of  $a$ , we get the line of slope  $f - 1$  discussed above (see Fig. 1). The range of the function is equal to the set of  $a$  values, the domain the set of values for  $e^2$ .

Linear Representation of Frames



**Figure 1.** Graphic representation of abstract/empirical ratio correspondences at the  $\frac{3}{2}$ ,  $\frac{7}{4}$ ,  $\frac{2}{1}$ ,  $\frac{9}{4}$ , and  $\frac{5}{2}$  frames.

As an example, let us say that we wish to augment the interval,  $\frac{7}{4}$  (a small minor seventh), by projecting it onto a frame larger than  $\frac{2}{1}$ . We select  $\frac{9}{4}$ , very nearly an equal tempered major ninth, as our frame, and proceed:

<sup>2</sup> The general function for reframing is denoted “ $g(f, a)$ ”. The denotation “ $g(a)$ ” gives a range of reframing functions that can be specified by the value of  $f$ , in keeping with the spirit of the terminology introduced above.

$$g_{9/4}(7/4) = 31/16, \quad ,$$

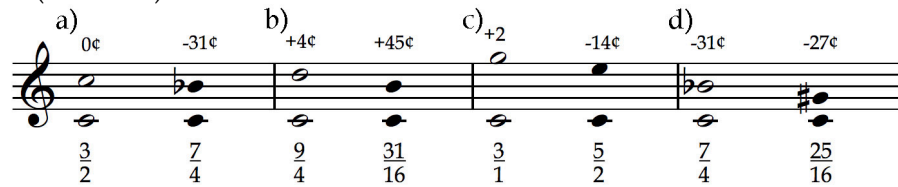
The ratio  $31/16$  corresponds to the interval found between the 31<sup>st</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> terms of the overtone series, and is somewhat less than an octave ( $32/16 = 2/1$ ). Its size in cents is approximately 1145¢. Had we selected  $3/1$  as the frame (an interval very near an equal-tempered perfect twelfth), we find:

$$g_{3/1}(7/4) = 5/2, \quad ,$$

which gives an interval of an octave plus a just major third ( $\approx 1586$ ¢). If we wish to undertake a diminution of  $7/4$ , we use a frame smaller than the octave. Let us use the frame  $7/4$ , itself:

$$g_{7/4}(1/1) = 25/16, \quad ,$$

which is equivalent to two just major thirds ( $5/4 \cdot 5/4$ ) and is approximately 773¢, whereas our original interval,  $7/4$ , is approximately 969¢. These reframings of  $7/4$  are presented in musical notation below (see Ex. 1).



**Example 1.** Musical notation representing reframing of a  $7/4$  frequency ratio at the a)  $2/1$ , b)  $9/4$ , c)  $3/1$ , and d)  $7/4$  frames. Open noteheads indicate the frame, itself, filled noteheads indicate the reframed  $7/4$ . Frequency ratios for each are given below, cent deviations from equal temperament are given above each notated interval.

When employing pitch augmentation or diminution, it will be necessary to define a reference pitch that will remain constant and against which the intervals are measured (the reference pitch,  $1/1$  is not altered by reframing). Let us take augmentation and diminutions of a major triad in just intonation (Ex. 2), which is denoted (in root position) by the pitch ratios  $1/1$ ,  $5/4$ ,  $3/2$ . To find the empirical form of the major triad abstraction in the  $3/1$  frame, we first assign the given values to their relevant variables:  $f = 3/1$ ,  $a_1 = 1/1$ ,  $a_2 = 5/4$ , and  $a_3 = 3/2$ . We can then calculate the empirical ratios for the major triad abstraction in the  $3/1$  frame:

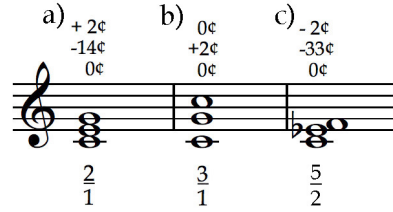
$$g_{3/1}(1/1) = 1/1 \quad (= 0\text{¢})$$

$$g_{3/1}(5/4) = 3/2 \quad (\approx 702\text{¢})$$

$$g_{3/1}(3/2) = 2/1 \quad (1200\text{¢}).$$

The  $1/1$  abstraction remains unchanged (as will always be the case), the  $5/4$  abstraction in the  $3/1$  frame becomes the empirical ratio  $3/2$ , and the  $3/2$  abstraction in the  $3/1$  frame becomes the empirical ratio  $2/1$ . Similarly, we find the empirical form of the major triad abstraction in the  $5/3$  frame (a just major sixth):

$$g_{5/3}(3/2) = 4/3 \quad (\approx 498\text{¢}) \quad .$$



**Example 2.** Musical notation representing a root position, close position triad at the a)  $2/1$ , b)  $3/1$ , and c)  $5/2$  frames.

This process will work, even where some  $a - 1$  is less than one, so long as it is above a certain threshold determined by the frame. Positive values for empirical ratios result from all values of  $a$  where  $(a-1)(f-1) + 1 > 0$ . The threshold occurs, therefore, at:

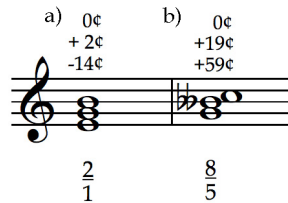
$$a = -1/(f-1) + 1 \quad ,$$

which results in an empirical frequency ratio (remember that this ratio is a multiplier to the original frequency) of zero (i.e. the  $y$ -intercept of the reframing function). For all values of  $a < -1/(f-1) + 1$ , the resulting empirical ratios will be negative values. Let us take, as an example, a first inversion, close position triad with  $1/1$  at the top (Ex. 3), which would be expressed (at the  $2/1$  frame) as:  $5/8, 3/4, 1/1$ . Diminishing the structure at the  $8/5$  (just minor sixth) frame, we get:

$$g_{8/5}(5/8) = 31/40 \quad (\approx -441\text{¢})$$

$$g_{8/5}(3/4) = 17/20 \quad (\approx -281\text{¢})$$

$$g_{8/5}(1/1) = 1/1 \quad (0\text{¢}) \quad .$$



**Example 3.** Musical notation representing a first inversion, close position triad at the a)  $2/1$  and b)  $8/5$  frames.

Beyond, simply creating reframed ratio sets from a set of shared abstract ratios, it may be useful to identify points of intersection between two frames, which is accomplished by finding those abstract ratios for each frame that will produce the same empirical ratio. To find the abstract ratio correlated to some empirical ratio at a given frame, we use the inverse function of  $g_f(a)$ ,  $h_f(e)$ :

$$h_f(e) = [(e - 1) \div (f - 1)] + 1 \quad .$$

For instance, to determine the abstract ratio of the empirical ratio  $14/11$  in the  $7/2$  frame:

$$h_{7/2}(14/11) = 61/55 \quad .$$

Given a set of empirical pitch ratios, we can find the points of perceptual intersection (at the empirical pitch ratios) across different frames. With the introduction of some criterion, we can have a justification for preferring one interpretation of the empirical ratios, as being certain abstract ratios in some frame, to all others. Such a criterion will be introduced in section 2.2., below; first, however, we shall present an explanation of transposition and inversion of reframed ratio sets.

## 2.1. Musical Operations under Reframing: Transposition and Inversion

As discussed thus far, we see that reframing can be used as a means of varying pitch and intervallic material in the creation of a composition in extended just intonation. The most direct and perceivable application of reframing will be to linear contexts where contour identity is to be retained, whether in sequential melodic or in overlapping polyphonic statements. Example 4 presents such a case: a partial phrase taken from the author's string trio, *Cognitive Congruence*, shown in a) the original pitch content and rhythmic values, b) pitch and rhythmic content augmented at the proportion of  $\frac{5}{2}$  (the  $\frac{5}{2}$  frame, with respect to the pitch material), and c) pitch and rhythmic content augmented at the proportion of  $\frac{3}{1}$  (the  $\frac{3}{1}$  frame, with respect to the pitch material).

Example 4 consists of three musical staves, each showing a sequence of notes with their corresponding pitch ratios and cent deviations from equal temperament.

- Staff a)** Original pitch content and rhythmic values. The notes are: C4 (ratio 1/1, 0c), D4 (ratio 3/2, +2c), E4 (ratio 5/4, -14c), F#4 (ratio 5/4, -14c), G4 (ratio 7/4, -31c), A4 (ratio 7/6, -33c), B4 (ratio 5/4, -14c), C5 (ratio 3/2, +2c), and D5 (ratio 1/1, 0c). There is a triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G4, A4) and a triplet of eighth notes (B4, C5, D5).
- Staff b)** Pitch and rhythmic content augmented at the proportion of  $\frac{5}{2}$ . The notes are: C4 (ratio 1/1, 0c), D4 (ratio 7/4, -31c), E4 (ratio 11/8, -49c), F#4 (ratio 11/8, -49c), G4 (ratio 17/8, +5c), A4 (ratio 5/4, -14c), B4 (ratio 11/8, -49c), C5 (ratio 7/4, -31c), and D5 (ratio 1/1, 0c). There is a triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G4, A4) and a triplet of eighth notes (B4, C5, D5).
- Staff c)** Pitch and rhythmic content augmented at the proportion of  $\frac{3}{1}$ . The notes are: C4 (ratio 1/1, 0c), D4 (ratio 2/1, 0c), E4 (ratio 3/2, +3c), F#4 (ratio 3/2, +2c), G4 (ratio 5/2, -14c), A4 (ratio 4/3, -2c), B4 (ratio 3/2, +2c), C5 (ratio 2/1, 0c), and D5 (ratio 1/1, 0c). There is a triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G4, A4) and a triplet of eighth notes (B4, C5, D5).

**Example 4:** A musical line at the a)  $\frac{2}{1}$ , b)  $\frac{5}{2}$ , and c)  $\frac{3}{1}$  frames, with corresponding rhythmic augmentation as found in Douglas C. Wadle's *Cognitive Congruence*. Pitch ratios are given below each notated pitch, cent value deviations from equal temperament are given above each notated pitch.

In *Cognitive Congruence*, the phrases from which the above material is drawn are part of a compound line. Each compound line is presented independently, in mensural cannon with each of the other compound lines, and as a mensural cannon with all three compound lines. This contrapuntal use of reframed musical lines raises the issue of the application of reframing to other musical operations derived from contrapuntal practice (i.e. reframed ratio sets under transposition and inversion).

To this end, a brief remedial discussion of transposition and inversion of frequency ratios is in order. Remembering that we are, in basic reframing, only concerned with pitch and pitch interval ratios (not pitch class or interval class ratios), we can see that any frequency ratio  $\frac{p}{q}$  can be transposed by any other interval  $\frac{r}{s}$  simply by multiplying. As the second ratio

represents a pitch interval by which the first ratio is to be transposed, ascending intervals will be represented by ratios greater than one. The corresponding descending intervals will fall between zero and one and are the inverse of their ascending counterparts (e.g.  $3/2$  is an ascending perfect fifth,  $2/3$  a descending one). So for transposition of some frequency ratio  $p/q$  at some other ratio  $r/s$ , we use:

$$T_{r/s}(p/q) = (p/q)(r/s) \quad .$$

Inversion around some axis  $m/n$  is accomplished by dividing the axis by the original ratio, and then multiplying that result by the axis of inversion:

$$(m/n)[(m/n) \div (p/q)] = (m/n)[(m/n)(q/p)] = (m/n)^2(q/p) \quad .$$

In the case of an inversion around the axis of  $1/1$ , this amounts to simply inverting the numerator and denominator of the original ratio. For other axes, it amounts to finding the difference between the ratio to be inverted and the axis of inversion, and then transposing, from the axis, by the inverse of this difference. These situations can be expressed more simply as a combined transposition and inversion operation:

$$T_{r/s}I(p/q) = (r/s) \div (p/q) = (r/s) (q/p) \quad ,$$

where  $(r/s) = (m/n)^2$ ; this is tantamount to inverting around the axis of  $1/1$ , and then transposing by  $(r/s)$ .

With this in mind, let us compare the results we found above (Ex. 3) for a first inversion triad at the  $8/5$  frame, with  $1/1$  at the top, to the results we get if we find the empirical ratios of the first inversion major triad abstraction at the  $8/5$  frame with  $2/1$  at the top, consisting of the abstract ratios  $5/4$ ,  $3/2$ ,  $2/1$ :

$$\begin{aligned} g_{8/5}(5/4) &= 23/20 & (\approx 242\text{¢}) \\ g_{8/5}(3/2) &= 13/10 & (\approx 454\text{¢}) \\ g_{8/5}(2/1) &= 8/5 & (\approx 814\text{¢}) \quad . \end{aligned}$$

The difference between corresponding ratios in these two sets is  $e_1 = 46/31$  ( $\approx 683\text{¢}$ ),  $e_2 = 26/17$  ( $\approx 736\text{¢}$ ),  $e_3 = 8/5$  ( $\approx 814\text{¢}$ ). This alerts us to an anomaly that creeps into the handling of frequency ratios when one tries to transpose musical intervals using two (or more) reframed ratios (in frames other than  $2/1$ ). We might expect that the results of our first inversion triad with the  $1/1$  abstraction at its top should have all elements  $8/5$  apart from the first inversion triad with the  $2/1$  abstraction at its top, where the reframed octave is  $8/5$ , but this is clearly not the case. Had it been, we would have a value for the empirical ratio of the  $5/4$  abstraction in the  $8/5$  frame of

$$31/40 \cdot 8/5 = 31/25 \quad (\approx 372\text{¢})$$

rather than  $23/20$ . This shows that for all frames where empirical ratios and abstract ratios differ (frames other than two or one<sup>3</sup>), simply multiplying empirical ratios resulting from the reframing function will not lead to the proper empirical ratio of the corresponding abstract

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<sup>3</sup> The case of the  $1/1$  frame transforms all ratios in the set to  $1/1$  as,  $1/1 - 1 = 0$ , and so any reframed interval will be:  $0 \cdot a/b + 1 = 1 = 1/1$ .

ratio found according to that function<sup>4</sup>. Where one of the empirical ratios remains constant, we will see a line that intersects the line defined by the framing function at the given frame at the point of that empirical ratio. The slope of this line can be determined by multiplying the consistent ratio by the empirical ratio of the correlated abstract ratio's inverse (to get the distorted  $1/1$  abstraction), and its octave complement (to get the distorted  $2/1$  abstraction), dividing the smaller into the greater and subtracting one<sup>5</sup>. For example, the distortions resulting from multiplying the reframed  $5/2$  abstraction will lead to a line of slope  $84/63$ , a slightly steeper grade than the pure  $9/4$  frame's slope of  $5/4$  (see Fig. 2).

This discrepancy can be corrected by introducing the following factor into the multiplication of reframed ratios, where two ratios,  $p/q$  and  $r/s$ , stand for empirical ratios connected to abstractions within a common frame, represented by the ratio  $x/y$ :

$$1 - \{[(p - q)(r - s)][(x - 2y/x - y) \div pr]\} \quad .$$

So, in order to make the product of the empirical ratios of the  $5/8$  and  $2/1$  abstractions in the  $8/5$  frame (i.e.  $g_{8/5}(5/8) \cdot g_{8/5}(2/1)$ ) correspond to the empirical ratio of the abstraction of the product of  $5/8$  and  $2/1$  (i.e.  $g_{8/5}[(5/8)(2/1)]$ ), we proceed:

$$(31/40 \cdot 8/5)\{1 - [(31 - 40)(8 - 5)][(8 - (2 \cdot 5)/8 - 5) \div (31 \cdot 8)]\} = 23/20 \quad ,$$

which is precisely what we found when simply reframing the ratio,  $5/4$ , in the  $8/5$  frame. Returning to our transposition function, we get a generalization of:

$$T_{r/s}(p/q) = (p/q)(r/s)\{1 - [(p - q)(r - s)][(x - 2y/x - y) \div pr]\}$$

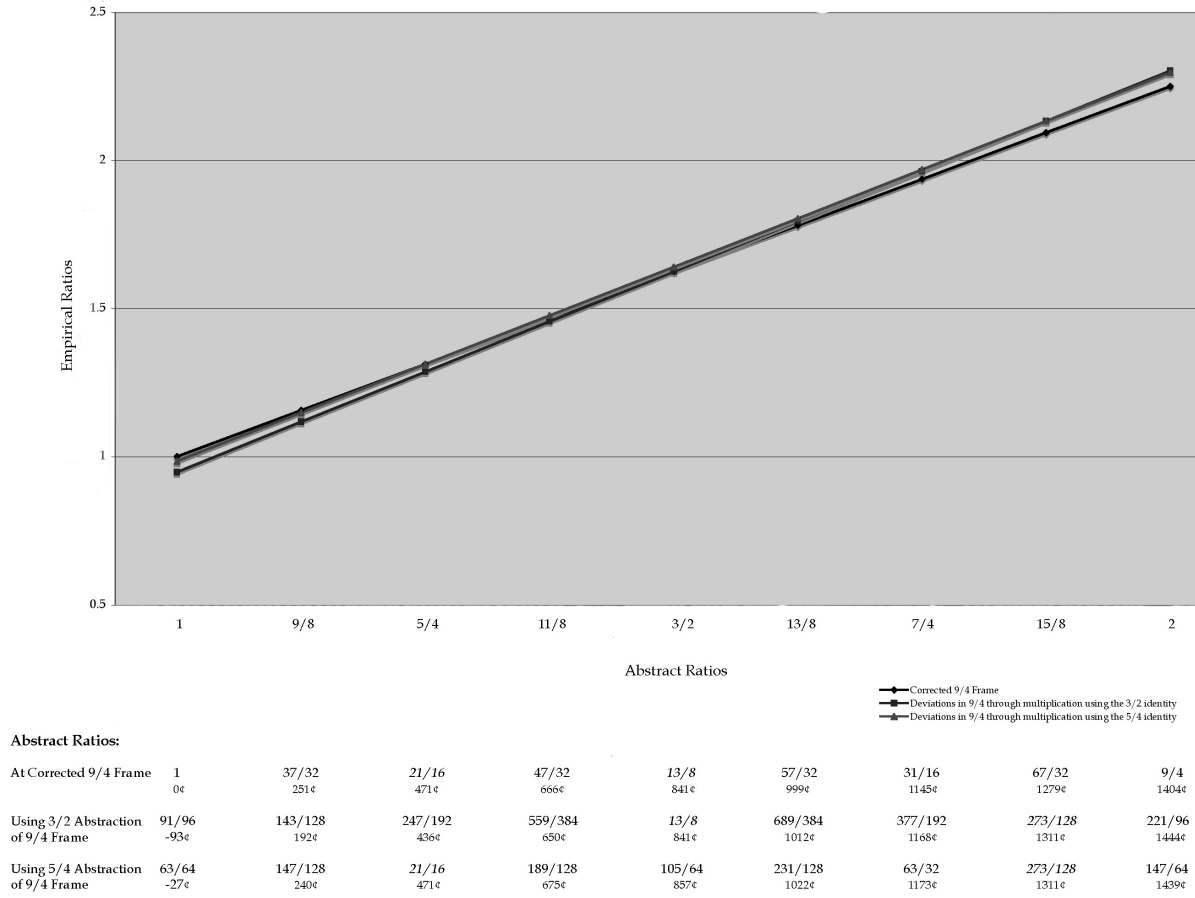
for all frames,  $x/y$ . Inversion operations are somewhat more problematic. The simplest way to proceed is to find the empirical ratio,  $w/v$ , for the inverse of the abstract ratio,  $m/n$ , associated with  $p/q$  such that  $g_{x/y}(m/n) = a/b$  and  $h_{x/y}(p/q) = m/n$ , by the reframing function  $g_{x/y}(n/m) = w/v$ . This will give the inversion around the axis of  $1/1$ . We can then simply transpose as above for any value of  $r/s$  using the corrective factor for the product of two reframed ratios.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, for all frames other than  $2/1$ , the reframed octave, through successive ascending iterations, approaches 2 such that:  $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} [g_f(2^n) \div g_f(2^{n-1})] = 2$ , for all  $f \neq 2$ .

<sup>5</sup> Note that this will result in a line parallel to that of the undistorted frame of the associated slope.



## Introduction to Reframing



**Figure 2.** Graphic representation of distortion due to compounding of reframed frequency ratios at the  $9/4$  frame.

$$\log_2(m \cdot n) ,$$

where the ratio  $m/n$  expresses the interval ratio between the two pitches. According to Tenney, the most compact ratio set<sup>6</sup> will be that with the lowest harmonic distance (HD) sum; that is, the set with the smallest value where the harmonic distance from every pitch in the set to every other pitch in the set is measured as an HD value and added together. I will further follow the suggestion of Wolfgang von Schweinitz that, where crystals have the same HD sum, the simpler ratio is preferred (i.e. the ratio with the smaller HD value measured from  $1/1$ ) (Sabat 2008). If there is still a tie, a random selection is made. For our purposes, when two frames are found to have equally compact HD sums, we can state that it has dual primary forms. We

<sup>6</sup> Tenney developed the concept of “crystal growth” in reference to frequency ratio lattices of the sort first proposed by Leonhard Euler (1739) and extended by Tenney (1984) to include higher primes and to return functionally useful information about relative consonance and dissonance relations between pitches within the lattice. In lattice-structure pitch space, every prime number allowed in a tuning system governs one dimension of harmonic space. The concept of crystal growth according to HD sum does not, however, require a closed lattice to be intelligible and so we may apply it without broaching the subject of lattices, proper (which will be saved for a later paper in this series).

remove the  $1/1$  frame as a candidate for the primary frame, as it results in a set of empirical ratios all of which equal  $1/1$ , for a composite HD sum of zero:

$$g_{1/1}(m/n) = 1/1, \text{ for all } m/n.$$

The following is a simple procedure for the determination of the prime frame of a given set of empirical frequency ratios:

- 1.) Given a set  $S$  of empirical ratios:  $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, p_4, \dots, p_n\}$ , find the set of ratios,  $T$ :  $\{q_1, q_2, q_3, q_4, \dots, q_n\} = \{p_1 - 1, p_2 - 1, p_3 - 1, p_4 - 1, \dots, p_n - 1\}$ .
- 2.) Find the prime factors for all numerators and denominators in the set  $T$ , and arrange them in a table (as in Table 1) where the rows correspond to a single appearance of a factor, each factor having a number of rows equal to the greatest number of times it appears within the set of numbers under consideration (numerators or denominators of  $T$ ).
- 3.) For each row of the table in which half or more of the respective numerators share the prime factor for that row, include that factor as a factor determining the numerator of the ratio  $f - 1$ . Do the same for the factors of denominators appearing in  $T$  in order to find the denominator of  $f - 1$ . Express  $f - 1$  as a fraction in lowest terms.
- 4.) Add one to the ratio  $f - 1$  to find  $f$ , which is the primary frame.

For example, given a set of empirical ratios,  $S$ :  $\{1/1, 9/8, 7/6, 5/4, 11/8, 3/2, 13/8\}$ , we calculate the set of related ratios,  $T$ :  $\{0, 1/8, 1/6, 1/4, 3/8, 1/2, 5/8\}$ . We very quickly see that the only factor appearing in the numerator of more than half the members of the set,  $T$ , of  $q$ 's is one, so this will be our numerator. We look to the factorization of denominators in  $T$  to see if any appear more than three times. Referring to Table 1, we see two appearing in more than half the instances of the denominators contained in our first and second rows and no other values occurring in more than half the instances of the denominators of  $T$ , which tells us that  $2^2 = 4$  will form our target denominator for  $f - 1$ . This gives a value of  $1/4$ . We then find  $f = 1/4 + 1 = 5/4$ , and so the prime frame for the given perceived pitch set  $S$  is  $5/4$ . If we wish to check the reasonability of this finding, we can calculate the abstract ratios correlated to the empirical ratio set  $S$  at the  $5/4$  frame by the function  $h_f(a)$ . This results in a set of abstract ratios at the  $5/4$  frame,  $R$ :  $\{1/1, 3/2, 5/3, 2/1, 5/2, 3/1, 7/2\}$ , which, intuitively, looks quite a bit simpler than  $S$ . We can verify by the construction of a matrix detailing the relations between all the pitches within each set, calculating the HD sum for each and comparing. If we do so, we will find an HD sum of approximately 138.6 for  $S$  and a value of approximately 81.4 for  $R$ .

0	8	6	4	8	2	8
2	2	2	2	2	2	2
2		2	2		2	
2			2		2	

3

**Table 1.** Arrangement of the prime factors of denominators in the set,  $T$ :  $\{0, 1/8, 1/6, 1/4, 3/8, 1/2, 5/8\}$  to aid in the determination of the primary frame for the empirical pitch ratio set,  $S$ :  $\{1/1, 9/8, 7/6, 5/4, 11/8, 3/2, 13/8\}$ .

With this means of referring to variable sets of ratios linked by virtue of some reframing relation, we can identify supersets of ratios (akin to set theory's set classes) and, by extension, identify the musical correspondences that obtain via these reframing transformations as discussed in the preceding sections. The reframing of frequency ratio sets may be seen to have deeper conceptual implications, as well. We will not tackle these implications directly in this paper, but we will introduce one additional consideration that will complete the foundation for undertaking these considerations in the future: the determination of cognized ratio sets from a set of empirical ratios.

### 3.0. Cognized Ratio Sets

Concerning perception, we will have recourse to what Tenney has referred to as "tolerance". Tolerance is our capacity to interpret complex frequency relations as their simplest nearest neighbor (Belet and Tenney 1987, Tenney 2001; see also Bregman 1990 and Terhardt 1974 on the related phenomenon of spectral fusion and Vos 1982 and 1984 on beats and pitch discrimination). A standard example is the equal tempered major third vs. the just,  $5/4$ , "major third", which have a discrepancy of about 14¢. The principle of tolerance states that, in hearing the irrational relationship of the equal tempered third (in isolation), our perceptual apparatus ascribes the meaning associated with the just interval. This being stated, we can see that, in attempting to arrive at interpretations of a frequency ratio, we must subject the mathematical exactitude to the vagaries of perception in the form of tolerance. To this end, empirical ratios will be reinterpreted as "cognized" ratios (designated by "c") within some pre-established tolerance threshold. For instance, if we allow a tolerance range of 10¢ in either direction from the empirical ratio,  $35/16$ , which has a cent value of approximately 1355.1, we can find the ratios  $24/11$  ( $\approx 1350.6\text{¢}$ ) and  $11/5$  ( $\approx 1365.0\text{¢}$ ), both within the tolerance range. The harmonic distance of  $24/11$  is  $\log_2(24/11) \approx 8.04$ , whereas the harmonic distance of  $11/5 \approx 5.78$  and that of  $35/16 \approx 9.13$ . Clearly, the preferred ratio within the specified tolerance range will be  $11/5$  as the cognized ratio of the empirical ratio  $35/16$ .

The determination of the preferred cognized frequency ratio in a musical context (rather than as an isolated interval) will be dependent upon the empirical frequency ratios then sounding in comparison with available interpretations of all empirical ratios sounding in the piece (or some analytically pertinent segment of the piece) and a specified tolerance range. In works to date, I have used a procedure in which a tolerance range is defined (e.g. 10¢) and all empirical ratios occurring in the work are compared with ratios found on a lookup table<sup>7</sup> falling within that tolerance range. The value selected is that which will lead to the simplest set of harmonic relations throughout the set of ratios (i.e. the lowest HD sum). The total resulting set of ratios is, then, the set of cognized ratios<sup>8</sup>.

An additional wrinkle may be added to the network of abstract, empirical, and cognized ratio sets – namely, the imposition of a limitation of the highest prime factor allowed in the elements of the ratio set of any or all of the types discussed. The reasons one might have for introducing such a limit are to ensure playability – ratios with higher prime terms are

<sup>7</sup> An extensive lookup table, running upwards of 400 pages, is available from the author as a spreadsheet that can be filtered in a number of ways to reduce the number of candidate values to a manageable number.

<sup>8</sup> I am, at present, at work on a tolerance algorithm for determining the cognized ratios from empirical ratios that allows variable inputs for tolerance range, highest partial used in fine-tuning, least number of acoustic beats required for fine-tuning, duration of tunable intervals, and allowable pitch-center drift in reference to a just noticeable difference across temporal gestalt boundaries. Such an algorithm should not only be a fantastically useful tool for the purposes described herein, but also for the analysis of music in tempered systems with respect to its harmonic (in the mathematical sense) implications.

generally harder to tune than those with lower prime terms – or to restrict dimensionality at some level of metaphoric significance when working with lattice structures. This will introduce yet another form of the frequency ratio set for consideration in reference to the others. This we call the “restricted cognized set at the  $n$ -limit”. To effect such a limiting, the algorithm for determining cognized ratio sets employs a lookup table filtered to omit all frequency ratios that do not fall within the specified prime limit.

#### 4.0. Conclusion

For the composer interested in perception and the apprehension of form, reframing can be used to explore the relation of theoretical frequency ratio constructs (abstract ratio sets) to empirically present ratios (what is present in the physical world, empirical ratio sets) to conceivable form (cognized ratio sets). Compositional work in this realm assumes the validity of articulating pitch structures that cannot be heard as evincing these structures (hence, these uses place an additional weight upon the information conveyed within the score where a score is used). While the validity of such an approach is not widely accepted, I think it is both defensible and interesting, but I will save the defense for another time. Applications, of the material contained herein (particularly in section 3.0.), for electronic instruments may be found without relying on such an approach<sup>9</sup>.

This paper has focused only on the mechanics of intervallic augmentation and diminution as a transformation of extended just intonation frequency ratios, along with naming conventions for these transformations and their products. Some small attention has been paid to the application of these tools to musical composition and certain musical operations under reframing. It remains for future papers to examine particular uses of reframing with existing compositions; the implications of each form of ratio set discussed herein for musical cognition and perceptual experience, more generally; and, finally, the projection of these ratio sets onto the lattice structures of standard extended just intonation theory. This excursion into speculative music theory should be understood as neither the first shot fired in a struggle to establish a system – as in the development of serial practices – nor as an attempt to introduce a new analytical paradigm – as in set theory – that will provide us with tools to analyze preexisting works. I am aiming, merely, at the explication of new (conceptually based) tools for application in musical composition with a description of certain applications of those tools that have occurred to me. Any use of this material, and any extension thereof, that seems, to the one undertaking it, worth the undertaking, is encouraged.

*Los Angeles  
August 2011*

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<sup>9</sup> See Marc Sabat’s “Algorithm for Real-Time Harmonic Microtuning”, text from a paper presented at the Congress on Sound and Music Computing (2008) available on his page at Plainsound Music Edition ([www.plainsound.org](http://www.plainsound.org)), for a description of related research initiated in collaboration with me in 2007 at the California Institute of the Arts, though we subsequently pursued this work independently of one another.

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## CARRIED ON THE WAVES OF THE EPIC — THE SONG OF THE SIRENS

Alicja Jodko

In his study of aesthetics and politics Jacques Rancière<sup>1</sup> notes that there is no point of view located outside of history, and that politics is not so much a question of power, but rather a matter of a specific configuration of space between subjects who share a common language. Inside such a linguistic space, says Rancière, only a few subjects have the license to own the discourse which may determine what is right or wrong, just or unjust, while the others are merely allowed a voice capable of expressing joy or pain. At the same time, he recognizes that the emergence of abstract art requires prior feelings of indifference toward its subject. In our post-modern time, this preliminary process of neutralization has been transformed into a semi-automatic distrust directed at the content or object of any representation, including, or perhaps especially implying suspense of disbelief toward all grand narratives of history.

The latest project of Karolina Freino, *Chansons de Geste*<sup>2</sup>, puts the personae of heroes of several narratives of the twentieth century to the test of abstraction with the view of converting this spectacle — if not of power then some sort of “dominion over the souls”<sup>3</sup> — to a meta-message in a purely acoustically distilled form. Alluding to the medieval epic form of *chansons de geste*, which could be understood both as “songs of heroic deeds”, or “songs of gestures”, Karolina Freino undertook the experiment of translating the gestures performed during political speeches into the electro-acoustically modified sound of an instrument. The project focuses on 18 icons of the past century’s politics and selected archival footage of their public performances, from which the sound of the speeches themselves has been carefully extracted, leaving, however, the background noise of the crowds. Perhaps in an attempt to further unify this space defined by the political speech, the artist introduces the silent figure of a mime. Texts/transcripts of the individual speeches can be read on separate boards placed around the gallery walls, while the suddenly wordless gestures of the politicians are interpreted by the mime, who is standing in front of each screen silently but expressively “performing” every speech on a Theremin. Two antennae of the Theremin sense the position of the player’s hands without being touched controlling the oscillators for frequency with one hand, and amplitude (volume) with the other hand; they generate an acoustical effect reacting to the movements and positioning of the mime’s body. What we could refer to as the body language of the historical figures required individual tunings of the instrument, followed by a careful editing of the audio material.

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1 Jacques Rancière, a French philosopher who came to prominence in 1968 when he co-authored (with Louis Althusser & Étienne Balibar) *Reading Capital*. Rancière’s works frequently investigate the concepts that make up our understanding of political discourse, such as ideology and proletariat. See for example *Le philosophe et ses pauvres, 1983* (*The Philosopher and His Poor*, ed. Andrew Parker, 2004)

2 *Chansons de Geste* was presented for the first time at the ENTROPIA Gallery, Wrocław, Poland, December 13, 2012 — January 11, 2013. The Entropia Gallery is a cultural institution supported by the City of Wrocław.

3. the expression alludes to the text of “Great Improvisation” (a fragment of the Messianic play by Adam Mickiewicz, *Dziady*, “Forefathers”, part III, in which the romantic hero Gustaw/Konrad by the virtue of metaphysical powers entrusted in him by the generations of politically oppressed forefathers, addresses God with the direct request: “give me dominion over souls!” (*transl. note*)



By emphasizing this discourse of one to many as its singular common thread, the archival footage composed into an intricate mosaic of situations provides a sort of template or a total visual menu of twentieth century politics. A lectern, the ritual furniture of orators, stands in front of the mosaic offering the viewer the possibility to “step up to the plate” of the political arena. The lectern (which incidentally also conceals the projector), equipped with a computer mouse, becomes a control panel allowing us to navigate through the mosaic and chose our own heroes from the political menu. (Visitors also have an opportunity to create their personal “speech” on the Theremin placed in an adjacent intimate room in the same gallery space under the gaze of its inventor, Lev Theremin, who is portrayed while playing the instrument.)

In *Chansons de Geste* the mime brings back the presence of the iconic heroes by performing imitative (on the verge of “ritual”) gestures that awaken the sound of a modern lyre - the Theremin. While the title of the project clearly refers to the epic of the Middle Ages, its central figure — the mime — who is both the carrier and translator of the central message sends us back to Antiquity and the sources of the classical epic narrative such as it emerged from the aesthetic tradition of Ancient Greece. There, the original mime of the mythological epic used dance (oftentimes accompanied by song) and sequences of body motions to represent life, or to express the inner states of character. For the Greeks the performance of mime, intimately connected with the concept of *mimesis*, was a combination of speech, gesture and music, empowered by virtue of their union to mirror reality which appears purged of any and all random elements. In that light, the mime unifies in his figure the poet, actor, and priest, both through his external actions and his personal participation. The mime can be perceived as the source of a distinct form of epic poetry.

Perhaps in these times, when we can observe “The Gutenberg Galaxy” folding over itself in front of our eyes, it could be worthwhile to touch upon the fact that at its origins the epic was not a book in a cloth cover, but that during the Middle Ages, and even more so in archaic oral cultures, it was above all a collective song of knowledge and experience. Transmitted by word of mouth, and preserved thanks to the deep emotional involvement of an illiterate audience, which at the time included the majority of the knights who frequently possessed no reading skills, the epos celebrated the deeds of legendary heroes in song or recitation of itinerant minstrels and troubadours. Man of oral tradition saw his own life as a repetition of gestures that others had done before him; by immersion he was able to identify his place in the world of words and objects, as well as words and deeds/actions, which were given a specific inflection by the existence of another human incarnation.

Of course, modern political speakers also place themselves within an oral tradition, as do the people gathered to hear their speeches, regardless of their level of education. Were this not the case, it is plausible that rallies would never arouse the emotions of the crowds, and we would not witness the habitual levels of applause, cheers, or on the contrary, booing and harsh murmurs of disapproval. In Karolina Freino's project, it is the sound of the crowds audible in all the archival footage that the author leaves rigorously untouched; only the voices of the leaders — orators are silenced. The spoken word, which was the only vehicle of emotion in the ancient epic, is now muted and kept in the form of printouts. Bare quotations from speeches or “stump” transcripts become a kind of mirror image of the archival records of these now voiceless heroes. Interestingly, most of the quotes, when taken out of the original context of their author's biographies or their historical roles, seem to be spoken in good faith — with the best of peaceful intentions and concerns to improve the world. We could say that they meet the ideal of Cicero, who equated the orator's eloquence with moral virtue and wisdom. And yet Cicero was unaware of print and therefore had no means to envisage separating the signs and sounds of speech from their meaning and emotions. The modern epic of Karolina Freino allows this possibility, and what is more enhances its result by translating the oratorical gestures into the abstract sounds of the instrument. The sounds of the words, replaced by the modulations of the Theremin demote the content of the speeches, putting it in a secondary position.

As we have learned from Homer the only safe way of passing by the island of the Sirens is to have one's ears plugged with beeswax. Sirens tempt unwary sailors with the mantic truth, offering them



knowledge of both the past and the future. So do orators of all times. Seducing the crowds with speech can be compared to the spectacle of Sirens who lure sailors into dangerous waters, all veracity and intentions of the message aside. In Karolina Freino's project all the voices of politicians are muted, thus creating a further parallel to the ruse of plugging the ears of his crew which Odysseus invented in order to sail safely past the Island of Sirens.) What remains in both situations is the display of "body language", which we too can safely observe while drifting on the acoustic waves of the Theremin. What comes to mind is something akin to the 'singing' of factory sirens at the beginning of a shift, the deafening scream of air raid sirens, ambulances, fire engines ... In fact, the sound of the contraption was quite frequently described as sinister, and therefore often used in such cinematic genres as horror, or science fiction. Although the Theremin may also turn, in the hands of a virtuoso, into a sublime musical instrument with a sound eerily evoking classical performances, we must consider more than its contribution to the development of electronic music. It also helped in creating some acutely sensitive surveillance devices, as well as the "hands-free" aircraft navigation systems which became known as automatic pilot; not to mention the fact that the biography of its inventor himself wove this electronic Siren's song into the art of war. In Book XII of Homer's "Odyssey" (verse 62-65) we find a description of the island of the Sirens, worthy of the twentieth century, with the creatures that

"sit in a meadow,  
a great heap of the bones of rotting men  
all about them,  
shrinking beneath their shriveling skin ."<sup>4</sup>

In many respects the archival mosaic of *Chansons de Geste* is a rather eclectic collection. The choice of presentation was primarily determined after an extensive consultation with a historian with regard to the historical importance of both the speaker and each particular speech, the "attractiveness of the choreography", and last but not least, the availability of archival material. Of course, on a purely ethical level, the mere fact that the choice was largely influenced by the availability of footage does not seem to be a sufficient excuse for putting side by side a number of individuals who would score extremely different results if judged by Cicero's golden maxim: "*bene dicere - bene vivere*". Gandhi, Pope John Paul II, and Walesa as the leader of the shipyard strike, seem to satisfy the ethical postulate that life and the way we speak about it both inform each other, and bear witness to their own truths. However, if we consider the epic as the historical process made visible, we must allow it to be a much wider river, meandering between vast and strange banks while carrying plenty of flotsam in its flow.

The availability of materials also contributed to certain incompatibilities of quality and settings. Among the selected speeches there are political rallies, as well as studio recordings, including one with an interpreter. The latter excludes any possibility of playing off the emotion and visceral responses of the crowd; the orator is not a conductor looking over an undulating sea of human heads — the antennas of an invisible Theremin, a TV set, do not react directly to the gestures of the orator's hands and we can't hear comments of the audience gathered in front of the screens. The heterogeneity in question is also a source of slightly ironic, if not openly comical character of certain effects of the acoustical translation. Such for instance is the case of the infamous Address to the Nation given by General Jaruzelski on Polish TV upon the introduction of Martial Law. The General's gestures, kept down to an extremely austere minimum in a studio environment, yield as a result a monotonous hum which brings to mind the white noise of simple TV static. But was this not exactly was the point? It is in such moments that we can come closer to understanding Marshall McLuhan's central thesis that "the medium is the message".

And although as a whole the project of Karolina Freino could be interpreted in relation to McLuhan's theory of dynamic media, the artist certainly does not share his optimism. In the common acoustic

4 Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Charles Stein, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley CA, 2008, pp. 278-9.

## The Song of the Sirens

space constructed by *Chansons de Geste* the emergence of sound is not the expression of a restoration of communal relations as it was foretold by McLuhan. Instead of a Global Village the display reveals the Society of the Spectacle. Not surprisingly, the results of the translation of a complex narrative polyphony of the twentieth century through the medium of Theremin leads to a rather post-utopian conclusion that all mass leadership adopts some degree of social engineering which is destined to seduce the crowds. However, regardless of its controversial character, the configuration of a common linguistic space proposed by Freino, and the acoustic product of her manipulations — the abstract sound of the twentieth century — exercise a very evocative synthesizing power of fusion.

translated by Dorota Czermer

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Karolina Freino — *Chansons de Geste*

in collaboration with  
Radomir Piorun, movement  
Cezary Duchnowski, sound composition  
Inga Lesniewska, history

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photo: Andrzej Rerak

## Charles Wuorinen's *Marimba Variations*:

### Memorization Strategies and Performance Practice Consideration

Payton MacDonald

In 2008 I approached Charles Wuorinen about writing a solo marimba piece. To fund the commission I put together a consortium of 22 percussionists. We each contributed some money and in return Wuorinen dedicated the piece to us. Wuorinen finished the piece in good time, and by January 2010 I had *Marimba Variations* in hand. The work clocks in around 13 minutes and is typical of Wuorinen's work: inventive, dramatic, thoughtfully constructed, and difficult.

I've always considered Wuorinen to be one of the most creative, colorful, and fundamentally *musical* of the composers writing 12-tone music<sup>1</sup>. I suspect that this is partly because of his background as a virtuoso pianist and conductor. His works are difficult, yet musicians everywhere perform them often. There's something inherently *playable* about his pieces. One comment I've heard over and over again from performers is that "it's fun to practice." Greg Zuber, one of the percussionists on the consortium, said as much. Zuber, who is a percussionist with the Metropolitan Opera, a virtuoso marimbist, and a long-time collaborator with Wuorinen, had this to say about Wuorinen's music:

"One thing that is important to keep in your thinking about him is that although many people often have the idea that 12-tone music is like some kind of science experiment, Wuorinen really writes lyrical, passionate music and playing *Marimba Variations* is like playing contemporary Debussy, at least to me. I told Wuorinen that one of the things I am really grateful for with this piece is that it offers one opportunity after the next to make a musical moment. That's what great music does. It gives a performer a chance to take advantage of those things and really grab your audience."

My other motivation for approaching Wuorinen was that he wrote several pieces for Ray Des Roches, my predecessor at William Paterson University, where I currently teach. Des Roches premiered several of Wuorinen's works, including *Ringed Changes*, *Percussion Symphony*, and *Janissary Music*. I thought commissioning a solo marimba piece from Wuorinen would be a nice way to pay my respects to Des Roches's contribution to the percussive arts and contemporary music in general, while simultaneously expanding the marimba repertoire. Furthermore, many of my

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper I will use the terms "12-tone" and "chromatic" interchangeably, even though they often mean different things in analytical circles. After running a draft of this paper by Wuorinen, he responded as such via email: "The article is fine. Only one reservation: I wouldn't spend so much time calling the work a 12-tone piece. It certainly isn't one in the literal sense, even though there is a generative ordered set. You might try something like 'chromatic with an ordered set basis', though that's rather clunky. But there has been so much ignorant journalistic nonsense about '12-tone music' that it might be a good idea not to assume the term is unfreighted with prejudice."

colleagues at William Paterson have also championed his works over the years, both as performers and scholars, including Peter Jarvis, John Ferrari, Gary Van Dyke, Jeffrey Kresky, and David Weisberg.

Shortly after I started practicing *Marimba Variations* I received an invitation to perform it on a Showcase Concert at the 2010 Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in Indianapolis, Indiana in November, 2010. PASIC is an important annual event for percussionists. It is the single largest gathering of percussionists on the globe every year, with over 5,000 percussionists coming from dozens of countries to present concerts, clinics, and master classes. And Showcase Concerts are some of the most heavily attended events at the conference. I knew I would be playing for a critical audience of at least 1,000 people. This would be a wonderful opportunity to share Wuorinen's brilliant piece with the percussive arts community. It would also be a very high-pressure situation.

I decided to memorize *Marimba Variations*. Although the piece is somewhat sectional, there is never a good opportunity to turn pages. Furthermore, even before I got deep into the learning process I could see that fumbling around with page turns would destroy the flow of the piece. Although there are moments of repose, the piece never really settles down. It moves ever forward, restless and energetic. I've memorized many big pieces in the past, so this process wasn't completely new to me, but this would be my first performance on a Showcase Concert at PASIC and I was justifiably anxious about making mistakes. *Marimba Variations* is a major contribution to the percussion literature and I felt it deserved an outstanding performance. And—perhaps less nobly—I wanted to impress my colleagues in the percussive arts community.

Furthermore, as I swam into the deeper waters of Wuorinen's piece I began to realize that my anxiety was well-founded from a musical standpoint. *Marimba Variations* is not a theme and variation piece in the tradition sense with short variations that each focus on one clear idea. "The title comes after the fact and doesn't mean a whole lot except that the materials are transformed and rearranged," Wuorinen told me. "It obviously doesn't refer to the old sectional approach to variations."

Wuorinen subjects much of the material in the opening sections to various variation processes, but the differences are often subtle. Many of the gestures begin and end in similar ways and in the beginning stages of the learning process I found it quite easy to start with, say, a gesture on page four that is similar to a gesture on, say, page eight, and inadvertently end up morphing into the gesture on page eight, having wiped out four pages of material! One wrong turn and I was backwards or forwards several pages. Aside from the shame and frustration of having lost four pages of music that I spent hundreds of hours learning, the entire architecture of the work was then destroyed, and all the subsequent material made less sense.

I'm not the only one who encountered this difficulty. Greg Zuber was the first person to perform *Marimba Variations* in June 2010. (I performed it for the first time a few months later.) Zuber and I talked about these issues over coffee one afternoon in summer of 2010. He kindly let me record the conversation. His explanation of his memorization process was quite helpful, and better articulated some of the strategies I had employed so far in my own learning process.

"Once I'm comfortable with the piece and can basically play it then I begin to spend a lot of time visualizing playing the piece away from the instrument," Zuber said. "I've been reading a lot about brain mapping. There's a very good book about it called *The Mind has a Body of Its Own*, by Sandra Blakesly. Brain mapping is a recent science where scientists can scan a part of the brain and tell

what parts are active when someone is doing a certain task. They've been able to use that to learn a lot more about the brain and how people learn things."

I had just discovered Blakesly's book myself. Blakesly discusses an experiment in which scientists look at how visualization compares with the actual real practice of an activity. They used dart throwing, and the experiment involves three groups of people, none of them had any experience with dart throwing previous to the experiment. At the beginning of the experiment all of the people threw darts and the scientists recorded their scores. Then over a period of time one group would play darts for 30 minutes a day. The second group would play darts 30 minutes a day every other day, and on the off days just visualize throwing them. The third group would only visualize, but did no throwing. After a period of time they were tested again and the group that did the combination of actual throwing and visualizing came out on top. The second group was the one that just did the visualizing and the third was the group that only threw darts. Blakesly argues that what we learn from this is that to achieve maximum performance in anything, one needs to include visualization in the practicing. However, this only works if you imagine yourself doing the activity. You can't put yourself in the position of watching yourself, but you have to actually imagine yourself doing it, and doing it well.

"So for me," Zuber continued, "that means seeing the music, and seeing the mallets hitting the bars. The other aspect that's important is reading the music while doing that visualization. That reprograms the 'computer' and keeps your memory of the details precise."

Zuber's method of memorization supported my own findings over the years that visualization was critical to successful memorization, much of which I had learned from reading biographies and interviews with the great pianists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Nonetheless, by September I was still feeling anxious about performing *Marimba Variations* in November at PASIC. I wanted those 13 minutes on stage to be ecstatic and musical, not nerve-wracking. I had dedicated at least an hour a day to the piece at the marimba, set up recitals at local universities leading up to PASIC, and was working on the visualization techniques away from the instrument for another hour a day, but I still found myself taking wrong turns when running the piece. I decided to meet with Wuorinen and see if he could help me better understand the pitch structure of the work. I thought that having an understanding of the pitch structure would give me yet another hook to hang my hat on, another pillar of support for the house of Wuorinen I was building in my head. Some of my thinking in this regard had much to do with my training in music theory. I distinctly remember while I was in school theory professors telling us that understanding the pitch structure of a piece would help us come up with creative and appropriate interpretations, as well as assist in memorizing works. I had used this approach with success when playing pieces drawn from the common-practice canon, especially movements of Bach's cello suites. I knew it could also work with a chromatic piece, though I never really tried it in earnest. I spent some time trying to figure out the pitch organization of *Marimba Variations*, but I didn't make much headway. I suspected his organizational scheme was quite complex and perhaps beyond my analysis chops. I thought that if he could give me some insight into the basic pitch organization I could take it from there.

So Wuorinen and I met and I recorded our conversation, but he wouldn't tell me much about the pitch structure. "It doesn't matter," he said, over and over again. He kept all of the sketches and subsequent drafts of the piece, which in itself was fascinating to see.



"I felt," Wuorinen began, "even as a young man, that there wasn't an enormous gap between old and new, and that one needed something like the freedom and structure that the old diatonic system used to give. The 'unbridgeable gap,' as Babbitt used to preach, between the old and new, is simply false. My concern has always been to write ordered set music in some way that is furnished still with a hierarchical pitch set up of some sort. The most obvious way I do that is that I tonicize the 'zero' pitch.

"So here is a template," he said. He dug around in his papers and produced a hand-written tone-row graph and some text notes. "The template is just a set of twelve-tone set forms, organized according to transposition levels of corresponding successive elements of the original set, furnished with some rotational arrays, which I sometimes spell out as chords. But this bears very little relationship to the finished piece. Each successive draft is really a new beginning for me, and by the time I get to the fifth or sixth draft it is so far removed from the original sketches and under girding that the original material is quite buried."

But did the basic under girding remained intact? I was seeking some clarity to the pitch structure. I didn't care about a detailed analysis; I just wanted something that would be useful for me in memorizing the piece. Again, Wuorinen didn't really give me any information.

"I don't know," he said. "I treat each successive stage and revision as a new beginning. So I don't bother keeping track of where I started.

"I've found that many composers—including many students I have worked with—are very preoccupied and have a constant neurotic worry about whether they are being true to the basic principles of the piece," he continued. "Could they do this, that, or the other thing with the material? But it is the artistic necessity that strikes you at a particular moment that should be compelling, not fidelity to some abstract principles. The way that I work is that I ignore everything except the thing I am working from."

He then set the second and third draft of the piece side by side on the table. Although his initial sketches were by hand, the drafts were engraved on the computer. Even on the very first page the third draft was covered in extensive revision markings. I recognized some of the figures I had labored over for the past six months, but only in their general shape and profile. Many of the details were strikingly different.

"So you can see how substantial the changes are with each successive draft," Wuorinen said. "A great many of the changes involve octave transfers, which will clarify the intervallic structure. By moving a note out of a given area and placing it above or below the other notes it is given some stress, and that is a way of giving some hierarchical value to a note. I do that on the basis of what I think it should sound like, or how the phrase should go. But to go through these drafts and try to explain the development of the piece would be an act of insanity."

At this point I bluntly asked him why he kept the drafts since he repeatedly said they weren't important. "Vanity!" he laughed. Although his discussion was interesting and will certainly be useful to future generations of Wuorinen scholars, it wasn't what I was after.

At this point I was frustrated. I wanted to give an outstanding performance of *Marimba Variations* but my memorization of the piece wasn't secure. Any potential problems would be magnified a thousand fold when I performed at PASIC. I came to Wuorinen for help and expected a sympathetic

listener. After all, he was a fellow performer, a gifted pianist and conductor. Of all the composers out there he should understand what I was dealing with and be able to help me. But I came away mostly empty handed.

The one thing Wuorinen did clarify for me, though, was an interpretive issue regarding some of the rhythms.

“There’s one remark I’d like to make about playing *Marimba Variations*,” he said. “It is very important that the faster passages be done strictly in time. If they become rhapsodic, then the whole shape of the piece disintegrates. There are plenty of places where there is room for expressive playing, and that’s fine; I’m not talking about a slavish, literal representation of the rhythms. But in passages where there are fast, regular pulsations, those things need to be executed precisely. Like the very opening phrases, and pages six and seven. If the fast material in page six isn’t kept in time, and we can’t feel the beat, then the piece becomes just gestures, with contrast. This is important to give the piece shape. The reason I make such a point of it is that in any solo piece there is always a tendency—even with the best of intentions—to wander off into rhythmic rhapsodic playing. I want to get that on the record.”

After my meeting with Wuorinen I continued to struggle with achieving a sense of security in the memorization process. I did some pitch analysis of my own, but didn’t really get anywhere with it. Meanwhile, PASIC was looming ever closer. I knew I’d play well—I wouldn’t have come this far in my career if I couldn’t do that—but I wanted something better. I wanted to offer my audience a transcendent experience. I needed a creative solution to such a creative piece.

Finally, a solution presented itself just a few weeks before PASIC. I was running the piece for a group of my students and I got tangled up in one of the fast, technically demanding passages. Of course I didn’t stop, but rather improvised around the material, thinking quickly that I would soon solidify my playing. However, the improvising took on its own energy and direction and rather than simply “recovering” as fast as I could, I continued to improvise into the next section, long after I had regained my footing. I used the basic material of the piece, shortening or augmenting material as I saw fit, treating the various harmonic areas as blobs of harmonic information that I could improvise on as I saw fit, while still retaining the basic character of the section. (At this point I still had no clear idea of how to label or analyze the different harmonic areas, but I did know that X collection of wooden bars struck in X kinds of rhythms with X types of dynamics and articulations would produce X sound.) I was feeling a bit cheeky that day and had a bit of fun with this, mischievously improvising when I felt like it and then returning to the composed material. To my surprise, the students had no idea I had done this. (They weren’t looking at the score.) Indeed, when I told them I had improvised a bit and asked them if they had detected the change in energy and flow, I got completely different answers from each of them as to where that had occurred.

Hmmmm. These were smart kids, and they had heard me run the piece several times. If good music majors couldn’t tell the difference between when I was improvising and when I wasn’t then it was unlikely anyone else would know either. I decided to take it to the next level and tried the tactic on some of my colleagues at William Paterson University, several of whom had worked extensively with Wuorinen himself over the years and knew his music inside and out. They also had no idea when I was improvising and when I wasn’t. It seemed I was on to something here, because rather than feeling bad about losing my place, I was actually having quite a bit of fun. More importantly, I realized that by improvising a bit on passages where my memory failed me I was actually staying closer to the original musical material that so inspired me in the first place. This wasn’t free



improvisation. I was still using the basic gestures and pitch collections and dynamic fields, but with less attention to a perfect realization of the score.

Wuorinen was right. Understanding the underlying pitch structure didn't matter. If he had given me what I was after, during a memory lapse I would have been tempted to default to an abstract theoretical blueprint of the piece, which might be interesting in another context, but would likely distract me from maintaining the emotional thrust of a given passage. It is the emotional energy of Wuorinen's music that drew me to it in the first place, not the theoretical aspects. It may seem thoroughly unprofessional to advocate improvising as a means of reaching a more secure performance of a piece of non-improvised music, but by staying closer to what I viewed as the essence of the piece—which isn't set theory, but rather an emotional energy—I felt I was offering a more pure interpretation.

Of course, this only works if you're an experienced improviser. I've been studying improvising in various forms (Jazz vibraphone and drum set, Hindustani tabla drumming, free improvisation) for over 20 years and I frequently perform improvised concerts. So indeed this solution is particular to my areas of expertise and experience. Nevertheless, most percussionists have at least some improvising background; it is a basic requirement for us to function in the modern musical world. So this solution will likely be useful for others as well. (Note, though, that the improvisation was purely a practice tool. In formal performances I never once purposely improvised.)

But I still needed a way to keep track of the general shape of the piece. The work is somewhat sectional and my first attempt at this had been to number the different sections. I ended up with 12 different sections. I then spent some time away from the instrument going through the sections in my head, just starting each one, and then jumping to the concluding phrase, a kind Cliffs Notes version of the piece to help me grapple with the overall architecture. But I found myself easily getting confused. Was it section five or six that started with the quintuplet phrase in the low register? Given the length of the piece and the amount of detail, it was difficult to remember the identity of each section. That became even more pronounced when I attempted to jump around sections out of order in an effort to strengthen my memory. I needed some other way to get a handle on the form.

So I went back to the emotional content of the sections. What exactly were these sections telling me? What was I feeling when I was playing a given section and how did that inform my improvisations? And what would they tell an audience? What does an audience want? Do they want a perfectly rendered set of sections, 1–12? No, an audience wants drama, struggle, conflict, resolution, the basic stuff of life! This isn't to say that I was interested in playing to the balcony, but I found that when I ran the piece using the numbered-sections method my playing was flat and tepid. When I listened to recordings I made in the practice room while using the numbered-sections method the dynamic, dramatic, and by turns lush and poignant aspects of Wuorinen's music were entirely absent.

So I took yet another step back and asked myself what I was hearing in each section. The answer was there all along. Poetry. Each section spoke to me in a poetic way. The opening phrases were simply *The Beginning*, but the next section (mm. 14–26) was *Simmering Stasis*, followed by *We Walk, and the Woods are Alive* (mm. 27–41). And so on. I gave each section a name, with some additional textual detail. I admit that it is unbearably corny, but it worked for me, and it was a unique solution to the danger of memory slips that I had never thought of before nor had I heard other performers discuss much. Suddenly these sections were telling me a story. They were alive and colorful and I had another way to communicate the essence of this wonderful music to my listeners. Combined

with the visualization techniques and my discovery of improvisation as another learning device, I was beginning to get a handle on *Marimba Variations*.

Of course, there's a concern that such labeling could push me into a programmatic interpretation of the piece. That would be dangerous as Wuorinen generally doesn't write programmatic music. (In fact, I couldn't get program notes from him as he told me that the music should speak for itself without any explanation.) But this labeling business was a private matter, not something the audience would know about, and I kept the descriptions vague enough that I remained focused on the sounds, and the kaleidoscope of colors and emotions suggested by its abstract construction. Indeed, after a few weeks of this I found I was beginning to forget the labels, and yet the order of events and the unique *character* of each section was more firmly lodged in my brain. In the end, the labeling process proved to be merely a learning technique, one of many that got me closer to the essence of *Marimba Variations*.

After all this I realized that my initial approach to learning *Marimba Variations* was misguided. There was no code to be cracked, no secrets hiding under the surface of the music. What I thought I was hearing was what I was hearing. I liked Wuorinen's music for the same reason that I liked Bach's music, or Stravinsky's music: because it speaks to me on an emotional and physical level. I could trust my ears and let that guide me in terms of finding a method for memorizing the piece. I don't know if my initial impulse to unveil a theoretical structure in the work was a holdover from my days as a student or perhaps a subconscious prejudice that all 12-tone music is basically a theory exercise, but it was the wrong impulse. Recalling Greg Zuber's comment that many people view 12-tone music as a kind of science experiment (when in fact it's generally not), I see that I indeed might have made that mistake. That puzzles me as many of my favorite composers write chromatic music and in my own composing I frequently venture into that territory as well. Perhaps I became a bit desperate as PASIC loomed ever closer and my insecurities about performing a difficult work from memory for over a thousand discriminating peers began to mount. But I might also have thought that since Wuorinen's work is so deeply rooted in the tonal system that some pitch analysis would be useful for memorization, just as I had found it to be with Bach's Cello Suites. The problem, though, is that the pitch organization in Bach's Cello Suites is fairly simple and straightforward. *Marimba Variations* is less obvious—at least to my ears—and even if I had figured out some kind of underlying structure, I'm not sure it would have supported my aural experience of the piece anyway. Whatever the reason, I'm glad it didn't work out. My failure at analysis and Wuorinen's refusal to give me a theoretical structure forced me to find other ways to memorize *Marimba Variations*.

I've told a familiar story here: a composer writes a difficult piece, and then a performer must master it (perhaps not from the composer's point of view), and in the process undergoes a journey of self-discovery. The story is a bit generic, but it is nonetheless something performers go through on a regular basis. This process may be thwarted with some composers and performers who work together intimately throughout the entire creative process, but in this case the performers' relationship to Wuorinen was more traditional. We had no creative input into the work.

But what I found illuminating about this particular journey was the discovery that improvisation could be a useful tool for securing my memory of the piece—not by cementing the details, but by bolstering my self confidence, which serves as a platform for which all other aspects of performing rests. Also, I learned that my initial impulse to unveil the assumed analytical underpinnings of the piece was misguided. Wuorinen didn't keep the structural elements of the piece in the forefront of his mind when he composed. So I could analyze it if I wanted to, but I would be moving backwards through his creative process rather than engaging meaningfully with the final score, which I felt was

more important to my needs as a performer. Secondly, the analysis may or may not have yielded interpretational insights, but it certainly wouldn't have helped me secure my memorization of the piece much in a way that reflected what I found interesting about Wuorinen's work in the first place.

The performance at PASIC 2010 was a success. From start to end I was focused and steady and I never lost my place. The triple combination of visualization techniques, improvisation, and a poetic interpretation of the structure gave me the foundation for a clean and expressive performance, perhaps one of the best of my career so far.

*Special thanks to Robert Morris for reading an early draft of this piece and clarifying my thinking.*

## Words as Music: Approaches to John Cage's Musical Writings

Walter Frank

"The sign never refers to the object, because it contains no intention, whereas the object is accessible only to an intention. The sign never refers necessarily to the signified; it therefore never refers to the object, because the object makes itself accessible only to a necessary, inward intention. The sign refers to what signifies the object..."

*Writings 1913 – 1923 The Object: Triangle*, Walter Benjamin

The relationship between text and music has been analyzed intently by scholars for well over four centuries. Music that accompanies text, and words that were exclusively meant for a particular piece of music, project an intimate relationship to each other as instances of sound, as well as to the music itself and to the text alone as such. The *Lied* may be the best example of a product of the relationship between text and music that results from the standard and classical approach of Romantic composers. In *A History of Western Music*, the authors conclude that: "The most influential and prestigious repertoire of nineteenth-century song was the German Lied. [The lied] was in many ways the quintessential Romantic genre: a fusion of music and poetry..." (2006:605) Although further analysis of earlier periods might surprise us with different forms of structure regarding the shape of music that is concerned with text, I will restrict myself here to the Romantic period, a period that is closer to the purpose of this writing.

When we analyze *Lieder* in the typical Romantic literature, we look to see whether the creative process started with the text itself or with the composition of the music. This analysis reveals that the typical Romantic-era composer worked first with poetry, or a sequence of writings, or verbal texts of any type, essentially for the purpose of creating a piece of music. First and foremost, the composer's attention was to the rhythmic and harmonic relationship between text and music and the dynamic proportion that this relationship entails in the resulting work. If we ask composers in the present time about this process of composing text-music works, it would not be surprising to find relationships among text, music, and musical framework consistent with the general line of musical thinking, in whatever musical genre, the composer is connected with, immersed in, or tied to directly. In other words, there is a specific type of intimate relationship at play between the music and the text. The compositional process of any *Lieder* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be divided into several steps, not necessarily in the following order: 1) the arrival at the particular text, 2) the fragmentation of the text for transformation, 3) the process of intertwining music with the words, sentences, and the integral text, 4) the subsequent consideration of how music and a particular writing can work and be developed through a primarily musical thought process, and 5) further decisions needed in order to arrive at the

final piece of music.

These observations do not conflict with the essence of the music that has been composed, performed, and heard for centuries, and also holds true for the music that is produced in our time. Much of what can be stated in terms of such an analysis regarding the compositional process is tied to the understanding of music that comes to us in its final stage as performance. If this process can be deconstructed in several stages, as above, the performance, as the last step in that chain, can be linked to the process of realization of a piece of music, and reveal the particular concept in that piece of the relationship of sounds and words; this concept, that is, becomes clear in the process of performance.

Since words are spoken (or sung), the element that constitutes the essence of a song should be heard in context with the music, hence arriving at the understanding once the work, in completed form, has been performed. Although the implications of performance practice for analysis and comprehension can be debated, I consider performance as the last stage of a musical work which must be included in any approach to its deconstruction, most particularly with pieces of music that involve text, and later, as we shall see, "words".

Perhaps there is no better example to a breakthrough of "words as music" in recent history than in the musical writings of John Cage. In *Lieder*, we find words and music intertwined. In the writings of John Cage, words can be viewed as both: words as words and words as music.

Over the course of Cage's output we can see a perceptible shift in his way of composing musical "words"; in songs, *lieder*, writer of musical "words". Perhaps we may see John Cage as the first musician to develop the concept of words as objects; the individual meaning and non-meaning of sounds of words; the non-intentionality of the relationship of, first, a sentence that has its own structure, to the subsequent meaning of these elements in the totality of a piece of music that consists of words as beginning, middle, and end, as it is heard in performance.

Here we can consider the term "word" as including as integral parts syllables, sentences, paragraphs, or any formations that include letters as information in a semantic context. This obviously connects to one of John Cage's most radical writings addressing the word-sound relationship: *Empty Words*.

Cage says in an interview with Richard Kostelanetz, "My pleasure in composition, renounced as it has been in the field of music, continues in the field of writing words; and that explains why, recently, I write so much." (1993:84) This simple statement contains much regarding intention and meaning as we approach an understanding of Cage's musical writings. There is no instance in which a composition can be understood as words, if words are not treated as sound. Nor has there been any tendency for a composer to write other than to explain a compositional system ± except in the case of many of John Cage's musical writings which treat words as sound and transform these into music, as music that is conceived from the standpoint of a single object – the word. An example of the treatment of the word as an object that stands as sound, and sound that is put into context regarding music elements that are not words is the work *Song Books*. Although this work does address in its entirety the concept of words as sound exclusively, it is important to address the presence of words as sound as a first parameter for understanding the word as an object. Kostelanetz makes important points regarding this piece: "What the score contains is a wealth of inventive instructions that can be read apart from musical realization, which is to say that the work *Song Books* can be appreciated as a book...". Kostelanetz continues,

describing the work's most important distinction for performance: "The instructions fall into four groups: "1) song; 2) song using electronics; 3) theater; 4) theater using electronics." By "electronics" Cage means "wireless throat microphones [that] permit the amplification and transformation of vocal sounds." (Kostelanetz's web page:1995).

Taking *Song Books* as one example for intertwining music and words, Kostelanetz points out that, regarding its performance, "...*Song Books* can be appreciated as a book...". Here we can infer that in this instance words are related to music as music is related to words. However, the instance of the word as a primary source and as a musical object is not yet considered. There is probably some connection between traditional song-type-lieder and the material of *Song Books*, in the sense that there is compositional activity here in which music is intertwined with, or dependent upon, words.

This connection can be appreciated only partially since Cage's piece is far beyond the standard song-type Kostelanetz's text explains, and the piece's concept and directions for performance present a different approach to what we usually consider a song, or a work of music that involves text. With Cage's production as a composer in this sense, and a connection to the past regarding *Song Books*, we can make a distinction between music with words, and words as music. On this issue, James Pritchett states: " [But after 1970] his interest in these areas intensified, and he began to make writings, etchings, and paintings that were totally unrelated to music – works whose origins were not in musical works, whose techniques were not derived from his compositional practice, and were not designed to be musical in any sense..." (1993:175)

But here I want to emphasize my understanding of Cage's musical writings as musical works. Pritchett in his statement uses the term 'musical composition' in a traditional sense, using that as a primary criterion for judging Cage's musical writings, as well as for his composing. There is probably not much to say about Cage with respect to composition as it was conceived in the past without wandering into tricky paths.

Pritchett continues: "However, because the bulk of Cage's work was musical – because he was primarily a composer – his work in poetry and art inevitably came back into his music, providing him with ideas and themes for new compositions..." (1993:175) Pritchett considers Cage's musical writings as an inspiration for composition. He continues explaining much of Cage's writings and poetry having meaning as idea, not as sound. It is true that Cage developed his ideas extensively in several formats, like lectures and poetry. But to consider and his musical writings primarily as inspiration for music is to conflate two different modes of writing that should be kept distinct in any attempt at a deeper understanding of the totality of his work. Although many examples could be shown to help explain this, let's limit ourselves here to an excerpt of *Empty Words*.

This work was conceived and written with the same procedure as a previous work called *Mureau*, and is based upon *Thoreau's* journals. Explaining the process of writing *Mureau*, Pritchett writes: "... he made a listing of all the references in the journal to sounds, silence, and music, and used only these portions as the source material for the new text [...]. Here, Cage identified five types of material in the journal: sentences, phrases, words, syllables, and letters [...] Elements could then be connected to one another (thus forming nonsense words) or not, and the typeface was selected as random as well. The text occasionally makes sense, but mostly does not..." (1993:176)

In *Empty Words*, the procedure remains the same for the compositional process, this



time extended on a larger scale with respect to the former work. Pritchett continues: “In *Empty Words* Cage divided the text in blocks at random into lines and stanzas, based on the punctuation marks found in the original journal. The work as a whole is divided into four parts, which form a progression in terms of the kinds of materials used: the first part uses phrases, words, syllables, and letters; the second uses words, syllables, and letters; the third uses syllables and letters, and the fourth is made up solely of letters drawn at random from the journal. The effect of this is that the text makes less and less sense – it changes from something that is recognizably drawn from a work of literature to a pure vocalize with more and more empty space around each event.” (1993:176)

It is particularly clear that in *Empty Words* that there is no intention to produce meanings of ideas through writing; hence it arrives at a clear musical purpose, treating the elements of the writing purely as sound. Pritchett decides that: “...Elements could then be connected to one another (thus forming nonsense words) or not [...] The text occasionally makes sense, but mostly does not...” (1993:176) If this is true, then we face the fact that Cage was concerned with another approach for using words. Pritchett follows his idea regarding Cage’s material stating that: “Both [*Mureau*] and *Empty Words* have a dual musical-poetic nature: these are poems that are meant to be read aloud, not silently [...] *Mureau* and *Empty Words* thus straddle the line between poetry and music...” (1993:177)

As we approach a more substantial analysis of Cage’s musical writings, it seems appropriate to introduce what Cage came to call “Mesostic”, a concept that can be explained as, “...a name, word, or phrase [that serves] as a “key” for the text to be written [...] Cage points out its letters by capitalizing them and aligning the lines of the poem so that they run down the middle...” (1993:177)

The Mesostic is an appropriate example of how Cage treated words as sounds. And it is probably the simplest approach and the most understandable one for those not immersed in Cage’s more elaborated musical writings. Taking a broad view of these writings, Pritchett states: “Most public performances by Cage in his later years [...] consisted of his reading from his poetry. In some cases these readings were quite straightforward, but others involved a sort of enhanced or musical form of recitation. In reading [...] Cage would change the pitch, tempo, and timbre of his reading; the result bordered on singing [...] It is difficult to say whether [his musical writings] are musical compositions or poetry...” (1993:179) Perhaps more detailed research would lead to the conclusion that there is no connection whatsoever in Cage’s musical writings to the sense of introducing a particular idea, explaining or demonstrating a thesis, or — what is especially important — and way that all these writings should be taken as inspiration for his other compositions. However, Prichett does point out a very important aspect of Cage’s musical writings.

In the are of words and music, Pritchett also mentions Cage’s connection to the poet Jackson MacLow. He states: “Both [*Mureau*] and *Empty Words* have a dual musical-poetic nature [...] In this regard, as well as in his use of chance to manipulate language, Cage drew upon the work of poets such as Jackson MacLow...” (1993:177) Extreme instances of this type of composition occur on Page 66 of *Empty Words*.



e Its n; thly, r O rn i h orly hsi  
n grn

A first glance at this page would suggest that there is nothing of the nature of ideas or (for that matter) grammar that could be regarded as projecting a particular idea. There is no intention in Cage to create anything with his language formations understandable except as sound. And the resulting work is composed of individual word-objects that are meant to be produced this way. We see them as words that are single parameters, intertwined or not with others, and conceived with the single purpose of manifesting sound within the context of letters, syllables, words, and sentences.

Jackson MacLow makes an important point regarding Cage's musical writings: "These considerations are as relevant to his writing as to his music – especially to the poems he wrote from 1967 to 1992, most of which are alogical and asyntactical collage word-strings of language elements: letters (which Cage seemed not to distinguish from phonemes), syllables, words, phrases, and/or sentences. By "asyntactical" (Cage often used the term "nonsyntactical"), I mean that these strings are ones "departing from conventional [normative] syntax..." (2001:211) / (1993:xv) Mac Low takes a deep view regarding structure and syntax as far as poetry is concerned. He continues: "I think he viewed the experiences of composing, performing, and hearing [...] as being equally conducive to the arousal of [...] – intuitive wisdom/energy, the essence/seed of the enlightened state – by allowing the experience of sounds as perceived in themselves, "in their suchness", rather than as means of communication, expression, or emotional arousal or as subordinate elements in a structure." (2001:211) – (1993:xv)

MacLow mentions the terms 'communication', 'expression', 'emotional arousal', and connects them with elements that are subordinate to (a) structure; he subsequently negates this structure arriving indirectly at the concept of object in Cage's musical writings. There is much to consider and agree with here, as MacLow connects this state of being with communication whose elements are not tied to structure. However, if MacLow's assertion is correct, the term 'structure' itself has nothing to do with these parameters, and in any case MacLow uses the term only to demonstrate its futility. Any other uses of the terms 'structure' or 'non structure' would be misleading and would obscure the concept of object which is the very essence of Cage's musical writings. MacLow correctly points to the misuse of "structure" when focusing on the experience of words as sound. He makes his point by linking the essence of a musical writing with the meaning of this, and expands to some extent his view of Cage's writings when he refers to 'sounds as perceived in themselves'. This may be contradictory; but it is a contradiction that is inherent in the very concept of words as sound objects; since words treated as objects do in fact need to have no meanings as literate language, but at the same time also need to have purpose and meaning as sounds.

Words in Cage's musical writings are single parameters, single objects that speak for themselves; objects that are treated as isolated sounds within a context of a thought, but dependent on that thought. A perfect example can be found in *Empty Words*.

[Quoting Cage from the Introduction to Part IV of *Empty Words*:] "A transition from language to music (a language already without sentences, and not confined to any subject...) [...] Languages becoming musics..." (1979:65) Syllables, words, sentences, all of them intertwined, have no purpose of literacy in Cage's musical writings. They are objects for the production of sounds, where words, syllables, and sentences have a radically different purpose, arriving at the revelation that any sound can be made with any word, insofar as the word is treated solely as an object for the production of sound.

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## Occupy Wall Street, Composers and the Plutocracy: Some Variations on an Ancient Theme

John Halle

### I.

In the six month since its difficult birth in mid September, Occupy Wall Street has attracted a widespread and largely favorable reaction among the public with a recent poll indicating 46% support, far higher than most political institutions, established parties and elected officials. Of course, the reaction has not been universally favorable. The political right wing has been withering in its criticism, but they have not had a monopoly on their viewing Occupy as a alarming, corrosive and even sinister development in political consciousness. Indeed, some of the most brutal and violent assaults against Occupy encampments have been undertaken by municipal governments in Oakland, Albany, Portland, and Chicago having the reputation as at least liberal, and even on the radical left.

So the question of who supports Occupy is by no means as unproblematically aligned on the left/right spectrum as it initially appears. As for specific social classes and professional categories, matters are just as confused, with supporters claiming a broad representation from all walks of life and critics of Occupy denigrating participants as trust fund babies or slacker college grads who need to “get a job”. When it comes to artists generally and composers in particular the question of how involved we are is more problematic still, and is likely to remain unanswerable for the foreseeable future.

But that doesn’t mean that composers can’t usefully discuss the question with an eye to learning more about who we are and what makes us tick. And it is with that in mind that I will offer the following short answer: based on my experience as a relatively active participant in the movement and my having attempted to organize support for it among composers [here](#), I don’t think that we have been well represented in the Occupy Movement. This, however, needs to be accompanied by a disclaimer; more than most professional categories, composers are profoundly committed to what we do. Keeping our distance from OWS prevents us from getting mired in the swamps of politics something which we would avoid as we would anything else which takes us away from our work.

That said, we know this cannot be the entire explanation. For example, many of us will recall having devoted considerable energy to the Obama campaign, demonstrating that composers can be highly political when we want to be. With this in mind, we can return to the original question: why have we not been involved in a movement whose stated objective is advancing economic justice for the 99%?

Now a somewhat more problematic answer suggests itself: for centuries, composers were beholden to the one percenters of their day, the feudal aristocracy. And while aristocratic patronage would decline during the 19th century, the traditions and political allegiances inherited from this golden age live on. While we are not, like Haydn, required to wear powdered wigs and military uniforms, the barriers separating us from the plutocracy are significantly less pronounced than those obtaining in other professions. And as the degrees of separation

diminish, we are more likely to view economic elites as individuals who, like any others, deserve our respect rather than as a class that has earned our contempt.

That we are in relatively close proximity to them can be seen in the following tour of some of the premier arts institutions with which we are associated or at least hope to gain favor. Having familiarized ourselves with these surroundings, I will continue with some reflections on the broader picture which emerges, and conclude with some thoughts on how composers who choose to become active in the OWS movement can most usefully direct their energies.

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A good place to begin is with the winner of this year's Alice Ditson Prize for the promotion of American music, the New York Philharmonic. Much of the credit for this programming goes to the recently appointed music director, Alan Gilbert. But the financial wherewithal for these programming decisions is provided by the NY Philharmonic board and its chairman, Gary S. Parr. Mr. Parr is currently CEO of Lazard, his bio on the NY Phil website informs us, in which capacity he "has recently advised on transactions such as the sale of Lehman's North American investment banking business to Barclay's; the sale of Bear Stearns to JPMorgan; he served in numerous capacities at Morgan Stanley, including as vice-chairman — Institutional Securities and Investment Banking."

Accepting a commission from or performance by the New York Phil in no way implies that we are sympathetic with these activities—for example, the "sales" of Lehman and Bear Stearns<sup>1</sup> underwritten by the extortion of hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars. But it does mean that we have an indirect financial stake in concentrating wealth in the hands of one percenters like Mr. Parr who provide the ultimate financial basis for our work. The same can be said about our relations with Sanford Weill, the chairman of the board of another pre-eminent uptown musical institution, Carnegie Hall. In this capacity, composers are grateful to Mr. Weill for helping to foot the bill for the impressive range of contemporary music under Carnegie's auspices.<sup>2</sup> This Mr. Hyde is complemented by the Dr. Jekyll who was the former CEO of Citibank, the company perhaps most responsible for the marketing of subprime loans which were to blow up the economy, immiserating hundreds of millions, while helping itself to hundreds of billions of dollars in bailout funds.

Returning to Lincoln Center, we find ourselves truly in the belly of the beast upon entering the David Koch Theater, named after the notorious sponsor of far right initiatives, and home to the New York City Ballet, a frequent and consistent advocate for American composers. Also in this category is the New York City Opera, whose orchestra is now being subject to a vicious union busting campaign by its director, George Steel, which Mr. Koch and others of his ilk would undoubtedly heartily approve of. A few lateral steps will land us in the Metropolitan Opera, whose \$300 million budget is underwritten by a board including billionaire heiresses from the publishing and oil industries, a managing director of Goldman Sachs, and former CEO of Texaco. Among the more problematic features of the Met in recent years has been the Alberto Vilar Grand Tier, the name having been removed following the donor's conviction on multiple counts of defrauding investors.

Mr. Vilar reminds us that not all of the crimes on which were constructed the great fortunes we benefit from went unprosecuted. Moving a couple of blocks uptown from Lincoln Center provides us with more evidence: Merkin Hall was presided over for many years by Ezra Merkin, the chief

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1 For a detailed examination of these cases see, for example, recent books by William Black and Nomi Prin

2 <http://www.carnegiehall.org/About-the-Music/Commissions/>

marketer of the Bernard Madoff line of investment products, whose once eager purchasers are now required to subsist on Social Security, having lost their life savings to the smooth talking Talmudic scholar, White Shoe lawyer, and music lover. Some of the programs at Merkin have been sponsored by the Milken Center for Jewish Music and here we are submerged in the previous wave of financial crime presided over by the Milken brothers, the notorious junk bond kings.

Major artistic institutions such as these are, of course, well known for their longstanding connections to financial elites, so the above list could be continued almost indefinitely. Given that the latter has become a de facto criminal class, we shouldn't be surprised that our tour has by now degenerated into a kind of perp walk—albeit perps attired in Brooks Brothers suits with refined musical tastes.

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It was at least partly in reaction to the stifling artistic climate created by these stuffed-shirt connections that the downtown school of composition would arise in the sixties and seventies, though it was probably inevitable that, as it became established, downtown institutions would be underwritten by similarly problematic sources. This became apparent in the nineties when numerous downtown events received sponsorship provided by the pre-eminent rogue corporation of its day, Philip Morris, including a major gift to the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Another source was the DIA foundation, established by the heiress of the Schlumberger oil services fortune and most notable for its sponsorship of a six-year residency of the iconic minimalist composer La Monte Young.

Another pole of downtown, the Bang on a Can Festival has now been held for some years at the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center. This merits comment since, as I write this, OWS demonstrators are being violently dispersed by the police at the behest of the Winter Garden's owners, Brookfield Properties. This dichotomy provides a renewed demonstration that elites have little difficulty countenancing expressions of artistic radicalism. Indeed, they will open their doors to it and—quite literally—invite us in. But when radical style turns into radical substance—that is, when it challenges the economic basis of elite prerogatives and privilege—the one per centers of today, as of generations past, are ready, willing, and able to replace the proverbial velvet glove of acceptance with an iron fist of repression. This is the logic through which the Winter Garden, formerly the site of many years of the classical music world's version of Woodstock, has just now become a war zone.

Interestingly, one of the board members having signed off on Brookfield's actions is Diana Taylor, the live-in companion of the Pontius Pilate of OWS, Mayor Bloomberg. The billionaire Mayor himself is also a strong supporter of the arts although, in another indication of the entanglement of the public and private, his contributions frequently compensate for budget cuts enacted in his executive capacity. That there are strings attached to these donations became clear when *The New York Times* reported that the beneficiaries were expected to enlist in support of the mayor's controversial ballot initiative to revoke term limits.<sup>3</sup>

It should be recognized that attempts at advancing a political agenda through pulling artists' purse strings are uncommon. In the concert music world they are rarer still, the only recent instances which come to mind involving donors pressuring the Boston Symphony to rescind an invitation

3 [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/18/nyregion/18termlimits.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/18/nyregion/18termlimits.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)



to Palestinian rights supporter Vanessa Redgrave and subsequently to cancel a concert staging of John Adams' opera *The Death of Klinghoffer*. That these instances are so rare might be taken to be indicative of orchestra boards' tendency to maintain a hands-off policy with respect to artistic decisions. But it would be a mistake to claim that they do not exercise significant influence, albeit in an indirect fashion. As elites have understood for generations, their simple presence at the upper levels tends to insure that they will not have to exercise direct veto on forms of expression of which they would disapprove.

Rather, a climate is created in which artistic decisions are made with an awareness of the location of certain political boundaries, and those at all levels of the organization choose not to transgress them. These decisions don't need to be conscious as those making them have often, to cite a remark by Noam Chomsky, "internalized the values of the elites themselves" to the degree that they do not require guidance or discipline. The extent to which we do so will be the last subject I will address.

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The claim just made is a slightly more pointed formulation of the suggestion made previously that our long history of aristocratic patronage may offer an explanation for our inherent tendency to throw in our lot with the one percent. But there is more to our identification and affinity with elites than shared history and economic self-interest. First, as composers we function in an executive capacity, one which involves, to cite a pointed remark of John Cage, "telling other people what to do." Just as the CEO dictates the precise specifications of a product and the conditions under which his labor force produces it, composers, if anything, go a step beyond the most repressive corporate executive, dictating every gesture by a workforce which is almost totally under the control of the choreography we produce for them in our scores. The megalomania of a composer like Wagner and that of a CEO like Rupert Murdoch may not be so different after all, and it should come as no surprise that the Met, a three ring circus of gesamtkunstwerkliche activity, is the most generously endowed of all art institutions.

Second, just as CEOs define themselves according to an intensely structured and rigid hierarchy which they have succeeded in ascending, so too do classical musicians take for granted something roughly equivalent. Our training as performers or composers is founded on the notion of the transcendent musical masterpiece—those works whose inherent excellence and structural sophistication have allowed them to survive the Darwinian competition for survival in the musical marketplace of the concert hall. Our own work, insofar as it is successful, also manages to survive and thrive within its own place and time. In accepting this hierarchy, and the basis on which it rests, we recapitulate what are by now familiar arguments of corporate executives in the top 1% as to their own fitness and legitimacy. Given this shared set of attitudes, the mutual affinity of composers and plutocrats probably shouldn't come as a surprise. And, to return to the original observation, it is more or less natural that we would view with suspicion a movement whose commitment to radical democracy seeks to challenge not just the basis of the social hierarchy, but the notion of hierarchy itself.

Finally, there is the matter of the highly controlled, quasi police-state atmosphere of the concert hall, one which forces audiences to submit passively to the experience imposed on them by the composer. As pointed out by Lawrence Levine in his much discussed 1988 book *Highbrow Lowbrow*, it is no coincidence that domestic classical music institutions were created by



industrialists at the turn of the century confronted with mass popular uprisings. The codes of conduct attached to classical music were seen by them as a means to impose discipline on what they regarded as a dangerous mob and their support for it can be seen as another front in the war waged by elites against “the rabble” That we might not perceive ourselves as having allied ourselves with them does not mean that we are not objectively supporting their broader agenda.

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At this point, it should be recalled that what I have laid out here are my opinions, which I have reached in the absence of rigorous studies relating to the representation of musicians within OWS, none of which, to my knowledge exist. That said, there are two pieces of hard evidence, albeit limited and circumstantial, worth mentioning here. The first is the Occupy Musicians website alluded to previously, and the mixture of negative responses and non-responses I received in my attempts to organize for it. Compounding this with the relative absence of names of well-known composers, many of whom were contacted for inclusion and chose not to sign on, provides one general indication that composers have kept their distance from OWS.

The second piece of evidence implicating the unexpressed attitudes towards OWS comes in the form of the numerous comments attached to the viral Facebook posting created by Los Angeles-based composer Eric Guinivan: While it is always a dicey business to excavate the foundations of a joke, in this instance it is revealing that the majority of the respondents simply register agreement with the proposition, making note of the disproportionate representation of a small number of elite composers in the world’s concert halls, “Sooooo true. Ha, ha!” says one.



But these comments beg the question: why does pointing out this self-evident truth seem funny to us? What appears to be operative here is humor of the classic Freudian type: the joke masks the introduction of a taboo topic, namely that the Darwinian world of the concert hall is a brutal one in

which very few of us can be expected to survive either in the here and now or in the future. And so we tend to broach the subject in jest or after a few beers.

Another possibility is that the humor resides in the Pythonesque absurdity of the premise: that programming decisions should be, like the OWS general assembly, radically democratic, granting all composers, living or dead, equal access to public performances. The logical consequence of this philosophy, for example, that the Wagenseil Piano Concerti should be programmed with the same regularity as those of Mozart would strike many as coming close to a dystopia, of course. One commenter's avowal that "he's with the 1% on this one" seems to be a recognition that this scenario, equivalent to imaging a hospital intensive care unit staffed by chimps, is perhaps better left to the imagination.

In either case, whatever is the basis of the joke, which I found as amusing as everyone else, the reactions to it are entirely self-referential at best or merely self-absorbed. They give no indication of any particular sympathy or, for that matter, even any understanding of the basic issues which have motivated OWS and its supporters.

In laying out some of the reasons for our not having done so, I don't mean to suggest that composers can't be active participants in OWS. If there are any doubts of our potential, they will be removed by viewing Alex Ross's extraordinary video taken on Lincoln Center Plaza following the final performance of *Satyagraha* at the Met on Dec 1. In what is by now a minor legend, Phillip Glass decided against taking his curtain call on stage and to stand with occupiers on Broadway across the plaza requesting that the Met audience exiting the theatre join them. Police barricades had been erected to prevent precisely this—a demonstration in support of Occupy in Lincoln Center—but Glass's presence, the message of the opera, and occupiers' repeated reminder that "the opera is your life," proved so compelling that hundreds ignored the police orders.

It needs to be well understood that these actions were illegal—indeed textbook cases of civil disobedience; had typical OWS demonstrators disobeyed police orders would have subjected them—possibly hundreds of them—to arrest at least, violent assaults at worst. Indeed, Glass himself could have reasonably been charged with incitement, a serious felony. But, even in the nascent police state into which New York City has devolved under the current administration, such a response would have been unthinkable. The opera audiences engaged in the act are one of the few constituencies which Bloomberg must treat with deference. And Glass himself has by now become an iconic figure, one of the very few classical composers who can legitimately stake a claim to real cultural and even moral authority.

That Glass's protest appeared in the pages of *The New York Times* speaks to the unique power which classical music and classical musicians still command. Resting on top of the pinnacle of elite artistic culture, constructed on generations of aristocratic patronage, our work provides us an entry into the inner sanctum of the one percent. Few of us will ever achieve the status as composers which will allow us this access. And, it could reasonably be argued that Glass, a member of the composerly one percent, knowing that he is immune from retaliation, can exercise his rights to protest in a way which composers of the 99% cannot. Some of Glass's numerous detractors may see his activism as nothing more or less than another public relations stunt profiting from the "buzz" surrounding the now fashionable OWS movement. But that is too cynical. All that needs to be said is that Glass stepped up to the plate. It remains to be seen how many of the rest of us will.

*This text has also appeared in New Politics Summer 2012 / Vol. XIV-I (<http://newpol.org>)*

## Paying the Fiddler, Calling the Tune and the Madwoman in the Attic

from John Halle's blog: [johnhalle.com/political.writing.fiddle.htm](http://johnhalle.com/political.writing.fiddle.htm)

At the peak of its visibility a few month ago Occupy was not only popular, but also fashionable to the extent that hidebound establishment elite institutions were compelled to respond to it.

Among these were arts institutions for whom the sort of cultural relevance which Occupy possesses as well its appeal to a younger demographic, is not just desirable but even necessary. On this basis, it made sense that the most terminally unhip and geriatric of the arts, contemporary classical music, felt some pressure to associate itself with occupy. And it was for this reason that the leading professional advocacy organization for contemporary classical composers, New Music USA, would request an article from me on the relationship of composers to Occupy to run in its online journal, New Music Box.

While I recognized that affinities between a movement of the ninety nine percent and what is, almost by definition, an elitist enterprise would be hard to come by, I was glad to do it wrote a rather long piece explaining more or less precisely that, and submitted it to them.

Things proceeded smoothly-the editors read it, had a few suggestions and corrections, and were clearly excited about it running. One of them described it "amazing" though adding, somewhat ominously, that she was "going to want to give my CEO an early read on it as well, just because of the subject matter/politics involved."

So it came as no surprise that, in a few days time, I received an email from the CEO in question (who I should mention is an old and close friend) inviting me to chat on the phone about the piece.

Knowing well he had in mind to discuss, I responded to him that it wasn't necessary for him to take the time out of his hectic schedule to inform me that they could not run the piece. All that was necessary was one or two words of confirmation and he could go back to doing what he does by all accounts exceptionally well: managing to keep an important and vibrant organization afloat during the worst economic conditions of our lifetimes.

He insisted however, and we spent a pleasant half hour covering the expected ground-- the unpleasant realities which prevented New Music America from associating itself with the piece I had written. What was particularly problematic was that the piece «named names.» That is, that it mentioned specific benefactors of classical music and the de jure and de facto crimes on which their fortunes were based. Among these, as it turned out, the most problematic was Mayor Bloomberg who was, as was described in the piece, both a generous, albeit anonymous benefactor and at the same time a careful puller of the purse strings attached to his largesse.

My response was that the piece was responsible, sober, and seemingly well sourced and as such would seem to make it fit for publication. But, as we both recognized, that was precisely the problem: Had the piece been a fact-free rant or had it had expressed the same views in the kind of purple prose characteristic of some composers rhetorical style it would have been easily ignored. This would not be so easily confined to the composers' sandbox, and it therefore had the potential to expose New Music America to serious retaliation from its funders and would raise questions about NMA's management oversight of its in-house journal.

We concluded our conversation on an additional point of agreement: that their rejection of the piece

was itself a demonstration of the central claim that composers remain beholden to their patrons within the 1% whom they must treat with deference. In this respect at least we are not so different from Bach, Mozart, and Haydn after all.

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Having my conclusions validated was gratifying; having my work effectively censored was not, but in the age of the internet other publication options were available. One of these was provided by my friend and colleague Kyle Gann who was nice enough to post the piece on his blog, one of the more widely read sources of information about contemporary music. Also, New Yorker critic Alex Ross graciously described the piece as «well worth a close read» on twitter with the result that it would probably be seen by most of those who would have read it had it appeared on the NMB site.

While the piece generated a certain amount of conversation on Kyle's blog and on a few other locations which linked to it, I was a little disappointed to have received what appeared to be even less response than similar sorts of pieces I have written in the past. Furthermore, even the favorable responses seemed to skirt around the main issue, focussing on whether the money we might accept from this or that foundation was in some sense tainted by association. That was directly at odds with my intention which was not to accuse composers as being morally culpable in the crimes of elites, but rather to focus on the systemic basis which makes inevitable the Hobson's choice which composers face.

Of course, in the case of New Music Box avoiding the central issue had an obvious explanation, namely, the financial one which they owned up to. But what about rank and file composers? The piece did suggest one explanation for our averting our eyes, that composers have internalized the value system of the elites and are as uncomfortable about being confronted with the rap sheet of financial rape and pillage as the elites themselves.

But while this is part of the story, there is more to be said. In particular, what needs to be recognized is a kind of deep, dark secret within the classical music family which needed to be carefully hidden from the broader public, lest they get the wrong idea about who we are and what we stand for.

As alluded to above, for decades classical music has made a herculean effort to deal not so much the problem discussed in the piece, classical music's connection with elites, but rather with a variant of the problem: its perceived elitism. Despite decades of audience friendly virtuosi and all too eager to please composers, elitism still is seen as woven into the fabric not only of the social circles associated with classical music, but into the music itself. The most conspicuous instance of the latter is academic high modernism whose notoriously disparaging relationship to its potential audience was unapologetically outlined by one of its iconic figures in the now infamous essay "who cares if you listen".<sup>1</sup>

These and other highly public pronouncements made necessary the decades long campaign of damage control a main current of which involves attempting to shove the high modernist madwoman back into the closet. A recent example of the genre is a widely circulated column by the Guardian's Tom Service rebutting what he takes to be «five myths about classical music». As with all such exercises a fair amount of distortion and special pleading is required to make the case for the defense. Thus, the old hobby horse of Milton Babbitt having taught Steven Sondheim is

<sup>1</sup> [author's title as submitted to High Fidelity Magazine: "The Composer as Specialist".-Ed.]

trotted out, with the implication that underneath the rubble of combinatorial hexachordal detritus is a Send in the Clowns struggling to get out. To other audiences, a completely different marketing strategy is rolled out: pieces such as Stockhausen's Gruppen and Xenakis's Jonchaies are "signal, culture-changing achievements of contemporary music . . . open(ing) your mind and ears to re-hear the world, to realise the beauty that's around us in sounds we would otherwise call noises." To still other audiences, Service celebrates contemporary classical music's connection to traditional audience favorites such as Ravel and Prokofiev, but then admits that "(t)here's a good argument that the less you know about Mozart or Schubert, the more directly you can understand the sounds composers create today."

In short, classical music is a full service shopping mall of consumer preference, offering all demographics a line of product appropriate to their budgets and life style. «All you need is an open mind and open ears» and Mr. Service will find the right model of Sonata(TM) for you.

This is not the first time Madison Avenue techniques have been recruited in service of an Upper West Side product, though their prospects for success are no better now than in the past. The reason is that audiences are, in fact, far more sophisticated than the marketers given them credit for. Many have attempted to engage those pieces or others like them and have not found in them the promised populist bon-bons, but rather something very different, more like broccoli. Whether or not they are familiar with Babbitt's (or Feldman's or Schoenberg's) published statements expressing an aristocratic disdain for an ignorant and uncomprehending public, they are able to correctly infer from the music itself that it is not designed with them in mind-hence Service's case coming across as applying chocolate covering to a brussel sprout.

This is not to say that there is no place for the musical equivalent of vegetables. Quite the opposite. Rather, any defense of classical music generally needs to start from the premise that there is a place for many kinds of musical expression, only some small fraction of which will be supported within the fatally degraded ecosystem which is the late capitalist marketplace.

But to make this claim goes against many generations of indoctrination into what has become our market fundamentalist state religion. In the absence of massive transformation in public attitudes, a kind of mass deprogramming, observing this and other completely obvious truths will come across as at the least eccentric and maybe bizarre. Or more likely, as Orwell would have predicted, they won't even be heard at all.

And so the response to my piece didn't come as a surprise. It was an attempt to insert add a brick onto the wall which Occupy is hoping to build.

A small contribution according to my abilities, as the saying goes; the best I could do under the circumstances.



## American Musics

# “Music For the Masses”: Milton Babbitt’s Cold War Music Theory

Martin Brody

It is exceptionally important to master the musical forms of the mass: songs, marches, dances, etc., forms which are part of their life. To ignore these forms would be incorrect and harmful, to master them would mean helping the creative growth of the artist and his nearer approach to the working class.

*(Lev Lebidinsky, speech at the Second International Music Conference of the International Union of Revolutionary Music, 1933)*<sup>1</sup>

Mass Culture is a dynamic, revolutionary force, breaking down the old barriers of class tradition, taste, dissolving all cultural distinctions. It mixes and scrambles everything together, producing what might be called homogenized culture, after another American achievement, the homogenization process that distributes globules of cream evenly throughout the milk instead of allowing them to float separately on top. It thus destroys all values, since value judgments imply discrimination. Mass Culture is very, very democratic: it absolutely refuses to discriminate against, or between, anything or anybody. All are grist to its mill, and all comes out finely ground.

*(Dwight Macdonald, “A Theory of Mass Culture,” 1951)*<sup>2</sup>

The composer . . . in many cases [is] unwilling to face what it is like not to be a cultural hero in what one simply has to call a democratic culture, a populist culture, an egalitarian culture. After all, we know who the cultural heroes are in a people’s cultural society.

*(Milton Babbitt, 1985 interview)*<sup>3</sup>

## Prologue: The Mightiest of Fortresses

Why is Milton Babbitt controversial? Most students of contemporary music have acknowledged the originality and importance of his work, but their characterizations of his influence have been curiously divergent. Babbitt evokes extravagant critical responses. His position has

been described as “the furthest extension of the romantic ideal of the Promethean, independent artist who flies free of the earth and its compromises.”<sup>4</sup> He has been accused of “fanatical scientism, a search for quasi-logical precision of reference . . . [with] an undertone of distress, even rage,”<sup>5</sup> and is said to be possessed by “a fine madness.”<sup>6</sup> In a less flamboyant but equally robust claim, his “work appears to have extended the musical universe in a multitude of directions and respects and has taken it near to the boundaries of human conceptual and perceptual capacities.”<sup>7</sup>

Along with such images of heroism, exploration, intransigence, and insanity, a number of themes recur: that Babbitt has argued for and exemplified a special relationship between music theory and composition (and between composers and universities); that he has proposed new and influential ways to think about the culture of contemporary music in the context of a sophisticated musical metatheory; and that in developing this metatheory, Babbitt has extended twentieth-century philosophy of science to music. These achievements have been variously praised and decried as proving (among other things) Babbitt’s “elitism,” “relativism,” “organicism,” “scientism,” or, more plainly, “academicism.” Babbitt has been regarded as the charismatic figure perhaps most responsible for a “mountain of unlistenable academic exercises that did so much to inspire, and for the now widespread belief among laymen that *all* new music is repellent pedantry.”<sup>8</sup> Or he has been hailed as the “protean” creator who has taken us “near . . . to the heights of contemporary intellectual accomplishments.”<sup>9</sup>

The preceding descriptions are not entirely contradictory; rather, they indicate ambiguities or differences in emphasis and values—one critic’s “repellent pedantry” may well be another’s “height of intellectual accomplishment.” However, the differences in these appraisals are not simply vagaries or matters of taste. They point to unresolved controversies in our musical life, controversies that are themselves often not very well articulated, though they continue to shape our musical responses and values. And Babbitt (the person? writer? pedagogue? composer?) seems to represent these issues at their most polemic. Moreover, although the corpus of Babbitt’s prose writing to date is compact enough to consider as a whole, it often seems that commentators are not reading the same texts. Critics experience inapproachability and polemicism; apologists point to his methodical, recurrent recognition of diversity in musical culture, noting that Babbitt’s most overtly polemical rhetorical question was falsely attributed: the essay title, “Who Cares If You Listen?,” a soundbite oft-repeated by Babbitt



detractors, was an editorial substitution for Babbitt's own, less inflammatory heading, "The Composer as Specialist."

And this is where the discussion usually ends. In this essay, I would like to play it out a bit further—to test the points that resist resolution and to consider the reasons why the controversies surrounding Babbitt cannot be wished away. The focus of this discussion will be Babbitt's important metatheoretical papers that began to appear in the late 1950s—the writings in which he set out a revisionist methodology for music theory and a fresh perspective on its relationship to composition. The controversies surrounding Babbitt in general, and the complexities of these articles in particular, provide both the backdrop and *raison d'être* of the study presented here.

In his metatheoretical writings, Babbitt strongly advocates what he sometimes calls "scientific language" by waging a negative campaign against imprecise language in music discourse, by praising the salutary uses of formal theory, and by describing the close connection between musical concept, structure, and perception. Here is a key passage from 1961, a touchstone for the discussion to follow:

For the essential elements of the above characterizations [of Carnap's discussion of the term "concept"] involving the correlations of the syntactic and semantic domains, the notion of analysis, and—perhaps most significantly—the requirements of linguistic formulation and the differentiation [sic] among predicated types, beyond strongly suggesting that the proper object of our assigned investigation may be—in light of these criteria—a vacuous class, and strongly reminding us of the systematic obligations attending our own necessarily verbal presentation and discussion of this presumed subject, provide the important reminder that there is but one kind of language, one kind of method for the verbal formulation of 'concepts' and the verbal analysis of such formulations: 'scientific' language and 'scientific' method.<sup>10</sup>

The notorious structural complexity and extravagant rhetoric of this sentence surely warrant discussion; however, I will mark only the sense of a long upbeat and then an arrival at the parallel structures of the final phrase of the sentence, where Babbitt finally declares his passionate advocacy of " 'scientific' language and 'scientific' method." The flow of the argument—from concept to analysis to predication and back to analysis and concept—rationalizes Babbitt's methodological insistence on scientific language. But this discussion of the theoretical language of music is also a litmus test of the contradictory critical reception of his work as a whole: for supporters, the metatheory offers a logical and unbiased foundation for inquiry into the nature of music; critics find in it a hint of a retrograde organicist view of musical culture and a shrill, even bizarre insistence on restricting the terms of

musical discourse. In the following, I propose that Babbitt's meta-theory is more complicated, radical, and more pertinent than either his detractors or apologists allow. The interconnected arguments he unfolds (about the situation of contemporary music, the "nature and limits of music" and music theory, and the implications for twelve-tone technique) neither place him in the cultural debate in the reductive ways that previous critics have described, nor locate him "beyond culture." Babbitt's discussion of scientific language and music theory is not just a statement of method; it is both a response to and expression of a broad view of American musical culture at mid-century. Falling at the cusp joining modernist and postmodern trajectories, Babbitt's positions engage the problems of contemporary cultural construction most compellingly just when these positions are ostensibly freeing themselves of all sectarian cultural biases.

How does this engagement occur? In his groundbreaking meta-theoretical articles, Babbitt attaches several correlative themes to his apologia on scientific language. The metatheory combines a neo-positivist's concern about the relationship between concept and percept with a pluralist/pragmatist view of cultural diversity and the immanence of musical values. Both facets are repeatedly concretized in Babbitt's own, post-Schoenbergian proclamations of the "emancipation of the dissonance"—or, more accurately, denaturalization of the consonance—through a critique of the metaphysical undercurrent in previous music theory. The arguments are roughly (also partially and quite synoptically) as follows: The only a priori constraints on musical structure, in its conception and reception, are given by psychoacoustics and formal logic. In Babbitt's 1961 terms, the limits of musical potential "reside ultimately in the perceptual capacities of the human receptor, just as the scope of physical science is delimited by the perceptual and conceptual capacities of the human observer."<sup>11</sup> Thus, we can (should, must) reveal (and purge) external limitations on musical thought—normative or metaphysical claims about the nature and limits of music—claims that will otherwise artificially constrain the free development of music conceptualization. Babbitt urges us "to recognize the possibility, and the actuality, of alternatives to what were once regarded as musical absolutes" and surrender any residual nostalgia for a "unitary musical universe of 'common practice'" in favor of a variety of diverse practices.<sup>12</sup> We will encourage compositional experimentation and diversity while clarifying our own, already diverse conceptual groundings as composers, performers, and auditors, by invoking scientific language, which is "the one kind of language . . . for the verbal formulation of 'concepts' and the verbal analysis of

such formulations.”<sup>13</sup> Only in this context will the more or less covert assertions of value in imprecise or metaphysical language be exposed and purged. And only in such a relativist context will musical creation develop freely.

In support of these claims, Babbitt attacks each of the traditional absolutist arguments limiting music conceptualization, whether they take the form of analogies between planetary structures and the overtone series or of organicist views of music history. For example, he considers Mersenne’s “[pursuit of] the perennial ‘why’ of the correspondence between the interval content of the major triad and the first six divisions of the vibrating string”: “[Mersenne] supplies a characteristic ‘justification’ for the ‘use’ of but six by citing the numerical indentification [sic] with the then known number of planets. Beyond the intimations of the cosmic scope and affinities of music, there is the implication that certain classes of objects hierarchically ‘justify’ others . . . [leading] one to conjecture as to whether, in all seriousness, the discovery of a seventh planet invalidated the theory of the music founded upon the assumption of the ‘incorrect’ number.”<sup>14</sup> And, in a similarly vehement polemic against historical teleology, Babbitt describes the heroic figure of Schoenberg and his musical innovations as paradigms of cultural difference, not traditionalism; he focuses on what distinguishes Schoenberg from his predecessors rather than smoothing over “the jagged edges of abruption” between Schoenberg’s innovations and their precedents: “However pedagogically convenient and intuitively suggestive a quasi-genetic approach [to explaining the historical origins of twelve-tone music] may be, eventually it succeeds only in obscuring both the character of the system and the profound differences between the twelve-tone system and those musical systems in which the historical forerunners of the twelve tone operations appear.”<sup>15</sup> The normalizing effects of “time and practice,” which tend to distill out artistic differences for the sake of an elegant historical narrative, must not interfere (any more than false metaphysical imperatives) with the exploration of the full range of musical possibility.<sup>16</sup>

However, by resisting metaphysics and dismantling the structures of absolutism in music theory in favor of a value-neutral, positivist epistemology, Babbitt positions himself at the edge of a precariously relativistic precipice: if the criteria of music theories are merely that they be conceptually clear, then an infinite number of “theories,” “compositional systems,” or, simply, “pieces” can be equally viable; musical composition is cut loose from constraints and boundaries. The “human receptor” can no longer rely on traditional claims and

justifications of value to limit the range of what is musically possible. How, then, will the proliferation of diverse musical concepts and practices be contained? Babbitt backs away from this abyss by invoking the same principles that led him to it: “[While t]here are an infinity of analytic expressions which will generate any given composition . . . the relation between a formal theory and its empirical interpretation is not merely that of validity to truth . . . but of the whole area of the criteria of useful, useable, relevant, or significant characterizations.”<sup>17</sup> *The whole area of the criteria of . . . significant characterizations:* With this move, Babbitt shifts the discussion away from claims about inherent values in (or characterizations of) particular compositional techniques or practices to the criteria for verbal characterization of any and all musical practices. Without attempting to define “use,” “usability,” or “relevance,” etc., Babbitt indicates a role for “scientific language” beyond the expression and protection of cultural diversity. In an especially provocative passage, he begins to clarify this larger role:

Perhaps there have been eras in the musical past when discourse about music was not a primary factor in determining what was performed, published, disseminated, and—therefore—composed . . . when—indeed—the compositional situation was such as not to require that knowing composers make fundamental choices and decisions that require eventual verbal formulation, clarification, and—to an important extent—resolution. . . . The composer who insists that he is concerned only with writing music and not with talking about it may once have been, may still be, a commendable—even enviable—figure, but once he presumes to speak or take pen in hand in order to describe, inform, evaluate, reward, or teach, he cannot presume to claim exemption—on medical or vocational grounds—from the requirements of cognitive communication.<sup>18</sup>

Already, these words may seem quaint. Recently, Babbitt’s *requirement* of verbal formulation has been largely by-passed in the process of determining what is “performed, published, disseminated, and—therefore—composed.” However, it is important to note that music theory was conceived by Babbitt as the primary source of authority in an era lacking anything approximating a common practice or the prestige of aristocratic patronage. For Babbitt, scientific language is the sole, firmly required medium of the musical cognoscenti (“*knowing* composers [must] make fundamental choices”), a foundational discourse in an otherwise foundationless configuration of practices. Indeed, it is a precondition of musical citizenship: “[C]oncerns with . . . verbal and methodological responsibility . . . must be central to the instruction of the student of music theory . . . if he is to attain that rarest of all

states, that of the concerned and thoughtful musical citizen."<sup>19</sup> While Babbitt's emphasis on responsible musical discourse recognizes and encourages diversity among and differences between musical practices, it also provides what seems to be the last viable basis for drawing a line between responsibility and irresponsibility, citizenship and exclusion. The point of emphasis here is the ambivalence in the advocacy of "scientific language." Babbitt manages to refashion a conservative orthodoxy out of a radical, if anxious, acknowledgement of cultural relativism.

But why should "verbal and methodological responsibility" be the touchstone of citizenship? And why should the advocacy of cultural diversity be so ambivalently linked to concern about its containment? If Babbitt favors an open conversation among the participants in musical culture, why does he insist that the rules of this conversation be so stringent? I believe that Babbitt's emphasis on musical discourse and his concomitant proposals for theory and composition relate closely to his informal visions of musical culture as a whole. In turn, both have strong precedents in the politics of American culture from Babbitt's college years in the 1930s to the emergence of his mature work during the Cold War. I will sketch the outlines of this alternative intellectual biography in the remaining sections of this essay.

\* \* \*

In the classic metatheoretical articles, Babbitt's comments about musical culture tend to appear around the edges, in the introductions and conclusions that surround his detailed, sustained arguments. In a more recent published lecture, he has been more explicit:

I don't think there's anything melodramatic or exaggerated about bringing up the question of the actual survival of serious music. . . . [S]urvival seems unlikely when the conditions necessary for that survival are so seriously threatened. These conditions are the corporal survival of the composer in his role as a composer, then the survival of his creations in some kind of communicable, permanent, and readable form, and finally, perhaps above all, the survival of the university in a role which universities seem less and less able or willing to assume: that is of the mightiest of fortresses against the overwhelming, outnumbering forces, both within and without the university, of anti-intellectualism, cultural populism, and passing fashion.<sup>20</sup>

According to this formulation, composers must not only survive corporally and have some means for distributing their work, they need to be protected from the large world outside, a world of "anti-intellectualism, cultural populism, and passing fashion." Universities

must not only hire composers and house their works in libraries, they must provide a bulwark against cultural forces that threaten the life of serious music. (There is a characteristic touch of Babbittian satire in his “mighty fortress” reference, an allusion to Luther’s hymn and its formidable history, just when Babbitt is making one of his most blunt statements about the failure of contemporary cultural authority. However, the effect of the humor here is uncharacteristically self-effacing; the wit in incongruously juxtaposing the institutional and spiritual resources associated with Luther or Bach and contemporary academe seems adequately ironic to undercut Babbitt’s own rhetoric, as if he were particularly anxious about the virulence of his arguments.)

In any case, Babbitt’s polemic claims about universities and populism clarify the lines connecting his metatheory to his view of the cultural landscape as a whole: scientific language is the medium of the responsible musical citizen. If the university is the fortress against cultural populism, and cultural populism threatens serious music, then scientific language safeguards serious music. Babbitt draws a line between serious and populist music; scientific language is at the boundary.

In the following, I speculate about why these distinctions and functions might be so powerful for Babbitt, rooted as they are in the cultural debates and critical discussions of art, literature, and mass culture carried out by such prominent “New York Intellectuals” as Clement Greenberg, Dwight Macdonald, and Sidney Hook. Reflecting on this largely unacknowledged context of Babbitt’s work will, I believe, provide us with a particularly useful perspective on our own cultural predicament. The original impetus for this project came from Babbitt’s own autobiographical comments in recent interviews and writings, and I will begin my contextualization by recapitulating some of the surprises I encountered in them.

### **“Some of my best friends were Trotskyites.”**

In conversation and informal lectures, Babbitt often repeats an anecdote about his early years on the faculty at Princeton. As a former student and protégé of Roger Sessions, Babbitt explains, he was shielded by Sessions from the anti-Semitism of the music department.<sup>21</sup> Trying to make the most of an awkward situation, the young faculty member composed his *Music for the Mass* (1940) “to comfort my chairman.” As Babbitt indicates, the piece then won the prestigious Beams Prize in composition and was later mistakenly referred to

in a book on twentieth-century music as “Music for the Masses.” In concluding the story, Babbitt clinches the joke by proposing an explanation—his was a setting, after all, of the *ordinary* of the mass.

The ironies of the story hinge on a double incongruity, not only the composition of Christian sacred music by a composer of Jewish extraction, but also the inadvertent pun (echoed by Babbitt in his “explanation” of the joke) that associates him with mass culture. The question begged, however, is why the mistake should be so funny. What is the significance in this slip from *mass* to *masses*—one that implicitly transforms Babbitt from a genteel, assimilated academic into a radical cultural politician? How deep is the irony in making Babbitt into a composer of “music for the masses”?

Similar reminiscences have begun to appear in Babbitt’s published oeuvre as well. A book of often anecdotal lectures, a conversational memoir, and excerpts from several informal interviews have appeared in print.<sup>22</sup> The apparent spontaneity and candor of these texts suit their genres. In most cases, the printed text reads as an unmediated record of speech (lectures, conversations). Breezy, dense, vitriolic, at once improvisatory and calculated, torrentially brilliant—the tone of this transcribed talking will be familiar to Babbitt aficionados. Babbitt’s narratives interweave detailed accounts of his own intellectual and artistic development with an evocation of the American musical scene from the mid-1930s to the present.

Nonetheless, it is tempting to dismiss such reminiscences, like the even more informal anecdotes that punctuate Babbitt’s conversation, as a marginal entertainment—decorative and virtuosic, but unconnected to the arguments of Babbitt’s theoretical writing. However, if we elevate this kind of writing/speaking to the same level as the theory, puzzling incongruities appear. Taken seriously, Babbitt’s recent self-presentation complicates our own established image of his accomplishment and his antecedents.

For example, consider the following excerpt from an interview, in which Babbitt affiliates himself with the New York leftist intellectual scene of the 1930s and 1940s:

About my time [as an undergraduate at Washington Square College, 1933–35] NYU was the swinging place. Washington Square College was where it was at. Anyone from [James] Burnham to Sidney Hook, all the people were there. These guys were the Stalinists, the Trotskyites, the Lovestonites, the Cannonites—I’ve lived through all of this. Some of my best friends were Trotskyites. Sidney Hook before he changed. Sidney Hook, who had just gotten his PhD. with John Dewey, wrote a book called *Toward the Understanding of Karl Marx*. He was the guru of Marxism, and he was a brilliant guy and still



is. He and James Burnham—what does the name James Burnham mean to you? Burnham was for years a columnist for the *National Review* and wrote a famous book called *The Managerial Revolution*. That's before your time too. James Burnham and Sidney Hook were in the left wing, ultra-left wing party called the American Workers Party. NYU and Washington Square College were just torn to bits by it.<sup>23</sup>

There is a hint of ambivalence, if not dismissiveness, in Babbitt's expansive and bemused appreciation of the "gurus of Marxism." In a surge of nostalgia, however, Babbitt associates himself with Hook and Burnham, two faculty members in the NYU philosophy department during his undergraduate years, who were among the most prominent figures in the overheated political and cultural debate of that moment.<sup>24</sup> Early in the decade, Burnham joined forces with Phillip Wheelwright, the senior philosopher at NYU, in founding *Symposium* (1931–33), a journal of "philosophy, logic, and the arts," a conjunction of fields strikingly congruent with Babbitt's mature interests. Burnham and Wheelwright also wrote *Philosophical Analysis* (1932), a book that, along with *Symposium*, Babbitt cited as an important influence.<sup>25</sup> "[I came] to NYU, to encounter Burnham and Wheelwright's *Philosophical Analysis*, and a magazine [*Symposium*], and I always forget the name of it . . . it lasted for only three or four years . . . I still have the copies. And they discovered I. A. Richards, and they published a lot of practical criticism. I was surrounded by this, and it excited me and interested me. And I felt this was much more interesting than anything going on in music theory."<sup>26</sup> The first article to appear in the first volume of *Symposium* was John Dewey's "Qualitative Thought." It is easy to imagine the interest that Dewey's discussion of structure in the arts would have held for Babbitt: "The logic of artistic construction and esthetic appreciation is peculiarly significant because these exemplify in accentuated and purified form the control of selection of detail and of mode of relation, or integration, by a qualitative whole. The underlying quality demands certain distinctions, and the degree in which the demand is met confers upon the work of art that necessary or inevitable character which is its mark."<sup>27</sup> In the same journal, Babbitt would have encountered other stimulating articles: Richards' "Belief" (1, no. 4), Morris Cohen's "Faith of a Logician" (1, no. 1), and Wheelwright's "Poetry and Logic" (1, no. 4). However, Babbitt must also have been disappointed by the course *Symposium* took over its brief history. By the final year of publication, Burnham's politics had moved radically to the left, and each issue of *Symposium* began with an editor's comment in which he advocated a

reformed version of American communism. "Poetry and Logic" gave way to Burnham's "Marxism and Aesthetics" (3, no. 4), and the work of other radical culture critics such as Dwight Macdonald filled out the pages of the journal.<sup>28</sup>

Burnham also came to be closely associated with Sidney Hook, a disciple of Dewey who composed volumes on the interconnection of Marxism and pragmatism. Both Hook and Burnham were committed leftists by the mid-1930s, and, in their leadership of the American Workers' Party, they called for "a new communist party and a new communist international."<sup>29</sup> In a matter of only a few years, however, Hook and Burnham would be among the anti-Stalinist intellectuals to support Trotsky and eventually surrender their socialist positions altogether. Progressively more disenchanted with developments in the Soviet Union and with the efficacy of his own theories, Burnham wrote what has been called the "last rites delivered over the grave of Marxism," *The Managerial Revolution* (1941).<sup>30</sup> After the war, Hook and Burnham both participated in prestigious anticommunist causes, such as the Committee for Cultural Freedom.<sup>31</sup>

However, Babbitt also encountered another variety of leftist intellectual in his years as a student at NYU and the period leading up to World War II. Speaking about this time in a decidedly different tone, though in the same interview in which he discussed the glory days of *Symposium*, Babbitt was overtly hostile to what he called the "ultra-left wing" and to a kind of leftist different from Hook's or Burnham's—the kind who never or only belatedly "changed," remaining loyal to Stalin and the Soviet Union, even in the face of the infamous Moscow Trials, the Hitler–Stalin pact, and other contemporary events in the late 1930s that disillusioned many prominent intellectuals such as Hook and Burnham. Babbitt also refers to John Dewey's commission to investigate Stalinist charges against Trotsky (1937), which, in exonerating Trotsky, clarified the Stalin/Trotsky question for many prominent western intellectuals and artists. Babbitt's own position was unequivocal:

We found ourselves reading magazines, such as one called *Musical Vanguard* . . . full of articles saying, "well, in Russia they run things better than they do here with regard to music." Aaron Copland said that, for example: that things seemed to be better with regard to the young musician in Russia today. . . .

People who later wanted to be regarded as intellectual martyrs, as political heroes, called John Dewey a fascist! Why? Because John Dewey brought together a group of serious, professional thinkers . . . to investigate the Moscow trials . . . So one was living with this kind of dangerous irrationality all the time.<sup>32</sup>

He concludes his remarks with a startling pronouncement: "This [not just Dewey's aesthetics or Richards' criticism] affected the intellectual atmosphere at least as much as reading Schenker, Lorenz and Kurth."<sup>33</sup> While the voice is unmistakably Babbitt's, the juxtaposition of politics (American communism and Trotskyism in the period before World War II and the discussion of American vs. Soviet musical culture during the heyday of socialist-realist aesthetics) and music theory (Schenker, Lorenz, Kurth) is dramatic and incongruous.

Certainly, an engagement in politics was *de rigueur* among aspiring intellectuals in Babbitt's student milieu, and the polarities bred by the political movements and ideological divisions of the 1930s—Stalinist/Trotskyist, bourgeois/proletarian, avant-garde/mass art— informed American artistic culture for some time thereafter. In the words of one of Babbitt's Trotskyist friends, Dwight Macdonald, who became an editor of the influential journals *Partisan Review* and *Politics* in the latter half of the decade, "Over here, wrote Emerson to Carlyle apropos the America of the 1830's, everyone you meet has a project for universal reform in his pocket. So did everyone that someone like Emerson might have met in the America of a century later (but our scripts were all Marxian). An interest in *avant-garde* politics was expected of every proper intellectual."<sup>34</sup> Babbitt's recollection of his antipathy to the *Music Vanguard* (and Copland's comments therein on the comparative situations of young Russian and American composers) suggests that he was highly engaged by the debates over proletarianism, radicalism in general, and music during the mid-1930s. Babbitt must have been painfully well aware that radical politics played an important role in defining a fragile American musical culture in search of techniques and values. As Copland declared in his article "Note to Young Composers" in the inaugural issue of the *Music Vanguard*, the proletarian movement threatened to overthrow the great bourgeois lineage of European musical tradition: "It is no secret that many of the young composers who had taken one or the other of these two older men [Schoenberg and Stravinsky] as their models have now thrown in their lot with that of the working class."<sup>35</sup>

Recalling the period over forty years later, Arthur Berger elaborated on Copland's claim:

[A]rtists were being supported and commissioned to carry out projects with Americana as their subject matter. You can easily understand that the mannerisms and devices issuing out of Vienna were too remote for this purpose. . . .

Curiously enough, Americanism [at that time] went hand in hand with political leftism. . . . Now it should be obvious that the demands of a proletariat [sic] music required greater accessibility than could be vouchsafed by the type of music emanating from Vienna.<sup>36</sup>

This stark opposition of Europe and America, the Schoenberg–Stravinsky tradition and proletarianism, must have troubled the young Babbitt. For Babbitt, the suggestion that younger American composers must devote themselves to the development of working-class culture must have seemed a bleak prospect. In this environment, the problem for Babbitt was clear: to delineate a vision of American musical culture that might incorporate European achievements without being stifled by (or assimilated to) them and also offer an alternative to the class analysis (and working-class affiliation) of the left-wing intelligentsia. As early as 1933, for example, Babbitt's composition teacher, Roger Sessions, spoke out forcefully against the invocation of politics and nationalism as organizing principles for musical thought.<sup>37</sup>

What has all of this to do with the mature Babbitt and his insistence on scientific language? I propose that Babbitt's metatheory, with its overt anti-ideological pluralism, its emphasis on language, rationality, and formalism, and its anxieties about conserving standards of musical citizenship (however much these anxieties might be pushed to the periphery in his writings), offered an alternative picture of American musical culture to that which opposed Europe and America, Stravinsky or Schoenberg and the "working man." Babbitt's positions emerged in a cultural and political climate that was at first resistant, but later more congenial, to his particular interests in European tradition, music theory, and philosophy. Moreover, Babbitt's writing retains a largely unacknowledged trace of the specific terms and concerns that informed anti-Stalinist positions on culture (especially as they came to be recast before and during World War II in terms of "mass" rather than "class" culture). The values and meanings that Clement Greenberg, Dwight Macdonald, and other prominent critics associated with the terms of their mass culture critique—such as "avant-garde," "kitsch," and "extraversion"—are, I believe, closely connected to those that Babbitt later associated with "populism," "scientific language," and "musical citizenship."

### **"Words and War": Scientific Language vs. Propaganda**

In November 1945 Babbitt published a brief poem, "Battle Cry," in Dwight Macdonald's journal, *Politics*.

Lie seeks out lie  
Untruth follows untruth  
This can be read  
In the Book of the Dead.  
Make it your maxim  
and fill it with lead.<sup>38</sup>

Macdonald, by then a self-described anarchist–pacifist, founded *Politics* in reaction to the *Partisan Review*'s retreat from political positions during the war.<sup>39</sup> It would be extravagant to ascribe anarchist, pacifist, or socialist opinions to Babbitt based on his association with Macdonald's journal.<sup>40</sup> However, for any author, a connection with *Politics* signalled a strong anti-Stalinist position. The question of free, clear, noncoercive speech, in opposition to the state policies of both Germany and the Soviet Union, was central to almost everything that appeared in *Politics*. Within a few months of the appearance of "Battle Cry," Macdonald published articles by numerous prominent New York Intellectuals, among them, C. Wright Mills, Clement Greenberg, Daniel Bell, and Mary McCarthy. Simone Weil's "Words and War," an impassioned demand for clear thought and speech as a remedy to the treacherous obscurities and sloganeering of war, seems an obvious companion piece to Babbitt's poem. Her contrast between "known qualities" and "empty absolutes" even seems to adumbrate Babbitt's critique of metaphysics and imprecision in music discourse: "Clouds of empty absolutes hide the problem's [the elimination of war] known qualities, even the fact that this is a problem to solve, and not an inescapable fate. They dull our minds, they carry us to our deaths."<sup>41</sup> Alongside Weil's polemic, Karl Jaspers reported on the struggle for academic freedom in Germany during the war, Macdonald denounced "the big lie" in both Stalinist Russia and the American Communist Party, and Nicolas Nabokov brought word of "the music purge" in the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout the history of *Politics* (1943–49), Macdonald also published a series of articles on mass culture.<sup>43</sup> While these may not contain the full diversity and complexity of the discussion of mass culture, Macdonald's was one of the strongest voices raised in a critique of mass culture as an "instrument of social domination."<sup>44</sup> Numerous critics, including Serge Guilbaut and Andrew Ross, have identified the discussion of mass culture as a central component of cultural criticism in the latter part of the 1930s and through the 1940s.<sup>45</sup> In Ross's words, "[T]he appearance of fascism—characterized by a form of social and ideological organization that appeared to transform classes into 'masses'—ensured that the social concern of American intellectuals would increasingly be with the model of a mass society and mass culture."<sup>46</sup> For Babbitt's Trotskyist friends, indeed for many American intellectuals, the Soviet Union, as well as Germany, came to be seen as a dangerous proponent of mass culture. The formation of the Popular Front by the seventh congress of the Moscow Comintern in 1935 announced a shift in the Communist

cultural program from an emphasis on proletarianism, per se, to a less obviously politicized approach to art that might have greater immediate mass appeal. The American Communist Party leader, Earl Browder, referred to its cultural program as “the artistic recreation of the great process going on among the people of the creation of a broad democratic front.”<sup>47</sup> Despite an overtly antifascist posture, the mass culture strategies of the Popular Front became a touchstone of the American critique of Stalinism. At the same time, events such as the Moscow Trials and the Hitler–Stalin Pact contributed to a disillusionment with Russia on the part of many American intellectuals and a sense of polarization and “dangerous irrationality,” to recall Babbitt’s words, at home.<sup>48</sup> Reports both of Soviet suppression of art that did not conform to the requirements of the state and the infiltration of cultural fifth columnists in America regularly appeared in the progressive magazines. In 1944, for example, Kurt List, writing on Russian music in *Politics*, warned against the threat of Soviet contamination: “Whether our music will succumb to the shallowness and the easy success of the present Russian style will largely depend upon the future political influence of the Soviet Union. With politicians of all shades jumping on the Russian bandwagon, it is not unexpected that musicians are following.”<sup>49</sup>

Mass culture, identified with the Soviet Union and Germany, and with “debased” and “mechanical” capitalist production, was seen, both in principle and practice, to be an instrument of authoritarianism and totalitarian states. As Greenberg put it in 1939, in the important essay, “Avant-garde and Kitsch,” “every man, from the Tammany alderman to the Austrian house painter, finds that he is entitled to his opinion. . . . Here revolvers and torches begin to be mentioned in the same breath as culture. In the name of godliness of the blood’s health, in the name of simple ways and solid virtues, the statue-smashing commences.”<sup>50</sup> What is the antidote to the violence ensuing from unfettered popular opinion? For Macdonald, Weil, or the Babbitt of “Battle Cry,” as well as for Greenberg, a part of the answer could be found in reducing the pervasiveness of propaganda (“lie seeks out lie”)—in identifying and suppressing those dangerous “names” (“godliness,” the “blood’s health”) used to validate and consolidate totalitarian power.

A complementary defense against mass art lay in the promotion and production of a different kind of artistic work, work that was doggedly individualistic, unafraid of complexity, irreducible, resistant to appropriation. The anti-Stalinist/antifascist critique of mass art provided politically engaged intellectuals and artists with powerful

arguments for the rehabilitation of modernist masterpieces. No longer “un-American” or “antiproletarian,” European modernist culture might now be viewed as a paradigm for America and an answer to the artistic production of totalitarian states. As the *Partisan Review* editor, Philip Rahv, proposed in “Proletarian Literature: A Political Autopsy” (1939), “There are certain forms of demagoguery . . . which a medium as palpable as fiction—unless it degenerates to the level of pulp propaganda—excludes by its very nature. Thus the media of art, if only by that fact alone, prove their superior humanity to the media of politics.”<sup>51</sup> Palpability vs. propaganda: For Rahv, the media of art resist authoritarian violence *unless they degenerate*. As I suggest in the following section, one of Clement Greenberg’s contributions to the anti-Stalinist critique of culture was an especially full account of the conditions of non-coopted (or, to use Rahv’s term, nondegenerate) art, one that is suggestive of Babbitt’s later metatheoretical writing.<sup>52</sup>

### **The Reflected Effect: Scientific Language and Artistic Autonomy**

Greenberg’s analysis of mass culture went far beyond a generic warning against propagandistic language. He provided the densest, most elegant synopsis of the history of this moment in American cultural production and criticism: “Someday it will have to be told how anti-Stalinism which started out more or less as Trotskyism turned into art for art’s sake, and thereby cleared the way, heroically [!], for what was to come.”<sup>53</sup> Greenberg’s own critical contribution to this trajectory focused on his discussion of the distinction between “avant-garde” and “kitsch.”

As Greenberg suggested, Trotsky (opposing Stalin and the cultural policies of the Soviet state) provided leftist intellectuals with exemplary declarations of the need for self-legislated art. (Recall that Trotsky was vindicated by John Dewey’s commission report in 1937 and that Babbitt singled out this incident in the reminiscences of the 1930s cited above. The exoneration of Trotsky by a figure of Dewey’s stature had enormous impact on American intellectuals.) As proposed in a letter to the editors of the *Partisan Review* signed by Trotsky in 1938, “Artistic creation has its own laws—even when it consciously serves a social movement. Truly intellectual creation is incompatible with lies, hypocrisy, and the spirit of conformity. Art can become a strong ally of revolution only insofar as it remains faithful to itself.”<sup>54</sup> Through the mediating term “intellectual creation,” this Trotskyist



polemic proclaims the opposition of “lies, hypocrisy, and the spirit of conformity,” and self-legislated art. The lies of totalitarianism require not only corrective language, per se, but also the creation of art that will be immune to cooptation. Replacing the emphasis on revolution with the more modest aim of salvaging serious culture from the totalitarian threat and capitalist mass production, the Trotskyist opposition of conformity and true artistic creation comes close to Greenberg’s famous categories of “kitsch” and “avant-garde.” (Greenberg published “Avant-garde and Kitsch” in the *Partisan Review* in 1939, a year after the Trotskyist letter appeared and shortly before Rahv’s “autopsy” of proletarian literature, quoted above.) Greenberg offers a detailed account of the conditions necessary for art to be entirely “faithful to itself.”

Content is to be dissolved so completely into form that the work of art or literature cannot be reduced in whole or part to anything but itself. . . . The non-representational or “abstract,” if it is to have aesthetic validity, cannot be arbitrary or accidental, but must stem from some worthy constraint or origin. This constraint, once the world of extraverted experience has been renounced, can only be found in the very processes or disciplines by which art and literature have already imitated the former.<sup>55</sup>

The final, rather studied prepositional phrase of this passage closes elliptically with an adjective (“the former”) that refers to the already disappearing term (“the world of extraverted experience”) at the beginning of the sentence; the verb form of the closing phrase establishes the historical grounding of the process of self-reference (emphasizing “processes or disciplines” rather than any original object of imitation). Greenberg’s intricately self-referential writing may remind us of the elaborate self- and cross-references in many of Babbitt’s long sentences. And the search for a “worthy constraint” unbound from representation and “extraverted experience” recalls Babbitt’s “criterion of significance,” unhindered by metaphysics or ideology. (Note also the echoes, in Greenberg’s contemplation of formalism and the constraints of art, of John Dewey’s coupling of “artistic construction” and “quality” in the earlier essay, “Qualitative Thought,” cited above. Whether or not Greenberg was as enthusiastic a proponent of the early issues of *Symposium* as Babbitt, “Avant-garde and Kitsch” provides an urgent social context for the revival and revision of Dewey’s structuralism, with a special emphasis on contemporary art.)

I will return to Greenberg’s “extraversion”/(introversion) distinction before closing this discussion. But first, I should note that Greenberg, in this formulation, explicitly contrasts his characterization of

abstract, neo-avant-garde art to that of kitsch. (By contrast, Babbitt restricts his discussion of kitsch [populism, mass culture] to his non-theoretical comments.) While the avant-garde distinguishes itself by distilling all traces of content from formal artistic processes, the latter uses “debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture” for its materials.<sup>56</sup> The high art of the avant-garde can “keep culture moving in the midst of ideological confusion and violence,”<sup>57</sup> while kitsch supports obfuscation and constitutes ideology.

Why is kitsch so powerful an instrument of “confusion and violence”? Because it imitates the “effects” rather than the “processes” of art.

[T]he ultimate values which the cultivated spectator derives from Picasso are derived at a second remove, as the result of reflection upon the immediate impression left by the plastic values. It is only then that the recognizable, the miraculous and the sympathetic enter. They are not immediately or externally present in Picasso's painting, but must be projected into it by the spectator sensitive enough to react sufficiently to plastic qualities. They belong to the “reflected” effect. In Repin, on the other hand, the “reflected” effect has already been included in the picture, ready for the spectator's unreflective enjoyment. Where Picasso paints *cause*, Repin paints *effect*.<sup>58</sup>

Again, Greenberg seems to echo Dewey's discussion of qualitative thought. However, the point of emphasis here is that kitsch is coercive; it inherently contains its own responses, leaving neither choice nor effort to the receiver. Hence, it can be appropriate for the requirements of the state. By contrast, only the “plastic values” or serious contemporary (avant-garde) art are accessible to reception. Such art is created and received for its own sake; its autonomy ensures that it cannot be subjected to state control. Thus, the avant-garde's renunciation of “extraverted experience” is linked to its insistent and exclusive concern with its own plasticity; this in turn ensures its inherent distinction from the effects and uses of mass art.

It is probably clear by now how Greenberg's discussion of avant-gardism helps to explicate the connection between Babbitt's “official” discussion of scientific language and his informal antipopulism. Greenberg's criteria for inclusion in the category of avant-garde art (and culture) resonate closely with Babbitt's for inclusion in the category of serious music (musical citizenship). Just as avant-garde art is “about” plastic values and the causes of artistic experience, serious music is to be understood in terms of scientific language, not the vacuous, “incorrigible” language of “easy evaluative” and “expressive descriptives.”<sup>59</sup>

Both Greenberg and Babbitt dualistically oppose high and mass culture and view the distinction in terms of the contrast between purely structural and extrinsic descriptions or properties and qualities. Both take the experience of mass culture in the late 1930s and 1940s as a reference point. Both provide an authoritative and distinctly American apologia for a commitment to the exemplars of European modernism. However, while Greenberg distinguishes avant-garde and kitsch by describing the *inherent* nature of the works of art that fall into these categories, Babbitt frames the discussion in terms of language, specifically the language for regulating the characterization of music. For Babbitt, the metatheorist, writing in the 1950s and 1960s and cognizant of the contemporaneous epistemological writing of Willard V. Quine and Nelson Goodman, the distinction between high art and mass culture—"autonomous" and "coopted" art—could not be framed in terms of any inherent properties of music "itself."<sup>60</sup> The discussion necessarily shifted from the inherent properties of music to the properties of language used to describe music. (Greenberg's own claim, that there are *intrinsic* characteristics distinguishing works of avant-garde and kitsch art, would have been difficult for him to make if it were applied principally to music; music would not have provided him with the visual arts' strong intuitive distinction between representation and abstraction.) The difference between Greenberg's approach and Babbitt's involves a linguistic turn necessitated by the intellectual developments during the twenty years that separate "Avant-garde and Kitsch" from Babbitt's important metatheoretical essays. However, both sets of oppositions provide a *modus operandi* for excluding the products of mass culture from the realm of serious art.

In short, while insisting on a de-politicized discussion of music composition, Babbitt has persistently worried about the problems of musical citizenship, cultural difference, and diversification, the limits of musical thought, and the survival of high culture. His comments on these matters retain traces of the anti-Stalinist/mass cult anxieties he and his contemporaries experienced in the 1930s and 1940s. Indeed, speculating about the remnants of these anxieties in Babbitt's later work helps to explain the tensions between the relativistic and elitist aspects of his metatheory. As I suggest in the following section, the New York Intellectuals' discussion of cultural pluralism during the 1950s—following the mass culture critiques of the previous decades—coupled an acknowledgement of cultural diversity with a rationale for insulating a cultural elite in ways that significantly parallel the cultural commentary inherent in Babbitt's metatheory.

### **The Vital Center: Scientific Language and Pluralism in the Cold War Era**

It might be argued at this point that I have gone to extraordinary lengths only to paraphrase an interpretation of Babbitt that has already been well articulated. As Kerman put it in *Contemplating Music*, “[Babbitt’s] distress, even rage, erupting into repeated assaults and innuendos directed against various predictable targets . . . issued obviously (and openly enough) from the same sense of modernist alienation as was expressed very differently by Schoenberg or, to take an even more extravagant case, Adorno.”<sup>61</sup> Kerman goes on to propose that, unlike Theodor Adorno, “Babbitt at Princeton was pointing out that avant-garde music could find its niche after all—though only by retreating from one bastion of middle-class culture, the concert hall, to another, the university.”<sup>62</sup>

For Kerman, Babbitt’s positions identify him as an “alienated modernist,” like Schoenberg and Adorno. Although both Adorno and Babbitt stated their antipathy to popular culture in no uncertain terms, those familiar with Babbitt’s informal comments about Adorno will be skeptical about any putative connection between him and the critical theorist, whom he once met in Washington Square.<sup>63</sup> However, Babbitt’s particular brand of modernism is a far cry from Adorno’s vision of Schoenberg—the hermetic, self-sacrificing artist who presents a “surviving message of despair from the shipwrecked,” and who retreats from complacent notions of beauty while “point[ing] out the ills of society rather than sublimating those ills into a deceptive humanitarianism.”<sup>64</sup> (For one thing, Babbitt would probably consider such statements meaningless, whether in connection with his own music and thought or Schoenberg’s.) While Babbitt’s methodological preoccupations and taste might discourage him from explicitly stating many of the cultural implications of his theory, his approach to music contains a cultural critique much more closely aligned with Greenberg’s and Macdonald’s of the late 1930s than Adorno’s. What this means, I propose, is that their brand of modernism was more “critical” than “alienated,” not so much withdrawn and self-sacrificing as socially committed and engaged. Fighting for the preservation of significant distinctions within and between artistic works could be construed, as Greenberg suggested, as a heroic act, a kind of skeptical patriotism. This fight required an elite critical perspective within the cultural mainstream rather than an ascetic retreat or self-denial. This point recalls Kerman’s formulation of Babbitt’s “retreat” to that “bastion of the middle class,” the university. Babbitt’s university—understood in terms of postwar cultural politics—was close to the front lines

of cultural debate: in Babbitt's own term, a "fortress" in the culture wars, for academic composers, not a "greenhouse," as Kerman describes it in his comments on university-based new music.<sup>65</sup>

As the historian, Peter Gallison, has shown, such a view of culture was powerfully foreshadowed by Babbitt's self-acknowledged epistemological influences, the Vienna Circle positivists themselves. As Gallison proposes,

the two movements [the positivists and the Bauhaus artists] faced the same enemies—the religious right, nationalist, anthroposophist, *völkisch*, and Nazi opponents—and this drove them even closer together, toward the conjoint life they had in mind. Both enterprises sought to instantiate a modernism emphasizing what I will call "transparent construction," a manifest building up from simple elements to all higher forms that would, by virtue of the systematic constructional program itself, guarantee the exclusion of the decorative, mystical, or metaphysical. There was a political dimension to this form of construction: by basing it on simple, accessible units, they hoped to banish incorporation of nationalist or historical features.<sup>66</sup>

We have already seen how Babbitt's own "systematic constructional program" dealt with history and excluded metaphysics, and we have observed the anti-*völkisch* current in his thought. Was Babbitt (or Greenberg) explicitly aware that "the Vienna Circle and Dessau's Bauhaus vision of transparent construction was anathema to the Nazi movement; [that] it cut any transcendent national purpose from the state, from architecture, and from nature"?<sup>67</sup> Was he cognizant of the parallels between his own politics and those of his positivist antecedents? Someday, this story, too, will have to be told.

During the early 1950s, in the context of Cold War, anti-Soviet sentiment, a critique of mass culture along Greenbergian lines echoed loudly in the American discussion of culture. However, the participants in this discussion grappled just as conspicuously with the question of cultural pluralism, emphasizing the importance of encouraging diversity in a free society. The phenomenon of cultural pluralism itself, like Greenberg's avant-garde art, was to serve as an antidote to the insidious, homogenizing, and totalizing encroachments of mass culture (which was seen as an instrument of state oppression in the case of the Soviet Union). Conversely, safeguarding the conditions of autonomous, artistic expression, answerable to no authority outside of itself, could be proposed as one of the fundamental principles of cultural pluralism.<sup>68</sup> After the war, avant-garde art continued to occupy a privileged function: to oppose mass culture. In this context, serious, avant-garde art could be seen as "affirming America." In the influential book, *The Vital Center*, Arthur Schlesinger proposed that

modernist masters such as Stravinsky or Picasso “reflect and incite anxieties which are incompatible with the monolithic character of the ‘Soviet person.’ ”<sup>69</sup> Moreover, as Schlesinger stated forthrightly in the *Partisan Review*’s 1952 forum on American culture, “the only answer to mass culture, of course, lies in the affirmation of America, not as a uniform society, but as a various and pluralistic society, made of many groups with diverse interests. The immediate problem is to conserve cultural pluralism in face of the threat of the mass media.”<sup>70</sup> Andrew Ross has suggested that Schlesinger’s “agenda was clearly to distinguish American social experience from what was lumped together as fascist and Soviet ‘totalitarianism.’ ” According to Ross, the pluralistic model that emerged was promoted by intellectuals whose

role [was] therefore central to the process of legitimation—to serve, again not always consciously, as the bearers and shapers of a language that makes some forms of discursive experience available while it ignores, excludes, or suppresses others. A certain vocabulary is presented as permissible, not all of it hegemonic (some counterhegemonic ideas are contained within it), and not in any way unified, but which nonetheless marks the temporarily legitimate boundaries of consciousness.<sup>71</sup>

Ross’s description of intellectuals shaping and bearing a language that at once permits diversity and limits the boundaries of permissible thought strongly recalls our previous discussion of Babbitt’s ambivalent advocacy of scientific language. Schlesinger’s vision of cultural diversity, like Babbitt’s, implies conflict. Both implicitly distinguish healthy diversity from another kind of cultural proliferation, which is unhealthy and needs to be contained. The proliferation of the former kind of diversity is needed to counterbalance and contain the latter.

In recent writing, in which Babbitt has been especially candid about the problems of contextualism in music and diversity in musical culture, he comes close to acknowledging the contradiction between simultaneously promoting and containing diversity. In the same published lecture in which the “mightiest of fortresses” image of the university occurs, just as he introduces the theme of cultural diversity, Babbitt introduces an anxious qualification while reaffirming composition as an intramural university activity: “The first thing I have to do is disabuse you that I’m talking about a particular kind of music and a particular kind of university. That would often be inferred, particularly from me, but I mean nothing of the sort. . . . Music has never been so pluralistic.”<sup>72</sup>

In any event, Ross’s description of the process of legitimizing some forms of “discursive experience” while excluding others, com-

bined with Greenberg's and Macdonald's cultural norms and categories, provides a provocative (if partial) answer to the questions raised earlier: Why should Babbitt so closely link concept formation in music to "scientific language"? Why should verbal and methodological responsibility be the touchstone of musical citizenship? And why should the advocacy of cultural diversity be so intimately linked to concern about its containment?

### The "umbilical cord of gold"

In considering ethnographies of literature and art in *The Predicament of Culture*, James Clifford has suggested a beginning and end point of this study. What he says about museum collections of art objects applies, in large part, to our approaches to music discourse: "I propose that any collection implies a temporal vision generating rarity and worth, a metahistory. This history defines which groups or things will be redeemed from a disintegrating human past and which will be defined as the dynamic, or tragic, agents of a common destiny. My analysis works to bring out the local, political contingency of such histories and of the modern collections they justify. Space is cleared, perhaps, for alternatives."<sup>73</sup> Critical, analytical, or theoretical writing about music is itself a form of collecting, redeeming the artifacts "collected" (discussed) "from a disintegrating human past," and defining the persistent legitimacy and importance of some kinds of music rather than others. Like Clifford, I too have been concerned with the political contingencies of a history, but one that justifies a particular kind of music discourse; this discourse, in turn, is often used to justify particular musical practices.

To a large degree, the kind of "space clearing" that Clifford mentions has already occurred within American musical culture; indeed, as we have seen, Babbitt himself is among those who have begun to clear the space. However, as I have also suggested, he has erected his antipopulist fortress in this perilously open terrain. In proposing a cultural/historical context for Babbitt's metatheory, I mean to suggest that the time has come to finish the job of space-clearing that Babbitt began. However, in dismantling his modernist fortress, we should be careful to keep the bricks, if not the mortar, as we continue to rebuild (and topple) our own cultural constructions.

In light of this claim, the story I have told about Babbitt has specific implications for the discussion of our own current situation. If we accept the premise that an insistence on scientific language (rather



than a looser, less exclusionary attitude) is linked to the historical project of distinguishing between high and mass culture, how are we to proceed if we no longer subscribe to this dualism? Even as early as 1939, Greenberg recognized the fragility of the circumstances necessary to support his conception of avant-garde culture:

The avant-garde's specialization of itself, the fact that its best artists are artists' artists, its best poets poets' poets, has estranged a great many of those who were capable formerly of enjoying and appreciating ambitious art and literature, but who are now unwilling or unable to acquire an initiation into their craft secrets. The masses have always remained more or less indifferent to culture in the process of development. But today such culture is being abandoned by those to whom it actually belongs—our ruling class. For it is to the latter that the avant-garde belongs. No culture can develop without a social basis, without a source of stable income. And in the case of the avant-garde, this was provided by an elite among the ruling class of that society from which it assumed itself to be cut off, but to which it has always remained attached by an umbilical cord of gold. The paradox is real. And now this elite is rapidly shrinking. Since the avant-garde forms the only living culture we now have, the survival in the near future of culture in general is thus threatened.<sup>74</sup>

I have quoted the entirety of this paragraph from "Avant-garde and Kitsch" because it is so richly suggestive for our current discussion. The second sentence evokes the famous published title of Babbitt's essay, "Who Cares If You Listen?," while the first recalls the original title for the article, "The Composer as Specialist." The question of survival raised in the conclusion of Greenberg's paragraph is echoed in the "mightiest of fortresses" passage from the last chapter of *Words About Music*, cited above.<sup>75</sup> And, of course, Babbitt hints at his own version of the "umbilical cord of gold" in that passage: the university is responsible for the "corporal survival" of composers as well as the dissemination and protection of their work. To paraphrase Babbitt, we need only replace Greenberg's phrase, "elite among the ruling class," with the single word, "university," the benign patronage of which (tenure, academic freedom) is meant to protect the composer's autonomy. Within the enclosed space of the academic "fortress," the composer presumably needs no umbilical cord, but may participate untethered in symbiotic, nourishing exchanges of gold and academic discourse.

Whether or not any part of this view of high art continues to seem viable or desirable, it exists in relation to a conception of "kitsch" that may now seem entirely too monolithic. Thus, the high/mass culture distinction is likely to seem entirely too severe. We are

far more likely to refer to the precarious marginality of the high modernist wing in American new music, rather than the heroic containment of its antithesis—especially as the brief para-aristocratic reign of the university composer gives way to the new arrangements of a music academic disciplinary perestroika.

This point brings us back to methodology. Over forty years after Babbitt's important essays on metatheory began to appear, the discussion of models of diversity, group constitution in musical culture, and the cultural history of musical praxes may play as liberating and clarifying a role as have his theoretical innovations. Moreover, the two kinds of investigation are not discontinuous: notions about culture, the institutions and practices that support them, and the metaphors invoked to carry them, play a crucial role in shaping our technical languages and artistic perceptions. The feminist critic Teresa de Lauretis proposes a more generalized and succinct statement of principle: "Practices—events and behaviors occurring in social formations—weigh in the constitution of subjectivity as much as does language."<sup>76</sup> From this point of view, the discussion of and experimentation with different cultural categories, approaches to musical discourse, institutional affiliations, and communal practices may be considered part of the creative musical process as much as theorizing (in the sense of Babbitt). To the extent that such discussion and experimentation borrows from contemporary ethnography and cultural history, they may constitute a relativistic position more radical than Babbitt's but still able to accommodate his methodological advances. At the same time, they may help us find alternatives to the stark opposition of "negative dialectics" and "positive" formalism that so often divides critical theory from music theory.

It was Babbitt's already radical move to show us how much language could inform the "constitution of subjectivity" for the paradigmatically nonverbal, nonrepresentational art, music. In spinning the terms again, emphasizing the complex, historical embeddedness of subjectivity and our conceptions of intersubjectivity, it is tempting to tamper with one of Babbitt's own evocative titles: "Contemporary Music Composition and Music Theory as Contemporary Intellectual History." We may simply want to reverse the terms of this formulation, to see historical and ethnographic narratives about music as (among other things) efforts to stimulate new conceptualizations and practices of theory and composition. However, to the extent that this project replaces the kinds of interactions between theory and composition described by Babbitt, the simplification will be unsatisfactory.

Theory, history, composition, and criticism will, as I have suggested, continually maintain a dialogue in broadening cultural contexts. As the art historian T. J. Clark formulated it in a discussion of Jackson Pollock:

How do we map the context of exploitation, misuse, rereading, misreading in the culture *onto* and *into* a certain practice, a certain set of intentions—intentions realized? Aren't we all still struggling with that?

"Struggling" really is the word. We still don't have even the beginnings of an adequate set of terms—set of coordinates—with which to *do* the mapping. . . . Internal *versus* external is like "originality" *versus* "only afterward," or, come to that, "text" *versus* "context." Not that our work will ever magically escape from these metaphorical divisions, but the more pressure they're put under, in the actual process of historical inquiry, the better for all of us.<sup>77</sup>

Babbitt's revolutionary metatheory taught us how music discourse might, rationally—without magic—try to find a way out of the metaphorical divisions Clark poses. In reasserting their power and struggling (and failing) again to transcend them, we may come to feel the crosscurrents of pressure emanating from both Clark's "process of historical inquiry" and Babbitt's "scientific method and scientific language."

### Notes

A number of people have commented very helpfully on drafts of this paper. Thanks especially to Susan Blaustein, Stephen Dembski, Marion Guck, Caroline Jones, Fred Maus, Robert Morris, Katharine Park, Jeff Stadelman, and Judith Tick. Thanks also to Marion Guck and Fred Maus and to my interview collaborators Susan Blaustein and Dennis Miller for permission to quote previously unpublished interview materials. And thanks especially to Milton Babbitt for his gracious participation in the interviews cited here and his cooperation in editing them.

1. Quoted in Richard A. Reuss, *American Folklore and Left-Wing Politics: 1927–1957* (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University 1971), 69.
2. "Theory of Mass Culture," *Diogenes* 3 (Summer 1953): 1–17; repr. in Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, eds., *Mass Culture* (Glencoe, Ill.: Knopf, 1957), 62.
3. Susan Blaustein, and Martin Brody, "Inventing an American Musical Culture: an Interview with Milton Babbitt," excerpts trans. into French in *Contretemps* (Geneva, Switzerland, 1987). The interview was conducted during Jan. 18–20, 1985. Excerpts from the unpublished portion of the interview will be cited in the remainder of this paper.
4. John Rockwell, *All American Music* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 32.
5. Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 101.

6. Greg Sandow, music column of the *Village Voice* (Mar. 16, 1982): 98.
7. Benjamin Boretz, "Milton Babbitt," in *Dictionary of Contemporary Music* ed. John Vinton (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974), 48.
8. Rockwell, 36.
9. Boretz, 48.
10. Babbitt, "Past and Present Concepts of the Nature and Limits of Music," *International Musicological Society Congress Report* (New York, 1961), 398–403; repr. in *Perspectives on Contemporary Music Theory* ed. Benjamin Boretz and Edward Cone (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), 3.
11. Babbitt, "Past and Present Concepts of the Nature and Limits of Music," 9.
12. Babbitt, ed. "Who Cares If You Listen?," in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Barney Childs and Elliott Schwartz (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 244; originally published in *High Fidelity* 8 (Feb. 1958): 38–40, 126–27.
13. Babbitt, "Past and Present Concepts of the Nature and Limits of Music," 9.
14. Babbitt, "Past and Present Concepts of the Nature and Limits of Music," 15.
15. Babbitt, "Twelve-tone Invariants as Compositional Determinants," in *Problems of Modern Music*, ed. P. H. Lang, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), 108.
16. Babbitt's expression, "Twelve-tone Invariants," 108.
17. Babbitt, "The Structure and Function of Music Theory," *Perspectives on Contemporary Music Theory*, ed. Boretz and Cone, 13–14.
18. Babbitt, "Structure and Function," 12.
19. Babbitt, "Structure and Function," 21.
20. *Words About Music*, ed. Stephen Dembski and Joseph Straus (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 163.
21. For example, Babbitt told the story recently during a lecture at the Harvard Music Department (Nov. 4, 1991). He also narrated it in the interview with Blaustein and Brody cited above.
22. Dembski and Straus, *Words About Music*; Babbitt, "On Having Been, and Still Being, an American Composer," *Perspectives of New Music* 27 (Winter 1989): 106–12. Two interviews with Babbitt that I conducted—one (already cited) with Susan Blaustein and the other with Dennis Miller (Mar. 14, 1985 at the Juilliard School)—provided much of the stimulation to write this paper. Portions of the latter interview appeared in the program booklet to the recording *Piano Works of Milton Babbitt*, Harmonia Mundi Recordings, and "Milton Babbitt: An Appreciation" (League-ISCMPublications: Boston, 1985). Another interview, conducted by Marion Guck and Fred Maus (Aug. 6, 1988)—which will be quoted in the following—is currently being prepared for publication.
23. Interview with Blaustein and Brody.
24. A great deal has been written about the politics and culture of the New York intellectual scene from the 1930s to the present. Richard H. Pells's *Radical Visions and*

*American Dreams* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973) and *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) and Alan Wald's *The New York Intellectuals* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987) have been especially helpful to me in sorting through the primary texts.

25. P. Wheelwright and J. Burnham, *Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Holt, 1932).
26. Interview with Guck and Maus.
27. John Dewey, "Qualitative Thought," *Symposium* 1 (1931): 17.
28. For example, see Macdonald's two-part "Notes on Hollywood Directors" in *Symposium* 4 (1933): 2–3.
29. Sidney Hook, "Why I am a Communist: Communism Without Dogmas," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934): 23–24; repr. in Wald, 4.
30. James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (New York: John Day, 1941), as described in Pells, *Radical Visions*, 352.
31. The Committee for Cultural Freedom, an organization of intellectuals that (it was eventually revealed) was funded by the CIA, has been written about extensively. See especially, Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy* (New York: The Free Press, 1989).
32. Interview with Guck and Maus.
33. Interview with Guck and Maus.
34. Dwight Macdonald, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 3.
35. Aaron Copland, "A Note to Young Composers," *Music Vanguard* 1 (Mar.–Apr. 1935): 14–16. In the interview with Guck and Maus, Babbitt is likely to be referring to the following comment of Copland's: "The creative artist's life has never been an easy one in any epoch. (Undoubtedly, in the Soviet Union they order these things better.)"
36. Jane Coppock, "A Conversation with Arthur Berger," *Perspectives of New Music* 17 (1988): 49. Berger goes on to comment on the complexities of the changing relationship between proletarianism, mass culture, and European modernist composition. I will touch on the same issues in the following, though my emphasis will be on the opposition of mass and high culture rather than class analyses of culture.
37. See Roger Sessions, "Some Notes on Dr. Goebbels' Letter to Furtwaengler," *Modern Music* 11 (1933): 3–32; repr. as "Music and Nationalism," in *Roger Sessions on Music: Collected Essays*, ed. Edward T. Cone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 271–81.
38. *Politics* 2 (Nov. 1945): 346.
39. Macdonald announced his withdrawal from the *Partisan Review*, and his intention to found *Politics*, in a letter to the editor (*Partisan Review* 10 [1943]: 382).
40. In recent years, Babbitt has described himself as a conservative and has indicated his antipathy to leftist movement politics as far back as his student years. Certainly, "Battle Cry" takes a cynical attitude toward the "maxims" of war. I asked Babbitt about the poem after the Harvard lecture already cited. Indicating that it was a response to what he viewed as America's belated entry into World War II, he

referred to the poem as an example of what he called "my elitism." Babbitt and Macdonald could hardly have agreed about the war; not long before publishing "Battle Cry," Macdonald was still calling for "revolutionary action against the warmakers." In referring to "elitism," I took Babbitt to be associating himself with intellectuals such as Macdonald—skeptical anti-Stalinists who remained engaged by, however critical of, mainstream political and cultural thought (and who defended the production of "autonomous" high art). In our conversation about Macdonald, Babbitt referred to him as a close friend and colleague for over forty years.

41. Simone Weil, "Words and War," *Politics* 5 (Mar. 1946): 77.
42. See Karl Jaspers, "The Rebirth of the University," *Politics* 3 (Feb. 1946): 52–57; Dwight Macdonald, "USA vs. USSR," 5 (Spring 1948): 77; Nicolas Nabokov, "The Music Purge," 5 (Spring 1948): 102–6.
43. A "Popular Culture" section was regularly featured in *Politics*. In the first issue, Macdonald published "A Theory of Popular Culture" (Feb. 1944), which he later reworked under the title "A Theory of Mass Culture" (see note 2). For some of Macdonald's other contributions, see "On Lowbrow Thinking," 1 (Aug. 1944): 219–20 and "Field Notes," 2 (Apr. 1945): 112–14.
44. Macdonald, "Theory of Mass Culture," Rosenberg and White, 64.
45. See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), and Andrew Ross, "Containing Culture in the Cold War," in *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989).
46. Ross, 50.
47. Earl Browder, "Writers and the Communist Party," 1938, quoted in Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1961), 160–61.
48. See Guilbaut, 21, *passim*.
49. Kurt List, "The Music of Soviet Russia," *Politics* 1 (May 1944): 108.
50. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 17.
51. Repr. in Philip Rahv, *Essays on Literature and Politics* ed. A. J. Porter and A. J. Dvosin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 303.
52. Was Rahv self-consciously echoing and inverting the Nazi expression, "entartete Kunst"?
53. Greenberg, "The Late Thirties in New York," in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 230.
54. Leon Trotsky, "Art and Politics," *Partisan Review* (Aug.–Sept. 1938); quoted in Guilbaut, 31–32.
55. Greenberg, "Avant-garde," 6.
56. Greenberg, "Avant-garde," 10.
57. Greenberg, "Avant-garde," 5.

58. Greenberg, "Avant-garde," 15.
  59. See Babbitt, "The Structure and Function of Music Theory," 11–12.
  60. See, for example, the discussion of nominalism in one of Babbitt's most admired philosophical sources: Nelson Goodman, *The Structure of Appearance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), esp. 31–35.
  61. Kerman, 101.
  62. Kerman, 101.
  63. In the interviews both with Brody and Miller and Guck and Maus, Babbitt has discussed his personal disdain for Theodor Adorno. He met Adorno through the mediation of Roger Sessions and the sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld. Adorno's writing on music would never pass Babbitt's tests of clarity and verification for responsible musical discourse.
  64. Theodor W. Adorno, *The Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. A. G. Mitchell and W. V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 102–3. This may be an appropriate point to mention another bit of Adorno's construction of modernism that has contributed to the current critical view of what (still) tends to be called "uptown" music. Referring to twelve-tone music as "mechanistic," "absolutely determined," and "obstinately rigid" (*Philosophy of Modern Music*, 71, *passim*)—hence (for him) admirably detached from the complacent habits of cultural expression—Adorno may inadvertently be the source of much of the current critical invective against musical "intellectualism."
  65. See Kerman, 104: "The academy has become a sort of greenhouse; even a writer so contemptuous of the use of metaphorical language as Babbitt cannot avoid sometimes succumbing to the 'organic fallacy.' " In this context, it is interesting to recall the ironies of Babbitt's "Music for the Masses" anecdote, especially in reference to his Judaism. Alan Wald has pointed out that many of the New York Intellectuals who came into prominence during the 1930s were the first American Jews to achieve prominence in the academic elite. Theirs was a struggle for engagement in a newly forming American culture—not a withdrawal from a European culture in tragic decline. A good deal has been written about this and about the sensibilities of those intellectuals, both Jewish and non-Jewish, forming the affiliation of writers referred to as New York Intellectuals. As Richard Pells put it, they "thought of themselves as quintessentially urban, refreshingly cynical, and above all erudite. . . . The intellectuals who clustered around *Commentary* and *The Partisan Review* were instinctive outsiders, descendants of immigrants and ghetto dwellers . . . suspicious of populist sentimentality as a prelude to the pogroms" (*The Liberal Mind*, 74).
- Babbitt's anecdote reminds us that he was the first Jewish composer to be hired at Princeton, just as Hook was the first Jewish philosopher at NYU and Trilling the first Jew in the Columbia English department. Babbitt, like Hook, Trilling, Greenberg, Meyer Schapiro, and Philip Rahv, was, as Irving Howe puts it, among "the New York writers [who] came at the end of the modernist experience, just as they came at what may yet have to be judged the end of the radical experience, and as they certainly came at the end of the immigrant Jewish experience." Certainly, one of Howe's descriptions of these often-Jewish intellectuals fits Babbitt perfectly: "They could talk faster than anyone else, they knew their way around better, they were



quicker on their feet" ("The New York Intellectuals," *The Decline of the New* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), 218. The point to emphasize here is that this sensibility, however critical it might be, was not one of isolation and alienation.

66. Peter Gallison, "Aufbau/Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism," *Critical Inquiry* 16(4) (Summer 1990): 710–11.

67. Gallison, 744.

68. Macdonald, for example, continued his longstanding critique of kitsch and mass culture in the postwar period, as the quotation at the beginning of this essay exemplifies. His discussion of the way kitsch "mixes and scrambles everything" adumbrates Babbitt's comments on "unscientific" musical discourse "which permits anything to be said and virtually nothing to be communicated" ("Structure and Function," 11), hence obfuscating meaningful distinctions.

69. Arthur Schlesinger, *The Vital Center; the Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1949), 79.

70. Schlesinger's untitled contribution to "Our Country and our Culture, Part III" *Partisan Review* vol. 19 no. 5 (1952): 592.

71. Ross, 56.

72. *Words About Music*, 164. Here Babbitt's discussion of pluralism and the problem of diversity is, in many ways, his most explicit. Chapter 6, "The Unlikely Survival of Contemporary Music," discusses "the crux . . . of the problem of diversity" in musical culture in terms of *contextuality*, that is, in terms of the internal, individualized differences between musical works. "This is where it began. Those middle-period works of Schoenberg . . . are to as large an extent as possible self-referential, self-contained, and what I'm given to call 'contextual.' Contextuality merely has to do with the extent to which a piece defines its materials within itself" (167). For Babbitt, the paradigm of diversity is the structure of the individual work, rather than the characterization of different ideologies, styles, and/or other shared identities. Indeed, words like "ideology," "style," and "aesthetics," or for that matter, "culture," are not, for Babbitt, reasonable concepts for conceptualizing music. Again, the emphasis is on preserving and valuing intra-work structural individuation and intra-work structural distinctions.

73. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 13.

74. Greenberg, "Avant-garde," 8.

75. As the composer Jeff Stadelman has pointed out to me, there are also echoes here of the closing passage of "Who Cares If You Listen?" (The connection should not be overlooked; it pertains significantly to the question of Babbitt's relationship to Adorno and to the characterization of his academic "retreat.") Babbitt states:

Granting to music the position accorded other arts and sciences [in universities] promises the sole substantive means of survival for the music I have been describing. Admittedly, if this music is not supported, the whistling repertory of the man in the street will be little affected, the concert-going activity of the conspicuous consumer of musical culture will be little disturbed. But music will cease to evolve and, in that important sense, will cease to live. (250)

Reading this passage in *Contemplating Music*, Kerman puts his emphasis on the word *evolve*, which he interprets as a swerve into historical organicism. I propose a blander reading of “evolve” and wish to place more emphasis on Babbitt’s quest for an alternative institutional context for new music, one that would be unhindered by consumerism, philistinism, and the pressures of mass culture. Two points should be emphasized. First, Babbitt’s advocacy (in “Who Cares?”) of a “withdrawal from the public world” should be read in the context of Greenberg’s ruminations on the avant-garde and Macdonald’s critique of mass culture. In this context, Babbitt’s use of the term “public music” and “public world” seem to drift very slightly from “mass culture” or “kitsch.” The withdrawal from *this* public world (mass, kitsch, consumer culture) need not be interpreted as a retreat into hermeticism. In any case, Babbitt’s disdain for the egalitarianism of the “market place of the concert hall” (248) conforms with the rhetoric and values of Greenbergian avant-gardism, especially as these came to be identified with conservative, Cold War reactions to Soviet cultural politics. Second, as I have suggested through much of this essay, Babbitt sees wide-ranging, discursive connections between institutions, language, dissemination of values, and behavior of the groups and individuals engaged in various aspects of musical praxis. To borrow Greenberg’s terms again, Babbitt seeks to piece together the remnants of a “living culture” after the avant-garde/ruling elite arrangement has dissolved.

76. Teresa de Lauretis, “The Violence of Rhetoric,” in *Technologies of Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 42.

77. T. J. Clark, “Jackson Pollock’s Abstraction,” in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945–1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 243.

TELLING IT *SLANT*  
or  
IN SEARCH OF THE EARLY YEARS  
or  
'A SITTING ON A GATE'\*

ELAINE BARKIN

In 1962, MY DEAR FRIEND Ben Boretz (who was only 28 and also music critic for *The Nation*, a boon for me as it turned out) drafted, recruited me into helping out with, still under wraps, as yet unborn, *Perspectives of New Music*. Drafted but willingly, for I had been out of touch with music and music-thought for several years: nr. 1 son Victor born in 1958, nr. 2 son Jesse in 1961; nr. 3 son Gabriel arrived on Halloween in 1963, and I was a stay-at-home mom, reading tons of 19th & 20th century American, English-Irish, European, Russian novels, mysteries, and plays; in 1964 we moved from the Lower East Side to the Upper West Side, closer to the *Perspectives* home office; Ben also rented a nice office near Carnegie Hall, "name on the door, rug on the floor". And thus, with much trepidation and eagerness, was my music-intellectual re-education reinitiated, reanimated, regenerated, pre- and post-doc graduate school! New linguistic modes, some of which I wanted and learned to speak, others of which were never my thing. University Without Walls. For starters I sent out galley proofs that had already been copyedited by Harriet Anderson, later Eve Hanle, of Princeton University Press, asking contributors to read through their galleys carefully, me trying to find a way to get them to limit changes, look for typos, write a short contributor's note, etcetera. Them were big-name, post-WW II composers—American and European—and a younger productive generation of all stripes, scholars, and techies; insuperable bulwarks yet to arise. "How did you come into this line of work?" one irate contributor wrote on his galley proofs, you being me, he was totally miffed that *any* of his original wording had been trifled with. Having heard George Crumb's music but never having seen a score I agonized about what might be an indelible coffee mug stain on a music example of his *Night Music*! And what about those "iffs", I wondered, were they ALL typos or, if not, what were they about? And when an eminent middle-generation composer asked me to send him the Bauer- Mingleberg/Ferentz offprint that listed all "eleven-internal twelve tone rows", I wondered and still do, where did he put those rows? The summer of 1963, with Ben in Europe, I worked with Arthur Berger (he had a brief tenure as a *PNM* editor, Ben and I had studied with him at Brandeis, later on he was key chair of my PhD committee), who gossiped and kvetched with and at every polysyllable. But Arthur and I put the issue to bed to everyone's satisfaction. In 1964, I met with Milton Babbitt at Columbia's Electronic Music Center and he effortlessly talked to me about time-point sets, invariants, aggregates, Southern hospitality, and Chinese food restaurants. Now, as I take down and open Vol. 1 No. 1, Fall 1962—with a memoriam to Irving Fine who died way too young and also with whom Ben and I had studied at Brandeis—I am taken back, and aback, when I notice a short article by my longtime friend and colleague Paul Des Marais who died last year. That issue was the cat's meow! (The cat's pajamas might have been the magazine *Source, music of the avant garde*, which made its first appearance in 1967, supported by UC Davis, its glossy focus on scores and photos a world apart from *PNM* then, but *Source* ceased in 1973.) Also appearing in this first issue is my translation of Stockhausen's "Die Einheit der musikalischen Zeit";

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\* Reprinted from *Perspectives of New Music*, Volume 20, Nos. 1 & 2 (2012)

the Telling the chutzpah it took to do that staggers me now. (In the summer of 1957, after a year in Berlin studying with Boris Blacher, I enrolled in the Darmstadt Ferienkurse, sat in on lectures by Stockhausen and the rest of that post-WW II gang, went to loads of concerts, and absorbed what I could. Far out, another galaxy.) An invaluable resource for me, as I research my *PNM* years, is Ann P. Basart's *Perspectives of New Music / An Index, 1962–1982*, as well as the many Indices and Catalogues of Issues produced by Ben. My *PNM* connection was enlivening, radically-socio-musicallyculturally life-altering and, as I was to discover a few years later, politically charged; competition was fierce, egos easily bruised or boosted. (It might have been 1964 or 65 when I first attended an editorial board meeting in a room at midtown's Princeton Club, the air reeking of 'composerly' H2S, famous nostrils spewing, Clashes of the Titans, not always *sotto voce*. No wonder Ben had not encouraged me to attend.) For sure, I'd been naïve. Yet, all the while, learning and intellectual stimulation were interfused with a plenitude of protonic plusses, a bunch of negative charges, none of which was generated by any of the music I was listening to.

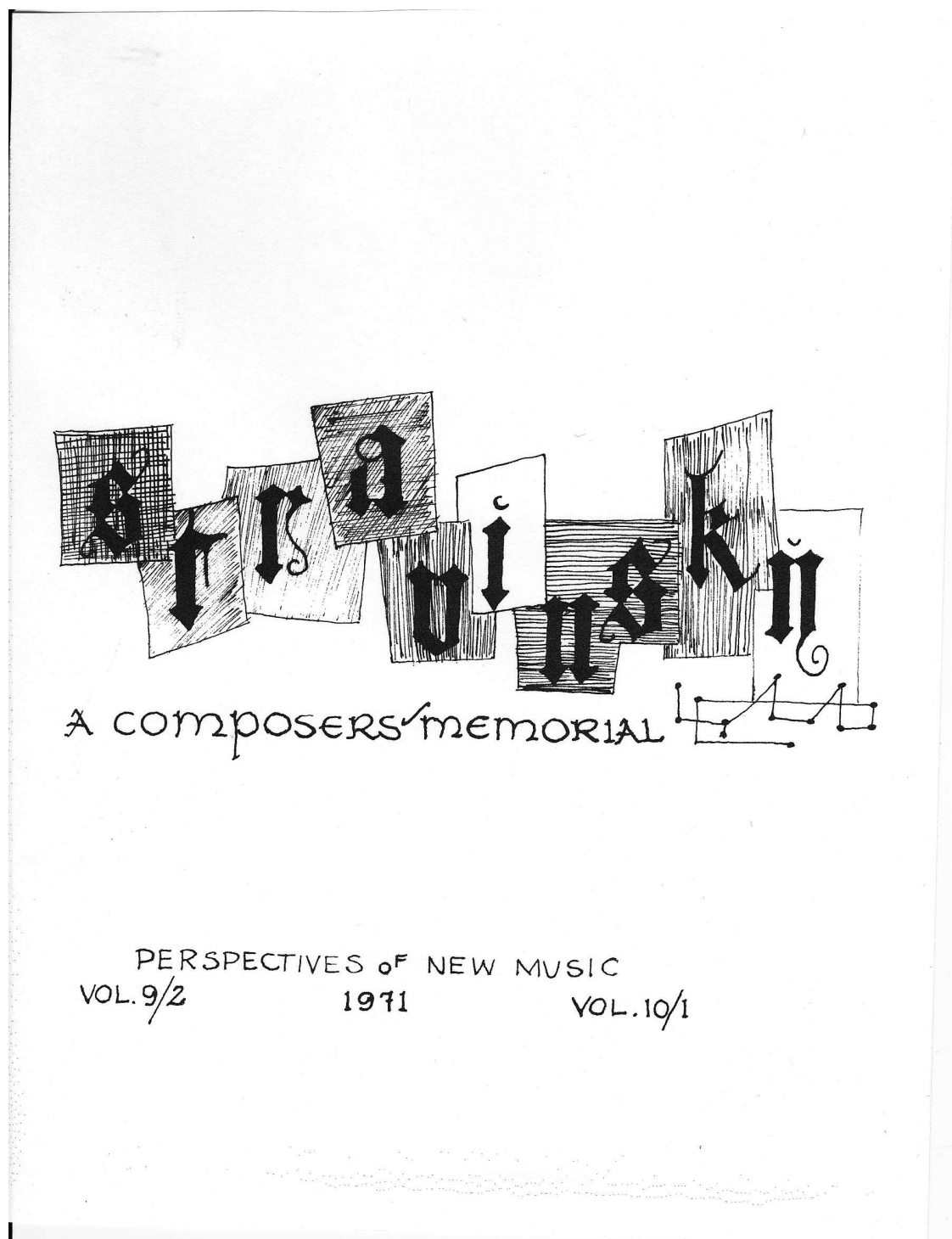
[And "the 60s" were a'comin' . . . Dylan, Cuban missile crisis, the Beatles & Brit-loads, Woodstock, Feminism, Grateful Dead, Ken Kesey, Timothy Leary, rock-n-roll, JFK's assassination, Summers of Love, Great Society, Open Theater, Open Classrooms, Malcolm X's assassination, civil rights marches & murders, Rev. MLK's assassination, RFK's assassination, Open Form, race riots, anti-war protests, Kent State, Stonewall riots, ballet, modern dance, on & off Broadway, fiction, film, poetry, MoMA and the art world, Moon Landing, culture wars, Manson murders, the Chicago 1968 Democratic convention with TV journalists crying out: "they're killing the children" (footage still unbearable to watch, all of which came back to me, November 2008, when Barack Hussein Obama, President-elect, met with his family and supporters in Grant Park, Chicago).]

And what a fabulous time to be living in New York—as it has been again, or so I read; concerts of New Music in little halls, big halls, churches, indoors, outdoors, uptown, downtown, all around the town. And gradually, if I read aloud and breathed sentences slowly, glimmers of music-intellectual thought seeped into my brain, as did those remarkable really "New Musics" sounds get lodged—remarkable performers and performances emerging in the mid 1960s when New Music groups proliferated nationwide—some sounds retained, some discarded, into a lively and resurgent awareness of what music could be, was then becoming, was then being. *Perspectives* was always about composers composing and a quick glance through "my" time, the first 22 years, reveals *PNM* as undeniably conceived and imaginatively realized as a composer's journal, a commitment to composing, composers, compositional thought and discourse uppermost and unflappable. Hardly limited in scope, supremely catholic in outlook, a community outreach endeavor. But there was conflict, tension, loss of support from the Fromm Foundation and of the Princeton University Press in 1972, some-ones having poured poison in another's ears (and pockets), a bit Shakespearian yes, high-falutin' sense of propriety, culminating in a decision for *PNM* to be independent! I could, but I won't, write an entire article about Vol. 10 No. 2, 1972: its opening page of editors, commencing with the first part of Jim Randall's "Compose Yourself", at the very end Ben Johnston's letter admonishing *Perspectives* for 'perennially ignoring the John Cage phenomenon'.

\* \* \*

Back to 1967, when my first article appeared in Vol. 6 No. 1, part of the Younger American Composers Series, "Lawrence K. Moss: Three Rilke Songs", and when, after a ten-year hiatus I began composing music again. Having discovered a voice and a milieu, I continued to write both words and music thereafter. Stravinsky's death in 1971 inspired the first of many special commemorative double issues, Ben contacting the world and receiving a flood of responses. Naomi Boretz's elegant cover drawing took us right inside to a telegram from Alexei Haieff; never again was *PNM*'s logo as

poignant, Ben tucked the table of contents midway, a brilliant aesthetic decision that ticked off lots of folks. At the end of Don Martino's eloquent response, Don, "pawing" through his shelves of Igor's scores and recordings, writes: "You Old Cocker. You really did it!" Yeah, ditto. Vol. 9 No. 2/Vol. 10 No. 1, the first double issue in which original compositions were published: Claudio Spies, Peter Racine Fricker, Vincent Persichetti, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Kenneth Gaburo, and Harvey Sollberger.



1971: Stravinsky Memorial Cover Drawing by Naomi Boretz



In 1970 I joined the music theory faculty of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Leaving our hometown was wrenching for us all, but we moved—and that’s another story.\* Despite—because of—being 515 miles away, my *Perspectives* involvement became even more critical as a creative intellectual resource, trips to New York were frequent, the USPS and AT&T were lifelines. The U of M theory faculty, most of whom were composers, was altogether hospitable to me and *PNM*, as was the musicology faculty; many colleagues became *PNM* contributors. John Rahn joined the theory faculty in 1973, Marianne Kielian(-Gilbert) and Marion Guck took classes with me, and thus we all met. With the exception of Ross Lee Finney, the U of M composition faculty remained aloof.

\* \* \*

Ben’s *Meta-Variations* was published serially from 1969–1973: Preface, Introduction, Parts I–IV are verbal essays; Part V is the composition *Group Variations*. A from-the-ground-up reconstructive unfolding of all that which is nominally called or designated as being “music”; a re-evaluation of “music theory” and “ear training” starting with the idea that there is musical intellection and asking the questions ‘why *do* music in the first place’ and ‘how is it possible to capture our musical experiences’?, concerns with which Ben and scores of others continue to grapple. He observes the varieties of languages in which musical discourse can be expressed, he ponders how each of us cognizes incoming data as “music”, how each of us ontologizes “music”. Ben’s decision to publish in *PNM* wasn’t easy, a real Catch-22, and my decision to write at some length here about *M-V* has been tricky. Much in *Meta-Variations* utterly perplexed me, but what I did firmly grasp was revelatory. (Check out Ben’s hilarious deaf-man footnote in Part II/8.) *M-V* was received with respectful esteem and malevolent flak from insiders and outsiders. (See composer B below.) On a lighter note, I am reminded of the alleged last words of Gertrude Stein who, when Alice B. Toklas asked: “Gertrude, what is the answer?”, is said to have answered: “Alice, what is the question?”

1972 (I’d become associate, then co-editor), some of the older members of the editorial board stayed on, younger composer-theorists joined in; associate editors were Tuck Howe and Paul Lansky; editorial staff: Jane Coppock, Hilary Tann, and John Rahn, all of whom, with ideas, matters of concern, and contacts of their own, infused *PNM* with vitality and enthusiasm. Meanwhile, Ben had to find new typesetters, music engravers, paper, printers, *et alia*, finally settling on Hamilton Press near Albany, NY, from/to whom, for another decade, I continued to receive and return galleys, page proofs, and offprints, my contact person Cliff \_\_\_\_, simpatico, cooperative, and reliable. Despite overwhelming and nearly insurmountable problems, onward and upward we forged and swerved, freed of the scrutiny of The Elders, of the entanglements of financial dependence. *PNM* inaugurated “Toward the Schoenberg Centenary” in Vol. 11 No. 1, a VI-part run ensuing as articles poured in, 33 of which were published, from Milton Babbitt’s socio-musically seminal 12-tone “Since Schoenberg”, to Herbert Brün’s enigmatic “Drawing Distinctions Links Contradictions”, to Claudio Spies’ annotated and translated AS document, “Vortrag /12 T K/ Princeton”, to Paul Lansky’s *Vergangenes*-illuminating “Pitch-Class Consciousness”, to Jane Coppock’s unprecedented “Ideas for a Schoenberg Piece” (*Farben*), an inimitable brainstorm, in which *each & every* type/kind of event, pitch, canon, chord, instrument, and event-chains were painstakingly, verbally and graphically, enumerated, reconceived, recomposed. The entire AS “World’s Serious” fête jam-packed with grand slams, fast & curve balls, home runs, in- & outfield plays, perfect games. At the start, for me, indirect contact with authors was the only way to develop a sense of community. Many *kvetched*, some *shepped nachas*. (**Check it out!**” quoth Stephen Hawking.) C was pissed that his article began, or was it ended, an issue; L & H were grateful for everything; composers—theorists I & J were outraged that their articles had been rejected—they were, after all, renowned, not just “Mr. Anybody”; scholar Z was irritated when his text didn’t appear immediately after acceptance—98.6% by or about males for the first decade; theorist W & performer N were patient and content; composer G didn’t like the choice of font; composer B rebuked *PNM* for not taking an anti-Vietnam

war stand and virulently attacked Ben (published in 1972: *beep-beep*); performance artist R was pleased to be interviewed, *etc, usw, dsb, enzovoort, itd, itp, etcetera*. Ben had always had articles vetted by experts in mathematics, engineering, technology, etc; a concern of his was how an issue flowed, be it straight, bumpy, curved, smooth, and how to allow each text its own distinct(ive) space and place, like programming a concert; he was and is uniquely canny about order and placement. Along with my increasing editorial responsibility came stimulation, anxiety, and bad dreams; I'd begun soliciting—that's the word—articles, rejecting some, albeit never unilaterally, writing my share of nasty-horrid negative letters, about which I am still abashed, and trying to come up with ideas for projects or forums. Once I began attending conferences, I preferred not to wear my name badge for fear that a rejected author would find me out!

As soon as the Schoenberg centenary concluded, Milton's 60th birthday was wondrously celebrated, *Sounds and Words* galore, a gem-filled trove. It was 1976, the world had "split [wide] open"—for women, 'people of color', doves, hawks, the young, and for *Perspectives*! "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open."—Muriel Rukeyser. Revolution was in full swing, "full fathom five" to the bottom of the lake-sea and up again, throw the crutches away if you can, start over "now from here" [JKR], from scratch, from everywhere!, Jim's earlier *soundscroll* and subsequent southpaw-handwritten *how music goes* (Tchaikovsky never had it so good, nor have most of us), Ben's piano composition *my chart shines high where the blue milks upset* unfurling in its own time-space. By then I'd been at UCLA for two years, several composer colleagues had already been contributors of *Perspectives*—Paul Des Marais, Roy Travis, and musicologist Robert U. Nelson—others were indifferent to *PNM*, but Brownie points for my *PNM* editorship were duly given during review time! Across town, Leonard Stein, at USC and struggling to have the Arnold Schoenberg Institute built there, graciously welcomed me; he loved *Perspectives*, all that Schoenberg stuff, though he regarded Ben's *chart* as "self-indulgent!" Ben, at Bard College since 1973, had asked Nona Yarden to be managing editor, and for a time *Perspectives* had a basement office in Brook House, a cottage in the woods. Three or four times a year I visited New York and worked with Ben and Nona; occasionally the editorial staff met at Bard. Many articles came in "over the transom", such as George Kautzenbach's "Composer, Performer, and Marx", he a covert fan of *Perspectives*, which he read in UCLA's music library and visited with me a few times. By then it had begun to seem perfectly reasonable and intellectually sound to write "I", to now and then dispose of "we"; to eschew (one of Jim's favorite words) "just", to find a voice to express the sound of an entity, to *compose one's self* in real time in one's own voice.

And then, 1979, *whammo*, rrrrrrrrrrrr, the RED issue, Revolution Reified (the latter not a word I knew prior to *PNM*, nor had I any awareness of pitch qualia (Jim's pitch quails) or of ontological stuff). Ben, like Don's Igor, was really doing it! His, Ben's, *Language, as a music*, his "someantiquelyfused . . . miscegenated . . . wordbird" fluttering free. Frabjous joy! John Rahn's encompassing "Aspects of Musical Explanation", John, eyebrow(s) raised, talking to himself and all of us, carefully pondering digital, ad hoc, analog, and experiential modes of musical discourse (a mini sketch of a neat text). Marjorie Tichenor's "Onanalysis"! Obscene, cried the furious Puritans! Unique fonts for articles, some printed sideways, William Maiben, poets, cartoons, doodles, collages, and—but wait, OMG!, take another deep breath: no page numbers for long stretches of wordpieces, a daring editorial decision! Shakespeare's Miranda telling it like it now was: "O brave new world / That has such people in it!" For nothing was, we were not, ever the same thereafter. The look, the feel, the fonts, typography, layouts, how thoughts were expressed, discovery of new cosmoses, a synesthetic multi-lingualism affecting diverse sensory-left-right mind-brain receptors and hemispheres simultaneously. As in *Perspectives'* very beginning, balance reigned, "opposing forces" side-by-side. In 1980, the Big Fat White issue included complex theoretical-philosophical discourse by Robert Morris, John Clough, David Lewin, and John Rahn, sitting in the same pew with Arthur



Margolin's evocative "Mozart's D major String Quartet / k 593 / mm. 53–56" (four measures to die for: ERB), preceded by Wallace Berry's "Symmetrical Interval Sets and Derivative Pitch Materials in Bartók's String Quartet No. 3", my own "A Dedication / Five ADMusementS, & A Digression", all coming after a 250 page riot of texts celebrating Kenneth Gaburo—a brilliant, tough, Frontiersman—each benefiting from the presence of the other. Similarly in 1980, even Bigger Fatter Bright Yellow, Aaron Copland at 80, composers clamoring to be there for Aaron; UCSD's KIVA; the First National Congress of Women in Music conference sensitively recalled in Nona Yarden's "Meditation", Tom DeLio's text about John Cage, mine about Earl Kim's *Earthlight*; William Maiben's *Tombeau* for John Lennon and then, Oversize Brown, Vol. 20, Ben's last issue as editor (but he'd be back), ca. 650 pp., Ben's stunning "TALK. If I am a Musical Thinker." melding with Naomi's arresting Rohrschachian ink-blobs, its layout created with the assistance of Bruce Huber, beckoning reader-viewer-listener. But many had been crying "foul", hiss-filled air reeked again; several Yale graduate music theory students hassled me in 1981 with: "it's *just* poetry"—as if "poetry" was a dirty word, as if expressive verbal language was an irrelevance; did "IT" belong in The Academy, in Music-Talk? Did they—or whoever they were speaking for—think that they "owned" *Perspectives*? What had *PNM* been perceived as being all about? For whom was *PNM* perceived as being conceived? Did we, the editorial group, think proprietorially? *PNM*, a community outreach effort gone awry? For many of us, *Perspectives* had become a utopian vision, *communitas*. Why not dream of better ways of doing things?; being inclusive, responsible but not narrowly responsive to any one way, although it might never have seemed that way to a cadre of critical others, many of whom were themselves readers or contributors. But *how* could *PNM* be considered as being one- or any-sided? It was more like a Crazy Quilt, each unique patch from a different expressive–investigative corner of the emerging, diversely un-unified multicultural music-analytic-theoretic-speculative-poetic-descriptive-philosophic-composed, not-yet-composed or conceptualized music-thought-soundscape. For two+ decades, *Perspectives* was deeply embedded in my life and I into its. I identified with it, although I wasn't always sure what everything inside its covers was about, nor, as I soon enough gathered, did I necessarily have to agree with everything. Enrichment by picking and choosing via unanticipated routes. When the time came to move on, to turn everything over to John Rahn's creative mind, resourceful hands, astute wit and wisdom—to wit, "How do you *Du* (by Milton Babbitt)?" wherein John really does do *Du's* *Wiedersehen's* skewed symmetries of rhythms-pc's-syllables. When the time did come, it was like leaving home—"She's leaving home"; akin to seeing one of my sons off to live his own life, detaching myself, shreds of the cord remaining attached, acknowledging strong family ties, but leaving.

Due to John, who took over as sole editor in 1984, Vol. 23, my bookshelf has a festive appearance, hued and nuanced oranges, purples, greens, reds, whites, blues; buff covers now signaling something special, not mundane. With our final issue together (I was an advisory editor) Vol. 22, Supersized Forest Green, 670 pp., came a cassette tape, the first of an outburst of JR innovations, a flood of Forums—Music in Culture, Improvisation, Computer Research, Microtonality, Complexity, Feminist Music Theory (wherein appeared my ((in)famous) review—flanked by Jann Pasler's and Marianne Kielian-Gilbert's texts—of Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings*—and Susan's response)—my all-time Forum fave being: "Being a Composer in America in conjunction with the national celebration of the Constitutional Bicentennial". John published paintings, graphics and, starting with Vol. 26, CDs. Music, after all, is what *Perspectives* has always been about. Vol. 27 No. 2 had a large section guest edited by Henry Burnett and Hilary Tann, "Tradition and Renewal in the Music of Japan", with matching CD, the Pacific Rim now in our ears, part of our global awareness. (If there is a soul, her voice would be an East-West blend of Japanese *shakuhachi* and Armenian *duduk*.)

Before I close, which I will soon, I'd like to answer one of Rachel Vandagriff's questions. Although I flat-out snubbed her and preferred not to respond to her directly, Rachel's questions subtly affected

me as I wrote this *memoir*: She asked: “What did it mean to you to come up in the musical-intellectual world and have *Perspectives* as a publication, resource, and community?” Earlier in my life, I feared writing, its discipline, not my thing (as a Queens College sophomore 60 years ago, I would have failed an English Literature course due to my “inability to write a term paper in coherent English”, but the instructor, whose name I have interred, let me rewrite the paper, for which I got a C, not an F!). A decade later, like a stutterer, I found a voice, a perch, began to flap my wings and sing, all the while ventriloquizing and like “most of us try[ing] others on”, none of which would have come about had it not been for the continuing involvement with “*Perspectives* as a publication, resource, and community”. Not meant as doublespeak babble or evasion; rather coming from way far deep down. I am thrilled to be here with all of you to celebrate *PNM*’s Golden 50th.



1978: Gale Sasson's PNM Art Woodwork Sign, Brook House, Bard College

A SOURCE, A NOTE, AND AN ADDENDUM

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant —  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind —  
— Emily Dickinson

\*Another story: My life with/in *Perspectives* would not have been possible without the support, love, and encouragement of my husband, George.

ADDENDUM

1912 : Centenaries, a Mini-Mini-Selection

January 28, birth of Jackson Pollock in Cody, WY (d. 1956).

April 14-15, RMS Titanic hits iceberg in North Atlantic and sinks.

May 15, birth of Arthur Victor Berger in New York City, NY (d. 2003).

July 14, birth of Woodrow Wilson "Woody" Guthrie in Okemah, OK (d. 1967).

September 5, birth of John Milton Cage Jr. in Los Angeles, CA (d. 1992).

October 16, premiere of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in Berlin, Germany.

October 27, birth of Samuel Conlon Nancarrow in Texarkana, AR (d. 1997).

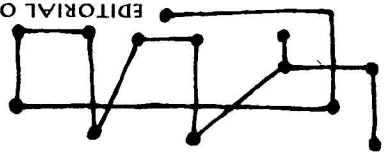
November 5, Thomas Woodrow Wilson elected 28th PotUS.

For a fuller list of births in 1912, go to: <http://www.nndb.com/lists/911/>

1	Evans on Piano	MARJORIE TICHENOR
2	9/15/1980	DAVID HICKS
4	(a loss too soon.)	J. K. RANDALL

# GABURO

7		
11	Competenza Maiedetta	WILLIAM BROOKS
49	Surfing is Harder than you Think	HARLEY GABER
99	On Kenneth Gaburo's LINGUA I: POESIES	SUSAN MOTYCKA
107	To	HERBERT BRUN
	One	GARY MITTRO
	Of	SUSAN PARENTI
	Those	SAMUEL MAGRILL
	Who	MARK SULLIVAN
	Do	ARUN CHANDRA
	In	MARK ENSLIN
	Deed	DAVID GROTHE
	Leave	HERBERT BRUN
	Traces	KENNETH GABURO
		with a response from
135	On Gaburo as a Teacher	PAUL PACCIONE
137	For Kenneth Gaburo: A Personal Note	ROBERT SHALLENBERG
141	le t t e ' s	RON JEFFERS
	Ga bu r o n	
160	ADVT.	
	Brain: ... Half	J. K. RANDALL
	A	
	Whole	KENNETH GABURO



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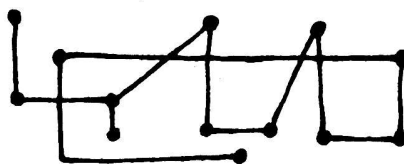
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\$26.00 two years  
\$38.00 three years  
\$10.00 Students

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AARON COPLAND AT EIGHTY (29 word/music pieces by colleagues and friends)

A SAN DIEGO-CENTERED ANTHOLOGY (6 texts from the Center for Music Experiment)

COMPOSERS (Babbitt, Boretz, Cage, Kim, Oliveros, Randall, Rochberg, Shifrin)

EVENTS (Darmstadt, New York, Cincinnati, Bowling Green, Paris)

REVIEWS (Hofstadter, Sessions, Soundings 10)

COLLOQUY (pieces and polemics)

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Graphic: 17th Sigil Water of Fire  
from **The Sacred Alignment and the Dark Side of Sigils**  
by Robert Podgurski



## Mountain Sent

The moment  
that is full of the earth

is full

Ken Irby  
from *Variations: 13*

A perfect fire ignites

out of ecstatic providence from the top down

Upon carefully layered kindling,

logs,

For survival set needs branches of the self-

same passion

enables the able

supple limbs upon the trunk

From the crown down pathway blazing

the same applies to our bodies caught in this illuminating descent

unveiled in the coupling opposites the third arises

Union                      Reaction

Flames spreading downwards

dictated by the eye of the spark

So much light

reflected off the fresh fallen snow

rare now, even up higher in the Blue ridge Mountains

The storm of 16<sup>th</sup>, February 13

caught everyone off-guard

On the other side

at the courthouse falls

a peculiar absence

of snow            nonetheless had the stream running high

At camp the fire immolates inward

bestowed       3 lone logs    fan outward flames

a devil's pitchfork,

                         The center tine    hollowed out    a hummingbird's silhouette  
fashioned so delicately, long and slender, a sickle bill

                         now pulsing out of the orange scarlet heart of ember glow

                         ebbing and waxing       this self-tending       furnace

going for hours    untouched    how the solitary survive       by maintaining  
their grip,

                         and hedge bets

                         by banking their coals            accordingly    the beloved

                         has wings

                         given

                         to volatile displays

                         caprice

                         and departure

                         upon trains       of indecipherable thought

At any given point on the ridge line

the snowfall rate varied

The parkway bare on the border of Shining Rock

but back on the Art Loeb and Mountains to Sea trail

It was deepening

No view from the Devil's Courthouse

White – Out conditions prevailed

The cloud ceiling so low as if the sky's bottom fell out

above and below coalescing in the dissolution of vision's field

All those giant Mountain Laurel and Rhododendron's

Thousands of buds, dormant

Violet hues encased hidden passions under

protection of the snow's wall of winter warmth

How long to hold out for the opening

↳ return from the woods with skills born bush-wise

and honed axe edge ground sense

freshly split humour and nerve

balls out

bearing on

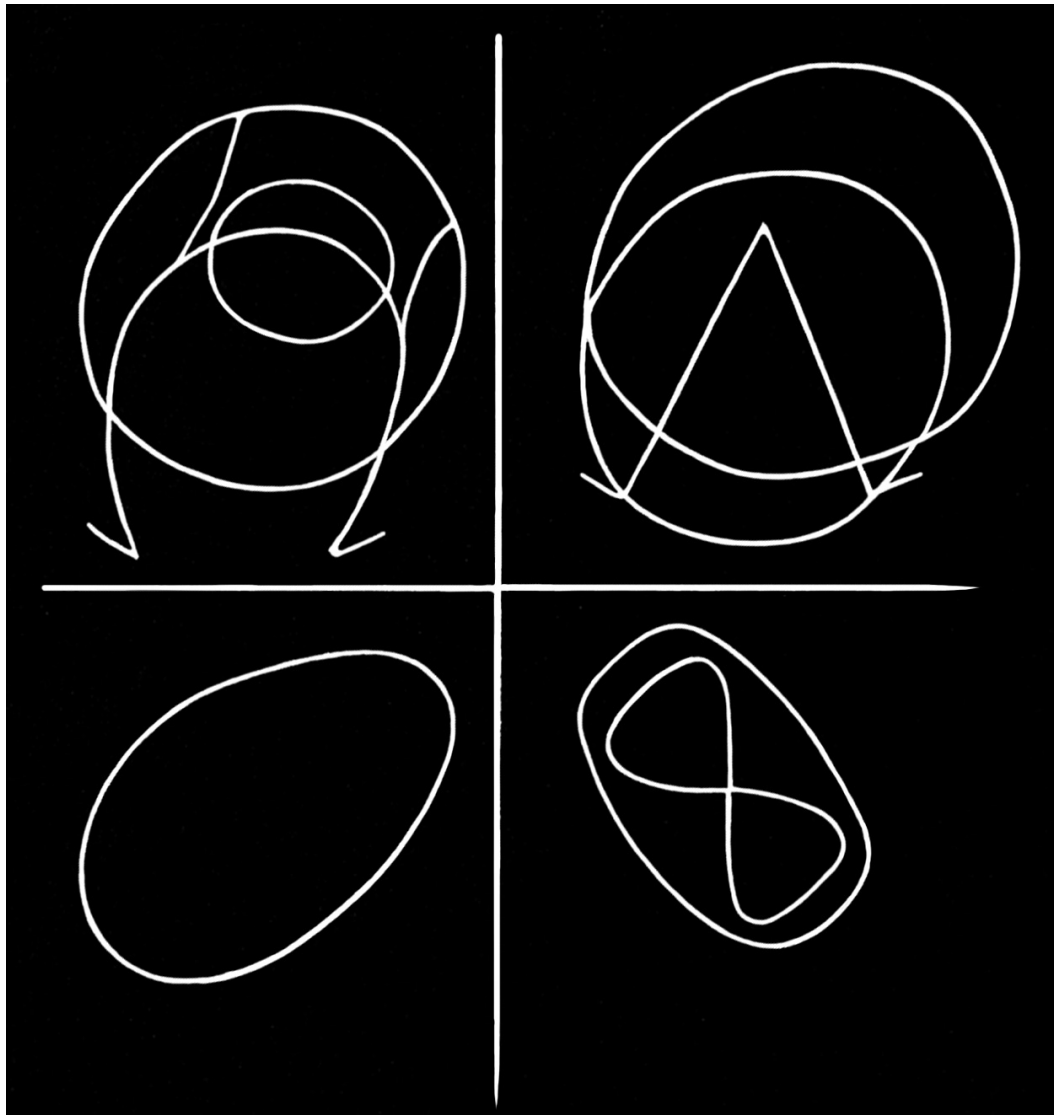
magnetic North

Ultima Thule destiny coordinates

along certain lines / life  
that fire building sensibility creeps down  
its kinetic traveling cell to cell in cognition ignition  
spread by the metabolic inferno  
carrying swatches of wonderment  
in a survival sack      for all ways      take notice  
Never running, but living outside      of time.

Robert Podgurski

2/16/2013



Graphic: Aeonica  
from **The Sacred Alignment and the Dark Side of Sigils**  
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