The OPEN SPACE *magazine*

issue 4 fall 2002

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From the Editors

OPEN SPACE invites interested colleagues to work collaboratively to create and sustain an ongoing web-based publication/forum associated with The OPEN SPACE magazine. The online site is a context for publication of creative work, whether art or discourse or both, which may not fit into the conventional print format, by virtue of medium, subject, or form. We would like to provide opportunities to experiment in forms which are made available uniquely in this kind of space: person-to-person work exchanges; webcasting; text, audio, video, and graphics file exchanges; exhibitions; experimental community-building projects; etc. For this enterprise we are seeking committed collaborators and contributors, especially people who want to help maintain such an online structure, and contribute to its formation and development. Currently the site implements audio, video, graphics and text files on this site. Online publication started March 1, 1999. New contents will be posted on a continuing basis. If you send us your email address we will inform you regularly of current postings. The web address is:

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The OPEN SPACE WEB MAGAZINE is edited by Tildy Bayar, Benjamin Boretz, and Mary Lee Roberts. Inquiries and other communications should be emailed to

postmaster@the-open-space.org

What's Missing and What's Coming

This is Issue 4 of Open Space Magazine, appearing a little more than one year following Issue 3. To our dismay, we were unable to accommodate within this issue all the texts we planned to publish. To those contributors whose work is thereby delayed until Issue 5, we apologize. Readers can look forward to reading the following texts as part of Issue 5:

William Anderson Hausmusik

Tildy Bayar ONE

Warren Burt What Does it Mean to Be Avant-Garde in the 21st Century?

Howard Becker The Power of Inertia

David Borgo Music, Metaphor, and Mysticism

Benjamin Carson and Chris Williams Benjamin Carson's Piano Music

Renée Coulombe The Tao of (Free) Improvisation

Christopher DeLaurenti "I Am The Messiah"

Keith Eisenbrey Now Music in New Albion

Jean-Charles François Art, Music, and Music Education Today

Jean-Charles François Le Pensée Double de Stefan Wolpe

Andrew McGraw The New Music Scene in Bali, 2001

Robert Paredes How About The Platypus?

Eric Peterson Inside/Ouside: A Response to "I/O"

Charles Stein from *Jew Lips; Babbitt Piano Concerto*

A note of thanks:
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Contributions should be in etext, preferably in Word 2001 format, on disks, CD-ROMs, or as email attachments.

October 16, 2001

To the Editors:

I wish to thank Professor Robert Morris for rescuing from obscurity my article which, having appeared at the dawn of commercially available information about the 12-tone System, had been buried by the weight of more formidable discoveries from latter years. "The Source Set and its Aggregate Formations" (JMT,1961) was actually more of a reference work for composers than a scholarly theory paper in that it was concerned more with how and what than why, and therefore was obsessed with tables, the object of which was to bring the what and how quickly to one's fingertips. It remains for me a handy, though limited text and I still refer to it from time to time.

Professor Morris' fascinating and informative confession "Some Things I Learned...," which appeared in issue 3 of this journal, contains, as far as I can tell, just two misrepresentations of my work in that past time.

First, on page 71 we read "The letter names [of all-combinatorial hexachords] were probably given by Martino." This should read "were given by Babbitt." By the way, the remaining letter-number names were in fact given by me.

Second, on page 75 Morris seems to have forgotten the text of my article when he writes "I found out later that some of the material in Martino's article had been discussed by Babbitt at Princeton in the 1950's." I direct those who might infer from this that I used Milton's ideas without acknowledgement to the first sentence in my article: "I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Milton Babbitt whose lectures on combinatoriality delivered at Princeton University in 1952 led me to initiate the researches herein presented." In point of fact Milton's 1952 lectures covered only hexachordal all-combinatoriality, and that only cursorily. Great teachers do not tell all.

Donald Martino
Walter Bigelow Rosen Professor Emeritus
Harvard University

I.

PROVOCATION

There is a statement I wrote for a performance in Denmark— in October 2001—what I had in mind was this one issue—which you might describe as the relation (or the difference) between composing music and displaying a flag. . . .
—BAB

II.

That which provokes artistic work, in my experience, is prior to any consideration of relevance, or the quantification of relevance, "scale." I don't work from some prior commitment even to my own creativity, or at least to any prior articulation of such commitment. It must be new every time, the question of art itself at hazard in every venture. I suffered a cerebral hemorrhage two days before the towers were stricken. The terrestrial trauma of that week (and the trauma to a city I have always felt to be my own, though I have lived away from it for thirty years) and my own compliance with an extreme internal assault, simply converged. After a few days, out of the ICU, when the (medical) surveillance apparatus were sufficiently tuned down, late at night, when the solicitations of nurses and kindesses of loved ones were far away, in the dark of the hospital cell, I wrote. Working under the exigent possibility of my own mortality and the simultaneous radical disruption of what planetary stability we Americans believe ourselves to have enjoyed—almost uncannily—changed nothing. I have confirmed for myself what I always suspected: that creativity in the only sense that I have ever known it is already sufficiently radical; its rises from a primordial recognition of the most extreme vulnerability; from an acceptation of the most extraordinary risk: the unavailability of any preeminent ontological order, independent of one's own act. Blows to one's material well-being, or to that of the human world complex intricated with which one is situated, may exemplify and intensify the immediacy of, but do not spiritually alter the ontological hazard which is and always was the case.

Charles Stein
October 10, 2001, Rhinecliff NY

III.

A paragraph for OS:

The forms of revelation immanent in musical experience have always seemed to me to be intimate and ephemeral—not easily exported. In the sphere of music (at least when the static clears out) there is plenitude, tranquility, change, renewal, and receptivity. Even the expression of angst tends to be beautiful, liberating, redemptive. An incomprehensible world of pain goes on elsewhere, where the horrors of geopolitics unfold and George W. Bush is a head of state. I've never liked the idea of music as a haven, but it now seems urgent to affirm music's difference from this other, "real" world. . .and to figure out how to import musical values into it: It is, perhaps, not news that "aspiring to the condition of music" might be interpreted as an ethical imperative; but the practical questions of how to do so couldn't be more pressing.

Martin Brody, 8/2002

IV.

Robert Paredes

ITCHES AND SCRATCHES;TRUISMS AND PLACES;THEM AND US; LISTENING THROUGH FLAGS.

For: Melody Scherubel, Matthew Burrier, and Benjamin Boretz (whose statement prompted this work in response).

PRELIMINARY NOTES

Note on the reading

In an out-loud reading, leave out nothing. Pursue the sense of theater you want . . . but I hear it read slowly, introspectively, softly, ruminatively, haltingly at the joins—(fully-voiced, but not much above a stage-whisper)—as if to self . . . as if reading in order to uncover and excise the "bugs." Little speed-ups and slow-downs, here and there, sound good to me too. What is it (this)? Part rant, part sermon, part formal paper, part poem, part reasoned argument, part rhapsody, part namedrop, part play let. (It wants to be all of these things and is none of them in its entirety).

Note on "Places"

Each "place" is the name of an instance of music (or collection of instances: mine and others) which has meant something to me during the past year. It should not be assumed that any given place specifically refers to any given part of any given text (and vice versa). Their presence represents an act of sharing, not of contextualization. If anything, readers are invited to go to them, from time to time (if possible), to get away from the text (so as either to "cleanse" the "ear-brain" by way of the "tongue-brain," or the tongue-brain by way of the ear-brain?).

Note on "We," "They," "It" and "Place"

It is preferred that, when employed in the following specific contexts, the words, "we," "they," and "it" be assumed to be as if enclosed in quotation marks. For example, although I stipulate a "we" (and a "they") —(when referring to my imagined sense of "our" collective identity)—I really don't know, with anything approaching certainty, who "we" are. And, although, I stipulate a "they" and an "it,"—(when referring to instances of music, i.e., "pieces")—I am uncomfortable both with the sense of "selfhood" which the word, "they," conveys (as if instances of music were the persons "they" speak for) and with the sense of "thing-hood" which the word, "it," conveys (as if instances of music were, in fact, "objects"). The word "place," although generally qualified to-within the "rubric-world" of "noun-hood," is herein used to connote "something" (yet, another word-candidate for perennial enclosure in quotes) more in the nature of an occasion, or context, for focused (but fluid) attention given to a field or fields in motion, rather than to refer to (to connote) some condition (or sensibility) characterized by incontrovertible solidity or rigidity of perspective.

ITCHES

Initially . . . I had thought that my attempt to address Ben's topical stimulus would result in something like a simple but definitive statement . . . a declaration demonstrating that I, in fact, understood the distinction between something called a flag and something called a musical composition. And, I do, (sort of)—and can (sort of), but the fact that I do (and can) seems vaguely trivial: somewhat in the nature of an answer to a test question, one more demonstration to myself that I can (on occasion) think, one more attempt to curry favor with no one in particular . . . something to pass the time.

That . . . I might be able to construct or recognize a simple measure of distinction between a flag and an instance of music seems to elicit not much more from me than a hopeful "ho-hum"— (in which, it must be said, are nested the faint stirrings of a thrill)—in the absence of some possibility that I may experience a moment of signification on quite another level of address . . . But what might that be? . . . And where found?

Maybe . . . in addition to the mere ness of distinction (as in, this is not that: my previously alluded to ho-hum), there is some more meaningful sense) — (my own albeit blatantly periphrastic one, originating in perennial attempts to get a handle on the writings of Gregory Bateson) —in which the construction of a given distinction may pave the way for the recognition of a difference, and that that difference may, in turn, be re-contextualized as a difference which makes a difference.

Maybe . . . the (a) "big whoop"— (should it come, and if so it may be called) —may not so much be found to reside in the fact that I can discern a difference, but that this difference will be observed to carry a degree of weight, indeed, "meaning" for me— (Those for whom meaning is something of a "crock"-designation will take note of [and be placated by?] my parenthetical offset. Perhaps, indeed, words don't "mean" anything—they merely "point," but, for ease of handling, I have used the word, "meaning," as if it means what it used to . . . when it was still thought to mean something).

Maybe . . . (Said, another way) the "meaning"—(should it come, and if so it may be called)—might be found to reside in a feeling that my distinction is now an occasion for, at least, the possibility of change. . . hinted at by the inadvertent and unpremeditated articulation of my body under the gut-skin . . . as well as to be found at those supposedly higher levels of elevation wherein I warehouse my abstractions . . . (if, so, they may be called).

Maybe . . . my distinction is (now) troubling enough in its implications to elicit questions which may serve to further differentiate the already differentiated.

Maybe . . . if before, I had an abstraction, I might now have an itch . . . requiring the remedial application of a vigorous scratch.

A-priori-pursuant . . . to said "scratch," I suppose the difference that my difference-born-of-distinction might make might begin with a recognition that something more than the mere ness of "signing-in" to an issue is now involved—(that "proforma" may now be facing imminent replacement by necessity)—that in

circling around the by now multiple and various ways in which a flag and a musical composition are and are not one another, I have begun to think that what I most need to know—(in their multiple and various lights)—is how I feel.

For . . . initial example, how am I "grabbed," by the very idea of musical composition-as-flag (flag-as-musical composition) by the notion that at one time or another, someone, somewhere, will take musical work as if representative of—(a flag for?)—some condition or situation, or idea, or narrative understood (or not) to reside quite outside the immediate domain configured of its immanent characteristics . . . as if to stand for "something?" of (or about) which its materials (its "stuff") may have but little to do . . . (And),

Am . . . I easy or uneasy when my own composition—whether in approbation, passive-aggressive dismissal, or undisguised scorn—is taken for a flag (overtly and defacto) either by interested (or other) parties, or when construed as such by my own express design so as, for example, to represent my personhood in its agonistic struggles?

Do . . . I prefer that my composition, absent its correlative person, be left alone to be "itself" (as if it had a "self"), to be what it most manifestly is, and only that, in some imagined state of the "pure and unadulterated": pristine, free-floating . . . as if untouchable and inviolable as it transits within and between each and every person's multi-proliferating perception-space?—(as if the idea of I, or you—of (a) transmitter and (a) receiver—did not, had not, or could not (ever) obtain?).

Or . . . would I rather that my composition be heard to imply (to refer to, to be a flag for) the existence of something other than "itself": some possible relationship between . . . say . . . (a) work and (a) person, as in, an I, and a "you" (as if you might have wanted "it," and/or "me")—or an I and a you—(as if you didn't want either it, or me)—or as in some situation in which the work is posited to be descriptive of a world or worlds external to its first-order languages (as in, what used to be called "program music," or music in overt or *sub rosa* use for purposes of advertising or propaganda).

And . . . if the idea of "you" becomes a significant informing factor in my making, just how much influence will I allow "you" to have . . . and what will be the quality(s) of our association? Just, where, along some imagined continuum between "fuck you" and "how may I help you?" will I place my composition/flag?

And . . . Or . . . if the idea of "I" becomes a significant informing factor in my making, just how will (indeed, can) my composition articulate, reflect, describe and/or otherwise be expressive of resonance within that web of interaction and complexity—informed as it is of various degrees and shades of anger, insecurity, fear and hubris—which informs and inter-qualifies my discourse (me with me) and carries the physicality of the inquiry?

(**By way of a straw man**): "So what?" . . . (He might say). "Who cares?" . . . (He might say). "It's "just" "music" . . . (he . . . might . . . say).

PLACE: **Largo Sinfonico 1944**, for large orchestra, by Nikos Skalkottas.

TRUISMS

At . . . the risk of unfolding a further array of potential "so what's"—(a veritable conga-line of truisms)—it seems to me to be, at least, somewhat clear that musical compositions—if not in most cases constructed to function as such—have, nevertheless, been utilized as flags: i.e., employed as symbols and signaling devices referential to issues arising from the consideration either of those attributes of which given works are made (as in its notes, rhythms, formal properties, etc.), or that "turf" which such attributes might be imagined to imply (as in those biographical or other putatively extra-musical resonances in surround [either composer-informative or observer-implicative in nature], such as worldviews, political stances, "agonistic struggles," etc.) . . . (And)

It . . . is further clear (by way of a **Truism 2**) that, in addition to providing a richness of interiority for contemplation, these compositions-as-flags have as well been abundant with ramifications for the emergence and development of social groups.

PLACE: **Exordium** from **Delusion of the Fury**, by Harry Partch.

Truism 3

Each . . . musically-embodied change in the means and modes of articulation from Ars Nova and before to Grunge and after—(from Camerata to Tropicalismo; from systematic to emblematic tonality; from running the changes to playing whatever you want)—has invited sympathetic persons to join together around (or "under") its standard, as if a musical style or methodology were a nation-state, or a cavalry troop, or the Magna Carta: a shared cosmology, a desired system of moral values or pattern of social etiquette . . . a favorite restaurant or neighborhood bar. Musical phenomena which originally distinguished particularly to-within "music" have been, and continue to become, the agents of (and occasions for) a corresponding social distinction . . . (This is clear, at least, somewhat) . . . (but)

PLACE: Symphonies 3 or 7, by Roy Harris.

Truism 4

Conversely . . . too, each musically-embodied change in the means and modes of articulation has served to repel some for whom its very existential unpredictability, its incompatibility with accepted paradigms, presents not the welcome reminder (which it might be) that the world is an altogether richer, more beautiful and variegated affair than the redundant and debilitating system it becomes through prejudice, violence, habit, sloth, and fear . . . but a threat . . . dire and profound in nature.

PLACE: **Toward the Margins,** a collection of works by the Evan Parker Electro-Acoustic Ensemble.

Truism 5

In . . . such a social surround— (one, now rich in real and potential anxieties) —musical compositions may (indeed have) provide(d) occasions for divisiveness, territoriality, and recrimination, their makers coming to acquire (for

some) the symbolic representation and actual significance of "enemy." How better (or else) to adequately contextualize such diverse aggressions as the near-mythical mayhem precipitated by the first performance of the *Sacre*, the initial and equally violent reactions to the musics of Ornette Coleman, John Cage and Arnold Schoenberg—(to cite but three of the more obvious examples)—,or the scurrilous behavior exhibited, on occasion, by otherwise "nice-guy" professionals toward those who unwittingly, or by design, advance (or blunder into) musical positions different from their own . . . (as if in daring to compose an instance of music, to me alien or unpleasant—unorthodox, nonconformist or marginal—you have in some way sought not only to disagree with me, but to negate my very existence, and I must fight fire with fire . . . yours with mine)

PLACE: **Luiza**, composed and performed by Antonio Carlos Jobim.

THEM AND US

The . . . phrase calls to mind a scenario in which I and my "bandidos"—(as K.G. used to call his more committed and vocal students)—,"sons-a-bitches," "acolytes," "fellow-travelers," and other extended musical family band together and close ranks (circle the wagons) the better to defend, nurture, and advance our mutual and shared musical concerns against the threat (perceived as palpable and persistent) from you and your "bandidos," ("sons-a-bitches" and other extended musical family: circled—when not otherwise marauding—in your wagons) . . . as in some musically-contextualized transmogrification of the Hatfields and McCoys, or the Earps and the Clantons; the Three Musketeers vs. Cardinal Richelieu or Clarence Darrow and the evolutionists vs. William Jennings Bryan and the creationists . . . (And),

PLACE: Isle of the Dead, by Sergei Rachmaninoff.

Then . . . there are those more benign and familiar musical-historical resonances of "them and us," as exemplified by a French Six and a Russian Five; the Twelve-Toners vs. the Major/Minor Key Systementalists; the Minimalists vs. the Twelve-Toners; the Microtonalists vs. Equal-Tempermentalism. The-Free-and/or-other-modern-Jazzers vs. the Dixie-and/or-other-moldy-figgys: uptown vs. downtown; regional identity vs. big city usurpation and absorption . . . Ad Reinhardt and the "one art" vs. every other form of every other art (as in a "them" and (a) "me"). T. H. Huxley's "bloody battleground" of evolution . . . (When),

PLACE: selected **Intermezzi**, by Johannes Brahms (as performed by Glenn Gould).

Applied . . . to creative music, it suggests (implies) the territory of composition as variously mapped by (or on to) the pursuits of warfare, religious proselytizing and conversion, the search for scientifically verifiable truths, or even the debate over the proper way to hold a soup spoon . . . with the composer "cast" as general, avatar, prelate, scientist and final arbiter of all tasty things (as in, some "tweakily" surrealist admixture of Douglas MacArthur, Madame Blavatsky, Einstein,

Emily Post and the Pope . . . El Cid and his loyal knights, to say nothing of "give up your father mother and come to me!").

PLACE: String Symphonies, by C.P.E. Bach.

Welcome . . . to the psycho-(melo)-drama of conflict (of righteous struggle) in which musical position-taking in the form of composition becomes an occasion to run up a flag, the subservience and fealty to which— (the standing under [understanding?] of which) —provides a certain lucidity whereby I can know that I belong—and that "they," (there is always a "they") do not. The issues are clearly delineated: the battle-lines drawn . . . the composer presenting as an action figure and musical composition reduced to a matter of strategic acumen, applied to the purpose of defining and holding proper and defensible positions (given unto the mission of acquiring territory and protecting gains) . . . torqued to the task of inflicting and being inflicted upon.

There . . . might as well be uniforms (as in the 4' 33" cap which Warren Burt gave me. . . but, of course, in this instance, my head becomes a flag for a kind of anti-sectarian, all-inclusiveness, if you know the tune. . . thank you Warren!).

PLACE: Blood and Water (the Billy Higgins Improvisations), by John Rapson.

For . . . quite some time, I have experienced conflict between the sympathy which I harbor for this mentality of "them and us," and a commensurate and nagging sense of revulsion that such dialectics appear to be inevitable if, in the heat of it, I am to preserve my dignity in the punch and counterpunch of a musical/social exchange enamored still, it would seem, of "manhood" struggles and survival of the fittest as metaphors for creative endeavor.

My . . . sympathy finds its roots in the fact that I experience loneliness in pursuit of my own versions of "unpopular" music and am needful of friends and fellow-pursuers: (that I can't quite go it alone in the tradition of good old American iconoclasm). As well, it originates in the desire (the ambition . . . less often present these days, I suppose) to be—(and to be seen to be)—on the right side of that history (that flag) to which I give credence; to have discovered—(and to be seen to have discovered)—some new thinking; to have at last arrived—(and been seen to have arrived)—at formerly uninhabited terrain, like Amundsen at the South Pole with his flag. . . (and his bunch).

The . . .complementary, converse, and coefficient disquietude/disdain/ho-hum of this (my) sympathy emanates from a general feeling that by virtue of an overriding preoccupation with the notion of music as argument-in-perpetuity, as activity to the contrary—(as in a "reckoning" between them and us in which I [and mine] must, at all costs, emerge the victor)—my musical life has too often been immersed in, and unfolded through, a kind of self-fueled-and-tended psychological combat with physical consequences: a combat necessitating the nurturance of an ongoing protection racket, in which the adherence to rigid and unyielding views (flags) tell me that I am "right" and—by way of this rightness—also . . . somehow . . . "safe" . . . . (safer).

This . . . over-arching (macro) feeling is articulated by and articulates a complement of contributing others (micros) quite specific in nature and structure. For example: the feeling
that

the musical issues which engage me are of such seriousness and potential danger—(as they will be (to be sure) in overtly and physically repressive societies with much more devastating consequences for evidencing and advancing systems of argument than exist in our own)—that every inconsistency must be rooted out, every contradiction, contravened . . . (and, that, to think otherwise is to disgrace the flag under which I would cling [for my protection] to an ultimate and reductionist notion of "constancy" in defense of "rectitude");
that

every creative act must be polished to a "fare-thee-well," every rough place smoothed, every halting clumsiness purged, as if musical composition were the equivalent of brain surgery or piloting an aircraft . . . (and, that, to think otherwise is to disgrace the flag under which I would cling [for my protection?] to an ultimate and reductionist notion of "perfection," of "gravitas");
that

a change of mind is tantamount to heresy, or, at the very least, a distinct flaw in character . . . (and, that, to think otherwise is to disgrace the flag under which I would cling [for my protection?] to an ultimate and reductionist notion of "true fidelity": of "integrity, as exemplified solely by rigidity");
that

I must hold to the revolution even if I'm the only one who still believes in it, even if it has "turned tail" on the very people it was meant to advance and nurture . . . (and, that, to think otherwise is to disgrace the flag under which I would cling [for my protection?]—even in the face of a need for further change—to an ultimate and reductionist notion of the complete validity of orthodoxies, of rigidly-reified originary views; of "jargons of authenticity" . . . of that "woodenheaded ness" so clearly illustrated in Barbara Tuchman's, March of Folly);
that

there cannot possibly be more than one modality within which to experience an instance of music: that I cannot listen, for example,—BOTH—in that "dumb kind of way" (of Copland's lovely illustration)—AND—as befits (my) presence in and to the co-presence of some example of profound, complex, multi-leveled and layered; terraced, latticed, nuanced, richly resonant and vastly implicative sound-thought . . . (and, that, to think otherwise is to disgrace the flag under which I would cling [for my protection] to an ultimate and reductionist "vision" of the "right" way to hear);
that

music is a cause worth the situational derision and humiliation of other people . . . (and, that, to think otherwise is to disgrace the flag under which I would cling [for my protection?] to an ultimate and reductionist notion of what it means to be "serious."—is to show the "white feather" in the battle for ideas—For, if music really is a serious matter, isn't it worth the pain which I dispense and receive in its name?);
that

if I am uncomfortable with complex discourse about music either I, or the music under consideration, must be incontrovertibly "lightweight" and therefore beneath (my) contempt . . . (and, that, to think otherwise is to disgrace the flag under which I would cling [for my protection?] to an ultimate and reductionist notion of music as only of value if I am capable of generating {and subsequently subjecting the music to} an infinity of suitably complex meta-language in its after-space. For, if music really is a serious matter, shouldn't I always . . . (always) . . . have something of commensurate seriousness to say about it?);
that

if I am comfortable with complex discourse about music, I—in periphrastic homage to Duke Ellington—contribute to a general "stinking up the place," to a pollution of the experience of music . . . (and, that, to think otherwise is to disgrace the flag under which I would cling [for my protection?] to an ultimate and reductionist notion of the "pure" hearing, of music as of value only when rendering me incapable of the need to generate and engage in any but the slightest meta-language in its after-space. For, if music really is a serious matter, shouldn't I be rendered speechless—struck "dumb"—by it);
that

if (whether, either) from love, or externally imposed force)—I have no choice but to engage in discourse about music, I must employ, either a prescribed, respectable, and institutionally approved mode of selfsame—(as if the work under consideration were only or merely an occasion to demonstrate my understanding of it to a particular constituency)—or some completely personal, and self-referential jargon (as if the work were only or merely an occasion for me to dwell in my own infinitely reverberant mood-space)—(and, would it not be the case, that to think otherwise disgraces BOTH that flag under which I would cling [for my protection?] to an ultimate and reductionist notion of the primacy of official and "precise," languages of expertise—{those bearing an aspired-to *imprimatura*}—AND that flag under which I would cling to an ultimate and reductionist notion of music as if its . . . "really" . . . "only" . . . "all" . . . "just" . . . "about" . . . me: my feelings, my much longed-for transportation to distant lands, my Grandma, my "stuff," etc.)

(By way of a straw man): "Don't whine to me! . . . (He might say) . . . Did I, or anybody, ask you to be a composer? . . . Who cares about your fears, or the rest of your "Oprah" shit! . . . And, if you really were the composer you say you are, wouldn't you be writing "music" instead of sermonizing about gutlessness and contrition? . . . What about a brass quintet. Are you up to that?" . . . (He might say).

PLACE: Blue in Green, (as performed [and probably composed] by Bill Evans).

Truism 6

Given . . . the ongoing territorial and warlike proclivities of human beings— (from Ardrey's naughty but necessary Australopithecine to present day acolytes and aficionados) —it is not surprising (and a truism to boot) that such clotted and stultifying thinking, with the accompanying repertoire of articulative behaviors which it engenders, should characterize, buttress and/or justify much of what has passed for my (our) musical/social interaction. Composers, acting in good faith, can

fear the annihilation of their ideas and externalized concretions perhaps as much as they fear for their lives and the lives of their intimates. Musical constructions, deeply saturated with hopes, dreams, and real feelings become—when derided and dismissed (subjected to acts of violence)—the source of a profound and sometimes irreversible psychological and physical wounding. Why wouldn't I (or you) want to protect myself from this?

PLACE: Piano Concerto, by Milton Babbitt.

(By way of a straw man): "If . . . you can't stand the heat" . . . (he might say) . . . (to which I might reply, with all due respect): How much of this "manly" forbearance is but more of the theater of the "bloody battleground?" . . . Yet another attempt to prove to a skeptical, and sickly competitive social milieu that even though a you're musician (a composer) you're still a "tough-guy," a "rationalist," as thoughtful as a scientist, capable of coaching football on the side, impervious to sentimentalism . . . that you're worthy of such laudatory appellatives as "objective," "rigorous," "robust," "lucid," "prescient," "perspicacious," "adroit," "disciplined," "grounded-in-history," "fully credentialed" . . . but, yet, for all that, still "cool," "awesome" and "sweet" . . . capable of dispensing the familiar pleasures (simple and perennial): of "drizzling—(by way of yet another periphrastic homage, [this time] to the late Barney Childs, from whom I had two very beautiful and memorable composition lessons in the late '60's)—,warm beverage over the afflicted areas."

"Aren't . . . you just re-fighting the battles of adolescence? . . . (He might ask) . . . angry, because you can't live up either to the demands of a profession or the desires of a public . . . wanting to be free of me and all the other voices that work to keep you serious, try keep you from being a "joke": a "bore" (an embarrassment)? Isn't that what this is all about; self-justification; the culture of complaint: victim-chic?"

PLACE: Om, by John Coltrane.

LISTENING THROUGH FLAGS

Truism 7

As . . . I said awhile back— (didn't I?)—musical compositions are flags, if used as such. But, it seems to me, that more than providing the service of "flag hood" they are places for the contemplation, observation—enjoyment of and inquiry into—the sounds which inhabit them. They are complex environments (in fact, the very terrain for which they stand [unlike, perhaps, a banner/emblem in the mere ness of symbol; a symbol/emblem in the mere ness of banner]). And, distinct from any symbolic significance which may be imparted to them, instances of music are entities and identities (unfolding fields of explicit attributes) in and of utterance: some one person's or group's sound/time expression, in and by way of the body, exhibiting through their physicality, internal worlds of differentiation and dialectical interactivity at levels large and small. Line, shape, design, trajectory, spatiality,

motility, timbre, proportion, symmetry, asymmetry, tendency and teleology—accreted, configured and assembled from various expressions of frequency, length, grain, velocity, pulsation and level of presence—:all, coalesce and "counter-pole" to inform and articulate musics in their plenitude..

PLACE: Taarab Music from Zanzibar, (by the Culture Musical Club).

And . . . these instances of music are given to experience and habitation as variously as there are facets and qualities of awareness (of levels of involvement resident in diverse observers, of virtuosity and specificity of the descriptive languages employed to address them) . . . accessible by way of those implications which their explicit attributes may call forth (inviting analysis, comparison, interpretation and descriptive caprice). They are both more (less) and (other) than any reductive characterization to which my colonizing thought would shape them, and subject to a potential infinity of re-qualification; both, what they are (as if I weren't here) and what they are (because I am); both, independent manifestations and possibilities for diverse inference (not unlike the persons who bring them into existence). For me, this is the paradoxical (and beautiful) soil in which music is embedded (and, perhaps, the idea of music-as-paradox might be a lovely counter pole to the idea of music-as-flag. [Few use music other than to trigger the most immediate and obvious of associations, but some might come to embrace {enjoy} the paradox musical experience presents by way of the many and contradicting flags which its in-dwelling complexity affords, or, so it seems]).

PLACE: Selected Improvisations, by PhD, by the Paredes-Hatwich Duo: Robert Paredes (clarinet) Anton Hatwich (contrabass).

In . . . contrast, maybe, flags—(not being the circumstances to which they point)—exist in the mere ness of sign . . . (although, I can readily imagine a flag about a flag, as in some beautiful but wholly non-functional vary-colored-field flapping in the breeze to the delight or confusion of those looking on.) . . . their purpose being to reduce, serving in this, a process whereby complex and diversified wholes may be distilled to few or solitary reference points, the better to facilitate location, identification: embrace, avoidance, or dismissal. By way of their presences (through their agencies), friend can be distinguished from foe; the status of one person can be discerned from that of another; a particular place already discovered can be located again.

PLACE: Deep River, (Spiritual, as performed by Pete Fountain.)

When . . . resident in the functional, flags would seem to be benign enough: (indicating the presence of a desired green on the golf course, pinpointing the location of the consulate, telling you that the admiral's barge is passing). But, when that single attribute (denotation?) for which a flag stands (to which it is seen to be as if "inextricably" connected), is freighted with a host of un-interrogated and sometimes malevolent connotations—(becoming, in turn [and habitually], as if

{"inextricably"} fused to the flag and its single attribute to such a degree that flag, attribute, and connotation are perceived to be one and the same, transcending the mere ness of simple and obvious function)—a particular sign for a particular reality becomes a moment of Pavlovian predication: the occasion for free-associative salivation; the source of a veritable mitotic frenzy of conceptual misprisioning . . . (bogus take on bogus take, proliferating *ad infinitum* unto damage).

PLACE: Nocturnes, by Frederic Chopin (as performed by Alexis Weissenberg)

(By way of a straw man): (He might say) . . . "Man, is that last bit some purple shit!" . . . "Why don't you get yourself a copy of Fowler, and read the part about simple words, you know, like, in English." . . . (to which I [might] reply): "It's a sensual thing, you know, like, in the body." . . . You see, I derive a not inconsiderable "jolly" from the feeling and sound of each syllable as its phonemic touch-points, articulate my tongue (or, is it the other way 'round). . . the Eros of the Aulos (if you know the tune).

PLACE: Violin Concerto, by Samuel Barber.

It . . . seems to me that when our musics, our races, our national origins, our genders, our sexual orientations, our environments, or our religious affiliations (or lack thereof) become a flag, signifying little or nothing more than the mere ness of someone's idea of "music," "race," "national origin," "gender," "sexual orientation," "environment" or "religious affiliation" (as if that is all that could or would be said), it is—however "symbolic"—a palpable act against us: a pre-figurative presentation of violence in the small, presaging potential future metastasis of far greater range and import . . . and, by way of it, we are certainly diminished and potentially damaged.

PLACE: Words and Music, by Samuel Beckett/Morton Feldman.

When . . . malevolently-connoted flags—occasioning the dismissal of our very selves, as we are—are made of the passports we carry, or the relative inclines of our noses, or the pitches of our occipital crests, or the fact that our Grandparents came from Chihuahua—(or—as in the case of my own Grandmother, who couldn't read the example of "practical English" drawn from Shakespeare (?) which the citizenship examiners so "kindly" required of her as proof of "literacy"—the fact one's English is not at a level at which even most native speakers do not function) . . . (it seems to me) . . . that we are certainly diminished and potentially damaged.

PLACE: Free Range Rats, by the John Carlson quartet.

When . . . malevolently connoted flags are made of the fact that the musics we make don't (sometimes) have tunes you can hum, or ABA's you can follow, or rigorous and well-integrated systems of pitch relationship you can validate and admire, or a beat to drive you to unbridled arousal— (or beatlessness, for that feeling

of complete stillness and peace you require) . . . (it seems to me) . . . we are certainly diminished and potentially damaged.

PLACE: Listening I Hear (text-music), by Robert Paredes.

When . . . the fact, dare I say the "truth"— (or, is this currently as much the "crock"-designation as meaning) —of the phenomenally given, and the potential for knowledge of and about it, falls casualty to the impoverishment rendered inevitable by willy-nilly recourse to the "flag" of an impoverished and largely symbolic language—to the paucity of the gloss— (it seems to me) . . . we are certainly diminished and potentially damaged.

PLACE: Mouthpiece II, by Kenneth Gaburo.

It . . . seems to me . . . that the perennial violences of racism, xenophobia, gender-bias, homophobia, religious bigotry, environmental insensitivity, and the scorn and vilification of unfamiliar music (yet another form of fear of the unknown, rooted in language bias) . . . are all deeply connected to this deadly confusion of reality for qualified sign: this malevolent reification formed of the un-interrogated merger of a symbol (idea) with the reality to which it points, accompanied by silence in the face of the fact . . . as if no more needs to be said.

(By way of a straw man): "Duh!" . . . (He [might] say) . . . "You don't seem to be able to say anything that isn't a truism . . . Every time you tape a noun to a verb, you reinvent the wheel . . . And, anyway, you're not a semiotician! . . . You're not a psychologist or, a philosopher (or, a preacher, I might add) . . . You have no credentials to qualify you to speak on issues other than those pertaining to the right way to play a piece of music. You're a musician! Belay the pretentious posturing and just play your clarinet!. We like that, sometimes." . . . (to which I might reply that even though I am (most of the time) "just" a musician, I (some of the time) oblige myself to attempt an understanding of my situation as a human being, and that—(in further periphrastic homage to John Fowles and his book, the Aristos)—I confer upon myself the right to an opinion on any matter bearing on my life . . . and, in any event, hiding behind the "licorice stick"—(as if it were the sum-total of my identity: as if the clarinet were a flag for me-as-if-me-and-no-other-me)—has never particularly "cut" it . . . (with me).

PLACE: Tilbury 1,2,3, by Christian Wolff.

It . . . seems to me . . . that when reduced to the function of a "flag," (as previously construed) instances of music cease to be much more than that single use to which the flag obliges them. In their subsumption to unitary levels of signification and articulation— (in their reduction to a "mere ness") —the complexities which they exhibit (and possibilities for use which might otherwise present themselves by virtue of a more open and inquiring reception) are diminished

and/or disappeared: filtered away to the impoverishment of both observer and observed.

Yet—even while immersed in this (our own particular) malevolent gloss on the history of human social interaction—, we continue to reduce persons to the flags we make of them (and music's to the flags we make of them), ignoring the arguments made by, and on behalf of, both for a fair hearing. What would it take, finally to be able to hear them, and what's the profession of music got to do with the facilitation of such an enabling? Why can't we see, hear, smell, touch and taste what's in front of us without the demand that it be some other experience we would have preferred to have had? . . . (And, what could the profession of music have to do with learning to do that?).

PLACE: Triangulation: Improvisations, by the Lewis, Turetzky, Golia Trio.

I . . . don't know what "we" can (or ought) to do about these matters—(or how "we" can [or ought] to think about them)—but,
maybe . . . despite my best intentions, I further this malevolent cycle. Not because I am possessed of "agonistic" struggles, and commit myself to living in and through them—(coming to understand and exorcise them)—via the agency of my various creative media, but, that, by dint of some perennial and perhaps organic proclivity for a continually narrowing self-absorption (a reduction of self to "self"?), I have come to think (to believe) that I am the only one so engaged, so preoccupied, so obsessed, so agonized . . . that my struggles are the world's . . . as if the world weren't there . . . (And),

PLACE: Four Comic Tangos, by Ric Cupples.

Maybe . . . despite my best intentions, I aid and abet this cycle of malevolence because in my discomfort, my embarrassment, my rage, my self-absorption—my own sense of humiliation and self-annihilation—I have made of your work (and you) a flag, signifying (malevolently connoting?) not only the presence of your work (and you), but the non-presence of my work (and me). And I can hear little else in its light, beyond the fact and quality of this pain . . . in response to this pain . . . in response to this pain . . . ad nauseam.

Maybe . . . to listen without hope of reward (actively, tenaciously) might bring me nearer the beginnings of a breakout (a breakthrough), some rent in the fibers of habitual response and justificative language by which the cycle is stitched together . . . some unraveling of the noose. But its far easier, and more immediately soothing, to create a self-aggrandizing theater of adversaries, peopled with miscreants, failures, and heretics; "mountebanks," "nincompoops," and "dilettantes"; ("phonies," "fools," and "dabblers" . . . old Paul's "ranks of the nitwits and the ungifted," from which our "noble "art of composition"" must be protected). Its far easier to demonize, to reduce your work (and you) to a flag, which signifies not only the fact and quality of my deep trouble with you—(wriggling, itching; spiking hot-and-cold at once when not the source of an all-pervasive lethargy)—but for its imagined cause in your music, or your person—(or something else about you)—(as

if you-as-(a)-you didn't exist; and your work-as-(a)-work didn't exist; and my work-as-(a)-work didn't exist; and I-as-(an)-I, didn't exist . . . only the contracting web of connotative attributes causing my mind/body to coil in on itself to complete involution).

What
would happen if I were to

listen

through and beyond the flag I would make of my pain; to
listen

through and beyond the flag I would make of my embarrassment (at you . . . for you . . . at myself, for myself); to
listen

through and beyond the flag I would make of my rage at my perception that I am not here to me, or, much, to anyone else; to
listen

through and beyond the flag I would make of my suspicion (my belief) that your music is not "music" (or, your humanity, not "humanity"); to
listen

through and beyond the flag I would make of my need to validate some right that I think I have to be everybody's "judge;" to
listen

through and beyond the flag I would make of the "ear-jerk" nattering (the unremitting noise) of the mere ness of my own likes in response to every unfamiliarity; to
listen

through and beyond the flag I would make of my idea of the "right" music (of my thought that there ought even to be a "right" music); to
listen

through and beyond the flag I would make of some show-biz, art-history, soap-opera of a "them" and an "us"—Indeed, to ask what it means; to

listen,

and then, by way of an answer, to proceed—with a measure of seriousness—towards the possibility of

hearing

(as if there might be something more?)

PLACE: Language ,as a Music, by Benjamin Boretz.

In his collection of essays of the same name— (to which [along with Kenneth Gaburo's, "Adio"] I am indebted for causing me to think about damage)—

the author Wendell Berry asks "What Are People For?" . . . and in sympathy, I wonder (and often) what music is for.

PLACE: Anatomy of a Murder (film score), by Duke Ellington.

Could . . . it be that one good reason for music to be here is so that I (we) can have a "word/place" for sound: a context, distinct from the rest of the world's languages of "stratagem and spoil;" an occasion to practice listening and hearing and speaking and thinking about everything I hear? . . . (and) . . . what if "music" were not thought to be (in point of fact) any one music, or set of musics—or even all instances of (all) music—but this name-now-become-locus-of-connection denoting the space between observers, transmitters, and all-sound: a circumstance not ultimately reducible to any given "what-state"—(as if no "whose")—but a "where," wedded to a "when," in which observer-transmitters and observer-receivers listen to each other (and other than each other)—a "what," not only to be found to within the physical boundaries of a single instance of utterance, but in the interstices defined (and informed) of whos and their hearings of it.

Could . . . it be that music is here to help me to listen and hear more thoughtfully and with greater commitment, not only in order to acquire some greater ability to discern between what is and isn't "good" for me to hear—(if my "ears" are to attain that much-vaunted and coveted level of "cultivation")—but with the hope of experiencing some deeper and more complete presence to (and appreciation of) the superabundant whole of my earspsace: not, to the end that I become, willy-nilly and unthinkingly accepting—as in some situation in which tolerance and amiability are but disguised forms of dismissal, pusillanimity, capitulation, and strategic machination)—but that I might be able to craft a continuing openness to the possibility of learning something more, or other, (feeling something more or other) than I know—(and feel)—already.

I . . . would like to able to listen . . . and finally be able to hear . . . more sensitively, more acutely, more comprehensively, than I now do. And, I would like to continue to find new ways to share this listening and inquiry.

I'm . . . not sure that I know (or, will ever quite know) how to do this, but the task is composition (sure enough) . . . (or, so it seems to me) . . . even if a brass quintet is not among the traces left behind.

PLACE: Silent Demonstration 1970 (performance piece involving the display of empty signs and complete silence as an expression of protest), by Robert Paredes.

CODA 1 (Unfinished Business)

There . . . are those for whom a music's significance can only be demonstrated by the degree to which one is prepared to fight the bitterest battles on its behalf, prepared to draw blood, metaphorically if not physically and, perhaps, I am still one of these, albeit, not without reluctance. In this light, some of me still feels that, in the right circumstances, I could strike a blow for music. But what

would that signify? Would it really be for "music's sake that I did this? (Or, is this not the most egregious of falsifications, i.e., the idea that music "needs" this [or indeed, anything] of me: that it is "music" rather than me which has the need, [does] the "needing"?).

PLACE: Roaratorio, by John Cage.

CODA 2: (Unfinished Business)

Throughout . . . most of my life, I have believed deeply in the defense of unfamiliar, alternative, or unpopular musics, musics for which their makers and supporters have suffered for little remuneration or to little acclaim: flatfooted . . . incompetent . . . pedestrian . . . wheezing . . . gnarly . . . benighted . . . halting . . . homely . . . prolix . . . desiccated . . . purple . . . unprepossessing and ridiculously capricious musics which may have little if any chance to be heard. Musics of groups and individuals who, by virtue of an unregenerate (or unavoidable) honesty, find themselves caught between the dangers of disappearance and discovery: . . . between the onslaught of a rapacious commercial culture—which ingests every useable and consumable source of nutrition in its path (even as it excretes an information-poor morass of saleable self-similarity under the glitzy flag of a "glamour-puss" culture of "diverse" choice)—and a statistically-obsessed and judgment-driven culture of the "collectable," in which the valorization of the masterwork, the rigidification of, and limitation on, the modes and number of its attendant discourses, and the implementation of musics as counters in the game of strategic manipulation—(of "one-up-man-ship" in the war for power, waged by speed)—conduce to the perception that music is finally little more than an accretion of "objects"—(of "things," "flags")—having only or merely an emblematic significance, divorced from any apparent source in flesh.

PLACE: Absolving Neophilia, as performed by the Lee Morgan Quintet.

CODA 3; (Unfinished Business)

Preliminary "Scratch" 1:

I . . . am not particularly uncomfortable with musical compositions being taken as "representative"—specifically, in cases in which their makers invite such readings—as long as it is also recognized and honored that a given work is more than any one signification to which it gives rise, that there is a maker who said what they said for reasons of their own (not mine, or yours?), and that there needs to be a willingness to take this into account when thinking about them . . . (I realize that this flies in the face of the idea of the "masterwork" as standing alone [which they don't really do anyway, do they? . . . insofar as their very presence depends on the fact that someone writes them, someone plays them, and someone hears them!]). As previously stipulated— (by now to the point of abject torpor)—musical works are particular identities giving rise to a plurality of ways to hear and talk about them

(ways, analytical and descriptive; traditional and "off-the-wall: fluid, speculative, empirical or capricious" in methodology and style). To the end of some deeper experience of musical expressions in their wholeness, anything which can be learned, should be . . . (while, as well, recognizing that sometimes enough is "enough.").

PLACE: Symphony #5, by Ralph Vaughn Williams.

Preliminary "Scratch" 2:

With . . . respect to my own work, I am not opposed to its being taken for a flag, provided its not a ("the") wrong one. I would not like to think that my work is heard to be supportive or affirmative of institutions or circumstances (or persons, for that matter) to which I am opposed, or for which I bear a deep antipathy— (and there are issues with which I am in sympathy, and would not decline the perception that my music is too). But, for all that, I prefer that my work be listened to, experienced (given a fresh hearing) for the potential "wilderness" which it might make possible before becoming subject to rampant attribution. (In this light, I am reminded that there are specific cases in my own composition in which I regard my own attributions (what I say about the given work, its meta-language) to be an integral component in and of its construction: its identity. In these works, my interest has been to explore the idea of a musics coming to be perceived (heard) as if residing somewhere between sound world's and word-worlds, as if a system of polyphonic inter-qualification of the verbal and acoustic domains ("defining" some difficult to grasp, interstitial, circumstance/space in which the language utilized to describe a sound-world may be understood to significantly inform (change, shape?) the way it is heard (understood?) . . . (Both) . . . (And) . . . (Under these circumstances, I might [well] ask myself what a "fresh" hearing means).

PLACE Weekly Sessions, by the Improviser's Orchestra of the University of Iowa.

Preliminary "Scratch" 3:

Unless . . . I'm working to order, it seems to me that when I'm composing alone, "you," are an inference—(my idea of you)—: a parent, a lover, a professor; the audience that hated me; the audience that adored (or went to sleep on) me; the friends I want, the friends I don't want—a straw man (or woman), someone to be placated, seduced, banished or other wise "circumstanced" before or during the process of getting me closer to me . . . to what I actually want from the activity of composing.

PLACE: Electronic Music, by Jean DuBuffet.

Traditionally . . . (and for reasons of mental health), I have located my music-making to within several social domains. First, but not of more importance, there is the music I need to do by and for myself, like the old-time electronic music which I did for so long . . . (it felt like a very self-centered activity and I enjoyed it as such!). I delighted in the drama of me, alone in my cavern, adjusting the lights,

sweeping the floor, positioning the loudspeakers (and circling around them), waiting for the right moment to strike, tweaking the various pots in the half-light, listening hard to every emanation nattering from behind the speakers' grill. Yet, even in this situation, some sense of a "you"— (my idea of you)—was never completely absent, nor, could it entirely be banished. What would so and so think, I (might) ask? . . . (even without quite knowing that I had).

PLACE: Daydream, by Billy Strayhorn (as performed by Tony Scott).

Then . . . there is the music which I do collectively: music which I compose in co-participation with other people through sound-interaction and conversation. In this context, my own particular view of how a sound-circumstance should be composed is of much less interest than that, by turns, clumsy and elegant acoustical field (unmediated by macro-makers) which I hear as we unfold it together. In this situation, I can practice the kind of listening—the kind of more comprehensive hearing—I want to acquire: a listening which tries to hear what's there, rather than what I would have preferred to have heard. In this work, "you," as (a) reality, are an integral part.

PLACE: Seven Pastorales, by Lou Harrison.

Lately . . . the "lion's" share of my music-making has consisted of such real-time sound conversation, and the social ramifications of music-making have assumed a foreground position in my thinking. In large part, this has come about because I feel that (for me) the narrow preoccupation with music as if a search for "objects"— significant, primarily, for the idiomatic "purity" (becoming chauvinism) which they exhibit and embody—, is not a particularly interesting or useful avenue to pursue. In their search for relevant expression, musicians create (choose) the languages they need, and it is far more compelling for me to encounter each individual instance of music as if evidence of the particular and personal culture which informs it as it is (a culture of one, or of several). Perhaps, in this, I more become the anthropologist I would prefer to be— (experiencing and inquiring into the explicit musical realities and implications arising there from— [the meanings resonant within, between, and outside of their various tissues of connection] — occasioned by particular musical work) —rather than a pundit (a taste-maker) replete with his attendant rag-bag of informed opinion about what (all) music is or is not (should or shouldn't be). The pitting of idiom against idiom, style against style, methodology against methodology as if there indeed were some historical imperative that a particular language or embodied concern should gain ascendancy, should become as if "universal"—(as if this were all musicians had to do in the early twenty-first century)—seems to me to constitute a not inconsiderable impediment to the needed construction and evolution of viable social alternatives to that tsunami of "universal-language-music" which inundates us through the good offices of multi-national corporations. More would seem to be at stake than the traditional battle over whether music should (or should not) sound like B-minor (or a freight-train); (or uses a cello or a laptop to do what it does: be what it is). Can we say what we

want to say, and hear one another, as we are, for relevant example? (If this . . . [the aforementioned, should] . . . be . . . [construable as some {my own} version of] . . . "them and us" . . . [I suppose I {and you} may] . . . make the most of it . . . [or, so, it seems to me]).

PLACE: Apartment House 1776, by John Cage.

(By way of a straw man): "It . . . can hardly fail to be obvious to you that most of your "places," are accessible only through recordings— (only by virtue of the big-money music you execrate) —and, of necessity, that is the way you probably experienced them. Aren't you out on something of a limb here? . . . And, I also notice that examples of "popular music" among your places are slim and none. Just how all-encompassing is your approach to listening? . . ." (He might [well] say).

PLACE: In Delius' Sleep, by Harold Budd.

As regards the "I in "it," (my self in my composition) it seems to me that while I— (qua interconnecting fields of descriptive language) —can be in (and of) the work, I— (qua flesh and blood reality) —can most manifestly not (be). What of "me" is "in" the work is the system of "traces" I construct (e.g., of my idiosyncratic motility, the cadence of my speech, etc.). In this light, my improvised compositions committed directly to tape, or other storage media, would seem to be the most likely expressions of my "self-in-the-artifact" (being imaginable as "literal" traces, i.e., repeatable "reproductions," of what my body did in a given sound-circumstance; a step removed [from the body] and by way of being a very loose (!) acoustic analog to a snapshot). Two steps removed from the body and therefore less likely candidates for this designation are my scores and other instructive texts: (These, I might think of as "figurative" traces, i.e., descriptions of what my body did, becoming instructions for how someone else's body may, to some extent, reconstitute mine). (By way of an aside, these distinctions, while not without interest and potential utility, sadden, to the degree that they remind me that I am untrue to the sentimental animism which I embrace (now and again). To really feel (to believe) that there is life in "things"—(that even things are not quite "things," but variegated fields, intertwining streams, of perpetual and diverse moving(s) which blunder from time to time into the evocation of substance)—might indeed be a very beautiful state in which to dwell). (Maybe [by way of "shocking" admission] my work as a whole has been a kind of search for the feeling that I am really connected to something (I make); that I embrace improvisation, at all skill levels, because making music with people (feeling connected) is (almost?) more important than the quality or interest of music which results . . . (there, I said it).

PLACE: Double Dachshund Memory Trace, by Warren Burt.

Is . . ."fuck you," ever a musical option I would consider (as in the extreme edge of a last resort)? Given certain (for me, local) political developments such as the State of Iowa's recently-embraced English-only, dumb-show—(certainly

diminishing and potentially damaging the very people the state says it needs to drag it out of its economic doldrums)—I incline, however tentatively, to a yes. But "fuck you" is itself just another kind of flag we make of our sense of hopelessness with each other (you as my idea of some condition with which I am unable to cope), and, on a global scale, it gives every appearance of having become the first-order, knee-jerk, social response of choice. Some are saying it with bombs in protection of their hatred and bigotry. Some are saying it with dishonest accounting in protection of what they imagine to be their "right" to acquire and flaunt egregious wealth in the face of want. Some are saying it with rapacious and unthinking development (replacing life with death) in advance of what they imagine to be their "right" to "economic freedom." And, some say it by way of the velvet-gloved or brass-knuckled hand they have in the ongoing suppression of free, creative, speech . . . (to protect themselves [one imagines] from a more complete knowledge of the extent to which their own creative potential has been willfully and systematically obliterated.

But . . . however it is said— (and for whatever reason we say it)—we pay (and will continue to pay) . . . (and dearly) . . . for the complete collapse of creative potential which it represents.

One might ask . . . (I might ask) . . . When . . . (when) . . . will we be willing . . . even to begin to hear . . . what's being said to us . . . for . . . what . . . it . . . is . . . ?

PLACE: The Ready Made Boomerang, by Pauline Oliveros and the Deep Listening Band

By . . . way of making an end to the end—(a coda to the coda, if you will)—maybe my answer for myself (feeble as it may read) is to think of the positions I hold more as motels than as tombs (as places to stay for the night on the road, rather than repositories to house remains till the end of time) . . . to keep my flag in motion; to keep my thought fluid (erring, as it were, on the side of movement), while at the same time trying, like hell, to keep it anchored in an awareness that there is always a you, who wants to live as much—to have your say as much—as I . . . As you are . . . As I am.

PLACE:
Angels and Insects, by David Dunn.

PLACE:
Piano Music, by Cornelius Cardew.

PLACE:
Free Music, by Hermeto Paschoal

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Rethinking Music as/in Musical Rethinking: Proscriptions, Opportunities

(A Short Critical Reflection on Essays in *Rethinking Music*, Part 1 (eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999))

Martin Scherzinger

INTRODUCTION

There is more to the musical ear than meets it.

Many music scholars seem to think this is true. Scholars differ not on whether there *is* 'more,' but on what counts *as* 'more.' Some have said music reflects (or parallels) our innermost drives (Arthur Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard, etc.); others have said it reflects metaphysical essences and deep structures (Heinrich Schenker, Arnold Schoenberg, etc.), or cognitive archetypes and listening grammars (William Thomson, Fred Lerdahl, etc.); still others have said music reflects historical dialectics and social ideologies (Theodor Adorno, Rose Subotnik, John Shepherd, etc.), or subjective identity formations and psychoanalytic configurations (Susan McClary, Ruth Solie, David Schwarz, etc.). The list goes on. *Thinking music*, it seems, exceeds music. It involves categories from elsewhere: *Wille*, *Grundgestalt*, *Urlinie*, Archetype, Structure, Class Consciousness, Patriarchal Hegemony, and so on.

Of course, though I group them together here, these approaches mostly fail to recognize their shared methodological condition. In fact, many of the new 'cultural' and 'historicist' approaches to music fundamentally set themselves *apart* from the 'aesthetic' and 'formal' approaches. The former approaches aim to challenge the institutionalized priorities of a field of studies that ostensibly reflect a structural emphasis on the self-referential aesthetic autonomy of music and its independence from other forms of social discourse. So, this act of setting apart does not acknowledge the equally 'extra'-musical nature of the categories

grounding the formalist project, say; it also does not recognize the business of theory and analysis *as* social. Instead, this act of setting apart paradoxically secures the hermetic aspirations of theory and analysis as if some unmediated empathetic bond really *did* exist between music and a certain discourse about it. In contrast, I will not assume the validity of formalism's hermetic claims. Instead, I will mark the methodological kinship between these approaches. Their differences qualify the paradigm; they do not challenge it.

There is more to the musical ear than meets it in another sense as well. For, although the categories used to analyze and interpret music seem to *surpass* its unfettered sounding, they are often said to be *inadequate* to it as well. Indeed, it has become a ritual commonplace to emphasize the partial nature of one's musical findings; to recognize the validity of more than one interpretation; to recognize facts about musical experience to be somewhat relative, metaphoric, subjective, and so on. It is an irony that the 'cultural historicists' tend to announce this diminished epistemological expectation more readily than do the 'formal aestheticists.' It is ironic because the insight that an interpretation cannot exhaust the musical object under investigation at once *elevates* that object. By recognizing its interpretative limits *apriori*, the cultural/historical approach becomes hermeneutic: its object becomes always-already beyond the realms of the fully knowable. Hermeneutics, in short, paradoxically grants music the 'autonomy' ordinarily associated with formalism. Still, under both approaches, music is often said to lie beyond our immediate grasp; to give every decisive interpretation the slip. After all, *thinking / writing* about music bypasses an experience (or a performance) of it. The belief that writing is a surrogate and a substitute for the transparency of participation in music is popular and widespread. Indeed, the disjuncture between the phenomenon and its discursive elaboration may even be the necessary tension for the possibility of the discipline of music scholarship.

Thus, there is more to the musical ear than meets it. Our descriptions and analyses and theories and interpretations seem at once to say too much and too little. They connect music to *more* than it is (cognitive archetypes, structural shapes, ideological beliefs, etc.) and simultaneously grant music *more* than these categories can capture. Shuttling between excess and lack, this paradigm for scholarship assumes a split between music and discourse about music. (It is a theater-world paradigm sometimes dividing the music-as-spectator from the critic-as-actor and sometimes dividing the critic-as-spectator from the music-as-actor.) In short, music and writing on music exist in a state of non-identity.

Is it possible to *rethink* this relationship between music and writing? Some essays in the collection entitled *Rethinking Music* (ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) engage this question. After all, the divided paradigm I describe

above usually freights dichotomies that buttress epistemological *hierarchies* at various levels of argument. As one of the editors, Nicholas Cook, argues, the traditional dualism between musical analysis and musical performance, for example, is frequently tilted in favor of analysis (239-261). Using Fred Lerdahl's writing on the matter as a representative case, Cook demonstrates how performance tends to become a mere "epiphenomenon" of analytic competence; the explanatory paradigm moves "*from* competence *to* performance, *from* abstract knowledge *to* practical realization"(242). In short, performance is subordinated to analysis. Cook, in contrast, attempts to redeem the priority of performance (the subordinated term). Relatedly, Joseph Dubiel attempts to rethink the relationship between hearing music and writing about it by granting distinct listening experiences — rather than abstract theoretical constructs — privilege of place (262-283). Elsewhere, Kevin Korsyn attempts to menace the hierarchized dualism between approaches located 'inside' and 'outside' musical pieces with reference to Harold Bloom's model of intertextuality (55). Most trenchantly perhaps, Robert Fink attempts to debunk the widely believed opposition between music's 'deep' structure and its 'surface' detail with reference to Frederic Jameson's thoughts on postmodernism (102-137). As can be seen, then, one of the central themes of *Rethinking Music* involves contesting the violence implied by Inside / Outside paradigms of musical thought. How successful is this project of de-hierachization?

FORMULAIC MANUEVERS

Not all efforts to rethink music effectively deconstruct oppositions; nor do all such efforts proffer genuine paradigm shifts. In fact, there is a pattern of thought emerging in the new critical musicology that has begun to take on the character of a formula. It too betrays a particular will to assume the non-identity (between music and discourse) I mention above; and it goes something like this:

STEP ONE: Rethinking music involves a heightened awareness of the ideological dimensions of the 'purely aesthetic' paradigm of music scholarship. The reductive focus on the 'music itself' betrays an aesthetic escapism (or narrow idealism) intent on isolating culture from everyday life and then defending that isolation in terms of universal and timeless ideas. This compression of music into formal categories has negative ideological and musical consequences. Witness this *leitmotif* in the first articles of the book. First, ideology: Kevin Korsyn attributes the fetishization of music's autonomy to an ideological need for subjective autonomy / personal freedom: "Indeed, the more precarious our hopes as real individuals have become, the greater the tendency has been to

proclaim art the region where all restrictions on freedom and autonomy are transcended. This tempts us to make inflated claims for artistic unity, attributing to art a fantastic degree of autonomy, beyond the power of any artefact to achieve" (60). Thus music's autonomy functions as a surrogate subjectivity; an imagined solution to a real problem. Second, music: Philip V. Bohlman denounces the narrow understanding of music in the West: "The metaphysical condition of music with which we in the West are most familiar is that music is an *object*. As an object, music is bounded, and names can be applied to it that affirm its objective status". This view falsifies the music's true processual nature — "unbounded and open ... necessarily incomplete" (18). Likewise, Jim Samson argues: By hearing music as form, "we translate the temporal into the spatial, freezing the work in a single synoptic moment and laying it out for dissection in an imagined, illusory space" (49). Formalism, in short, falsifies music's dynamic temporality. Thus, methodologically speaking, formalism should not take center stage.

STEP TWO: Rethinking music involves a renewed interest in the heterogeneous and much contested cultural arena that is its condition of possibility. This shift impinges upon the content and method of scholarship: it embraces traditionally excluded social categories, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and so on, no less than an array of new methodological categories, such as deconstruction, intertextuality, performativity and so on. Worldliness, in short, assumes center stage: music cannot be understood apart from its social context(s). Witness this *leitmotif* in the first articles of the book: Bohlman drives home the idea that "ontologies of music" are contingent upon "musical practices," which in turn are rooted in shifting temporal and spatial contexts (17-19). Samson calls for a redefinition of analysis in the professional discipline; one that would "step beyond the identification of musical structures, and would focus, rather, on the identification of musical materials, confronting the social nature of those materials ...;" in this way "music theory ... would draw context into its universe" (53). Korsyn values the "social heteroglossia" of musical language (62), and Arnold Whittall seeks to affirm music's "worldliness;" "to put music back where it belongs in time, place, and thought" (100).

STEP THREE: Because of the methodological shift from 'abstraction' to 'worldliness,' the argument goes, investigations into musical matters become less verifiable in the robust sense. Analyses, themselves mediated by shifting social contexts, become interpretations – contingent, perspectival, relative, poetic, incomplete. This insight takes the form of an acknowledgment or a disclaimer in the text, which, in turn, destabilizes the investigator's point of view, renders visible the text's mediating filters, and so on. Witness this *leitmotif*: "Accepting analysis as interpretation presupposes ... that there will be alternative interpretations," argues Samson; thus he calls for an "accommodation

with relativism," which implies an "accommodation with plurality" (46-47). Relatedly, Samson's "concern for heteronomy" negotiates the demands of an "open-minded pluralism" (75). From the point of view of 'intertextuality,' Korsyn argues that all unified utterance is "relative and provisional" (59). Scott Burnham's high regard for an interpretation of Beethoven by a character from *Howards End* is announced with a proviso: "Helen's reading of the music is thus presented as truth. But this truth is not about the music; nor is it, strictly speaking, about Helen. Rather, it is a truth *for* Helen. ... We may call it 'poetic truth.'" (214). Most elaborately, Nicholas Cook redeems the status of relativism and pluralism. On relativism, for example: "The point is not that Beethoven is better than pop – or, for that matter, the opposite – but that they are different" (256). On pluralism: "If today ... we are content to let a thousand theoretical flowers bloom, then the only epistemological basis for this must be a conviction that each approach creates its own truth through instigating its own perceptions, bringing into being a dimension of experience that will coexist with any number of others" (261).

To write in the new musicological way, therefore, is to write in the contours of a certain prototype: (1) Criticize the limits of aesthetic autonomy and analytic formalism; (2) Value social and historical contexts highly; (3) Relativize the findings. By mapping this pattern of thought in a vulgar three-stroke formula, I am definitely not saying that all the essays in *Rethinking Music* take these steps; nor am I saying, when they do take these steps, that this is the most significant aspect of their contribution. Instead, by mapping this pattern of thought, I am attempting to identify a certain paradigm that has, to a large extent, become *unproblematic*. Skepticism about the autonomy of musical texts, along with an effort to contextualize these texts, to produce interpretations that are aware of their limits, has become correct to such an extent today that it is practically self-evident. While its aspirations may be critical, then, widespread acceptance of this pattern of thought diverts attention from its ideological limits. That is, widespread acceptance detracts from the fact that this is a pattern of thought that nurtures a particular theoretical terrain with its own technical *modus operandi*: a manner of proceeding complete with its own technical language and its own list of no-longer-possibles. It is this ideological malaise to which I will now turn.

ON ANTI-AESTHETICISM

From this 'critical,' 'progressive' stance, it is no longer possible, for example, to embrace the value of aesthetic autonomy as a basis for structural listening. But why the prohibition? Why the taboo? It is possible to cast aesthetic autonomy in a different light. It is possible, first, to broaden our sense of what at its best the aesthetic has been, how it can function between sensory experience and the rigors of systematic discourse to imaginatively grasp the radical particularity of musical experience, which in turn can resist the control of totalizing concepts and sedimented beliefs about it. Romantic figures like Heinrich Wackenroder, E.T.A. Hoffman, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and (early) Nietzsche posited music's ineffability in order to preserve a critical gap between the world and the work. In other words, for these writers, any single reading of a musical work was necessarily impoverished in the face of its inexhaustibility. The work's autonomy had a dual function: it disconcerted epistemological certainties and assurances, and, by receding from ordinary grasp, it provided the necessary compulsion (*Zwang*) to interpretation. For example, Schopenhauer's attempt to situate music in a transcendent realm beyond all semantic grasp was not escapist idealism as much as it was an attempt to pose a critical challenge to music's decipherment. It was an attempt to sustain the radical open-ness of music; an attempt to expand the conceptual possibilities of the subject and the world through music's boundlessness. In this paradigm, interpretations of music resisted ideological closure: representations of music were but one limited angle in a boundless field.

Alternatively (even if the aesthetic no longer holds an emancipatory potential of this sort), it is possible to direct attention away from the kind of language used to capture the musical text ('formalism,' or what have you), and to direct attention towards the *use* to which it is put in specific social contexts and political conjunctures. No language is inherently progressive (or reactionary); its progressive worth depends on the concrete context within which it operates. A revaluation of aesthetic autonomy in the public sector today, for example, may challenge the institutionalized mediocrity of mass music in the hands of increasingly domineering corporate oligopolies. In an era of titanic mega-media industries (such as Disney and Time Warner) and communication and radio monopolies (such as Clear Channel Communications), music is granted relatively little autonomous value. This is not to say that music's autonomy is assured in the academy, but to acknowledge that what can be heard on radio and television has been shored in significant measure by the logic of the profit margin, and what is produced must be within the ideological range and political interest of its producers. On considering

alternatives to music produced under the corporate juggernaut, it is perilous to shun all notions of cultural autonomy.

A revaluation of aesthetic autonomy in the public sector today may also attribute credibility and status to music of the marginalized world, for example. The mantra 'let the market decide' (an ideology of unprecedented centralization posing as deregulation) is less likely to preserve, and more likely to wipe out, huge swaths of the world's culture. Thus, considerations of traditional music in the non-western world 'on its own terms' (free from market considerations) may, to some extent, redeem its value today in both local and global contexts. Again, preserving some notion of aesthetic autonomy may matter politically. Indeed, there are countless other possibilities for the progressive use of aesthetic autonomy, which I cannot rehearse in this essay.[1] The point I am trying to make here is simple: Rejecting the idea of aesthetic autonomy along with the project of analytic formalism (labeled 'Step One' above) should not become routine or unproblematic.

ON THE RUSH TO CONTEXTUALISM

Of course the ideological prohibition on autonomy and formalism does not spirit away the problem of 'form' attending writing on music in general. It is not surprising, therefore, that music's repressed autonomy returns practically intact in many of *Rethinking Music*'s essays. First, the new prizing of contextualism and historicism is largely conceptualized in response to aestheticism and thus evokes and confirms the prohibition even as it tries to go beyond it. Second, musical autonomy is paradoxically recovered under the (ostensibly antithetical) conceptual rubric of 'social context'. Let me explain using Bohlman's argument as an example. While resolutely committed to the shifting ontologies of music in shifting historical and social contexts, Bohlman simultaneously grants music a general character over and above these contexts: "As a process, music is unbounded and open. Whereas names may be assigned to it, they are necessarily incomplete" (18). But what kind of idealization of music must already be in place to judge all representations thereof inadequate? The answer is: an old-fashioned Western one. That is, Bohlman grants music a general character that recapitulates the very autonomy articulated by nineteenth-century romantic notions. Like the romantic attempt to place music beyond linguistic certainty, names assigned to music in Bohlman's scheme are *necessarily incomplete*. Bohlman betrays his Western

[1] On the uses of aesthetic autonomy, see my *Musical Formalism as Radical Political Critique: From European Modernism to African Spirit Possession*. PhD, Columbia University, 2001.

romantic bias paradoxically in his critique of (apparently) Western music conceptions of itself: Music's "metaphysical condition" in the West is reducible to a "bounded" (instead of "open") "object" (instead of "process") to which "names" can be assigned (instead of remaining "incomplete"). While Bohlman expands the point on the terrain of musical notation – arguing that "the fear of loss drives the technologies of notation," and so on – it is unlikely that any Western theorist would recognize their work in the "object" of Bohlman's representation (18, 28). Indeed, most Western theorists would identify with Bohlman's "process"-oriented ontology of music. But, beyond this, it is Bohlman's surrogate belief in musical autonomy that I am trying to demonstrate here. Apparently committed to locating various ontologies of music (from South India to the Brazilian Amazon) in specific historical and social practices, Bohlman's text in fact identifies a particular Western ontology of music – with its own peculiar social and historical context – and applies it ahistorically to music in general.[2]

This paradoxical recovery tactic is a central theme in *Rethinking Music*. Like Bohlman's stance, Samson, for example, is unequivocally dedicated to historicizing and exposing "the ideological roots" of music's "project of autonomy" (47). Like Bohlman, Samson diminishes the dimensions of this historical project: "It seems that if we are to hear music as form ... we translate the temporal into the spatial, freezing the work in a single synoptic moment and laying it out for dissection in an imagined, illusory space" (49). Instead of recognizing that, within the protocol of the 'project of autonomy,' music's break with context precisely produced an unbounded mobility of reference, Samson reads the break reductively: music becomes spatial, frozen. On the other hand, Samson recovers the critical dimensions of music's autonomy (as I have described them above) in terms that value contextualism: "It becomes of ... importance ... to scrutinize the nature of the images, models, or metaphors used in analysis, since their *modus operandi* defines the gap between our experience and our description of that experience" (46).[3] Once again, the limits of formalism (which is rhetorically affined to the 'project of autonomy' in Samson's text) are described in terms of a critical gap between music and writing about music. But this gesture recapitulates the very project of autonomy it sets out to critique. At this point in the

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[2] Ironically, Bohlman withdraws this overarching ontology only from the very music that spawned it – viz., Western music, which Bohlman falsely identifies as falsely identifying as an "object".

[3] For Samson, music condemns "even the most 'scientific' of descriptions to opacity" (47). Samson emphasizes the point in his brief survey of analytic projects of the past: "From Koch's exposition of phrase structures and extensions, through Schoenberg's parsing of periods and sentences, to more recent generative theories, such methods have often proved illuminating. But they remain firmly on the level of imported models or metaphors, whose application to an ontological distinct art-form can never prove more than suggestive" (49). Music's essential autonomy, it seems, exceeds linguistic efforts to define it.

text, therefore, it is as if music's autonomy is paradoxically recruited to argue against music's autonomy.

What I am suggesting is that the high valuation of social and historical contexts ('worldliness') in recent times often recalls traditional notions of autonomy even as it attempts to resist them. In other words, like the romantic writers on musical autonomy, this new musicology posits a disjuncture between music and discourse in order to widen the horizon of the interpretable. While it does not recognize itself as such, this late twentieth-century use of what I will call *musical autonomy by proxy* is fairly widespread in apparently socio-contextual accounts of musical phenomena. And this is not inherently problematic. Burnham, for example, historicizes the gap between the realism of words and the idealism of music, and then brilliantly suggests that the gap itself might compel the hermeneutic inquiry: "The obligatory assurance that words can never do justice to the revelation that is music has never stopped anyone from the attempt, and in fact stages the attempt, which is after all the central challenge for the Romantic literary artist: how to fit the reality of words to the revelation of ideality. Understood in this way, our verbal relationship to music is fundamentally poetic" (195). For Burnham, this paradigm became problematic only when critics abandoned the "twilight vagaries of spiritual divination" in favor of the "rigours of formalism and structuralism" (195). The twentieth-century sublimation of music's spiritual challenge (which necessarily figured interpretation in terms of poetic perspective) into formal structure (which claimed to achieve epistemological closure via analysis) was, in fact, a reversion to pre-dialectical eighteenth-century thought: a "Kantian backlash" (196). What seems to disturb Burnham is the way certain interpretative modalities attempt to close the gap between language and music and thereby also to narrow the horizon of the musically possible. Burnham takes the debate to an important new juncture. He undercuts the opposition between 'analysis' and 'interpretation' *as such*, and marks instead a contrast between analyses that open options for engagement beyond music and those that close them: "Analyses and poetic criticism are not either/or alternatives. One might go further and claim that we need to understand music as music, as an autonomous language, if we want to grant it the power to speak of other things: we could not reasonably expect something without its own voice to comment on anything. ... In short, precisely because music is musical, it can speak to us of things that are not strictly musical" (215).

The dangers of formalist reduction befall purely formal accounts no more than they do historico-contextual ones. While it is not always made explicit, the idea that historico-contextualism itself is an effective panacea to analytic reductiveness is one of the axiomatic threads running behind the methodological scene of much new musicology. For example, Samson's surrogate endorsement of a critical gap between music and writing about

music to illuminate the limits of formalism does not necessarily extend to contextualism. On whether a theory that recognizes the "social nature of [musical] materials" (by, say, drawing "context into its discourse") will reduce the gap, Samson is elusive; still, Samson does suggest that "analysis *in context*" widens critical perspectives (italics mine, 35, 53). Likewise, for Whittall, restoring music's social dimensions resists the "unhealthy" tendencies of musicological writing "concerned solely with music's 'internal workings', as if nothing else in the world existed ... ." (75). Whittall's objective, in short, is to "affirm music's worldliness" (100). But the low regard for formalism coupled with the high regard for worldliness does not allay the 'formalism' inherent to the 'worldly' account. The socio-historical interpretation of music risks simply transposing those attributes formerly associated with musical form onto the world and then reading them as if they were a genuinely material approach to the musical text. In this process, the music as such threatens to disappear against a general background of social determination. Thus, while the language of such an interpretation may draw on various extra-musical discourses, its textualized shape is patterned by formal constraints of its own. I will call this situation a *hybridized formalism.* Whittall in fact illustrates a case of hybridized formalism using Timothy L. Jackson's study of Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen* as an example: Jackson's concern for contextual heteronomy and pluralism are synthesized into an organic unity that is ultimately beholden to an adapted Schenkerian analysis (82-88). Samson too recognizes the dangers of reading right through the aesthetic dimensions of music – "that vital capacity of the significant text ... to make its own statement" — as if it was a mere representation of the social (53). In short, 'Step Two,' the high regard for social and historical contexts as they mediate musical material, should also not become routine or unproblematic.

ON POLICING THE PLURAL

The general call for opening musicological debate to plural perspectives frequently ushers in an antithetical impulse to close options for debate; to discipline and limit musical inquiry to those features that count as 'worldly' (the really real?). Hence, Whittall's interest in heteronomy and "open-minded pluralism" is tempered by his interest in putting music "*back where it belongs* in time, place, and thought" (italics mine, 75, 100). Likewise, while he celebrates the "heteroglossia" of musical texts, Kevin Korsyn is reluctant to grant methodological heterogeneity all the way down: "Questioning [the] fetishization of unity ... does not mean surrendering to chaos" (60). Korsyn's essay in *Rethinking Music* ("Beyond Privileged Contexts: Intertextuality, Influence, and Dialogue") reads like

an introduction to Bakhtinian intertextuality in music; it provides no substantial musical analysis, and reads instead as a "belated preface, or perhaps an extended footnote," to an earlier article: "Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence".[4] Here Korsyn applies Bloom's model to music by comparing the intertextual relationships of works by Reger and Brahms to a work by Chopin. While both are 'discontinuous' with their 'precursor' text, Reger's misreading is weak, while that of Brahms is strong. Thus, moments of 'discontinuity' and acts of 'misreading' are hierarchized into 'strong' and 'weak'. More exactly, 'discontinuities,' as Korsyn understands them, are distinguished via a particular Schenkerian depth narrative; one that ironically registers resemblances between texts in terms of features on both musical surfaces and in musical depths. Reger's *Träume am Kamin*, op. 143, for example, contains numerous conspicuous allusions to Chopin's Berceuse, op. 57 but fails to " ... hear that Chopin's continuity exists in a dialectical tension with his four-bar groups [whereby] continuity arises from overcoming the sectional divisions".[5] In contrast, Brahms's Romanze, op. 118, no. 5, does register this dialectical tension adequately and thus also misreads Chopin's work 'strongly' (a.k.a. 'deeply'). In short, Korsyn is able to control the decentering multiplicity of intertextuality ("chaos") and recoup an aesthetic hierarchy of works.

Robert Fink's essay "Going Flat: Post-Hierarchical Music Theory and the Musical Surface" provides a lengthy critique of notions of musical 'depth' as they are harnessed to buttress canonic hierarchies. The author links his anti-depth stance to democracy in a postmodern world, which is characterized by "egalitarian mass culture" (135). His awareness of the duplicitous association of musical depth with value does not, of course, encourage an awareness of the duplicitous association of mass culture with the titanic corporate centralization that undergirds it. Thus, I am not arguing against the need for aesthetic judgment — outside of these omnivorous structures — as such. Rather, I want to draw attention to the force of ideological constraint and closure implicit in the general quest for inclusion, multiplicity and pluralism. The essays in *Rethinking Music* generally embrace a plurality of approaches and interpretations, but they tend not to focus on the exclusions that fragment the disciplinary terrain into plural dimensions in the first place. Thus, placing a high premium on pluralism does not guarantee a genuinely pluralized musical thinking. In *Rethinking Music*'s essays, a single concept-metaphor often organizes and guides (and hence contains) its 'plural' field of operation: For Bohlman, the key category is 'practice,' for Korsyn it is 'intertextuality,' for Fink it is 'flatness,' for Cook 'performativity,' and so on: A policed pluralism.

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[4] Kevin Korsyn, "Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence," *Music Analysis* 10, 1991, 13.

[5] Korsyn, "New Poetics," 1991, 46.

ON EPISTEMOLOGICAL DESIRE

Again, I am definitely not saying these central organizing categories do not open perspectives. (After all, Fink's work illuminates the limits of Korsyn's work, Cook's work illuminates the limits of Lerdahl's work, etc.) The point is, these approaches cannot not close options for debate as they open them; they come at an irreducible cost. Second, a genuine acknowledgment of this irreducible cost (or what Derrida might call an 'experience of the impossible') turns the matter of "rethinking music" away from unfettered epistemological criteria and towards social and political criteria as they intersect with epistemological ones. As Cook argues, we should "think of analysis, or for that matter any musicology, in terms of what it does and not just what it represents" (258). Joseph Dubiel raises the interest in what analysis *does* to a higher degree: "What do theories tell me? Not what to do; but what there is to do. Not what moves will sound good; but how each possible move will sound. Not 'If you do it this way, it will work'; but 'If you do it this way, it will sound so-and-so – and whether you want it is up to you'" (282). Dubiel's epistemological ambitions are tied to musical possibilities rather than certainties: Musical theories (a.k.a. 'ways of hearing') are "more like states of affect than like the maintenance of propositions" (282). This contrasts with the unconstrained epistemological attitude axiomatic in much new musicological writing. For example, even Cook's epistemological doubt – that the "scientific truth value of analysis [can] become ... at best secondary, and at times simply irrelevant" – recovers its certainty in a particular context: "... the primary significance, or *truth value*, of analysis *must* lie in its potential for realization in the perceptual or imaginative terms of Lewin's 'poetic deeds'" (italics mine, 257). Thus, however contra-fundamentalist these deeds turn out to be, they exert a claim to truth that necessarily excludes at least one other theoretical method. In short, fundamentalism is a necessary accomplice to (and even the condition of possibility for) any music analysis or interpretation. Without illusion, Nietzsche might say, we cannot do anything. As long as considerations of truth (knowledge) remain unhinged from considerations of ethics (value), the eternal return of the same critique is possible.

What I am trying to suggest is that the desire for unfettered epistemology necessarily encounters a limit. When a musical interpretation is oriented towards *mere knowing*, it fails to raise the question of the *value* of what is being done, and must miss opportunities. That is, in this paradigm, critically-minded analysis can only adequately reckon with its own diminished epistemological claims (the move from 'science' to 'poetics', for example) in two ways: (1) It can grant the reader a choice about accepting the result. Dubiel's approach to theory, for instance, is like an invitation to hear something, which the reader/listener can take or leave: "it is up to you" (282). Or, (2), it can grant the validity of

a plurality of perspectives. Cook once more, "If today ... we are content to let a thousand theoretical flowers bloom, then the only epistemological basis for this must be the conviction that each approach creates its own truth through instigating its own perceptions, bringing into being a dimension of experience that will coexist with any number of others" (261). Thus, if there is one, the moral of rethinking the musical story is to keep an open-minded acceptance of many diverse approaches.

Why is this valuable? First, to the extent that my diagnosis of formulaic maneuvers above is accurate, these approaches may not be as diverse as they might seem at first glance. Second, how egalitarian is this tolerant embrace in practice? Scientifically objectivist analyses are not going to go away or lose their social power just because some people think that formal analytic language is really poetic, or that objectivity is a social construction, or that science is really performative, or what have you. Exposing inventions does not proffer alternatives. Also, genuinely distinct perspectives freight different agendas, ideologies, values. Some insights are surely more valuable than others. One might argue, for example, that Burnham's musical thinking (as it intersects with that of Beethoven and E.M. Forster) provides insight into the paradoxical structure of faith (intimately connected to doubt) by adding to it a level of complexity not available to non-musical thinking alone. Or one might argue, for example, that Dubiel's musical interest in marking for consciousness music's radically unpredictive moments have a critical role to play in the world; that keeping an ear open for the unique, capricious and open-ended aspects of music is also an effort to challenge reification and the formal standardization of experience; that D# in Beethoven's Violin Concerto *matters* socially.

Is there not every reason in the world to make more of musical thinking, let alone musical rethinking?

guinnevere

I recently discovered Miles Davis' startling rendition of "Guinnevere," a David Crosby song that first appeared on Crosby, Stills & Nash's debut album. This find – one of several gems included in the CD compilation, "Miles Davis: The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions" – prompted me to revisit the CSN original, to explore the sources of its considerable allure for me.

1. Crosby, Stills and Nash

This music

meanders languidly

hovers

feints

eddies elusively

surges headlong

approaches the fluid texture

of dream.

We're buoyed, buffeted

seduced; charmed

by two contrasting intertwining forces:

– two throbbing/limping guitars
drone with asymmetrical arpeggiated regularity –
bulgarian ritual
brookwater gurgling over rock

– two well-tuned voices trace inscrutable patterns

hesitate circle accelerate pause

caress

bumblebee divagations
leaves afloat summer stream

(as I scrutinize these vocal trajectories,
and as I plumb the supple time-world
effected by the commingling of disparate
voice and guitar courses,

I discover a precision and
an elegant polymetric complexity
that reminds me of Stravinsky,
or John McLaughlin.)

(wha?)

inchoate suspension

aperiodic turbidity

– *lassitude*

– Guinnevere's shimmering idleness

she'd walk down through the garden
in the morning after it rained

. . . drew pentagrams
late at night
when she thought
that no-one was watching at all

she turns her gaze from the slope to the
harbor where I lay anchored for a
day

. . . had golden hair . . . streaming out
when we'd ride
through the warm wind down by the
bay

when memory gaze is diverted,

peacocks wander aimlessly
underneath an orange tree

seagulls circle endlessly . . .

sifting through these retrospections,
the observer is entranced, wan;
gently elegiac –

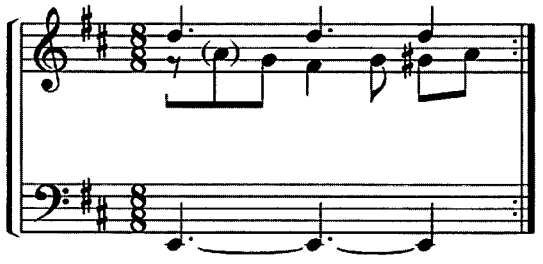
sings his wistful paean
to a mesmerizing, enervating
woman.

But I think it's much more:
through its hypnotic droning,
the intricate order underlying its asymmetric prosody,
and its deft shiftings of accent pattern and time-sense,
"Guinnevere" invokes, and evokes, magic.
It's an incantation aimed at celebrating and inducing – conjuring –
that mystical, surreal state
into which one may be tumbled by a spellbinding other.

* * *

I marvel at "Guinnevere"'s intricate temporal metamorphoses; and I notice that nuanced rhythmic variation is adumbrated in, and distinguishes, the song's introduction.
Two guitars – one acoustic, one electric – present the tune's signature texture, a harmonically static, gently ornamented unison ostinato that pulses with the steady irregular accents of an 8/8 promenade.

slide___step, slide___step, step-step



N.B.: voices have been separated by register, not by instrument playing them

After several anchoring iterations, this texture begins subtly to decompose:

— there's a chord change, and the harmony becomes non-static

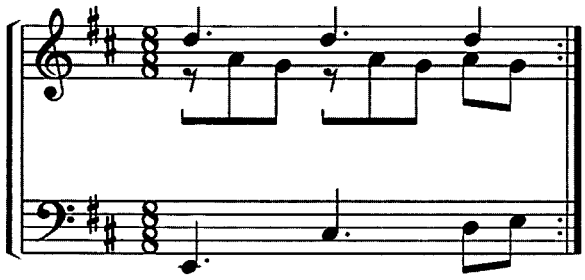
— the guitars nod at an underlying melodic structure – they feign a continued unison – but each inflects, and subverts, that structure with independent variants of it. They seem to oscillate restively, as if preparing to sublime – to so re-arrange their chemistry as to leap to another energy level.

— as the guitars thus stretch and transmute melodic configurations, the prevailing meter dissolves: accent pattern becomes increasingly subtle and irregular, revealing a barely differentiated stream of eighth notes. Pointed recurrent bass-register accents on each downbeat preserve a skeletal time structure;
but numerous tantalizing insinuations of tiny metric groupings coalesce, evanesce, and resist all hardening.

Dissolution and volatility color and abet the lazy, lulling, complex summer-stream quality intimated above. A leisurely, nervously susurrant interweaving unfolds here.

Relative stasis returns on the heels of these marvelous purlings. The metrically unambiguous 8/8 groove (now altered to include a more expressive bass line), repeated some twelve times, establishes itself as a throbbing, delicately inflected drone.

It becomes tamboura-like, the anchoring foundation for the ode – or esoteric, spell-casting formulae – now offered by the singers.



How do they do that?

Crosby and Nash sing in crystalline harmony

but their first outburst –
"Guinnevere!" –

starts at an awkward place

subsequent phrases

begin at comparably
anomalous moments

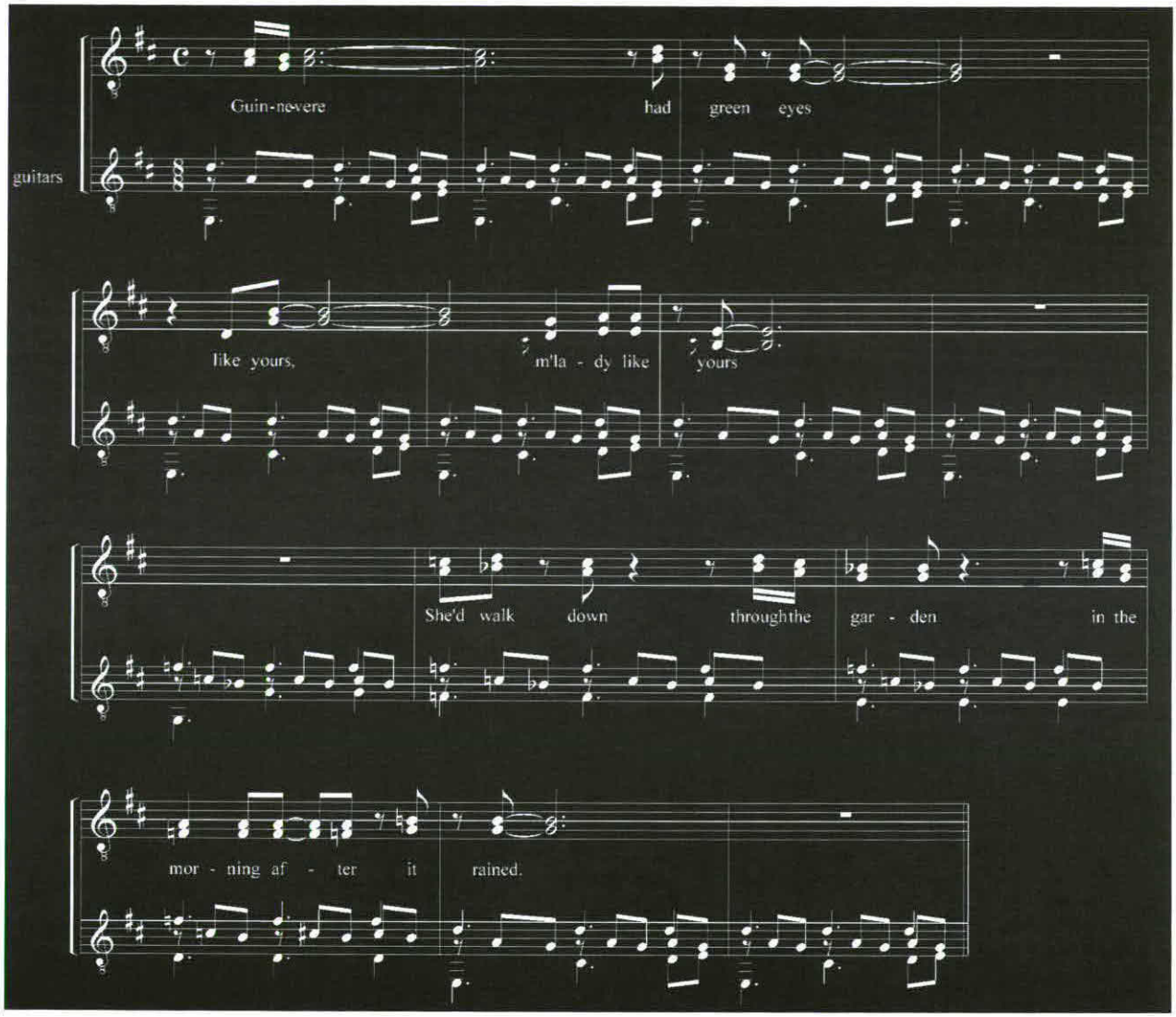
and unfold

as a series of discrete

nearly disjunct

gestures –

each suggesting a different metric substructure!

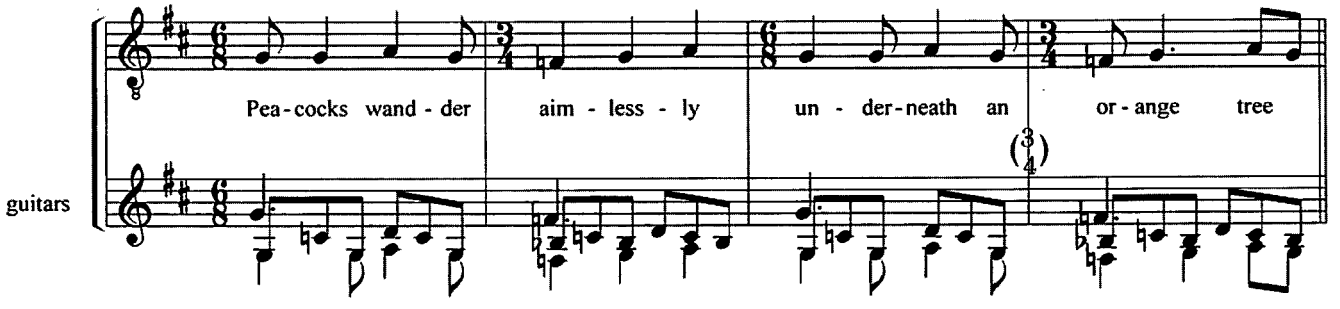


It feels like a code –
a speaking in cipher,
a verbal sorcery with which to
summon chthonic energies
induce mystical awareness

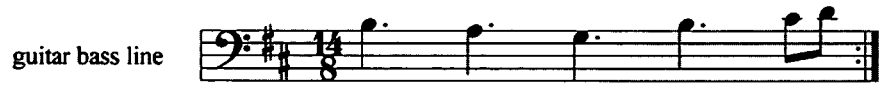
This inveigling vocal melody obscures, and seems to defy, the underlying 8/8 drone; its mysteriousness is immeasurably enhanced by the insistent counterpoint of that drone. In the absence of discernible generative patterns, the melody feels improvised; herein, too, lies mystery, a paradox. For it can't be improvised: despite its many unprecedented shunts, gaps, and odd twists, Crosby and Nash nail it, offer this supple recitative in perfect rhythmic unison.

(*How do they do that?*)

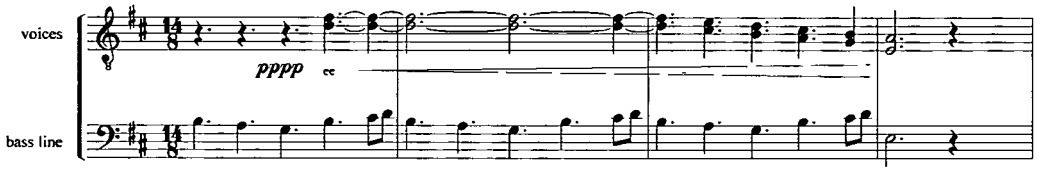
The song's esoteric exoticism, and its suppleness, intensify with a singular shift of focus to the aforementioned peacocks.
The throbbing 8/8 is temporarily abandoned; guitars morph it into 6/8 loops. Nash's solo meditation, superimposed on this steady 6/8 backdrop, alternates between 6/8 and 3/4; it's a freer, less fragmented chant, one unfolding a different (coded?) intricacy.



There follows a remarkable idiosyncratic, expressive, suspended moment. The guitars offer yet another short loop, another ostinato – but unlike the primary 8/8 pattern, which seems to rise gracefully throughout its length, this new reiterated cell doubles back on itself; it grounds an elegant/awkward galumph in 14/8 time.



When combined with a melismatic, close-harmonied vocal descent that emerges gracefully from nothingness (extending the 'ee' of 'orange tree'), it suggests a pleasingly ineffable suspension.



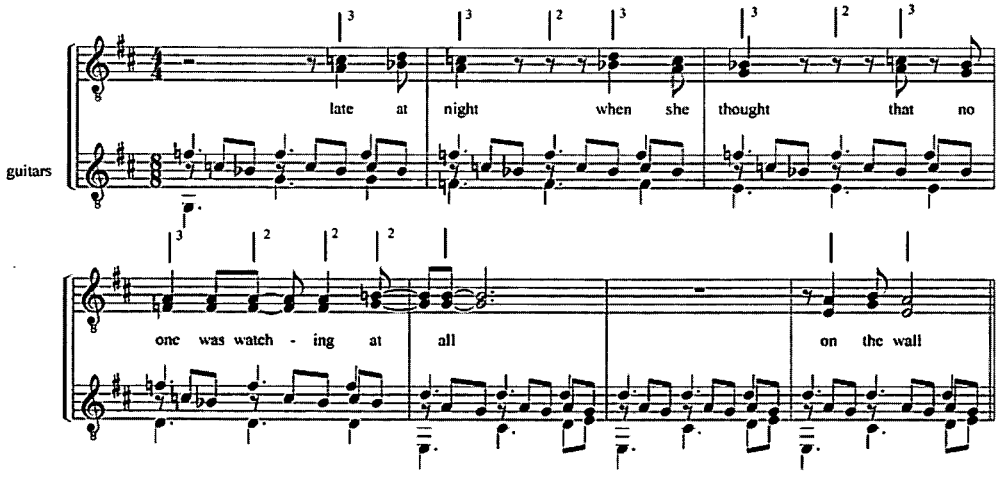
The synchrony of voices and guitars here, and their ultimate landing together on this magical passage's final downbeat, creates an immensely satisfying release from and contrast to the preceding complexities and ambiguities.

It's as if various independent lenses had found an alignment that secures great focus. Something clicks;
the formulae have proved efficacious;
a transformation takes place.

Silence.

The drone returns; settles.

Crosby and Nash resume their exacting (yet so fluid) arhythmic saunter – but now their ciphering in part entails adaptation and displacement of the drone's defining meter.
(It is these details that prompt me to think of Stravinsky and McLaughlin, and Brahms. . . .)
The prevailing 3+3+2 pattern is shifted in the voices, in a manner which places the vocal downbeat on an unaccented eighth of the guitar ostinato.
And then – seamlessly, beautifully – the vocal line mutates, leaving behind the displaced 8/8 and discovering a string of syncopated quarter notes.
Still further: almost as if to reveal the key to the vocal layer's enigmatic sinuousness, the second and third verses end with a queer tag: once again, a metrical unit comprising three eighths begins at an anomalous, 'unaccented', point in time.



(The first of these tags seems almost gratuitous:
— there is no precedent for it in the first verse;

— it jars grammatically, belatedly modifying a completed image –

. . . drew pentagrams . . .
late at night
when she thought
that no one was watching at all
on the wall [!]

— extremely delayed, its emergence serves as a sharp, insidious disruption of the now re-established drone (rather than as a plausible coda to the preceding meditation)

It's wild, a bald, gentle punch to the solar plexus,
a luscious singularity –
a distillation.)

* * *

Archaism suffuses this song,
enhances its mystery and magic.

Guinnevere –
a name associated with Arthurian legend, a story in which necromancy and the veiled illicit (passion, envy, intrigue) figure prominently
here, her drawing of pentagrams – and her desire not to be detected while doing so – intimates her interest in occult arcana, in the secret summoning of the demonic

milady
– antique salutation

The song's narrator recounts his own myth:
his memory seems to have been triggered by affinities between the woman to whom he tells the tale and the evocative Guinnevere.

He repeats – as a mantra, a spell –

like yours, milady like yours

– each verse springing from an observed parallel between present and mythical woman.

Guinnevere had green eyes,
like yours, milady like yours . . .
Guinnevere drew pentagrams,
like yours, milady like yours . . .
Guinnevere had golden hair,
like yours, milady like yours . . .

And there's something archaic about the tune's sound.

One part of this is overt: while Nash sings of seagulls circling endlessly, Crosby sings a light nonsense-syllable pattern heard earlier – but now he seems to be singing through a cheap telephone microphone, or to be broadcast through a cheap, tinny amplifier. As a result, we hear a time-warped echo of the earlier material; we're given a retrospective glimpse of another age.

(My awareness/memory of this detail is so powerful that it functions as an active filter: I recalled the sound quality of the first nonsense-syllable iteration as being similarly compromised, but – as a simple auditioning of the tune will confirm – it is not.)

The other component of sonic archaism – the electric-guitar timbre – is more subtle, and quite beguiling. The treble has been severely boosted, and bass attenuated; the net sound has a decidedly lo-fi metallic resonance. With this unusual timbre, the electric guitar becomes an uncanny ghost/mirror/interpreter of the acoustic guitar – which, again, it is always either doubling or permuting. With such intimate filtering, it is as if the acoustic materials were being projected through some historical, or mystical, prism, the amplified nuances a function of the vagaries of time or alchemy.

bass

eyeing dulcimer
askance,
measuring,
hesitates -
steps - -
steps - -
steps steps

finds groove gait

walks

determined

unperturbed

steady

(sustaining an
irregular 8 pattern
- one identical to the
3+3+2 ostinato bass of
the CSN original -
throughout!!)

drums (traps)

(cymbal–
boosh)

(*pishsh*)

with no forewarning,

slides in
begins a slow insistent march,
reinforcing bass groove

(transforming moment!!
–what seemed to be an array
of disparate independent
energies now acquires a
powerful anchor!!)

myriad nuanced wrinkles:

snare riffles unfold in counter-
and poly- rhythms, often

keyboard right

shimmers;

glows;

casts opalescent
beams

– gleams –

birdcall patter–
try one loop

then another,
more intricate,
showy

and another!
– eddying in stream whorls
twitchiffchatwit-
chiffchatwitcha
twitchiffchatwitchiff-
twitchiffcha

step
– step again –

SHREIK!!

settles; yawns
asserts

playfully
joyfully
flairs
down

bass	drums (traps)	keyboard right
continues	flouting the prevailing pulse-play	settles; watches
		scutscutscutscut eases . . .
implacable	skittish sub-gaits	
	supple careen walk skiptripfall	calls calls calls calls
monolithic	canter trot saunter	shifts turns hops
(asymmetric)	(but always underneath: march trudge) . . .	chiffchiffchiff . . .
lope . . .		

keyboard left

emerges

sidles over

familiar salutations
subdued acknowledgements
begins to find/establish a space
jostles for position
remonstrates
gently obstreperates

adjusts and shoves

mumbles/clucks resignedly –
murmurs with satisfaction

upbraids!

percussion

(dulcimer:)

ambles forward,
square vamp,
two tones,
back and forth

skews the edges,

dances,

oscillations now

supple,
more free –

spins off,

tinkers . . .

pauses;

scrutinizes;

lingers

disappears

picks up a hand drum
lets a simple beater
fall-and-bounce,
gravity-driven acceleration

what else can it do?

tamboura

struts it
(Bb: 1 - 2 - 5)
boldly establishes its own time world

(purrs repeatedly:

saucy 1 - 2 - 5

sitar

stretch–
languorous probe

purrrr

purrrr

gently doubles the bass groove (!)
– yet:
rhythm and attacks are just sufficiently supple
and soft
to suggest a series of
independent caresses
– purrings –
not lockstep walking at all)

purr

keyboard left	percussion	tamboura	sitar	bass	drums (traps)	keyboard right
	(dulcimer:)					
	ambles forward, square vamp, two tones, back and forth		stretch– languorous probe			shimmers;
						glows;
			purrrr	eyeing dulcimer askance, measuring, hesitates – steps - - steps - -		casts opalescent beams
	skews the edges,					–
	dances,					gleams –
emerges			purrrr	steps steps		birdcall patter– try one loop
sidles over	oscillations now					then another, more intricate, showy
familiar salutations subdued acknowledgements begins to find/establish a space jostles for position remonstrates gently obstreperates	supple, more free –	struts it (Bb: 1 - 2 - 5) boldly establishes its own time world		finds groove gait	(cymbal– *boosh*)	and another! – eddying in stream whorls *twitchiffchatwit- chiffchatwitcha twitchiffchatwitchiff- twitchiffcha*
	spins off,					
	tinkers . . .					
			(purrs repeatedly:	determined	(*pishsh*)	
	pauses;					
adjusts and shoves	scrutinizes;		gently doubles the bass groove (!) – yet	unperturbed	with no forewarning, slides in begins a slow insistent march, reinforcing bass groove	step – step again –
	lingers		rhythm and attacks are just sufficiently supple	steady		
		saucy 1 - 2 - 5	and soft to suggest a series of independent caresses	(sustaining an irregular 8 pattern	(transforming moment!! –what seemed to be an array of disparate independent energies now acquires a powerful anchor!!)	SHREIK!!
mumbles/clucks resignedly – murmurs with satisfaction	disappears					settles; yawns asserts

upbraids!

preens
observes
grooms

glances approvingly

GROANS

gossips

(– joins bass groove! –)

fusses

subsides . . .

picks up a hand drum
lets a simple beater
fall-and-bounce,
gravity-driven acceleration

what else can it do?

little boy at play

explores

scrapes,

taps,

rubs

zoned;

finds a string of bells

(– abandons the drum –)

shakes aggressively

sporadically . . .

– purrings –
not lockstep walking at all)

purr

1-2-5, pert

purr

stretch

sympathetic-string-splash

moves out on its own

cracks the mold
less brazen announcement

gingerly

attempts to engage sounding
tests new 1-2-5
permutations

new ground

splash . . .

- one identical
to the 3+3+2
ostinato bass of
the CSN original
- throughout!!)

continues

implacable

monolithic

(asymmetric)

lope . . .

myriad nuanced
wrinkles:

snare riffles unfold in
counter- and poly-
rhythms, often

flouting the prevailing
pulse-play

skittish sub-gaits

supple careen
walk

skiptripfall

canter
trot
saunter

(but always underneath:
march trudge) . . .

playfully
joyfully
flairs
down

settles;
watches

scutscutscutscut
eases . . .

calls calls calls calls

shifts
turns

hops

chiffchiffchiff . . .

2. Miles Davis

Much of the music of Miles Davis' *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* teems with both heterophonic complexity and abiding, near-magical cohesiveness. The foregoing pages offer a rendering of the metamorphosing colloquy which suffuses the first three minutes of Davis' version of "Guinnevere."* The meta-conversation unfolding here comprises numerous independent idiomatic stories:

each player seems intensely engaged in exploring, exposing, and developing distinguishing qualities of his instrument;
each proceeds in his own way, creating and investigating unique materials, and undertaking imaginative excursions with them;
each leaves ample space so that others' contributions may be heard;
each plays with an intense attentiveness to these contributions, such that the several simultaneously narrated stories inflect, and are inflected by, one another.

A richly colorful Brueghelian tapestry emerges, one which encompasses these complementary, quasi-independent narratives. Or it is as if one were observing a spring snowmelt, a series of parallel streams of varying velocity, trajectory, and depth, these variously intersecting, sharing a course, branching off on new idiosyncratic paths, moving among stages of independence and interdependence, and transforming continually as a result of this interplay.

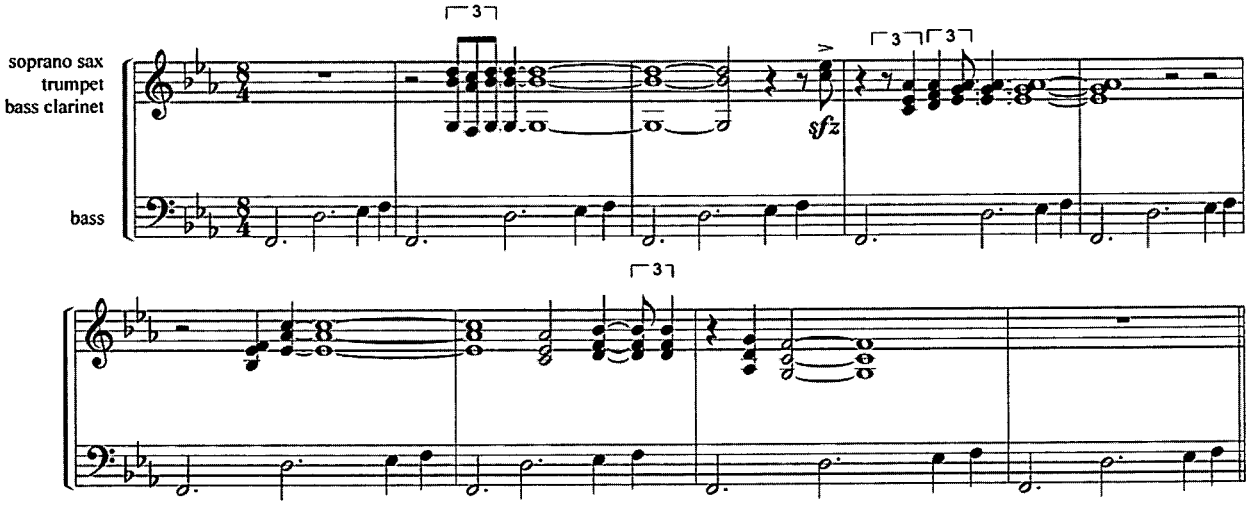
In Davis' "Guinnevere," the contrast between the clearly pulsed, relentlessly reiterated bass/drum ostinato and the more freely and unpredictably roaming utterances of the keyboards, hand percussion, sitar, and tamboura creates a defining tension: some abysmal menacing force frames a butterfly garden. This contrast is brought into even greater relief – and is re-defined – upon the startling unanticipated first entrance of the

---

*According to the information gathered by Bob Belden and Michael Cuscuna for the "Discography" section of the liner notes for *The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions* (Sony C4K 65570), "Guinnevere" was recorded in New York City on January 27, 1970. Personnel for this session included Miles Davis (trumpet), Wayne Shorter (soprano saxophone), Bennie Maupin (bass clarinet), Joe Zawinul (electric piano), Chick Corea (electric piano), John McLaughlin (guitar), Dave Holland (electric bass), Khalil Balakrishna (sitar), Billy Cobham (drums), Jack DeJohnette (drums), and Airto Moreira (cuica, percussion). The unacknowledged tamboura player may be Bihari Sharma, who played the instrument on two sessions in November 1969. I do not detect McLaughlin's presence on this recording, and if Cobham is present, he is playing minimal hand percussion (and no traps).

"Guinnevere" was first released, with a shortened introduction, on *Circle in the Round* (Columbia PCL 36278) in 1979.

main tune (some three minutes into the piece): seeming to float with utter autonomy above and into the manifold effervescing soundspace, trumpet, soprano sax and bass clarinet articulate an astringently harmonized version of the Crosby melody's initial segment. That soundspace is thus re-cast as a primordial substratum out of which the tune precipitates, a multivalent realm which seems part of an even wider universe. A similar transformation of a base sound-texture was effected by the first vocal moments of the CSN original; but while Davis, Shorter, and Maupin seem to operate (as did Crosby and Nash) within their own time-world in rendering the tune, they don't 'nail' its rhythm, instead offering it with a looseness that lends it an apt relaxed spaciousness.



(Davis' adaptation of the Crosby tune seems a marvelous abstraction of the original. He has converted the gesture:

Guin-ne-vere——————— had - green - eyes ————

into

Ba-da-dah——————— *BLAP!!* (□) ba - da – dah ———

In that one ***BLAP!!*** seem crystallized the many syncopations – indeed, the idea/gesture of syncopation – that so distinguishes the original piece.)

And so it goes, for another extraordinary eighteen minutes: the six 'background' instruments continuing to create and inhabit a dynamic heterophonic cosmos,

sometimes veering towards funk, sometimes towards a delicate intimacy, always anchored in some form of ambulation by bass and drums; the lead trio periodically emerging from the ether with a simple, two-phrase 'head' and then receding; Davis waiting six minutes to launch a series of angular acerbic solos. Along the way, the two electronic keyboards growl whirl fly dig interject meander wriggle stretch insist scratch explore. Airto Moreira's *cuica* solos suggest the single-minded, multi-angled focus of a dog working a bone; sometimes they evoke a sustained whimpering. And Davis grimaces all the way through his solos, sometimes spitting them out; he pleads writhes grunts laments cavorts sallies struts taunts slithers squeezes moans stammers . . . .

It's a breathtaking re-imagining of the original tune.

Review: *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music.* Edited by Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hamessley. Zürich and Los Angeles: Carciofoli Verlagshaus, 1999. [xxix, 358, compact disc. Hardcover: $59 (ISBN 3-905323-00-1). Softcover: $39 (ISBN 3-905323-01-X).]

Barbara White

> A Spanish Gypsy is killed for her transgressions. A German prostitute is killed for her transgressions. A voluptuous blues singer plays the piano with her breasts, acknowledging where her audience has been looking all evening. Refusing to be presented as a confection, a British musician sports loose clothing and an unglamorous Afro. A grunge singer cultivates a hoarse, choked voice, his tight throat displaying his unwillingness to be penetrated by Culture or Law. A novelist equates an emphatic, recurring bass note in a disco song with penile thrusting. A music group describes itself as "San Francisco's own all-dyke, all-out, in-your-face, blade-brandishing, gang-castrating, dildo-swingin', bullshit-detecting, aurally pornographic, Neanderthal-pervert band of patriarchy-smashing snatchlickers." I am reading a book called *Audible Traces*.[1]

How does identity inform musical experience? And how does musical experience mold identity? *Audible Traces,* an anthology co-edited by Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hamessley, offers an intriguing assortment of answers—and raises many additional questions as well. As the "traces" above imply, many of the contributions foreground gender and sexuality as a fundamental component of identity, drawing on recent intellectual and aesthetic currents to illuminate the identities of operatic characters, musical performers, and perhaps most provocatively, the contributors themselves. The volume adopts the investigative spirit of recent scholarly trends, but it slices up our musical culture in an idiosyncratic and refreshing way. So while the new musicology, understandably and somewhat expectedly, tends to apply its ever more dazzling intellectual gymnastics to either the canonical sound museum or the newly sanctioned vernacular shopping cart, *Audible Traces* conceives of musical activity as a decentered, somewhat chaotic living practice, as evidenced by its receptivity to contemporary experimental practices and its inclusion of practitioners alongside scholars.[2] (In fact, many

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[1]These are riffs on the articles by Rabinowitz, Lochhead, Coulombe, Hisama, Cusick, Morris, and Coulombe, respectively. The penile thrusting is quoted by Mitchell Morris (224) and is taken from Andrew Holleran, *Dancer From the Dance* ([New York: William Morrow and Company, 1978], 229). The penultimate sentence quotes the band Tribe 8; the citation in Coulombe's article (266) originally appeared in Evelyn McDonnell, "Queer Punk Meets Womyn's Music," *Ms.* 5 (November-December 1994), 78-79.

[2] Lest this comment be misunderstood as yet one more entry in the sometimes hysterical raving over the status and future of musicology, I hasten to underscore that the focus on canonical and popular works is worthwhile. It is also striking that while earlier collections like *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (ed. Ruth Solie [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993]) and *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas [New York: Routledge, 1994]) confined discussion of living composers almost entirely to the popular realm, more recent studies have begun to attend to living composers, as in Susan McClary's *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000) and the anthology *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought,* edited by Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auner (New York: Routledge, 2002). At the same time, McClary's book evidences an all too familiar demonization of perceived compositional ideologies, as she sets up her appreciation of living musicians (including Philip Glass and John Zorn) with an entertaining but conspicuously unattributed depiction of a the paranoid atonality fetishists besieged by the postmodern challenge to their authority: "The

contributors cannot be adequately classified as only one or the other.) A vigorous heterogeneity characterizes the book, in the editorial approach as well as in the diversity of musics represented. In her preface, composer (among other things) Elaine Barkin notes that after she agreed to edit the volume, she searched for a co-editor "whose entire outlook differed from my own" (xiii). This dual editorship, carried out by Barkin and musicologist (among other things) Lydia Hamessley, is only one way in which the interplay of complementary voices characterizes the volume. *Audible Traces* has the feel of a generous, expansive, ultimately boundless conversation. Many of the scholars have presented their work in the same venues (notably the series of Feminist Theory and Music Conferences, the 1991 installment of which was coordinated by Hamessley), and they cite one another liberally. In addition, the tendency of many contributors to fold multiple voices into their essays creates a sense of open-ended dialogue.

The essays' diversity belies a number of shared concerns, among them the significance of the corporeal self in music-making; the constitution of identity through musical syntax and style, and the ways in which musical activity may either obey or resist the normative identity formation of one's culture. Although there are, not surprisingly, a number of essays that consider canonical works, there is also a fair amount of discussion (as well as practice) of non-canonical, non-notated, experimental, interdisciplinary and collaborative music-making. Informal reflections of living composers sit alongside more scholarly articles, and there is even a composition delivered on compact disc. It would take a roadmap more complex and multi-dimensional than I can draw here to tease out all the connections and distinctions between the articles. Nevertheless, I will categorize them, if partially and provisionally, according to a few broad concerns.

A number of scholars offer readings and re-readings that focus on the mechanisms of spectatorship, interpretation, analysis and criticism. In a concise and enlightening essay, Judy Lochhead considers how analyses of Berg's *Lulu* have been informed by conventional notions

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proliferation of triadic sonorities in recent music has thus been received by those faithful to the premises of atonality as backsliding, as if culture had departed suddenly from the rules of a strict diet to engage in a Häagen-Dazs binge; latter-day Modernists voice their righteous indignation in tones that resemble those of ladies from the Temperance Union witnessing the end of Prohibition" (McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000], 141). One notes as well McClary's inclination toward theatrical capitalization and an amusing invocation of misogynist paranoia to make her point. I would be persuaded as well as entertained by her rhetoric if the portrait were accurate, and if it were not simply a regurgitation of the diatribe against modernism that McClary presented years ago in her article "Terminal Prestige: The Case of Avant-Garde Music Composition" (*Cultural Critique* 12 [Spring 1989], 57–81). The contentions of this much-discussed article were addressed by Elaine Barkin in her article "either/other" (*Perspectives of New Music* 30, no. 2 [Summer 1992], 206–233), among others. (For another opportunistic fantasy-indictment of the remote, hermetic, joyless modernist, see Richard Taruskin, "How Talented Composers Become Useless," *New York Times* Arts and Leisure [Sunday, March 10, 1996], 31.) Lochhead and Auner's collection, on the other hand, approaches a diverse crowd of recent and living composers, including George Rochberg, Helmut Lachenmann, Brian Ferneyhough, Mauricio Kagel, as well as more general theoretical articles and studies of vernacular works; and by avoiding the temptation to caricature (or fabricate) composers' viewpoints, *Audible Traces* promises a more nuanced, if rhetorically inconvenient, consideration of practitioners' complex responses to musical inheritances and idioms. (One engaging account of a composer's "misbehavior" in the face of current notions of identity and music-making is displayed in Lawrence D. Mass's "Conversation With Ned Rorem," published in *Queering the Pitch*: impatient with Rorem's insistence that "music cannot be defined as having any sexuality," Mass describes the composer's stance as "negatively defensive," and Rorem replies, "You say I'm negatively defensive, but how can I win when you're making the rules?" (Mass, "Conversation With Ned Rorem," in *Queering the Pitch*, 110). As this exchange shows, neither righteous indignation nor the siege mentality is the exclusive province of modernists—or composers. One hopes that the lively conversation about matters of music and identity will continue to offer composers a seat at the table and foster more unruly dialogues such as these. As long as composers' experiences are misrepresented and even dismissed, our understanding of contemporary musical practices and their cultural contexts remains woefully incomplete.

of gender. Weaving together a discussion of changes in *Lulu* criticism with her own interpretation of certain key passages, Lochhead begins by reevaluating the "revenge interpretation" (231): the notion that the murder of Lulu at the end of the opera is an act of retaliation for Lulu's fatal shooting of Dr. Schön in Act II. Lochhead points out that while the narrative may support such an interpretation, a close reading of the music encourages a rather different response. Like Lochhead, Peter J. Rabinowitz examines a canonical opera: in this case, *Carmen*. Rabinowitz reconsiders Susan McClary's contention that Bizet's music encourages the spectator to desire Carmen's death, arguing for the "distinction between representation and endorsement" (135). The end of the essay points toward a compelling reading of the opera, as Rabinowitz engages in a rich, ambiguous way with Carmen's outsider status and her eventual demise. Mitchell Morris also attends to the construction of identity through musical experience; however, he relies less on pre-existing analyses, since the object of his study is not an elite canonical work but rather the Weather Girls' 1983 disco hit "It's Raining Men," a campy anthem of the 1980s gay bar scene. Morris notes that the "triply abject" performers, who are black, female, and fat, conjure an ideal of "exuberant corporeality" (226): as they perform their own marginal identities, they offer numerous points of intersection with gay subjectivity.

While Lochhead, Rabinowitz and Morris examine the influence of identity on reception, others discuss its encoding in composition and performance. Martha Mockus offers a welcome consideration of a living lesbian composer who has acknowledged the significance of gender and sexuality in her work for decades, well before the explosion of gender studies in music. The subject is *Skin,* a 1991 collaboration between composer Pauline Oliveros and choreographer Paula Josa-Jones. Mockus juxtaposes citations from, and her own musings on, the writings of Dorothy Allison with her discussion of the Oliveros/Josa-Jones work.[3] Her view of the relationship between sexuality and musical preferences is intriguing. For example, she identifies Oliveros's "fascination for sounds that are interstitial, defiant, peculiar, at times unconnected to 'real' instruments: *queer,* in the most musical sense of the term" (53). In the realm of the vernacular, Renee T. Coulombe focuses on the good-natured defiance of blueswoman Candye Kane and the "Neanderthal-pervert band of patriarchy-smashing snatchlickers" called Tribe 8, while Ellie M. Hisama notes how Joan Armatrading's self-presentation and her music resist hegemonic constructions of identity to create instead a "black diasporic" sensibility (126). Ethnomusicologist Su Zheng discusses gender ideology in Chinese music. She begins by stressing the necessity of studying specific historical and cultural contexts to examine gender ideology appropriately, and goes on to consider a number of musical examples, the most recent of which raises the specter of Chinese composers' "'colonialization of consciousness' and . . . 'consciousness of colonialization'" (163).[4]

Among those who confront the nature and direction of music disciplines, Suzanne G. Cusick does so most explicitly, proposing a form of "performance-centered, embodied music criticism" (25), which she practices by delving into physiology and psychology to scrutinize the influence of enculturation on musical performances of gender and sex. Drawing on Judith Butler's understanding of gender as a mode of performance, Cusick notes that the voice, situated in the body, seems to be fixed in its gender identity and therefore less prone to the vagaries of enculturation than to the stipulations of physiology; she then goes on to expose the influence of cultural norms on the development of the voice—and specifically, tessitura. Her

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[3]Mockus's work is based on a video created by Ellen Sebring (see n. 21 [68]). Unfortunately, the video does not appear to be commercially available, but recalling a performance of *Skin* I attended in 1991, I personally find Mockus's description intuitively convincing and persuasive.

[4]These terms are adopted by Zheng from Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), xi.

essay virtuosically unmasks the ways in which even the most ostensibly "natural" facets of identity may be culturally inflected. In an another exercise in "embodied research" (187), Susan C. Cook notes the subjectivity of academic "story-telling" and claims the situated and the autobiographical (178). Her essay braids together three distinct strands: an examination of the early twentieth-century dance performances of Vernon and Irene Castle, a retelling of the fairy tale of the Twelve Dancing Princesses, and an investigation of the "musicological family romance" (178). Taking the example of the Castles as illustrative of trends in early twentieth century culture, Cook explores such developments as the increased popularity of couples dancing and changing preferences regarding women's fashions and body type. In an essay based on a talk delivered to the Society for Music Theory in 1993, Elaine Barkin confronts disciplinary challenges from a rather different viewpoint, though her multilayered text, full of "divergences," "digressions," and the insights of colleagues, shares something with Cook's braided tales (274). (There is even an intriguing use of pentimento.) A brief reference to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* gives way to a frank, reflective commentary on "something called 'feminist music theory'" (274), and in metatextual fashion, Barkin also incorporates her commentary *about* the process of constructing her talk, recorded in a series of journal entries—though the order is not always chronological. In fact, this dis-order is not unrelated to Barkin's agenda, for although her writing is informed by current scholarship in music, feminism and other fields, she also expresses a certain skepticism toward "*au courant* debunking strateg[ies]" (287). With characteristic precision and fluidity, allied with a sort of friendly perversity, she acknowledges a marked ambivalence about the very discipline she finds herself practicing.

Barkin is not the only one to combine analysis and invention with self-reflection. In an essay on Rebecca Clarke's 1919 Sonata for Viola and Piano, Marianne Kielian-Gilbert integrates Clarke's own commentaries, as well as texts by William Blake and Sylvia Plath, into her understanding of the work. The result is an emphasis on "feminine spaces and metaphors of reading" (71) which reads more like a composition, albeit a text-based and highly referential one, than a scholarly study. In a similar spirit, Benjamin Boretz offers a work called *music/consciousness/gender,* which consists of a performance recorded on compact disc. (The "script" is included in the book's text as well.) This is another case where the author inserts others' voices into his argument, as he peppers his own text/music amalgam with texts by Gregory Bateson, Suzanne G. Cusick, and Gilbert Rouget and others, as well as music by Coltrane, Hendrix, Mahler, Wagner, and J.K. Randall. The audio format allows for simultaneous as well as successive multivocality; often this entails the presentation of a musical example with a superimposed text, resulting in a strenuous and ultimately rewarding workout for the listener. The strands are not so much woven together as grafted onto one another: the music is overlain by a concurrent stream of verbal exegesis, interrogation and rebuttal. As Boretz "invasively recontextualizes" these pre-existing materials, many but not all of them centerpieces of various high- and low-brow canons, I am reminded of the complex responses I have to Jasper Johns's appropriation and defamiliarization of iconic images—or to Asger Jorn's unsettling disfigurations of generic paintings.[5] The ultimate effect, though, is entirely idiosyncratic, and characteristically intensive and earnest.

And while the syntax here is more traditional, if informal, the opening section of the book, a forum titled "Composing Women," also considers the composerly side of the equation, as a number of respondents reflect on the question, "How do you go about doing whatever it is you consider to be your work?" (The composers are Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, Mary Lee Roberts, Carla Scaletti, Anna Rubin, Vivian Adelberg Rudow, Susan Parenti, Mara Helmuth,

[5]This quotation is adapted from Boretz's introduction, "a text." (The printed version included in *Audible Traces* is unpaged.) *music/consciousness/gender* is also available in video format, as Open Space Video 1. The following web page concerns Asger Jorn: www.notbored.org/jorn.html.

Catherine Schieve.) In addition to gender, the composers share a penchant for creating "work [that] crosses boundaries via a mixture of media or language or systems (technological, political, or social)" (1). How invigorating it is to encounter a discussion with women composers that does *not* ask them to explain the "influence of gender" on their work!—a question that, all good intentions notwithstanding, constrains its subjects by suggesting that they alone take on the work of tending to the margin.[6]

Audible Traces is a rich, multifaceted book, and my response to it is quite complicated. I am heartened by its assorted insights, its refreshing approaches, and its commitment to questioning inherited conventions. At the same time, my enthusiasm is tempered somewhat by the inevitable challenges that arise as we question our discipline's character, scope, and goals. Witness the vigorous dismantling of binary constructs, incongruously followed by their resurrection in more "positive" valences: Judith Butler's seminal *Gender Trouble* is cited repeatedly, and yet her revolutionary work has only a limited influence. To choose just one example, Marianne Kielian-Gilbert's imaginative response to Rebecca Clarke's music may appeal to those who seek traces of gender in musical syntax, and yet I fear that the valorization of the feminine merely inverts, rather than dismantles, the all-too-familiar dismissal of women composers.[7] For that reason, the essays that question or resist binary constructs interest me the most. I also confess to harboring a certain ambivalence vis-à-vis autobiographically informed scholarship (a result of my repressive Irish-Catholic upbringing, perhaps?). Of course, in a collection subtitled as this one is, it is certainly appropriate to adopt what Barkin calls the "personal-work angle" (276) in order to reflect on the intersection of identity and experience. And it has often been noted that speaking candidly from the margins can be a radical act. Yet one needn't idealize a specious and exclusionary "objectivity" to note that such work is most successful when moderated by some variety of

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[6]Some of the composers, not surprisingly, do acknowledge or question the relationship between their gender and their compositional activity, whether implicitly or explicitly: for instance, Vivan Adelberg Rudow notes the effect of child-rearing on her practice (13), and Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner writes, "I don't think my music is about anything that one can really label. It is not about being a woman, or being a Western art music composer, or being a Democrat. My music is about being Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner" (4). Also, in her essay, Elaine Barkin discusses being "stumped" when asked about the relationship for her between gender and composition, although she acknowledges that she has posed this question to others (276).

[7]Consider Butler's words, first published in 1990: "If a stable notion of gender no longer proves to be the foundational premise of feminist politics, perhaps a new sort of feminist politics is now desirable to contest the very reifications of gender and identity, one that will take the variable construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal" (Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [New York: Routledge, 1999], 9). Kielian-Gilbert cites Butler's notion of performance (73), and Cusick and Zheng also draw on Butler's work. It is striking that she has become a surrogate authority figure of sorts, offering an alternative not only to conventional notions of gender but also to intra-disciplinary precursors, allowing us to bolster our arguments with her intellectual prestige without perpetuating the somewhat unsavory legacy of our own field. (See n. 10 below.) Also, it is important to acknowledge that Kielian-Gilbert positions her response to Clarke's music as metaphorical, thus avoiding the implication that Clarke's music is deliberately or essentially gender-inflected; yet it is imperative that we question our attachment to gendered interpretations of musical syntax, whether we locate them in the neutral, poietic, or esthesic levels, and *especially* when the subject is a composer who is no longer living and/or who was inculcated into relatively traditional musical idioms. (The tripartition is from Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music,* tr. Carolyn Abbate [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990].) Is it not enough that Clarke, against all odds, composed appealing and skilled music? Why do we need her work to contain or evoke a gendered narrative as well? Might it be that, despite ourselves, we don't believe she is worthy of our attention otherwise? I confess that this is something of an idée fixe for me; see, for example, "Difference or Silence? Women Composers Between Scylla and Charybdis," *Indiana Theory Review* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1996), 77–85. I would raise the some questions in response to Lawrence D. Mass's' interrogation of Ned Rorem (see n. 2 above) and Hisama's portrayal of Joan Armatrading's politics, which I consider below.

critical distance or multivocality, as in the articles by Lydia Hamessley, Mitchell Morris and Elaine Barkin.

In addition, references to normativity raise a number of questions not only about musical conventions and their circulation in the culture at large, but also about what we expect of our "subjects" vis-à-vis these conventions. A number of essays painstakingly examine such norms, as in Susan C. Cook's fastidious account of the development of social dance in the United States or Su Zheng's study of gender ideology in Chinese music. And Suzanne G. Cusick notes how musicians like Eddie Vedder (of the band Pearl Jam) and the Indigo Girls perform an intelligible gender identity for their respective audiences. Others contemplate resistance to the perceived norms, as when writers identify—and, not coincidentally, identify *with*—figures who appear to defy or subvert mainstream expectations. Yet the notion of resistance demands more unpacking before it becomes established as a hegemonic construct in its own right. (It might be called the New Musicology Mad Lib: "The music of Figure A avoids colonization by the dominant ideology of B, thereby resisting the established and oppressive conventions of X and Y.") For instance, Ellie M. Hisama writes that "Joan Armatrading's music resists being contained within traditional sites of gender and sexuality," (117) and Renee T. Coulombe claims that "Candye Kane challenges the ghosts of racism that inhabit the blues-woman arena" (262). Indeed, words like "resist" and "challenge," with their hyper-positive valence, circulate promiscuously and pleasurably.[8] It seems that rebellion offers such appeal and potency that we circulate and re-circulate our transgressive narratives, rarely stopping to question their provenance or their complex implications. Of course, such narratives can and do illuminate the experience of subaltern figures, as shown by Coulombe's and Hisama's contributions. But they also rely, conceptually and conspicuously, upon the familiar—dare I say masculinist?—myth of the heroic individual resisting mass opposition, and single-handedly expressing a heretofore unheard of personal point of view. Having written in my youth a piano duo in which I indicated the two parts as "Piano 1" and "Piano A," I recognize that a musician's outsider status may affect her work. But the stories of marginalized figures are complex, and we would benefit from a more nuanced depiction of the interaction between individual figures and the ostensible mainstream. Otherwise, we risk both overlooking the undeniable power of social control and erecting a double standard whereby we implicitly demand that our beloved heroes not only conquer but also dismantle established norms—a tall order for an insider *or* an outsider.

The transgressive hero(ine) plays a supporting role in the "Composing Women" Forum, too, as when Hinkle-Turner supposes that her "bulging file of rejection letters" confirms that her music "has apparently been deemed 'way too weird' by the conservative professional music ensembles" (4). In general, though, the composers' commentaries are refreshingly free of self-mythologization. Indeed, if one were to seek a commonality between the gender of the composers and the nature of their commentaries, I would say it lies in their modesty (not to say self-deprecation) and in their tendency to see their work in a holistic light. (I would then rescind this comment immediately after realizing that, however appealing, it traffics in a pernicious dualistic gender construct I would rather avoid.) Mary Lee Roberts notes that her feeling about her work are bound up with the seasons, her family history and her moods, and Vivian Adelberg Rudow states, "If I have difficulty composing, I eat chocolate which gives me better concentration but extra weight. I meditate in the morning & if I need to get into my

[8] Coulombe uses the word "challenge" twice more in that same brief paragraph before concluding thus: "Refuting mainstream culture's pathologizing of all women's sexual and culinary appetites, Candye dishes out as much as she takes. By doing it as a middle-class, married, white suburban mother she highlights the incongruity of the very stereotypes she is breaking" (262).

head better, I meditate some more" (14). Perhaps Susan Parenti's words are the most direct: "The work of composing floods over the barline" (15).[9]

In general, the musicologists' enactments of disciplinary rebellion are decidedly moderate and suggestive, as in Judy Lochhead's nuanced critique of *Lulu*. The transgressive urge that presents itself in the scholarly articles usually involves the crossing of disciplinary boundaries, and usually to considerable effect. For example, Peter J. Rabinowitz provides opera scholarship with a welcome infusion from narrative theory, and Suzanne G. Cusick investigates physiology and psychology to reach a fuller understanding of vocal performance. In her study of the Castles, Susan C. Cook argues convincingly for more attention to dance in musicology: "While notable exceptions exist . . . the majority of music scholars remain all too willing to turn a deaf ear to dance music entirely or to split the dancing body off from its music. . ." (185). Indeed, her essay is fortified by an impressive understanding of dance scholarship, but I wonder whether Cook would really expect more than a minority of musicologists to occupy themselves with dance.[10] As if to expose both the heady allure and the hidden dangers of interdisciplinary pursuits, Cook considers many features of the Castle's work and its social context but includes only a cursory discussion of James Reese Europe's music, which is confined to a brief passage at the end of her article; so while she notes, "my discussion would seem to privilege music over dance," I would say she tends toward the inverse (200). Thus the music—vital, infectious, and especially significant in that it was composed specifically for the Castles—is curiously silent, relegated to a faint ghostly

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[9]In her discussion of Pauline Oliveros's music, Martha Mockus notes the composer's comparison of her method to composting (55). Barkin resists identifying her "quests" as gender-specific, though she goes on to observe, "On the other hand, my entire life has been profoundly colored with constantly changing realities—from within and without—of having been born, raised, educated, accepted, rejected, encouraged, loved, appreciated, dismissed, most often identified and perceived as: female, girl, woman" (277). With this in mind, it is worth suggesting that some readers would likely receive Hinkle-Turner's comment (quoted above) differently depending on the gender of the speaker.

[10]With the notable exception of figures like Claudia Gorbman, Michel Chion, and Joan Acocella, who examine the role of music and sound in multimedia work, film and dance scholars likewise tend to overlook music. (See, for example, Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987]; Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen,* ed. and tr. by Claudia Gorbman [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994]; and Joan Acocella, *Mark Morris* [New York: Noonday Press, 1993], especially the chapter titled "Music" [159–182].) I find this narrow focus even more surprising and problematic than musicologists' inattention to the body, if only because film and dance most often include some sort of sound. (In other words, unaccompanied dance and genuinely silent film are less common than concert music.) To offer just one example: in her analysis of Martha Graham's *Night Journey,* distinguished dance scholar Sally Banes considers the movement vis-à-vis the narrative, commenting on the work's intertextual resonances and its gendered implications, as well as on the relationship of these to Graham's own life experience (Banes, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* [London and New York: Routledge, 1998], 157–167). She acknowledges the importance of Isamu Noguchi's set (158) and credits the cast and even the director of the video (262, n. 136) without mentioning the composer William Schuman. Interestingly, although her portrayal of Graham's choreography often suggests phantom sounds, such as unspeakable words, incantations and the gesture Graham called the "vaginal cry" (159), the discussion of music is relegated to ineffectual superficial descriptions, as in the following: "the churning music becomes peaceful" (158) and "the music turns from strident dissonance to gentle melody" (161). In addition, Cook's critique of musicology recalls Marjorie Garber's essay "Discipline Envy," in which she negotiates the social context of interdisciplinary fervor (Garber, *Academic Instincts* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001], 53–96). Stressing that "the system . . is not one of envious persons but of disciplinary envy" and that the term *envy* should be understood "to designate a mechanism, a kind of energy, an exhilarating intellectual curiosity, as well as what [Thorstein] Veblen called emulation" (60), Garber notes that some detractors (such as Stanley Fish and Edward Said) question both the possibility and the value of interdisciplinary work. Her own stance is more moderate and generous: "The inevitable consequence of interdisciplinarity may not be the end of the scholarly world as we know it but the acknowledgement that our knowledge is always partial, rather than total" (79–80). While acknowledging the force of Cook's argument, I propose that an interdisciplinary approach is, like any disciplinary one, also necessarily partial, and that that is as it should be.

presence in an otherwise vital and engaging discussion.[11] Of course, one assumes that Cook will address the music more fully in her forthcoming book, and any interdisciplinary endeavor is bound to privilege one of its "threads" over another. I mention this apparently minor point because it might provoke a discussion, not only about the thrill of interdisciplinary pursuits, but also about the power dynamics of text and sound. This is one of the most appealing facets of *Audible Traces:* while Cook demonstrates that the proper object of her inquiry is the amalgam of music, movement, and culture, Morris suggests that the text of "It's Raining Men" comprises not only sound but also lyrics, images, and the song's performance aspect. The contributions by the Composing Women as well as by composers Barkin and Boretz suggest the intriguing ways in which sound may be informed by, or fused with, text, image, and idea. It is "musicking" in the best sense. Nevertheless, I fear that the word at times occupies too dominant a position. By that I do not intend to advocate the limiting of scholarly discussion in favor of a romantic faith in sound "speaking for itself,", but rather *more* discussion, and more robust faith in musical acts—more *audible* traces, as it were.

Because a full discussion of the dominance of language over music cannot be undertaken here, I will offer one example by way of illustration. In her study of Joan Armatrading, Hisama argues that Armatrading's voice, performance, and songs negotiate and transgress conventional notions of gender, sexuality and race. But she expresses disappointment at Armatrading's insistence that she writes not "feminist songs" but rather "songs for whoever likes them" (123). In this statement, as in what she understands as Armatrading's "rejection of political movements," Hisama identifies a strain of "conservatism" (123). In other words, she emphasizes the political implications of Armatrading's music, and then demands that those implications be made explicit in Armatrading's interviews, thereby revealing her own lack of faith in the significance of the music she has just analyzed. This is all the more disappointing because her commentary on the music is so informative. (It is also puzzling that while Hisama acknowledges the pressure of the market, she does not consider that these statements might be a form of market-driven performance in themselves, rather than the expression of Armatrading's deeply held personal beliefs.[12]) Thus she implicitly demands that the artist practice activism alongside her musical craft, *even though her music engenders political significance*. In the end, I have an uncomfortable response to this power dynamic, in which the scholar alternately lauds and chastises the performer, monitoring her behavior through a logocentric and hierarchical relationship.[13] I'd like to see the vigorous interrogation of power dynamics in music production and reception, so integral to many of the essays in *Audible Traces,* taken one step further, to the relationship between word and sound, self and

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[11] Since *Audible Traces* was published, Ken Burns's notorious series, *Jazz,* has been broadcast on television and released on video; the first volume includes footage of the Castles. (Occasionally one can even hear James Reese Europe's music emerge from under the running commentary.)

[12] See Martha Mockus's discussion of k.d. lang's insistence that "I'm a lesbian, but my music isn't lesbian music. They [lesbian fans] have to realize that's the way I feel, and respect it" (Mockus, "Queer Thoughts on Country Music and k.d. lang," in *Queering the Pitch*, 269). As I write this I come upon an article wherein the musician Pamela Means relates an incident that further exposes the uncomfortable relationship between the women-identified music niche and the larger market: "I met this hotshot from L.A., and he was like: 'Oh yeah, I'm going to get you signed. Do you have a boyfriend?' I said, "No.' He said, 'Oh, a girlfriend?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'O.K., no problem—just don't tell anybody. Every guy in the audience has to think he has a chance with you'" (Quoted in David Hajdu, "Queer As Folk: How Did An Earnest Voice and an Acoustic Guitar Become the Sound of Lesbian Culture?" *New York Times Magazine* [Sunday, Aug. 18, 2002], 40). Certainly the conflicting pressures experienced by marginalized performers demand more discussion, as does the way in which the identities of public figures (even those who circulate in niche markets) become reified and commodified. (In the same article, Ani DiFranco says, "I was forced into the position of martyr, representative, mouthpiece for personal empowerment. It's funny—when people are searching for something in their lives, and you come to represent something to them that turns you into a symbol. . . . [Quoted in Hajdu, "Queer as Folk," 41]. It is in this sense that I refer above to "what we expect of our 'subjects'.")

[13] See n. 2 above.

other, in music scholarship. Since recent scholarship, like some strains of composition, has at last begun to interrogate the hierarchical nature of our inherited constructs, it might guard against disempowering the very object of the inquiry and aim instead to claim the disorderly, elusive, ephemeral character of sound.

When it foregrounds this complex relationship between sound, word and idea, *Audible Traces* is most invigorating. Here intellectual and musical drive is seasoned by a sense of inquisitiveness and generosity, and the insights regarding the formation, expression, and dissolution of identity are many. While it is tempting to posit a duality between the scholars who embrace "objective" study and composers who practice "subjective" music-making, it is in the blurring of this boundary—notice that heroic trope asserting itself here?—that the book makes its greatest contribution. Judy Lochhead exposes undigested notions about fictional female characters, and Mitchell Morris relates the Weather Girls not only to gay identity in general but to his own coming out. Lydia Hamessley reflects on her commitment to clawhammer banjo playing, and Elaine Barkin notes her distaste for "fringes & margins & peripheries & alternatives & mainstreams & centers: flagrantly and blatantly judgmental and hierarchical pronouncements" (286). The vivid and multivocal conversation that is *Audible Traces* offers fresh, imaginative ways of conceiving the kind of cultural work we do, the community we inhabit, and the individuals we are. The discussion is wide-ranging, unruly, and tantalizingly unfinished; one hopes it is just beginning.

A Review of *Essential Cowell: Selected Writings on Music By Henry Cowell 1921-1964*, edited by Dick Higgins, with a Preface by Kyle Gann and an Introduction by Dick Higgins (DOCUMENTEXT McPherson & Co., 2001).

Mary Lee Roberts

Perhaps there is some psychology that goes along with the human creation of something new; whatever it is, whatever the therapists tell their therapees in order to cope with the "newness" of creation, there must be something in there about dealing with what it feels like to be competitive about making new things. My question is this: why must there be a concept of competitive rank whenever the "new" is discussed? Not that rank is not potentially interesting and certainly it is a convenient method for packing things up for verbal distribution, but when what we get is mostly ranking, then the thing that is ranked becomes dis-interesting and the ranker and her/his desire for ranking begins to draw the interest. I'll leave this topic for now and continue on to my second theme, but I want readers to know where my thoughts are beginning.

My second theme has to do with fetishes. Last winter I attended a lecture by the composer Stan Link where he discussed film sound/music. Stan Link presented a Sylvester Stallone movie where the actor was preparing his weapons. We had Sylvester Stallone with a huge automatic weapon making minute adjustments. We were obliged to hear: click, clack, jam, bang, click, etc. for about 1 minute. The sound as reinforcer for the fetish of the gun was incredible (this was Stan's point). Until Stallone lost his hearing in the movie (a primary theme in this film) the gun-adjusting sounds were at the top of the mix. This is all very unsubtle and Stan provoked me to remember every movie that I had seen recently where weapon fetishes and the accompanying in-your-face gun adjusting sounds were prevalent. This led me to think about how ability, or technique, and how the fetish for ability or technique can be reinforced by sound. I immediately began a re-analysis of the writings on music that I was looking at and I noticed a preoccupation with fetishes for musical materials that reads to me like a kind of weak analysis of what is actually happening in a piece of music. These materials: form, scales, durations, and rhythmical combinations, are all very abstract to the actual experience of the truly musical listener. What was never ever described was the musical experience; only the materials were listed.[1]

I was having an especially hard time with *Essential Cowell* after this point.[2] My primary criticism of Henry Cowell's writings is as follows: the musical materials fetish is

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[1] This reminds me of all of my experiences in reading about popular music where the writers only discuss the lyrics of the music; for all I know I could never guess what any of the music sounds like.

[2] As part of my preparation for this article I reread Cowell's *New Musical Resources* and *American Composers on American Music.*

so overwhelming that there is little other content. Co-existing with this emphasis on abstracted musical materials is Cowell's ever-present preoccupation with who did what first, as if the only importance of an individual's creation is when it happened.

But just so I don't get mired in negative criticisms I'll start with the "Introduction" to *Essential Cowell*, which is a lovely article by Dick Higgins. Mostly biographical, Dick Higgins's "Introduction" tracks a slice of Cowell's life just before Cowell's death in 1965. This is a story of inspiration—Cowell inspiring his student Dick Higgins to work hard at his compositions, listen to a wide variety of music that Cowell was familiar with, and dedicate himself to art making. What Dick Higgins's essay provokes me to do is reevaluate how I feel about his (Higgins's) work, rethink all that I know about him, and reinvestigate his scores, pieces that I haven't looked at in years, but pieces that I heard at his memorial concert after his death on Oct. 26, 1998. The "Introduction" is a particular insight into Dick Higgins's mind; it is the article that I appreciate the most in this entire collection.

What comes next is a collection of Henry Cowell's writings most of which were published in journals, with some articles coming from Cowell's contributions to his *American Composers on American Music*. At first I was surprised at the brevity of most of the articles in *Essential Cowell*. Just as a topic is mentioned, briefly introduced, some criticisms or praises thrown in, the piece comes to a halt. Nowhere do I sense any depth of analysis. For example, I have always been interested in Charles Seeger, a grand figure in our American musical heritage. I eagerly opened *Essential Cowell* to the "Charles Seeger" article and found a reprint of Cowell's article from his *American Composers on American Music*. Having read this bit on Charles Seeger 20 years ago I gave it a try again and found the same problem, a perhaps perennial problem with Cowell's writings: brevity and lack of meaningful content. Here I reread that Seeger was the second person to compose "genuinely dissonant" works "from beginning to end". Ives was the first. [p. 73] "When the whole world thought Stravinsky and Schoenberg both insane, Seeger found them the most important new composers of their time." [p. 74] I reread *American Composers on American Music* recently thinking I might find some writing style characteristic of the 1920s and 1930s (the old older generation of American writers on American music). I had an idea that there must have been some mode of thinking that was prevalent at that time, a sort of idea that if something is declared there will be no questions asked. But when I read Charles Seeger from the early 1930s discussing Carl Ruggles and Ruth Crawford there is no evidence of Cowell's flippant one-offs. And I truly wish I were writing about Seeger — or maybe it is that Seeger picks the two most interesting composers from this period to write about so there is actually content to comment on. So here is a rating for the reader: Seeger beats Cowell.

A good illustration of Cowell's fetish for musical materials is his idea of how to be analytical about the music of Edgard Varèse:

"An analysis of the rhythms throughout *Hyperprism* reveals a great variety of rhythmic figures. On the first page alone there are thirty-two different rhythmical

manners of filling a measure. Through the whole work there are surprisingly few rhythmical duplications. It has been said by those who perceive a minimum of tonal, melodic, and harmonic changes in his music that Varèse lacks invention; yet undoubtedly for the development of so many different figures of rhythm one must concede as great inventive fertility as is usually recognized in the field of pitch." [p. 80]

These words are preceded by Cowell's conclusion that Varèse's music is not indigenous to America (we are not told why, or why we should care, unless, of course, it is meaningful for us to make such classifications on political or racial grounds) and he writes of *Amériques*[3] as a kind of telescopic view of what a Frenchman would think that American music should sound like. Just in case we need some convincing we get: "While he lacks melodic invention and harmonic succession, Varèse is in other respects unique, and deserves the highest place among European composers who have become American." [p. 81]

Where Cowell praises Carl Ruggles for his dedication to dissonance, as if dissonance itself (as a stand alone musical element dissonance seems unexplainably abstract to me) were a radical discovery, something new and inventive to be dedicated to, he takes John Cage apart for his lack of dedication to what sounds like old fashioned formal development. Here Cowell reads more like an old fuddy-duddy pedant than like someone wanting to deal with the next step:

"To John Cage, a brief series of sound, or even a single combination of them, has come to seem complete in itself, and to constitute an audible 'event'. But he does not use the conventional organization of music, in which such events are related through planned rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic succession to produce what we are accustomed to consider an organic musical development." [p. 133]

We may think that Cowell is just noticing something about Cage, but later on his limitations of understanding and flexibility (and his dedication to standardized usage of those precious musical materials) begins to show. Here is Cowell describing Cage's views concerning the many variations of a single composition created by chance operations: "Cage's own attitude about this was one of comparative indifference, since he believes the concept to be more interesting than the result of any single performance." [p. 135] Cowell goes further when he mentions:

"The compositions of Christian Wolff, Morton Feldman, Pierre Boulez, and John Cage vary widely in style, but a common philosophy unites them: a concentration upon unfamiliar relationships of space and time, and sound and silence, rather than on new melodies and chords, and a conviction that all musical relationships, whether arrived at by chance or by design, have potential value and are worth examination." [p. 136]

Even when Cowell had problems with Varèse's supposed lack of concentration on a supposed vital musical element, that being pitch and a resulting melodic development, he could still appreciate Varèse as a composer (albeit a nonindigenous one). But his problem with Cage and his colleagues is that they do not adhere to the traditional use of musical materials. There are none of the standard fetishes here;

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[3] Cowell spells the title of this piece as: *Amérique*.

instead Cowell sneers at Cage's compositional technique. In describing (certainly not even trying to think of a way to provide a meaningful analysis of) Cage's *Imaginary Landscape #4*[4] for twelve radios Cowell recognizes that "tunes, rhythms, chords, timbres" will never happen in the same sequence more than once. He goes on to comment about the compositional technique Cage was using with *I Ching* coin tossing, "The station selection and dynamic structure, once tossed for, are of course retained; and this constitutes the composition, if composition it be." [p. 138][5] Later on Cowell furthers his "write-off" by referring to Cage and colleagues as "coin tossers". [p. 141] Cowell sneers on:

"Since it can be shown that Cage and his friends have come together at one time in one room, the group may be considered an aggregate. So we may toss to decide whether the group is to change or to remain the same, and toss again to decide whether the esthetic pleasure to be derived from the work of its members is to play the role of silence or of an event in sound.

And if one must decide whether genuine value is, or is not, to found in this music, a last throw of the coins of *I Ching* will have to determine that for us too." [p. 143][6]

As I accumulate all this evidence of the limitations of Cowell's mind and musical ear, I get more and more mystified at his reputation as a creative inventor, as a great promoter of the "new", as a person who supported at least indigenous American music such as that of Cage, Wolff, and Feldman. I think the key to Cowell's limitations is in fact his inflexible fetish for traditional musical materials, and for a fairly traditional use of these materials, such as the old fashioned "development" that we all learned in our beginning music theory classes.[7]

Later on in his "Scientific Approach to Non-European Music" Cowell explains himself, albeit in a very different context:

"What constitutes the scientific approach to music systems with which we are unfamiliar? The first impression—one that for some people is not overcome for a long time—usually is that the music is 'unmusical,' 'out of tune,' 'unmelodious,' 'monotonous,' etc. Obviously it represents aesthetic criteria so different from those conventionally accepted by us that impressions of this sort must entirely be ruled out. Furthermore, the material forms are usually so unlike those of our conventional styles

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[4] Cowell leaves out part of the title; he calls this piece *Imaginary Landscape* .

[5] This seems unusually harsh for Cowell. My analysis is that since it is difficult to catalogue the musical resources of indeterminate compositions, Cowell is unable to consider the merits of Cage's music.

[6] Kyle Gann mentions in his "Preface" to *Essential Cowell* that Cowell is simply taking Cage "seriously, though with a layer of good-natured humor..." [p. 11] Somehow I cannot understand this interpretation; the way that Cowell discusses the work of Cage reads to me like disrespect, not humor.

[7] But I can still not explain why the appreciators of Cowell give John Cage's music any credence at all. I have written about this before in the pages of this magazine, but I would like to reiterate my wonderment that the supposed descendents of Cowell, those being the supposed "Downtowners", have any capability to appreciate Cage at all, what with Cage's devotion to processes that rival the serialists in their intellectual (rather than self promoting emotional) rigor. I've given up trying to think about this.

that any comprehension of their content or judgment of their value is completely out of the question." [p. 163]

This section of *Essential Cowell* is called *Music of the World's People*. I had never read any of these writings before, and since I had remembered that Cowell was an expert in all types of non-western musics I eagerly dug in. It was here that I settled in a bit with Cowell and his views: "I present myself to you as a person who realized from his own experience that the music of Japan, as well as that of China and other oriental countries, is part of American Music." [p. 188] Cowell goes on to describe his life as a resident of San Francisco and his own Irish heritage. This is all very heartening, a completely unchauvinistic opinion of the American Music melting pot. Even though Cowell gets mired in musical materials — his cataloguing of the number of scales in Indian music — these articles offer a nice bit of armchair music appreciation.

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A brief section appears next in *Essential Cowell: HC on Works by HC*. There are some very interesting nuggets here besides some rehashing of Cowell's earlier book *New Musical Resources*. Cowell's comments on his *Persian Set* improve one's understanding of his approach to studying non-western and "unfamiliar" music: "Of course I made no attempt to shed my years of Western symphonic experience; nor have I used actual Iranian melodies or rhythms, nor have I imitated them exactly. Instead I have tried to develop some of the kinds of musical behavior that the two cultures have in common." [p. 197] Cowell's "*Quartet Romantic* and *Quartet Euphometric*" article is an interesting analysis of two pieces he composed using the compositional rules he describes in *New Musical Resources*. These are compositions where note durations are laid out in accordance to Cowell's interpretation of the characteristics of the overtone series. What is valuable here is that we finally get to read how Cowell realized his musical ideology, how he used the rules he derived from the characteristics of the overtone series for musical composition. This is a type of serialism where pitches are assigned durations depending on where they occur in the overtone series: "note-length ratios may be derived from the overtone ratios ... I composed a very simple four-part theme, assigning to the low C (as fundamental) the length of a whole note." [p. 204] The last piece that Cowell discusses in this section is his *United Quartet* (1936). There is an interesting footnote here by Dick Higgins where he reminds us of those times when the Communist Party was putting forth the "united front", "though the general public still found Cowell's music difficult." [p. 207] Dick Higgins goes on to say: "Perhaps this work, ending with a march, had a progressive ring to it at the time." [p. 207] Cowell lays out his ideas for the materials of the *United Quartet*:

"...the *Classical* feeling is represented not by the employment of a familiar classic form, but by building up a new form, carefully planned[8]...*Primitive* music is represented, not by imitating it, nor by taking a specific melody or rhythm from some tribe, but by using a three-tone scale, and exhausting all the different ways the three tones can appear, which is a procedure of some primitive music... The *Oriental* is

[8] Cowell was always scathing towards Stravinsky and his so-called neo-classical works.

represented by modes that are constructed as Oriental modes are constructed, without being actual modes used in particular cultures... The *Modern* is represented by the use of unresolved discords, by free intervals in two-part counterpoint and ... by the fact that the whole result is something new, and all that is new is modern!" [p. 207]

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Later in *Essential Cowell* Dick Higgins has collected a large group of Cowell's essays under the heading of *Musical Craft*. As in *HC on Works by HC*, we get a closer look at Cowell's more defined ideas concerning composition. In both of these sections it seems like Cowell provides more detail concerning his use and appreciation of musical materials. Once again we are short on analysis, instead we get a kind of shopping list of available resources. In the *Joys of Noise* Cowell gives us an epiphany and a close look at his own development:

"My interest in noise as a musical element began when I discovered my delight on hearing Varèse's *Hyperprism*. Not until I looked at the printed score of it, however, did I realize the depravity into which my musical taste had fallen. This wicked work is recorded for seventeen percussion, and only four melodic instruments. I had been intoxicated by a composition seventeen twenty-firsts noise, yet noise is not a musical element!" [p. 249]

Cowell then explains that noise can be legitimized to music if it is heard as a "natural" part of a musical context. Noise happens already in so-called legitimate music such as when we hear singers pronounce consonants rather than sing vowels all of the time. "Since the 'disease' of noise permeates all music, the only hopeful course is to consider the noise-germ, like the bacteria of cheese, is a good microbe, which may provide previously hidden delights to the listener, instead of producing musical oblivion." [p. 251] In any case Cowell is still critical of those composers who seem to tip the scales toward using noise as an essential musical resource. Varèse and Bartók, composers who use percussion sounds "canonically", are said by Cowell to have not found anything "conclusive". [p. 252] Instead Cowell suggests that unless composers find a means to organize noises and rein them in to scalar catalogs, in other words, make sure that the resources are categorized and regularized, the significance of musical noise is diminished. "If we had scales of percussion sounds, with each 'key' determined by some underlying quality such as drum-sound, cymbal-sound, and so on, we could produce music through the conscious use of the melodic steps that would then be at the disposal of the composer." [p. 252] Never mind that Bartók may have had some wild idea that inspired him to use percussion the way he did in some of his compositions. What irks me the most is that Cowell is oblivious to any issue of musical meaning. Instead he keeps his mind in one very narrow place, the place of the organizer, not the creator. Even in his compositions, like in the *United Quartet*, he makes sure that all of his resources are displayed and used. Cowell's obsessions with cataloguing coupled with his absolutely stuck-in-tradition modes of criticism are fixed in these writings. For example, Cowell is constantly critical of those composers (such as Webern) who write disjunct melodies. In his "Nature of Melody" article Cowell gives us a line of logic that is not unlike the ideology that he presents in *New Musical Resources*

where he is constantly telling us that the only correct mode of composition is one that follows the "natural". I get the point that Cowell is teaching here:

"This convention is backed by the natural law of creation following action; the natural tendency of any exaggerated action to rectify itself, and the natural tendency to regard a starting point as a place to return to after making an excursion away from it... and the conventions which have been followed during the entire history of European melody. For many centuries it was prohibited in musical theory to follow a skip by anything other than a return in direction." [p. 263]

At this point in my reading of *Essential Cowell* I began to feel like I was losing my mind. Then I remembered that I always feel this way when preached at by an ideologue. I had thought that we as composers were supposed to create new ways of making music, invent our own materials, and by all means steer clear of those god awful Europeans.[9]

Then we get Cowell's doctrines about harmony. Cowell arrives at the conclusion that intervals smaller than those used in the diatonic scale should be introduced slowly and systematically; eventually Cowell's invention of the tone-cluster will be centralized as a key musical resource. We are warned: "it can be predicted that if there does not exist a balance of parts, and even an unascertainable and orderly series of mathematical ratios in the harmony, the music will not be accepted." [p. 272] The overtone series provides the paradigm. Even though Cowell seems to want to step into new areas of sound making, he is still stuck in convention somehow. Here is what he suggests can happen with tone-clusters:

"We take a simple melody and parallel it with a series of tone-clusters of which the lowest or highest notes shall carry the original theme. We may accompany a melody with tone-clusters. We may combine tone-clusters with tone-clusters. We may produce a harmony in tone-clusters or counterpoint of tone-clusters." [p. 284]

When Cowell moves further into analysis, such as in: "The Impasse of Modern Music: Searching for new Avenues of Beauty", he still does not budge past his original thesis offered in *New Musical Resources* where everything of value is attributed to the overtone series:

"By this discovery science helps us to grasp intellectually the principle behind the beauty toward which we have groped slowly, blindly, yet purely through our emotional responses. The great masters who have developed our music step-by-step have done so because their ears were keen enough to hear the harmony of the overtones and to play in outward notes the combinations which they heard." [p. 293]

Cowell then goes on to make some arbitrary tracing of interval usage throughout history, composer by composer. "The harmony of Schoenberg marks the interval between the fifteenth and sixteenth overtones, and the acceptance of Schoenberg brings music to a crisis, for the next step in the overtone scale cannot be played on the

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[9] "The smoothest melodies and most vocal ones adhere to this form, and it is recommended to the serious student to practice writing such melodies, in order to attain a technique in smoothness and conventional melodic grace." [p. 263]

instruments which Western music knows". [p. 293] Yet he is still critical of noise users who find strange simultaneous intervallic combinations (in other words: timbre) to be interesting (Varèse); and early on in *Essential Cowell* he blasts Harry Partch[10]; then getting confused about his valorous attempt to ignite a musical revolution Cowell promotes "Neo-Primitivism" as a kind of vaccine against neo-classicism (he must hate Stravinsky at this point: the early 1930s). You've got to give Cowell credit; he really does try to cover all his bases. Cowell would be proud to know that the Neo-Primitive movement has been going strong. Here's what he says:

"It [Neo-Primitivism] reacts against the over-complexity of the earlier modern music but not against experiment;[11] against the sentimentality and pomp of late romantic music but not against feeling; against the supercilious formalism of a return to the particular style of some past century but not against the use of primary musical elements.

This tendency is obviously neo-primitive in its drive for vitality and simplicity. It is not an attempt to imitate primitive music, but rather to draw on those materials common to the music of all the peoples of the world, to build a new music particularly related to our own century." [p. 301]

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The last article in *Essential Cowell* is entitled: "A Composer's World". Dick Higgins's commentary says: "In this late text (1961), written after his heart condition had returned, Cowell attempts to synthesize many of his ideas into a whole." [p. 311] And indeed Cowell spells out his lifelong intentions:

"My early interest was in discovery, and in the organization of my 'discoveries' for my own use as a composer. I was not looking for origins nor for national styles, but to discover what different *types of organization* one could find in the world for materials of my own craft: melody, rhythm, and multi-voiced music, for instance." [p. 312][12]

It is no wonder that Cage, Wolff, Feldman and Boulez mystified Cowell: here were composers who developed meaningful processes to work with their gathered musical materials. It seems that Cowell could never take this next step; instead he was either gathering or developing systems to catalog his gatherings, or he was presenting his inventory.

"A man who sits down to write a piece of music starts with a musical idea which he proposes to develop. This idea is the result of 'taking thought,' as we say in English,

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[10] "Why he persists in believing that his intervals are vocally possible and that he uses them, while at the same time he declares with some vehemence that our ordinary scale is never sung in tune and that it is quite impossible to sing the 'arbitrary' and 'arithmetical' interval of a quarter tone (which gives us only twenty-four intervals to the octave), is a mystery." [p. 118]

[11] What so called "primitive" culture is not steeped in tradition?

[12] Here is more: "But a thousand permutations for rhythm or melody, which may be found in different places but which can be grouped in the student's mind in a kind of family tree of relationships, growing perhaps in many directions but always in systematic and understandable ways—these it is possible to grasp and to appreciate as a fund of musical possibilities for use. Such a concept is simple enough to enable a composer to examine any kind of music that appeals to him in an orderly way, and to understand it." [p. 312]

of a conscious choice from among the innumerable musical germs that inhabit the unconscious levels of his mind, out of which he decides to make the subsequent musical composition grow.

Ideas in this sense have nothing to do with words, but are purely a matter of sound; a fragment of melody, or an attractive rhythm, or some polyphonic interplay of differently-colored melodic lines, or a harmonic sequence. Many such things float to the surface of the composer's mind, and he chooses the one that he feels at the moment like building into a piece of music. Its expansion will then depend on his skill in applying musical logic to this initial musical idea—one cannot just add anything at all to make the music longer or livelier." [p. 314]

And at this juncture, after reading and re-reading many of Cowell's writings, (or at least the ones that are readily available), after getting to the point where I'm reading Cowell's last articles — probably the most self reflective and analytical of his works — I can only leave his writings to rest. There really is nothing more that I can do with these articles. This is not to say that I have no awareness of Cowell's great promotional energies for new music. I just wonder how we can correlate his writings with his actions.[13] As should be now obvious, Cowell has mystified me. Even his legacy mystifies me.

"So few become full grown
And how necessary all the others;
Gifts to the food chain,
Feeding another universe.

These big ones feed sharks."[14]

[13] Kyle Gann's "Preface" to *Essential Cowell* provides a familiar interpretation of Cowell's writings which particularly corroborates the status of Cowell as a great promoter of American Music. Kyle Gann's interpretaions of Cowell's writings obviously differ from mine.
[14] "How Zen Masters Are Like Mature Herring", Gary Snyder, from *Left Out in the Rain.* I found this poem in: Gary Snyder, *The Gary Snyder Reader* (Washington, D.C., 1999), 518.

Rehearing Ives: *The Concord*, Experimentalism, and Analysis

John McGinness

Since the 1970s, around the time of the centennial of his birth, Charles Ives's music has experienced a widespread critical reevaluation. Prior to this, Ives had been most often perceived as an "experimentalist," even as the "father" of an American Experimental movement. Accompanying this early reputation was some vestigial doubt about the overall "quality" of the oeuvre, or to put it more directly, about Ives's skills as a composer. Elliott Carter's accounts of the *Concord Sonata's* premiere, for example, cast a lingering shadow. In both his initial review in 1939, and on several later occasions, he variously described the *Concord* as a work of "undifferentiated confusion," full of "gratuitous musical quotation," and esthetically "naive."[1] Although Carter eventually blunted the point somewhat, his youthful criticism still prickles. The noted Ives scholar and revisionist J. Peter Burkholder, citing Carter, addresses precisely these negative criticisms in a recent essay. Reviewing post-centennial scholarly and music analytic literature, Burkholder attempts to show how the perception of Ives in the public imagination has been transformed into an image of a masterful composer whose music is "much closer to [that of] his European contemporaries" than had been initially understood.[2] And if questioning the pervasiveness of this new view of Ives, one need only turn to current textbook accounts to witness the virtually wholesale transformation of the composer's reputation. Rare indeed is the description "experimental," the term having been excised, in America at least, in favor of depictions of the music as inextricably bound to the nineteenth-century European tradition in a way that would have been unimaginable prior to the Ives centennial.[3]

Music analysis has played a crucial role in the revision, and two broadly defined, non-exclusive, analytic camps have emerged, each offering a kind of antidote or response to the perceived weaknesses in Ives's music mentioned in early criticisms such as Carter's. In the first group, analysts like Robert P. Morgan and Larry Starr

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[1] *The Writings of Elliott Carter*, eds. Elsa Stone and Kurt Stone (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 209, 51. Carter's review of the premiere initially appeared in *Modern Music* 16 (March 1939).

[2] "Ives Today," *Ives Studies*, ed. Philip Lambert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 271.

[3] It is heartening that Ives's life and music has become—deservedly—the object of so much attention, and the role played by Burkholder, his prodigious efforts on the composer's behalf in the form of books, edited collections, and essays, must be acknowledged with both gratitude and admiration. A selected list: J. Peter Burkholder, *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985); *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); as editor, *Charles Ives and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); as editor, with Geoffrey Block, *Charles Ives and the Classical Tradition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996).

question the relationship between "traditional" evaluative methods and the music itself.[4] Morgan suspects that analysts who accuse Ives of technical incompetence "have been looking for the wrong kind of things in his music."[5] For both authors, Ives's welding of "style" and "substance," following the composer's own distinction between "manner" and "matter" in the *Essays Before a Sonata*, is unique and requires an individual interpretive approach. Members of the second group, including Lora L. Gingerich, Burkholder, and Philip Lambert, seek to show "traditional" relationships, or the re-formation of traditional relationships, within the music itself; to counter, in a sense, the music's reputation as the product of unsophisticated effort. Gingerich, for example, proposes a formal analytic method evocative of the "Grundgestalt" of Schoenberg, an application of motivic analysis to expose a traditional, if not immediately apparent, conception of unity.[6] Burkholder introduces the idea of "cumulative form," a product of Ives's interaction with traditional sonata-allegro form. To summarize in expedient, if overly simple, terms: Ives begins with the development, saving the exposition of thematic material for later in the work.[7] And finally Lambert, in *The Music of Charles Ives*, offers detailed analyses of *Tone Roads No. 1*, *Study No. 5*, and "The Cage," which yield a skillful manipulation of interval cycles, pitch class sets, aggregate structures, etc., all discussed within the context of Ives's developing technical mastery, each compounding the evidence of Ives's technical compositional skill.[8]

The lines taken by the analysts mentioned above, which represent attempts either to reposition the music within a different esthetic perspective from that into which it was first received or, more specifically, to expand "handed-down" methods of formalist analysis in such a way that the music will "fit" within the traditional canon, mirror intrinsic esthetic difficulties emanating from the music itself. At the very beginning of the Ives revival during the 1970s, Morgan commented upon the problematic dissonance between the combination of a "traditional musical content" with a "new kind of form" in Ives's music, and I submit this duality remains unresolved, a lingering and discomforting shadow behind otherwise self-assured critical re-evaluations of the music.[9] Morgan's observations deserve further comment: he was one of the first analysts to come to grips with Ives's ties to tradition, to nineteenth century concert music, in a way that sought a reconsideration of the music *on its own terms*, the inherent esthetic conflict between "content" and "form" having been palpable to some critics all along. Carter, for example, never doubted Ives's roots in the romantic

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[4] Lloyd Whitesell could also be included here, although his ideas are more broadly inclusive than either Morgan's or Starr's. Questioning the formulation of concepts about musical unity more generally, he suggests a "relaxation of its grip on our methods of evaluation." "Reckless Form, Uncertain Audiences: Responding to Ives," *American Music* 12/3 (fall 1994): 309.

[5] "Rewriting Music History: Second Thoughts on Ives and Varèse," *Musical Newsletter* 3/1 (January 1973): 10.

[6] Lora L. Gingerich, "A Technique for Melodic Motivic Analysis in the Music of Charles Ives," *Music Theory Spectrum* 8 (1986).

[7] See *All Made of Tunes*, 137-266.

[8] *The Music of Charles Ives* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997). Burkholder, at least, interprets Lambert's work in this way in "Ives Today," 270.

[9] "Rewriting Music History: Second thoughts on Ives and Varèse": 9.

tradition; rather, it was "the bombast"—the unskillful rhetoric—of the "content" that forced him into writing an initial review that was, by his own account, painfully honest.

Ironically, Carter was performing a bit of esthetic revision of his own, countering the music's reputation as modernist; specifically, as running in the vein of the "experimental" modernism promoted by Henry Cowell during the 1930s. In this paper, I reconsider this early reputation and posit that behind the recent relocation of Ives's music so close to the heart of nineteenth century European concert music lies the chimera of American Experimentalism, the experimentalism first identified and promoted by Cowell, which evolved with the help of Ives himself, the transformations of which have continued to resonate with his music in an unsettling way. The designation "experimental," despite postmodern skepticism about traditional methods of valuation, has remained tainted with the faint redolence of compositional unskillfulness, of untutored good intentions, that has dogged the movement since its earliest incarnation. I question the formation of the current point of view in relation to earlier, pre-centennial, portrayals of Ives as an experimentalist composer and suggest that, although support for the idea of Ives as a composer whose "...roots in nineteenth-century European Romanticism are as strong as those of any of his European contemporaries" has grown exponentially during the last two decades, this perception has been fostered by a series of reflexive assumptions about the nature of experimentalism, in both its early and "mid-century" incarnations.[10]

At the heart of all this is the music itself. While it is self-evident that analysis can effectively show relationships within a piece, or between pieces, to what extent can it be used in the formation of critical judgments about a style or a cultural context? What is the interplay between a predominant critical perception and analytic investigation? To what extent, in other words, can analysis show that the difference between Ives's music and that of Mahler is "a question of degree, not kind," to borrow a recurring post-centennial theme? In an effort to come to grips with these questions, I will compare an analysis of part of the *Concord Sonata's* "Thoreau" movement with interpretations by Carter, Lawrence Kramer, and Henry Brant (who premiered an orchestral version of the *Concord* in 1995). The focal point is the entrance of the flute, a well-known cache of analytic richness. Even in so brief an example as this, ideas about the music play out in ways far less satisfying, far more complex and ambiguous, than the general and abundant flow of much current published thought might lead an innocent reader to believe.

Before beginning with a discussion of Ives's relationship to the various incarnations of experimentalism, in order to show its role in the formation of his reputation, and to understand the eventual revisionist need to distance him from it, a clarification, if not a disclaimer, is necessary: my intent is neither to argue for a complete undoing of the "revised" Ives, nor to attempt the whole-hearted restoration of Ives as an "experimentalist." Rather, the goal of this essay is to expose the ongoing processes in which certain perceptions come to the fore and others retreat and, to some degree, to identify the motivating force behind these processes, which here appear to be at least somewhat reactionary, involving the association of esthetic value with the tradition of 19th century European art music. I contend that Ives's music refuses to settle into any

[10]The quotation is from "Ives Today," 278.

such confined category; that considered in detail, its compelling idiosyncrasy remains staunchly uncooperative, despite the current spate of romantic projections.

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The initial incarnation of both musical experimentalism in the United States and Ives's reputation as an experimentalist can be traced to Henry Cowell. Although complicated by a shifting identity over the course of the twentieth century, experimentalism's parameters were defined in the broadest possible terms from its inception. It encompassed a wide range of musical styles and activities, all participating, by Cowell's account, in the self-conscious creation of an American musical identity, all working to free American music from its "tie to the apron-strings of European tradition."[11] Within this expansive context, Cowell's omnivorous tastes found an inclusive esthetic expression, even to the downplaying of technical compositional skill, the occasional "crudeness of technique" regarded as a healthy antidote to a perceived weakness of content in European (read French, and the students of Nadia Boulanger) art music. Cowell's primary venue was New Music, an organization including concerts (New Music Society), two publication series (*New Music Quarterly* and the Orchestra Series), and recordings (New Music Quarterly Recordings).[12]

As is now well known, Cowell's association with Ives was both fortuitous and, from a financial point of view, indispensable, although some question remains about the amount of exposure Cowell had had to Ives's music at the beginning of the publication series in 1927. Neither Carl Ruggles nor Charles Seeger, probably on the basis of the self-published *114 Songs* and the *Concord Sonata*, were supportive of the music at the time, and allegedly tried to convince Cowell to ignore it.[13] Cowell's motivation for going forward and contacting Ives has never been recorded, but upon receiving some of his scores, Cowell enthusiastically recognized that the music, "...experimental [and] non-commercial," was precisely the kind that New Music had been founded to promote. Soon, Ives was not only bankrolling the organization, but had become its esthetic mentor.[14] In Cowell's 1933 book, *American Composers on American Music*, Ives is given pride of place for being "...in the vanguard of the most forward-looking and experimental composers..." of the time.[15] Among the many traits in his favor were the original modernist inventions—atonality, polytonality, and multiple rhythms—all allegedly achieved without exposure to European influence.[16] Moreover Ives, unlike his European counterparts, included in his borrowings of American music the original "feeling" of folk art, incorporating its "charming irregularities" as heard in actual

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[11] See Cowell, *American Composers on American Music* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1933; reprint ed., New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1962), vii, 13.

[12] New Music, founded in 1925, was initially affiliated with the International Composers' Guild, which had been founded by Varèse and Salzedo in 1921. For a summary of the history of these organizations, see Rita Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music 1925-1936: The Society, the Music Editions, and the Recordings* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1978, 1981), 1-16.

[13] Ibid., 63.

[14] Henry and Sidney Cowell, *Charles Ives and His Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 104.

[15] *American Composers on American Music*, 128.

[16] Ibid., 137.

performance by "the folk," an esthetic rationale and justification for the acknowledged rawness, and even crudeness, of some of the music.[17]

The younger generation of composers mentioned in Cowell's book—including Ruth Crawford, Carl Ruggles, Henry Brant, and George Antheil—were portrayed, like Ives himself, as representing the most promising hope for the future of an indigenous American art music. As experimentalists, each invented "techniques that owed little to any but a purely American experience of sound."[18] In Cowell's hands, these composers appear to stand together under the umbrella of a unified American movement; writing music based on a spirit of experimentation and an attitude toward the exploration of new musical resources, rather than on specifically identifiable stylistic traits or shared compositional predilections. Unbound from the "apron strings" of European concert music, the Americans were presented as working in a new tradition, which the esthetics of European critical judgment could not fully apprehend.

Such expansive breadth formed an identity that proved to be either tenuous—many members of the original group made their way into an increasingly diverse compositional mainstream—or for some, disconcertingly insistent. Those composers who continued to be identified as "experimental" came to bear a reputation for compositional idiosyncrasy that was sometimes read negatively as the byproduct of weak technical compositional skills. Morton Feldman, below, succinctly encapsulates the nature of the taint of prejudice against experimentalism at mid-century, giving evidence that, if nothing else, the problems of critical acceptance facing experimentalists remained a unifying constant:

> The real tradition of 20th century America, a tradition evolving from the empiricism of Ives, Varèse, and Cage, has been passed over as iconoclastic—another word for unprofessional. In music, when you do something new, something original, you're an amateur. Your imitators—there are the professionals."[19]

While the presence of artistic personae as different as those of Ives, Varèse, and Cage, not to mention Feldman himself, indicate an ongoing inclusiveness, the association of individual invention with iconoclasm—an implied rejection of all tradition—marks a departure from experimentalism's original meaning. Cowell's early experimentalism, by contrast, emphasized not only the range of new materials being invented, but also the motivation behind their creation. Feldman's emphasis on "empiricism" points to a focus on the materials themselves, a subtle, yet significant, change weighted towards the more purely formalist view of the music that was

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[17] Ibid., 131. This argument will reappear in the work of Larry Starr. See *A Union of Diversities: Style in the Music of Charles Ives* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), 15; also, see "Charles Ives: The Next Hundred Years—Towards a Method of Analyzing the Music," *The Music Review* 38/2 (May 1977).

[18] *American Composers on American Music*, vii.

[19] Morton Feldman, "The Anxiety of Art" in *Essays*, (Cologne: Beginner Press), 87. Quoted in Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 143.

predominant by mid-century in both the visual and musical arts, a change that encompassed the predilection for the "pure" abstraction of the 1950s.

The stage is now set for the revision of Ives's reputation discussed in the introduction. Further refining the differences between Cowell's and Feldman's experimentalisms, it becomes abundantly clear that Ives and Varèse, whose significant reception histories began with performances during the 1930s, intended to play a role that was revolutionary within the context of an evolving art music tradition; a tradition that, for them, was unquestionably European. Ives self-portrayal in the *Essays* as a Beethoven disciple is particularly convincing in this regard, although perhaps over-emphasized by revisionists, given his chameleon-like ability to adapt to different esthetic points of view as needed.[20] Varèse's music, too, represents a participation in an idealized cultural continuation, notwithstanding the destructiveness inevitably associated with the idea of "revolution," one of the terms with which the composer himself described his interaction with music from the past.[21]

The difference between this early experimentalism and its later manifestation at mid-century can be best understood in terms of the changing perceptions of the "quality" of revolution, the degree to which connections to the past are understood to remain intact. Cage, famously now, described his own variety of experimentalism as any action with an unforeseen outcome, an idea of music in which a piece could only happen once.[22] Contemporary criticism inevitably focused on this music's disconnectedness from the past. With the passage of time, the initial impression of extreme iconoclasm has diminished, but, as in its earliest incarnation, the American "experimental" identity has not successfully shed the lingering suspicion not only of outsider status (which might even be considered something of an advantage in today's postmodern climate) but also of lack of skill and, at worst, esthetic fraud.

Interpretations of experimentalism and the accompanying problem of critical valuation continue to play out along these lines. At present, Cowell's and Feldman's experimentalisms—which could be called, respectively, the historical and the material—coexist with separate, but not entirely exclusive, streams of meaning. In the historical stream, compositional intent remains an important consideration. Kyle Gann, an "unreconstructed" American writing about Ives, describes him in terms that echo Cowell's, as part of a tradition flowing from a "fount of native experimentalism...a tradition not of procedures and rules but of resources, attitudes, and pragmatic inventiveness."[23] While not underplaying the importance of compositional procedures, those in the historical group interpret them within the broader spectrum of an esthetic

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[20] *Essays Before a Sonata*, ed. Howard Boatwright (New York: W.W. Norton). See Burkholder, "Ives and the Four Musical Traditions," in *Charles Ives and His World*, for a discussion of Ives's adoption of different esthetic stances in different situations and venues, 3-34.

[21] "[T]he very basis of creative work is irreverence! The very basis of creative work is experimentation, bold experimentation...[t]he links in the chain of tradition are formed by men who have all been revolutionaries!" In Gilbert Chase, ed., "Freedom for Music," *The American Composer Speaks* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 189-190.

[22] In "Compositional Process," three lectures given at Darmstadt in 1958, reprinted in *Silence* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 18-55.

[23] *American Music in the Twentieth Century*, xv.

and/or cultural experimental framework.[24] On the other hand, the material stream, while superficially appearing to refine the meaning of experimentalism by concentrating solely on its formal elements, paradoxically expands its boundaries far enough to include everything from aleatory to integral serialism.[25] Here, at one time or another, composers as unlikely as Pauline Oliveros and Milton Babbitt have been included in experimentalism's embrace (although, admittedly, not together).

The description of a composer like Babbitt as an experimentalist, however, has become a strictly local phenomenon. For although difficult to pin down exactly what experimentalism is, a fairly wide-spread consensus has been reached about what it is not: experimentalism is perceived in terms of its exclusion of composers who have a firm creative grounding in European art music. Bryan Simms' description of the Second Viennese School composers is exemplary; although seeking to "reinvigorate their inherited musical language," these composers cannot be described as experimentalists because "their innovations and artistic outlook were grounded instead in their musical past."[26] Whether or not the manifestation of the connection to tradition is audibly immediate, Babbitt's self-conscious indebtedness to his predecessors has effectively protected his music from the experimental reputation, particularly as it became further entwined with those prejudices mentioned by Feldman, implications of the iconoclastic and the unprofessional.[27] And tellingly in the case of Ives, as mentioned in the introduction, the post-centennial revisionist defense has been focused on his relationship to the nineteenth-century European tradition and his compositional craftsmanship, those issues that, not uncoincidentally, have always undermined the favorable critical evaluation of composers labeled as experimentalists.

Ives himself, through his own multiple self-identifications–from "Beethoven disciple" to "radical experimentalist"–provided post-centennial musicologists and analysts with a way to limit the parameters of his perceived experimentalism.[28] In the *Memos* of the 1930s, he made a distinction between music for "private research" and "public concert music." Based on this, Burkholder was initially responsible for reigning in experimentalism's meaning by associating it with those primarily short works intended

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[24]David Nicholls, for example, while identifying ten of the "purely technical" procedures shared by the early experimental group, places them within the broader context of an American esthetic movement. See *American Experimental Music, 1890-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 218.

[25]For a description of aleatory as an experimental procedure see Stefan Kostka, *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1999), 281; Leonard Meyer refers to integral serialism as experimental in "Arguments for Experimental Music," *Music, the Arts, and Ideas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 245-265.

[26]*Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 125.

[27]Babbitt is not alone in this regard. The description of the music of the European avant garde during the 1950s and 1960s as experimental was not long-lasting precisely because of its perceived relationship to the past: "The great conceptions of Boulez, Stockhausen and Pousseur draw their strength...from the way they 'compose out' their historical positional value...[giving them] an exclusive claim to be the legitimate tradition." Heinz-Klaus Metzger, "Abortive Concepts in the Theory and Criticism of Music," trans. Leo Black, *Die Reihe 5*,

(19–): 24 .

[28]Burkholder discusses the breadth of Ives's self-identifications in "Ives and the Four Musical Traditions," *Charles Ives and his World.*

for private use, those pieces that Ives himself did not consider as finished works of art.[29] This simple act, the application of a single, ostensibly clarifying definition of "experimentalism," opened the door for a critical re-evaluation of the music of the mature Ives, which is now sometimes understood as a synthesis of experimental and non-experimental (i.e., traditional) categories.[30] The pervasiveness of this invention is demonstrated in Lambert's recent *The Music of Charles Ives,* in which some of the spirit of the earliest incarnation of experimentalism is invoked through the suggestion that limiting the experimental pieces to the "private" sphere overlooks "the common artistic aesthetic basis for all Ives's work."[31] Although Cowell would have agreed, Lambert does not return this music to the generously inclusive context of early experimentalism, but categorizes it as "systematic," a further refinement of post-centennial revisionist ideas.

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How does all this play out in terms of our understanding of the music? Do the many voices sounding the post-centennial revisionist call create a unified chorus in terms of critical evaluation? I will now take up a small part of the "Thoreau" movement of the *Concord* as a paradigm for the uneasiness, the unavoidable lack of consensus that appears to be the inevitable result of attempts to define the music's esthetic identity in some kind of essential way. Although it becomes clear that Ives aims for a comparatively straightforward unification of "Thoreau" through the formation and playing out of long-term structural goals, these efforts, long overshadowed by the extravagance of the music's surface, have remained both undetected and the subject of a variety of readings.

Analyses of "Thoreau," whether focusing on the music's formal or expressive aspects, invariably identify the entrance of the flute melody—Thoreau's flute—as a crucial event. The additional instrumental color near the close of a piano sonata, the surprise of the additional instrumentalist required to play it, and the structural significance of this moment within the music itself have all contributed to an extensive history of analytic commentary.[32] While the flute melody is unquestionably a crucial programmatic

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[29] *Memos,* ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 111, quoted in Burkholder, *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music,* 49.

[30] *The Ideas Behind the Music,* 18-19.

[31] *The Music of Charles Ives,* vii.

[32] The Cowells write that "the epic and lyric themes [of the sonata] are blended [together here] in one long melody." Geoffrey Block, identifying two thematic groups in the sonata as "families," which differ from the Cowells' "epic" and "lyric" themes, observes that the flute music from the "human faith" family is withheld until this special moment. Henry and Sidney Cowell, *The Music of Charles Ives;* Geoffrey Block, *Ives: Concord Sonata* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 32. The postmodernist theorist/critic Lawrence Kramer makes a connection between the flute solo and subsequent closing music, and the slow finale of the Fourth Symphony; quoting Ives, this music is "an apotheosis of the preceding content in terms that have something to do with the reality of existence and its religious experience." *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley and L.A.: University of California Press, 1995), 188. Too, Robert P. Morgan gives an account of the "...complex web of discontinuous yet interconnecting associations..." in "Spatial Form in Ives," *An Ives Celebration,* eds. H.Wiley Hitchcock and Vivian Perlis (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 152. See Burkholder for an identification of the source melodies in *All Made of Tunes,* 356-57.

juncture, my analysis will focus on the accompanying ostinato, described by Lawrence Kramer as "supplemental," a reference that almost certainly intentionally recalls the *supplement* of Jacques Derrida. In brief, the *supplement* represents one half of a binary relationship, "a surplus...[adding] the fullest measure of presence" that both enables and completes that with which it is paired.[33] In "Thoreau," the ostinato "supplementing" the flute effects the resolution and transformation of a textual juxtaposition portrayed in the movement's opening. The reference becomes doubly apt because of the formal, structural role of the ostinato sounding under the more "natural" music of the flute, which is seemingly less encumbered by artifice. A palpable physicality imbues "Thoreau," an imagined account of a day in the author's life at Walden, and the only movement of the *Concord* for which Ives included a relatively complete program.[34] The opening music consists of two contrasting *topoi* that set the stage for the "waves of motion," the series of ostinatos conceptually derived from those in this first presentation, that make up the body of the piece.[35] Immediately after an initial arpeggiation, the breaking morning light over Walden Pond, a series of repetitions is heard in the bass. In Example 1-a, the first topic, the ostinato character is defined by the E3, which repeats, footstep-like, within music that is registrally consistent, of limited dynamic range, and of a comparatively neutral melodic contour. Despite the initial chromatic fullness—nine pitches are heard almost simultaneously—a static, relatively limited pitch content predominates, emphasizing the "walking" chromatic sixteenth note bass pattern grounded on E. Here, Thoreau is moved "by the beauty of the day...to a certain restlessness..."

> ...but through it all he is conscious that it is not in keeping with the mood for his "Day." As the mists rise, there comes a clearer thought, more traditional than the first—a meditation more calm. As he stands on the side of the pleasant hill of pines and hickories in front of his cabin, he is still disturbed by a restlessness and goes down the white-pebbled and sandy eastern shore. But it seems not to lead him where the thought suggests—he climbs the path along the "bolder northern" and "western shore, with deep bays indented," and now along the rail road track, "where the Æolian harp plays." But his eagerness throws him into the lithe, springy stride of the specie hunter—the naturalist—he is still aware of a restlessness—with these faster steps

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[33] Kramer, 189. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 144.

[34] In this sense, the movement, sometimes described as idiosyncratic, is typical: "The idea of journey, and of progression—physical, psychological, and ultimately spiritual—is of supreme importance in the work of Ives. A great many of his works allude to physical progression, in the form of walks, marches, or parades." Starr, *A Union of Diversities: Style in the Music of Charles Ives*, 34.

[35] The image of "waves" recurs throughout recent writings about Ives. Morgan describes the overall formal construction of Ives's piano sonatas as "extensions" of the great nineteenth century symphonic tradition, as "built upon wave upon wave of climactic motion." "Rewriting Music History": 9. Burkholder, too, makes use of the idea of structural "waves" in his analysis of "On The Antipodes" ; Chapter 10 of his dissertation, *The Evolution of Charles Ives's Music: Aesthetics, Quotation, Technique* (University of Chicago, 1983).

> his rhythm is of shorter span—it is still not the "tempo" of Nature...and he knows now that he must let Nature flow through *him* and slowly...[36]

In the second topic, Example 1-b, the "meditation more calm" appears in two fragments, interrupted briefly by the restless bass of the first topic. The traits heard here, which will later be reconfigured as ostinatos in the body of the piece, include an expanding melodic contour, the filling out of chromatic and registral space, and dynamic changes that mirror the overall shape. The entire opening section of the movement (59/1-60/2) consists, essentially, of the repetition of the opening topical juxtaposition, and in this way functions as both an introduction and conceptual exposition.[37]

The two moods, one restless and active, the other meditative and calm, play themselves out over progressively longer spans of time in the form of ostinatos during the course of the movement. Figure 1 charts the progress of the "restless" ("R") and "meditative" ("M") ostinatos throughout "Thoreau." Upper case letters occurring within the R and M sections are the well known designators of traditional form (A, B, etc.,) and could be, and have been, used to describe the movement in various ways, including the most traditional nineteenth century "last movement" choice, the rondo.[38] My purpose in this figure is to broadly delineate large sections of music that are not purely, but only predominately, either active or passive. The character of the "restless" ostinato, for example, most frequently begins in a way that is momentarily tranquil. In the first "R" section, the three appearances of B all open with a G major triad resting as a comparatively stable mid-register quarter note. Each quickly gives way to an extravagant chromatic, dynamic, textural, and registral expansion, the frequently described "wedge" or "wave," that is, a pattern of graduated increase or decrease.[39] Easing some of the transitions between the meditative and restless moods is the motive x (Example 1 and Figure 1). Its melodic unfolding from minor second to major third is significant both locally within the movement as a transitional device, and "universally" within the world of the *Concord*, as the major third both recalls the quotation of the "Beethoven Fifth" motive in "The Alcotts," and foreshadows its transformed reappearance at the end of "Thoreau." As the program progresses, moments of calm reflection compete with moments of disturbed clarity until finally, near the end of his day, Thoreau "releases his more personal desires to [the broader rhythms of Nature]."[40]

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[36] *Essays Before a Sonata*, 67-68.

[37] The numeration, for example 59/1, refers to page number/system, second edition.

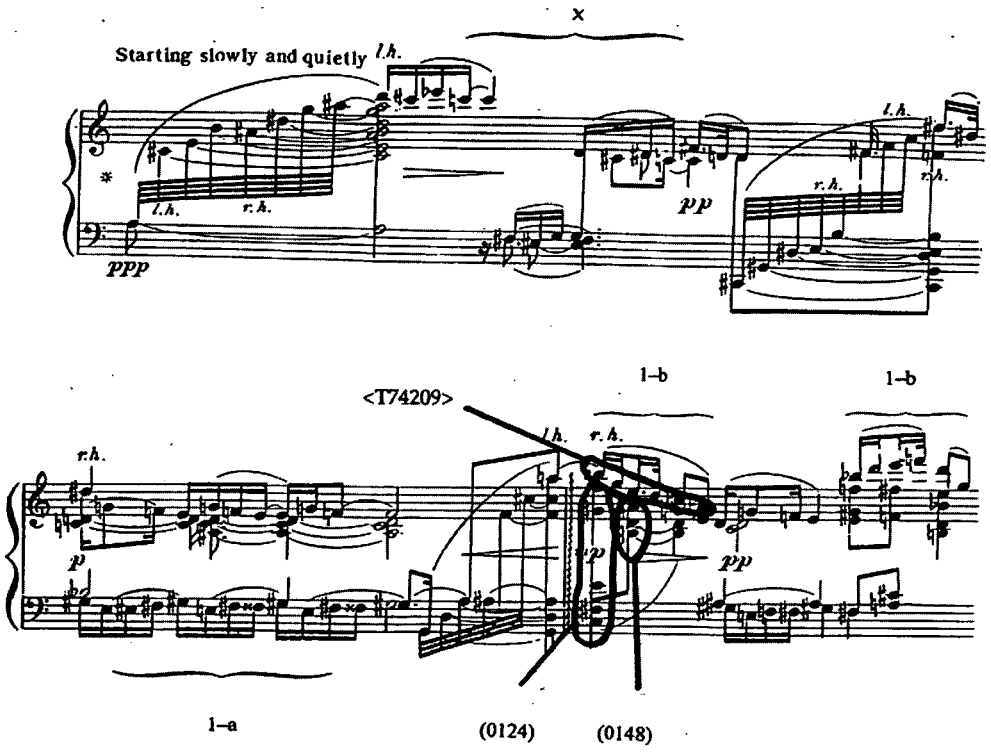
[38] Block, for example, while acknowledging that a wide range of analytic scenarios are possible, chooses to describe the movement as a rondo. This interpretation fits well with the overall idea of the piece as an extension of nineteenth century practice, and in fact it does seem quite evident that Ives was intending a "rondo-like" form for his close. Once again, however, the interpretation becomes of question of "degree and kind." Block's analysis, for me, is too loyal to the idea of preserving the traditional form and sacrifices some of the character of the music itself in favor of this attachment. *Ives: Concord Sonata.*

[39] Lambert defines a wedge as "...a visual image that might be given any number of musical representations....a mirroring of melodies or a succession of incrementally structured chords...." *The Music of Charles Ives*, 54. Also, see fn. 35.

[40] Ibid.

The topics "trade identities" after the introduction. The traits of the "restless ostinato" at Example 1-a (limited dynamic range, registral consistency, and static pitch content) are taken up in meditative sections, while the traits heard at Example 1-b (expanding melodic contour, the filling out of registral space) are translated into waves of motion. This paves the way for the recontextualization of the topics at the end of Thoreau's day.

Example 1



M(editative) = static ostinato
R(estless) = goal-directed [wedge] ostinato

Figure 1

		Page number/System*	Duration of ostinatos
R	B B¹ B²	60/2 60/4 61/3	[32 ♪] [32 ♪] [37 ♪]
M	C	62/1 (x at 62/4)	[52 ♪]
R	D D¹	62/5 (x at 64/4) 64/5	[59 ♪]
M	C¹	65/3 (x at 66/4)	[47 ♪]
	A¹	67/1 Transformation of expository material	
M	C²	67/3 (x at 68/5)	[54 ♪]

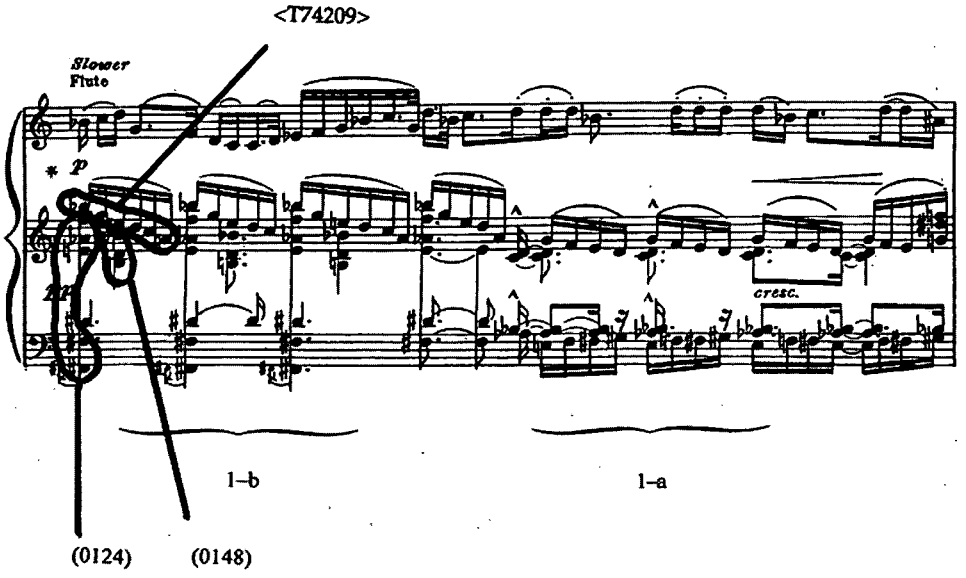
* 2nd edition

Here, beneath the flute solo (Example 2), Thoreau's early conflicting moments are overtaken by a single thought as the music from Example 1-b, the initially fleeting meditative moment, and later the source of goal-directed unrest, falls into an ostinato pattern. The fluctuating melodic line of its opening character is brought into focus as a repeated ordered string of pitches (<T7420>).[41] The mood of calm reflection becomes pervasive. The positions of the music 1-a and 1-b are reversed, and the harmonies of

[41] The commentary here employs the basic language of post-tonal theory: standard pitch-class (pc) labels, where C=0, T=10, and E=11; <an ordered string of pitch classes>; and (prime form).

the opening "meditation more calm," (0124) and (0148), are secured through repetition, rhythmically uniting the contrasting, conflicting moods of the opening section. A single, settled line of thought predominates as Thoreau surrenders "to the broader rhythms of nature..." In this way, the music heard accompanying the flute plays as significant a role as that of the flute itself in the formation of Ives's "apotheosis."

Example 2



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Does this analysis contribute in some small way to post-centennial revisionist efforts on Ives's behalf? A modernist reading of the "content" (or "matter," to borrow Ives's own term) seems unintuitive and artificial. The quality of "Thoreau's" nostalgia, if indeed "nostalgia" is even the correct word for such unselfconscious music, seems too direct, too unreflective, to merit a modernist interpretation. The issue of form, on the other hand, remains more open to question: the long-term structural goals which emerge as essential to the structure of the music can bear the weight of comparison with European "transitional" music of the early twentieth century. As previously noted, Morgan observed this same dilemma, the question of identity, at the beginning of the Ives revival during the 1970s, specifically in reference to the problem of critical evaluation. In the final section of this essay, I will discuss the issue of evaluation, including the limiting manner in which modernity itself has sometimes been perceived during the last thirty years, that is, in the formalist terms which were predominant at mid-century. As a result, the more expansive esthetic of Cowell's early

experimentalism could be placed aside, and the connection of Ives's music to the nineteenth century, a more conservative view, could be emphasized. I also suggest that this connection is something of a "straw man," having been present from the very beginning of the music's reception, and that the more pressing issue has always been the question of Ives's compositional skill. Ultimately, however, and despite the best revisionist efforts, interpretations of Ives's music have not settled into easy or definitive conclusions about either the composer's relationship to the past or his craftsmanship. Surprising intersections of opinion occur as different facets of the music are illuminated, and they occur in such a way that it becomes difficult to dismiss one in favor of the other. Regarding the *Concord*, the common ground shared by Carter, whose reputation as a quintessentially modernist composer remains both unchallenged, and given its longevity, remarkably pristine, and the postmodernist Kramer is a case in point.

Kramer acknowledges the complicated relationship between the formal and expressive elements in Ives's music and posits that the "modernist Ives," the composer at his most "formally advanced," is often simultaneously the most "socially retrograde."[42] He hears the flute solo in "Thoreau" as an "explicit" structural goal, but not as an "organic" event. While the music, in material terms, resides on the side of modernity, its meaning is an entirely different "matter," an "ideologically fraught" reactionary moment of cultural nostalgia for a social order that is "rural, white Protestant, patriarchal, and premodern."[43] The projection of meaning is achieved through the progression of "interplay, excess," and finally, "hierarchy," for only with the clear emergence of a dominant hierarchical layer—the flute solo—can Ives reconcile the diversity of musical and social ideas represented throughout the sonata. Ives's modernist musical ideas are interpreted as working for a conservative end, the preservation of a simple, less inclusive, and, significantly, American nineteenth century past.

Carter's early negative criticism of the *Concord*, mentioned in the introduction, has been enriched by its own history of embellishment, commentary, and reconsideration, in part a result of his long and complex relationship with Ives, which began when he was an enthusiastic high school music student in New York City. Throughout his life, Carter seems to have drawn the odd lot of serving both as Ives's most piercing critic and staunchest supporter. Carter's early review of the *Concord* on the occasion of its second performance was, by his own account, personally painful. Today, it is informative to consider Carter's recollections as adding a sober balance to some current history. According to Carter, he was one of the few critics—along with Lawrence Gilman—actually present at the "real" premiere of the work in 1939. Gilman helped to arrange the second "premiere" a few weeks later, not, as is sometimes now reported, because of the triumphant success of the first performance, but, according to Carter, because of outstandingly poor attendance. Reminiscing in 1975, Carter wryly observed that the positive response to the *Concord's* second performance could be attributed to the fact that "...most critics do not review, nor does the public applaud, the music *per se*, but rather the publicity that surrounds it."[44] Continuing with some of his early

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[42] *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, 175.

[43] Ibid., 189.

[44] *The Writings of Elliott Carter*, 334–335.

impressions, the music at the time seemed "flamboyant," extravagantly Romantic, and reminiscent of the "impassioned demagoguery" emanating from Germany and Italy at the time, the 1930s.[45]

Carter, like Kramer, interprets the *Concord* in terms of its relationship to an oppressive and troubled social order, and criticizes it on these grounds. For both, the quality of nostalgia summoned up by this music is not an appealing evocation of "the folk," or of the world of New England transcendentalism, but threatening, rooted in divisive political sentiments. And, for different reasons, the quality of the music as "American" comes under fire: for Kramer, on socio-political grounds, for Carter, because of his European musical training. The most significant divergence of opinion between the two concerns the formal elements of the music. Carter, perhaps because of the mid-century esthetic stance in which the bond between form and content is virtually indivisible, does not contextualize the "modern" material elements in the music as "innovative" or "new," but rather as substantively connected to the past.

Regarding the relationship between analysis and Ives's reputation, one of Carter's many reconsiderations of the *Concord* is a revealing starting point. Based on his later discovery that motivic and harmonic materials in the "Emerson" movement are "highly organized," Carter came to describe the *Concord* as "skilled and accomplished," and within "the frame of taste...we normally associate with European music."[46] In today's revisionist climate, much has been made of these comments, having even been taken as "[admitting] Ives to the pantheon of 'organic' composers in the Beethoven tradition," a claim that, given the coolness of Carter's language, seems somewhat too enthusiastic.[47] In any case, the context for Carter's "re-valuation" was not whether Ives *could* compose music in a "European" and "organic" style, but why he so often chsose not to do so and, subsequently, how to appraise the music in the latter category. For Carter, the central issue—in the spirit of mid-century formalism—is not Ives's connection with the nineteenth century or his relative modernity, but the degree of skill and elegance with which he presents his ideas.

An underlying question that has remained unasked is why formalist criteria such as Carter's can be considered valid arbiters of value for revisionist critics (putting aside for the moment the success of such analytic ventures in Ives's music) when so much recent musicology has been focused on questioning the foundation of these values. One outcome of this point of this point of view is the "conservativism" of the current history. The case of Ives appears analogous in some ways to that of Arnold Schoenberg, who worked assiduously to expand traditional elements within a new harmonic context. As the shock effect of Schoenberg's once radical musical language has faded, the issues that drove a wedge through the reception of modern music during the first half of the twentieth century have faded with it. The music is now even understood as residing within the realm of the "neo-classic," that is, within an expanded view of conservativism

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[45] Ibid., 335.

[46] *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971), 63. As early as the mid-1940s, Carter began to think that he "had been wrong about [the *Concord*]," but after going back to "reconsider" all of Ives's work, was overwhelmed by the task of organizing the scores for performance. See Vivian Perlis, *Charles Ives Remembered* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 141-143.

[47] Block, *Ives Concord*, 15.

that works to deflate the arguments of Adorno.[48] But unlike Ives, Schoenberg, at the mercy of an unsympathetic critical reception throughout much of his career, never faced accusations of "amateurishness" or a lack of compositional skill; rather, the opposite. Schoenberg's critics found themselves faced with a perceived excess of compositional sophistication and, in terms of formalist valuation—questionable or not—the music of Schoenberg has become a model for the most fruitful kind of relationship that can exist between analytic investigation and compositional sophistication.

Does the view of Ives as a conservator of nineteenth century concert music help to reconcile the conflict between form and content that is so palpable in his music? While it is analytically possible to demonstrate the presence of "organic" motivic development, the relationship to traditional structures, etc., such formal elements, neutral by nature, await the critical context of their author. In and of themselves, they do not show skill or accomplishment, but only an author's perception of these elements. The claim that Ives's "stylistic diversity" and "musical borrowing" is "systematic and logical," and therefore skillful and, by extrapolation, of greater esthetic quality is unsatisfying, to say the least; and this is not meant to imply that the music is any less valuable, or skillful on its own terms, because claims of its logic seem at times unconvincing or over extended.[49] Would that the relationship between compositional mastery, in the technical sense, and the elusive goal of esthetic "success" were a matter of logic, but reciprocity here is not guaranteed. The physical properties of a piece of music are not like the physical properties of a chemical compound, the analysis of which can completely describe the relationship between its component parts, and thus ensure its reproduction. If this were the case, the critical issue of "degree and kind," would be less dependent on interpretation, on the relativity of individual perceptions.

In an ideal world, the most simple and direct esthetic/critical determination an analyst or critic could make about traditional formal elements in Ives's music would be, not to put too fine a point on it, whether these elements are reactionary modernist failures or imaginative and transformative conservative successes. But it would seem self-evident that the extravagant generosity with which musical ideas are presented in this music, especially in the larger works, inevitably results in an over abundance, in multiple layers which may all lend themselves to a variety of methods of analysis and interpretation. The complexities of the music continue to elude any clear and easy resolution of the dissonance between "matter" and "manner" in the music itself. Whether arguing for the music's connection to the nineteenth century or its modernity, analysts, musicologists, and critics have been unable to reach a consensus regarding the "locus" of these identities, precisely how they reside in the formal and expressive aspects of the music. This dichotomy has not been explained away either by limiting the meaning of experimentalism or by placing the music within the frame of a more conservative view.

How did Cowell's experimentalism reconcile such seemingly conflicting aspects of the music? Without encouraging the unreflective embrace of Cowell's ideas, it is

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[48] See, for example, Martha M. Hyde, "Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 18 (fall 1996): 200-235.

[49] Burkholder, "Ivess Today," 274.

apparent that his experimentalism, specifically as a reflection of early American modernity, has been misinterpreted, overshadowed by mid-century manifestations like those of Cage. Henry Brant's orchestration of the *Concord*, the *Concord Symphony*, completed in 1995, exemplifies the inclusiveness of Cowell's brand of modernism.[50] Brant, a member of Cowell's original experimentalist group, often speaks of Ives as "the greatest composer of the twentieth century," an opinion that has remained unchanged since the 1930s when he was introduced to the music by Bernard Herrmann.[51] For Brant, the *Concord* is a great modernist work in which, revisionist claims to the contrary, "Ives avoids anything that unifies." Turning once again to the flute solo, one might therefore reasonably expect Brant to offer a hard-edged rendition that would amplify the more abstract features of the piece; a rendition that would stand in contrast to the "saccharine, lush, and smooth" performances of Ives's music that emerged during the 1980s.[52] As shown in Example 3, however, this is not the case. The music is metered, the "unifying" ostinato is emphasized by the unique timbre of the celesta, and the counterpoint of individual parts is orchestrated in a way that refines the roughness out of the dissonance.

Could Brant, who has lived with strong opinions about the radical nature of Ives's music since the 1930s, have come under the sway of "the politics of nostalgia" that emerged during and after the centennial?[53] One of Brant's principal compositional goals throughout most of his working life has been to make music simple enough that "an average orchestra conducted by an average conductor" can play it. In the *Concord Symphony*, Brant's interpretation of Ives is intentionally "populist" and encompasses elements most often understood as reflecting nineteenth-century expressiveness. Nonetheless, Brant understands this music in terms of its radical impulse as unabashedly modern. It would seem that the "revised" Ives, lush and romantic, has always been with us.

As the extravagant plurality of Ives's musical ideas continues to foster an unusually varied intersection of opinions, the attraction the music held for Cowell and other early American experimentalists becomes ever more self-evident: Ives's virtuosic imagination trumped any accusations of technical crudeness. Morgan, whose articles on Ives from

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[50]Cowell, in *American Composers on American Music*, described Brant as the most promising talent of the group, and, ever since, he has been consistently identified as an "experimentalist." With over 130 works listed in the Fischer catalogue, Brant is less well known than he deserves, especially in the United States. In part, this may be attributed to the difficult performance requirements of much of his music, which sometimes demands unusual combinations of instruments, with the specific arrangement of musicians throughout a performance space; a technique Brant has called "spatial music." The problems inherent in getting performances of this kind of music have persisted throughout his career. For example, Ives, discussing a recording project, writes in a letter to Cowell that he "[knows] nothing about Brant's or Crawford's music—except what you, Weiss, and Nic. S [lominsky], Carl R[uggles], Becker & others have told me—which is that 'in time & a nice tide' they may get mansized (even Miss C)." Brant's piece, for ten flutes, was not chosen. In Rita Mead, *Henry Cowell's New Music 1925-1936*, 256. In 2002, Brant won the Pulitzer Prize for his *Ice Field*, premiered in December 2001 with the San Francisco Symphony.

[51]All quotations by Brant are taken from my interview with him in the spring of 1998, around the time of his 85th birthday.

[52]The description of the music in performance is taken from Leon Botstein, "Innovation and Nostalgia: Ives, Mahler, and the Origins of Twentieth-Century Modernism," *Charles Ives and His World*, 40.

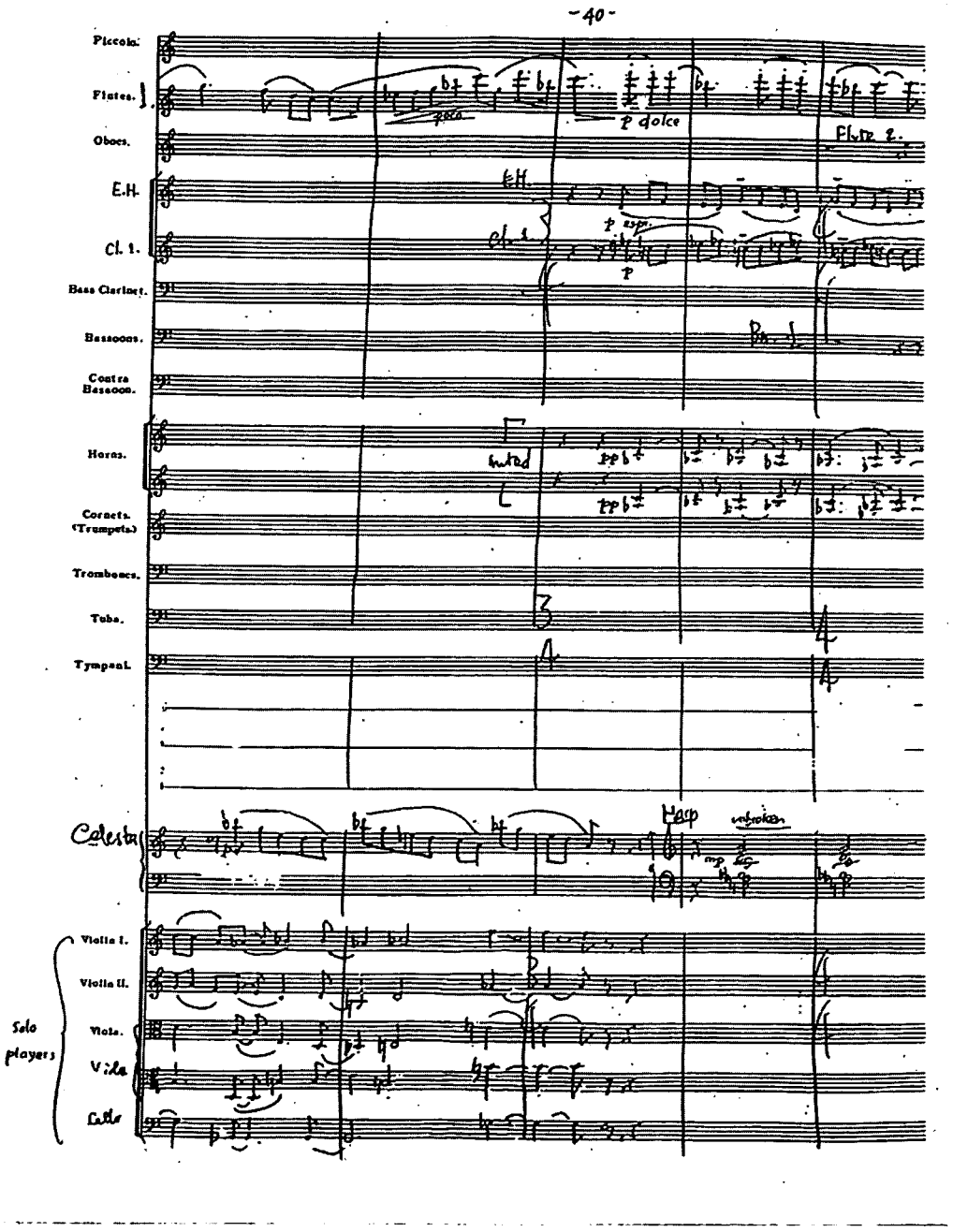
[53]Ibid.

the 1970s prove to be not only prescient, but remarkably balanced considering some of the work that follows, questioned the degree to which experimentalism maintained itself as a prevailing trend throughout the first half of the twentieth century.[54] As an ideological model, Ives's music could serve as an inspiration for composers writing in an almost inconceivably wide range of styles. Brant's trope on the *Concord*, a work he perceives as unarguably modernist while at the same time celebrating the music's expressive elements, is exemplary of such plurality. Too, the early incarnation of the movement could encompass all manifestations of Ives's style, from self-proclaimed Beethoven enthusiast to "radical experimentalist."

On a broader plane, the Ives history raises questions about the antithetical relationship between music analysis and experimentalism. The negative perceptions that became attached to experimentalism by mid-century sometimes still persist, leaving artists so labeled on the fringes of analytic discourse. What is the equation between technical refinement, analysis, and ultimately, value? While a definitive answer remains out of reach, there is no question that becoming the focus of wide spread analytic and critical scrutiny carries its own implications. Ives's prestige, a case in point, appears to have increased in proportion to the diminishing of his experimentalist reputation.

[54] "Rewriting Music History": 4.

Example 3


-40-
Piccolo.
Flutes.
Oboes.
E.H.
Cl. 1.
Bass Clarinet.
Bassoons.
Contra Bassoon.
Horns.
Cornets. (Trumpets.)
Trombones.
Tuba.
Tympani.
Celesta
Harp
Violin I.
Violin II.
Viola.
Vla
Cello
Solo players
p dolce
Flute 2.

The Case Against Over-notation: A Defense and a Diatribe

Kyle Gann

Edgard Varèse was perhaps the first to routinely attach several expression markings to one note in his scores. A single trumpet note, for example, can have an sf followed by a diminuendo, a p, a crescendo, and a sfff. Henry Cowell reports that Varèse was contemptuous of composers who did not fill their scores with expression markings: "They do not know how they wish their music to sound," he said.

That practice eventually spread throughout the contemporary music world, and so did the contempt that goes with it. In today's music world, and for the last 30 years, a plethora of expression markings has been regarded as a sign of professionalism in a composer. Composers who mark every note in their scores with slurs, constantly-nuanced dynamics, and articulation markings, are professionals: they know how they wish their music to sound. Consequently, scores that do not bristle with such markings are evidence of a composer who does not know how he wishes his music to sound, someone who did not learn his craft, someone who is an amateur.

This argument has a certain scientific rightness about it. We assume that the composer holds or develops in his or her head an image of how a piece is supposed to sound. The more a composer works, the more detailed that image is likely to become. The more experience a composer has working with performers, the more adept he or she will become at communicating every intention, no matter how minuscule, to the performer. After all, the composer knows better how the piece goes than the performer, right? And so the more every nuance of a performance is determined by the composer, the better it will be.

And yet, in another way, this premise flies in the face of common sense. Look at the manuscript of any Prelude and Fugue by J.S. Bach: where are the continually changing dynamics? Where are the slurs, the articulation markings? Where are the crescendos and decrescendos? Why, Bach must have been an amateur. He didn't know how he wanted his music to sound. (If you want to object that the Well-Tempered Clavier was written for clavichord, an instrument that precluded dynamic nuances, then look at Bach's manuscript for the famous Chaconne for violin: not a dynamic marking in evidence anywhere.) Today's professional, of course, has a ready-made answer to this: Bach lived back in the dark past, before notation had been developed to a science. We can forgive him his naivete, for he was born too early to benefit from hundreds of years' worth of development of music notation and composition.

Of course, if we follow this argument to its inevitable conclusion, we reach the result that today's heavily notated music is better than Bach's. If more specific notation represents progress, and progress is by definition a refining process resulting in a better and better product, than the composers like Milton Babbitt and

Mario Davidovsky today who mark every note in their music must be making better music than Bach did. I'm sure there are a handful of people who actually believe this. They should get out more.

I've also heard another argument from the professionals: we all know how to play Bach's music because there is a long and fairly continuous history (except for an unfortunate 79-year gap between 1750 and 1829) of Bach performance. Everyone knows how Bach's music goes, so it doesn't need so much in the way of notation. But modern music is an unfamiliar language, and performers need plenty of slurs, dynamic markings, and so on, to show people how it's supposed to go.

I own several recordings of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. In one, Edward Aldwell plays the D-sharp Minor Fugue from Book One in a sad, mellow, soulful legato. Glenn Gould plays the same piece mechanically, almost clocklike, with a crisp staccato. I love both performances. In some moods I would rather hear one, and in other moods the other. I'm glad that both exist, for diffracted between their diametric diversity the D-sharp Minor Fugue gains depth and multidimensionality. That it sustains such different readings makes it seem more universal.

But by our scientific paradigm above, only one of those interpretations can be right. Which one? Isn't it tragic that Bach didn't have at his disposal the expression markings that would have glued down the D-sharp Minor Fugue once and for all eternity, laminating it into a specific emotional expression? Isn't it tragic that we don't know precisely how he played it, the tempo, the volume and energy level, the phrasing, the amount of rubato?

On the contrary, I believe that the example proves that our scientific paradigm stinks to high heaven. I believe that the D-sharp Minor Fugue exists as a set of inexact relationships between pitch and rhythm. And I believe that Bach, having conceived these relationships and written them down, completed his job. I believe that he quite correctly left to the performer what is the performer's job: to manifest those relationships in sound, to take responsibility for the sonic details, and to find an interpretation that will make the spirit of the piece sound true and convincing, even though there are many possibilities as to what that might be. I believe that the D-sharp Minor Fugue is more than any one of its individual performances, and therefore to theoretically admit validity to only one possible performance is to diminish it and needlessly limit its significance.

Wherefore, then, do I embark on this diatribe, which only leads me, after all, to what seems a rather mundanely obvious, common-sense conclusion? Because the scientific paradigm above, and the philosophical stance it takes toward a work of music, is widely brandished as a power weapon, and used as such to marginalize, and diminish the role of, composers who don't subscribe to it.

In the 1960s, a new style of music appeared which departed from the Varèsian approach to notation. In works like Drumming and Music in Fifths, Steve Reich and Philip Glass wrote little if anything besides pitches and rhythms - just like old J.S. Bach. Since then, there has been a widespread return to a looser and less specific style of notation, for many, many good reasons. And yet, in the award-giving and commission-granting sectors of the music community, heavily nuanced notation is still reflexively equated with professionalism. Composers who sit on panels have admitted to me that, when a score comes through that doesn't contain

new dynamic markings in nearly every measure, with interpretive crescendos and decrescendos and slurs and verbal directions, it is automatically tossed into the rejection heap. When one can see at a glance that the composer isn't "professional," there is no need to waste further time trying to discern the work's content.

The assumption these composers make is that a professional composer knows exactly what his music should sound like and takes it upon him- or herself to communicate that in great detail. But even J.S. Bach aside, there are many, many drawbacks to this paradigm. Composers who do not overload their scores with markings often have excellent reasons for not doing so, reasons that they've thought long and hard about, reasons central to their most deeply cherished beliefs about music. Let's look at several of those reasons:

1. Many composers reject the idea that their music should have only one possible detailed representation.
2. Notation is incapable of expressing every iota of a composer's intentions.
3. Many composers today write in musical styles in which the music's meaning does not flow from continual nuances.
4. Many composers appreciate the opportunity to rely on the performer's instincts.
5. Clarity of expression in music renders detailed expression marks superfluous.
6. Composing music is not a profession.

Conclusion.

1. Many composers reject the idea that their music should have only one possible detailed representation. The first to rebel deeply against this idea was Charles Ives. He urged the performers of his piano sonatas to play them at different tempos depending on their moods and the time of day. He even appended different versions of certain measures so that the performer could have a choice. Though few composers of notated music are as extreme as Ives in this respect, many have inherited something of this attitude. I would hate to live in a world in which only one interpretation of the D-sharp minor Fugue or Concord Sonata was allowed.

George Gershwin's "Summertime" has been sung and played in every conceivable manner. At the other extreme, Milton Babbitt's Philomel exists only in one incarnation, and may not even be repeatable in performance, so intimately is it based on Bethany Beardslee's voice. Between these two extremes, there are many comfortable positions. Not every composer would want the vast liberties taken with his or her music that Gershwin's "Summertime" is subjected to, but it is something of the measure of the sturdiness of a piece of music that it can withstand and benefit from varying interpretations.

In fact, to go deeper into this cliché, the idea that to compose means to create a detailed sonic representation in one's imagination is a superficial one, and generally a fallacy. A piece of music, from its composer's point of view, is not merely, or primarily, or necessarily at all, a sensuous, sonic entity. For most composers, the parts of a piece of his or her music exist in some logical relationship to each other: a motive and its variations, a theme and its repetitions, a rhythmic structure and the various means used to manifest it. The logical structure of a piece can be stretched in one direction or another without necessarily being deformed. Intelligently

stretched, the meaning may even become clearer. There may be major composers (Debussy comes to mind, although I don't believe it was really true in his case either) for whom the sensuous aspect is so predominant that every decrescendo, every dynamic differentiation, every minuscule ebb and swell is crucial to the identity of the piece. But this is certainly not true of a Bach fugue or a Beethoven sonata, in which the composer's desire to make certain formal relationships evident vastly outweighs the fluid nuances of a particular performance. For some composers, writing a score can be like writing a novel or play. In a novel, word order and logic are crucially important, but they only partially determine the kind of expression one could appropriately bring to the novel when reading it out loud.

In much music of an experimental character, in fact, the essence of the piece may lie in the logical process through which it is composed, and the actual sonic result may be as much of a surprise to the composer as to anyone else. In such a case, it would be artistically ludicrous for the composer to go through and shape every nuance via notation, when such nuances weren't at all essential to his or her own mental image of the work.

2. Notation is incapable of expressing every iota of a composer's intentions. Every composer whose music shows any originality knows, from rehearsal experiences, how inadequate even the most meticulous notation is to get across one's feel for a piece. We have no way to represent on paper the momentum of a particular tempo, the nature of an energy level. We have all had experiences in which the tempo was exactly right but the energy all wrong, while someone else might play the passage at a slower tempo but get the energy perfect. Notation can be misleading: you put staccato dots on notes, but there are different kinds of staccato, and the performer may use a Prokofiev-style staccato when you were looking for something more subtle. Ultimately there is no real substitute for the composer being present, and in most world premiere situations, the composer is present. After your music has been performed for awhile, and there are recordings, an oral tradition of playing your music grows up, and people play it a certain way because they know how it goes. Notation, no matter how explicit, cannot substitute for this process.

This is why most of the world's musical traditions, including jazz, Indian music, Balinese music, and many others, will not teach music through notation: because teaching by oral transmission and demonstration communicates a composer's ideas far more subtly and perfectly. The composer-choregrapher Meredith Monk (winner of a well-deserved McArthur "Genius" Award) refuses to use notated music in rehearsal, because it fails to convey all the nuances she wants in her vocal lines, and it causes people to play or sing in a cold, calculated manner. Rampant expression markings are an attempt to fill in the gap left by the absence of direct oral transmission, but carried to an extreme they rob the music of even more spontaneity than if the performer were left to his or her own devices.

3. Many composers today write in musical styles in which the music's meaning does not flow from continual nuances. In fact, the heavy use of expression markings is tied to a particular conception of music, a conception that carries with

it the conceit of the sounds being delicate, precious. Everything proceeds in gestures; wisps of sound crescendo out of nowhere and diminuendo back al niente, the musical continuity always starting and stopping. The sound is supposed to be in constant flux, always either working up toward a climax or moving away from one. This delicate, precious aesthetic has little in common with most of the world's musics: medieval, African, Asian, vernacular, jazz, or anything else. There is no reason at all that the delicate aesthetic should enjoy a privileged paradigm according to which composers should notate their music.

In welcome relief to the precious type of music, minimalism reintroduced an aesthetic of greater stability, in which a single volume level, or energy level, is sustained for a longer amount of time. Not only do audiences not necessarily object to a piece being the same dynamic level for 15 or more minutes, there is plenty of evidence that the mesmerizing stability of such music is a pleasure to revel in. Accordingly, dozens of younger composers of the postminimal and totalist variety have taken to writing music in which the meaning flows, on a detailed level, from the interaction of pitch and rhythm, while dynamics and energy remain more or less constant. This is not evidence of amateurism, but a very conscious strategy. Morton Feldman quietly created a revolution by notating at the beginning of his scores, "as soft as possible throughout."

Related to this is the inadequacy of traditional notation markings for new technological media. Especially when electronic instruments are mixed with acoustic ones, relative dynamic markings of p, mp, and so on do not do an efficient job of securing balance. A three-note chord on a synthesizer is automatically three times as loud as a one-note chord: how are conventional dynamic markings to deal with this purely quantitative approach to volume? Often such balances must be worked out in rehearsal with allowances made for the acoustics of the space, placement of the sound system, etc. It is difficult to precisely redict the correct markings for dynamic nuances in a partly or entirely electronic performance.

Historically speaking, the ubiquitous use of expression markings stems at least partly from serialist music, in which composers were trying to apply to dynamics and articulation the same level of control that they did to pitch and rhythm. Now that serialism is dead, there is no reason to cling to a characteristic that sprang from a now-dead style. Besides, at least within the system of European music notation, pitch and rhythm are primary musical characteristics and enormously susceptible to control, whereas dynamics and articulation are secondary and less easy to notate precisely. The attempt to treat them uniformly via notation was an artistic mistake from the beginning.

4. Many composers appreciate the opportunity to rely on the performer's instincts. I have had performers throw wonderful ideas into interpretations of my music that I would never have thought of. In some cases, I have written those ideas into the score; in others, the effect seemed so tied to the style of that specific performer that it didn't seem wise to commit subsequent performers to the same nuance. In the current day of specialization, composers and performers have different skills, and for me the results of allowing performers free rein in

interpretation have far outweighed - well, I was going to say the disadvantages, but I can't think of any.

Actually, the disadvantages come only from performers who are primarily trained to play Uptown and serialist music. In my experience, musicians used to playing Babbitt and Schwantner and Druckman have a terrible time with postminimalist scores. "There are no dynamics," they say. "How am I supposed to play this? The composer hasn't told me what to do." But musicians whose repertoire is primarily 18th and 19th-century music find little-marked scores much easier to negotiate. They don't assume that just because the dynamics don't change frequently, that the composer wanted a stiff, bland, unmusical reading. Beethoven doesn't always tell them what to do either. They are used to the fact that Chopin's dynamic markings often can't be followed, and they don't see themselves as human computers, unable to act without instructions from the page. Performers trained to play serialist music are often so overtrained that they lose the ability to feel their way through a passage of notated music. I, for one, refuse to target my music for the overeducated limitations of that relatively small cadre of performers.

My idea of the perfect performer is Bari Mort, the pianist who played in the premiere of my "Last Chance" Sonata. At every rehearsal she'd come up with a few more interpretive ideas. A couple I dissuaded her from because I felt they departed too far from the spirit of the work (and the letter of the notation, actually). Several I liked so well that I wrote them into the final score. And several others I enjoyed because they fit so well with her playing, but felt I wouldn't necessarily like as well in other hands. And every idea came from the way she came to feel the music as she played it over and over.

5. Clarity of expression in music renders detailed expression marks superfluous. In that D-sharp Minor Fugue, for example, no decent musician would ever put an accent on the third note - D# A# B - because it would sound arbitrary and unnatural. But it would be quite natural to make a slight expressive crescendo toward the F# in the line - D# A# B A# G# F# G # A#. On the other hand, some might find such a crescendo overly romantic and unstylistic, and no one should be required to make such a crescendo. It was not incumbent upon Bach to put hairpins all over his score to tell the keyboardist what emotive expression he had in mind. A good musician can tell how to interpret that piece meaningfully and effectively. And contrary to what certain professionals have tried to tell me, it's not because we know the context of Bach's music that we can do that, but because the piece is so well, so clearly written that merely by playing the written notes one gets a feel for what should be emphasized.

The practice of over-notating music comes out of a stylistic period in which music was not clearly written. Twelve-tone music and the postserial styles that followed it tended toward arbitrary structures, often making it difficult for the performer to know what kind of expression was intended. Had the music been well-shaped, certain phrasings would have come naturally, and all those expression markings wouldn't have been needed. Constant expression markings are a substitute for good composing, a compensation for not having written the music well in the first place. They are actually a sign of a lack of artistry. The

appropriateness of Bari's additions to my "Last Chance" Sonata confirmed for me that I had written it clearly. One could imagine, in fact, a piece so perfectly written in its pitches and rhythms alone as to render expression markings unnecessary. The D-sharp Minor Fugue is, in fact, such a piece. As Heinrich Schenker said, even if Beethoven's Ninth Symphony contained no dynamic markings, we would be able to enter them exactly as Beethoven himself did.

6. Composing music is not a profession. It is a vocation, a calling, onedemanding a daunting level of radical self-reliance. A composer is anartist, not a professional. It is the essence of a professional that he orshe has met the standards of a profession. The artist meets only his or her own standards, and will inevitably be found wanting with respect to any group of collectively-derived standards. The professional deals with the world from a position of power, since he or she has been certified as a member of the profession, and therefore has collective backing. An artist always deals from a standpoint of vulnerability, since his or her own inner vision must be a new one, without certification or validation from any outside authority.

After all is said and done, it may well be that a detailed amount of expression marks does certify a composer as a professional, but to that same extent, that person is not an artist. That particular style of notation is one that universities impose on young composers like a cookie-cutter, to ensure that they all turn out to be interchangeable professionals. In the scores, however, of the great artists of the past century - Charles Ives, Harry Partch, Conlon Nancarrow, John Cage, Robert Ashley, La Monte Young - one will frequently find notation that is ambiguous, idiosyncratic, even difficult to decipher. These composers, of course, are not considered "professionals" by the Elliott Carter/expression marking crowd, but they find larger and more enthusiastic audiences than the professionals.

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I notice that on the score of a recent piano piece (Lament, 1999), the composer Ellen Zwilich has added the following performance instruction: "Throughout, whether the passage is marked liberamente or not, the performer should feel free to 'sculpt' the rhythm and dynamics for expressive purposes in order to give a spontaneous, improvisatory quality to the piece. It would be ideal if no two performances were exactly alike." This is what the professional mandates concerning notation have brought us to, the point at which even a well-known composer who wants a musically expressive performance has to point out in print the obvious truths that all good musicians have known for centuries. Imagine Chopin having to spell out that it would be ideal if no two performances of his E-flat major Nocturne were exactly alike. He would think we were idiots.

This isn't to say that there's anything wrong with heavily marking a score with expression markings. If you are artistically driven to do that, go ahead and do it. If the fluid, continual shaping of dynamics is crucial to your aesthetic, by all means express it. But there is something very wrong about using such a superficial criterion to dismiss creative artists, especially when the criterion itself is a

symptom of the bald-faced ignorance of the people doing the dismissing. Varèse himself may have been driven to a high degree of notational specificity by his inner artistic vision. But in the moment in which he lay down that criterion as a standard imposed on others, he forgot himself as an artist, and spoke only as a "professional."

Personally, I would feel rotten if I wrote precious, delicate music, music that could only be played exactly the way I imagined it in my head without falling apart. I quite consciously and intentionally reject the stop-and-start, gestural style of much late 20th-century music (that of Jacob Druckman being perhaps the quintessential example), which I feel sounds pompous and affected, in favor of counterpoint, rhythmic momentum, and the long line. This is absolutely my right as a creative artist. It is equally my right to reject the notational practice that makes that gestural style what it is. I want my music to be as sturdy and hard-edged and clear-lined as a good old Baptist hymn, crystal clear enough in its pitches and rhythms that the performer can feel his or her way into the piece - and that is simply my personal desire, not something I mean to impose on anyone else's music.

When I hear two different people play my music, and take very different approaches, I feel like the piece is successfully out in the world living its own life, not like I failed to pin it down sufficiently in the notation. One of my favorite passages in my own music is a page of my piano piece Time Does Not Exist that consists of uninflected quarter-note chords. There are no dynamic markings on that page, no slurs, no crescendos, only a dynamic of pp on the page before, and a single word: "devoutly." I don't want the passage played coldly and mechanically, I want it played with warmth and feeling - I know exactly how I want it to sound, and I've played it through a hundred times - but I also don't want it inflected in any particular way. Any extra mark would be a falsehood - yet without such markings, the Uptown composer panels look at that page and say, "This man is an amateur, he doesn't know how he wants his music to sound." As far as I'm concerned, the passage is notated perfectly, which is to say, with clear intentions yet with an acceptable level of ambiguity

I look forward to the day that such ambiguity, resulting from pages uncluttered by hairpins and dynamics, may no longer be seen as a sign of amateurism, but quite possibly as a sign of musical care and intelligence. I look forward to the day in which composers have, once again, the freedom to notate their music as loosely, if they so desire, as old J.S. Bach did 300 years ago - without being penalized by the profession for doing it. No task of my lifetime have I found more difficult than this: protecting the art of composing music from the professional composers.

June, 2000

The Contemporary State of Contemporary Music in the San Francisco Bay Area

Tildy Bayar

Other Minds Festival 8
March 7-9, 2002
Palace of Fine Arts Theatre
San Francisco

First on the first evening's program were the compositions of Paris-based Ondes Martenot virtuoso Takashi Harada. The lovely palm-shaped Ondes box, placed prominently onstage, sang from afar its lyrical siren song. Harada's compositions were bits of minimal musical scrap picked up off the practice-room floor; the pieces do not speak; only the instrument speaks. The instrument's voice is so haunting, so heart-stirring, the box gleaming so beautifully there on the stage, the sound so beautifully radiating from it, that, siren-like, it can make you forget while you listen that, while gorgeous sound may be stroking your eardrums, there's no music happening.

First on the second evening's concert, Lou Harrison's guitar pieces created an intimacy between instrument and performer, the performer's body wrapped around the instrument, his ears enfolded in a listening space unavailable to the other listeners, the instrument nestled close in his arms. Or perhaps it was the performer, David Tanenbaum, teasing so tenderly those lush velvety surfaces, rather than the composer having composed them. Rapt, for about five minutes, at the sheer beauty of that sound, I listened; and then I began to hear the music. The program notes informed us that the Serenade for Frank Wigglesworth (1952) was part of a musical letter Harrison wrote to a friend. His friend must have been a musician, as only another musician would be interested in hearing in such exhaustive detail about how one's practicing had been going lately.

After hearing these pieces, I wondered whether sound, or sound quality, has come to be heard as meaningful enough without having to be composed in any particular way. Is this the result of the widespread seepage of Cage's ideas about hearing sound as itself ("The restless investigations of John Cage live on in the spirit of this year's nine Other Minds 8 composers", enthused the program notes)? And then there's the "any sound you can imagine" phenomenon, wherein our recently technologically-enabled ability to access huge quantities of

sound qualities has resulted in a kind of collective mental fatigue, the result of which is that the meaningfulness of a particular sound (always contextual) has been replaced in our awareness with its surface qualities (easily divorced from context).

Eurocentric music listeners seem to make a category mistake about western vs. non-western tunings; we imagine that non-western tunings are somehow inherently more expressive. Perhaps this is just our collective inner Margaret Mead, invoking the Outsider as a self-corrective. But tunings don't imply a voice that speaks musically, only music creates such a voice (; the sound of an instrument doesn't make music; only composition engenders music). These thoughts were brought into sharp focus by contrasting Darius Milhaud's Suite for Ondes Martenot and Piano (1932) with Lou Harrison's pieces for tack piano (Incidental Music for Corneille's *Cinna*, 1957) and harpsichord (Sonata for Linda Burman-Hall, 1999-2000).

Alone on the first night's program of all-Ondes Martenot music, Milhaud had composed his Suite so that the instrument sounded different ways, rather than merely receiving and transmitting its initial, unprocessed sound. The instrument sounded more different ways in this piece than in all the others together, always a character in a clear, coherent (and perhaps "light", in some other context, but here wonderfully focused) musical image. In contrast, most of the sections in Harrison's tack piano and harpsichord pieces seemed to exist in order to demonstrate various scales or tunings. Of much greater interest was Harrison's Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1990) which struck me as just the right combination of "serious music" (i.e., music that its composer really cared about, rather than "any old" music pressed into service for some extra-musical purpose –getting one's name on a festival, say) and individual sensibility (the real-life version of "self-expression"). This music leaned toward Hollywood, in a sincerely and lovingly appreciative way.

The nadir of the second evening's event had to have been composer Annea Lockwood and vocalist Thomas Buckner's collaborative composition, *Duende* (1997). With Lockwood's calm, emotionless digital sound, which rumbled and bubbled, appeared and disappeared abruptly like some hitherto-undiscovered natural phenomenon — perhaps a sudden thunderstorm on Saturn — and which undoubtedly would have been intensely interesting on its own, Buckner performed a kind of Disney theater of a shamanic journey, turning the music into a kind of generic accompaniment.

Richard Teitelbaum's *Blends* was the real, non-hokey version of Lockwood and Buckner's "journey" idea. It was written at a time (1977) when the interpenetration of musical cultures was a new idea in the air, and the music evidenced an innocence and a sincere enthusiasm about such encounters, and a sensitive ear for the musics coming together. *Blends* is a delicately-composed musical trip around the world from East to West, impressionistic rather than catalogue-y; at each stage the listener is bathed in a particular music, and some of that bathwater is carried along as the music moves, glacially, westward. Its evolution is organic, so that you don't index "form" going by, but hear, at each moment, new musical senses.

Not many people can make the accordion sound varied and interesting, as well as avoid taking over a collective sound with it, but Pauline Oliveros did, in the first evening's collective composition by the Circle Trio (Oliveros, India Cooke, Karolyn van Putten). These three play together in a friendly way, leaving a lot of space, very collective, very sensitive. Oliveros especially impressed me with, a couple of times, a willingness to do something risky, something that might not "work", although mostly all three stuck to the fairly safe things people tend to do when improvising on a stage in front of a large audience. When they stopped playing I wanted to hear more; they were the nicest thing on the program, full of musical intelligences. It was unfortunate, I thought, that in two evenings of composed music the most compelling event was a short, modest improvisation (listed as a "world premiere" in the program).

Ricardo Tacúchian's guitar pieces were more nice musical scrap, played with flair and energy by the Mexican Guitar Quartet. The performers were lively but the pieces were so undistinguished that I lost my place in the program and thought they were more of Harrison's practicing pieces. Takashi Harada also played music for Ondes Martenot by Andre Jolivet, Shin-ichiro Ikebe, and Toru Takemitsu, but the differences between pieces hardly registered because of the near-identical lack of imagination in the way each composer treated the instrument. I was especially disappointed by Takemitsu's piece, but I suspect it was its location, on this occasion, within the surrounding context (last in an exhaustingly indistinguishable sequence of similar things) that made it sound so generic.

(Dis)honorable mention must be made of the sheer obnoxiousness of the presentational context surrounding the music of Other Minds 8, which was so egregious as to almost put me off listening (and to make me wonder, crankily, what precisely was being celebrated). Now that composers are writing their music with computer software, said Charles Amirkhanian (Artistic & Executive Director) to the audience during a pre-concert talk, "handwritten scores are the last of a generation. Music scores are important, and more and more people are collecting them. You might enjoy making your first foray into this area of collecting" by bidding for the scores on display in the lobby, donated by Festival composers; minimum bid $300. "A letter of some import by Brahms can command a price of $3500; another by Louis Moreau Gottschalk, $1600. A musical quote with a signature on a 5 x 5-inch card by Olivier Messiaen was offered last year at $850. Imagine what prices these composers' scores might command! The Alban Berg Violin Concerto went for $50,000 some years ago. More recently, just the first page (!) of Philip Glass's Cello Concerto was auctioned at $3500. And as we turn the page into a new century, this might be just the beginning...With that in mind, Other Minds offers you a chance to own a piece of our contemporary history, not only as an investment, but as an object of inspiration to live with in wonder at the ingenuity of the human mind." (From "Music Manuscripts: *The Touch of Genius*", in the program notes, by Charles Amirkhanian.)

"A coffee table book cannot be far behind", Amirkhanian enthuses elsewhere in the program notes. It's easy to get the point that this event, with its steep ticket prices and rhetoric exemplified by *The Touch of Genius*, is selling itself to someone other (the fabled "other half", perhaps?) than, say, someone passionately interested in *music*. The "other" in Other Minds presumably refers to "someone other than Bach or Beethoven" rather than to any particular aesthetic distinction, as the festival seemed designed as an attempt to turn these fringe and semi-fringe composers into household names.

Very few local musicians attended this year's Other Minds festival. The newly-organized New San Francisco Tape Music Center's two-concert program a few months ago, however, which overfilled a large hall on both Friday and Saturday nights with people who came for the sheer interest of hearing obscure digital music with no live performance element, much of it composed by non-famous locals, was a contrasting hopeful foray in what I, at least, would consider to be the right direction.

Charles Stein

"as if analogy were so"

— Gerrit Lansing

Our situation propounds itself as a story we discover as we tell it or as it is told, already duplicitous, redundant, the first time 'round. We have the impression that the tale of what we really are, what we do and suffer, is such as can be told; but also that no specific telling tells it all or tells it right. There would always be other reckonings — analogical or parallel tales, to complete the real.

But does this incompleteness at the source of apparency deride the thought of a dynamism and vitality, a treasure trove and vigor at the heart of Being? It surely does unmask a dark propensity, for thus are we sold on analogy. We assume an identity when we grasp the analog of our situation, heard of another in the tale: we "identify" with the persons of the story.

This analogical identification is, of course, prior to analysis. We give ourselves over to identity without ascertaining whether the analogy on which it is based is an apt one; we do not take note of the limits of its aptness; we do not inquire into its procedure; and we surely do not raise the suspicion that what we truly are may not be capable of analogical characterization at all.

To recover from our analogical identifications requires some careful teasing apart of our self-presence from the "form" under which it is grasped. But the problem is that, when we are somehow stirred to undergo this self-inflicted surgery, we tend to perform it by replacing one analogical form with another. Critiquing the aptness of some analogy, we search for a better one. Cognizant of excess or exaggeration, we put up a limit. But if what we truly are on our most intimate terrain is without form, no story, no image, no limit imposed upon analogy, will peg us down.

Thus to arrive at the formless center of our reality, however, is not yet to raise the question of how it is that, in general, we commit ourselves to analogy.

In the Dzogchen teachings of the Tibetans, an essential formulation has it that though our "essence" is formless or empty, another complexion of our being, translated usually as our "nature," perpetually generates apparent form. Though all appearances belie what we really are, what we really *do* is take on appearances.

Formlessness of essence — what does this mean? An essence is the character of an entity by means of which we distinguish it from another. It is a mark that is proper to the thing. It is the manner in which a being reveals that which it intimately, inwardly, and truly is. To speak of an essence is to provoke a noetic movement beyond the appearance to the thing as it is in itself, but in such a manner that the thing as it is in itself discloses its self through its appearance. A being's essence is its private, inner reality, but such as can be linked to its public display. Its essence is just that display which does not betray the intimate character of a thing. Essence therefore, in this sense, involves apparent form. To say that an essence is "empty" or without form is paradoxical. It is to say that its appearance is to have no appearance, that its proper distinction from other things is to fail of such distinction. A formless distinction is no distinction at all. A formless essence is an essence without an essence, or it is an essence that remains tucked up in itself with such thoroughness that no determination of it can appear without betraying it.

Now to be without an essence and yet somehow still to be — is to *court* analogy. Without determinate character on my own terrain, I spontaneously grasp myself on the basis of my similitudes. The origin of my spontaneous commitment to analogical identity seems to lie precisely in my essenceless essence, my lack of distinctness from that which I am not. It is not just that I have no essence. I am the project of a belief that it is possible to discover or attain one after all.

Since an essence is both a principle of distinctness and the inward core of the distinguished thing, the essenceless essence of this inner core does not amount to the possession of determinate form or the grasping of a distinction between one's own characteristics and those of another. Rather, it determines one's concrete existence as paradoxically anterior to all determination: though

lacking in form, we are not for all that lacking in a certain concreteness, self-presence, or existence as such.

My spontaneous impulse to seize upon identity through analogy does not arise simply out of my lack of determinate character, but from the contradictory fact that *though indeterminate, yet I am*. The indeterminate yet immediate character of my own being projects me into a quest for identity and ever-renews that quest through the dialectic of analogy — the spontaneous exercise of an analogical will, succeeded by the pain of contradiction and the loss of sense of identity. The disclosure of the inadequacy of the analogical, spontaneously reanimates it.

The dialect of identity is an impossible project. It cannot culminate in the attainment of determinate identity at last, and its self-corrections and reanimations cannot lead to an as-yet-unattained but in principle attainable core. Rather, it labors in the production of new analogies, new contradictions, new connections. And if it gain some respite, some apparent stability in its self-identification, it does so at the cost of its own awareness of how that stability is sustained by social supports, themselves as dubious and ephemeral as its own elusive character.

The dialectic of identity may be terminated, however, if the spontaneous will to analogy seizes upon the formless as its only analogical truth. Now the question is: if my analogical will is the failure to appropriate the formlessness of my essence, why, when this failure is overcome, does my own apparent form not cease to appear?

Perhaps an indirect answer might be this: that the manifestation of outer appearance is not *explained* by the analogical will and its dialectic; rather, the fact of appearance itself is among the conditions for the dialectic's possibility. I seek true form because, though inwardly formless, outwardly I do take shape. The intimacy of formless essence with external appearance may not *proceed* from errancy but be among its causes. It might just be of the essence of essenceless essence to generate apparent form.

Our appearances are not errant accidents, inessential to our true but formless being. To be both formless and yet not being-less is to generate apparency.

The necessary generation of apparent form from formless essence is our nature. And it is this nature that gives the possibility of our errancy, the possibility of the wanderings of an analogical will. *For if we did not take form, we would not seek a true form, and if we were possessed of a true form, the quest for the apprehension of it would culminate in a vision of our determinate being. But neither of these is the case.*

The generation of apparent form from formless essence is productive not only of errancy, but of the positive display of apparent being itself. Essence and nature are neither dissociated nor in any way apart from each other, but nondualistically co-implicate. If apparency occurs and is not true, its essence is essenceless. The nondual identity of essenceless essence and empty appearance is the depth of the display of Being — the energetic manifestation of the concreteness of existence.

The title of this essay is taken from Gerrit Lansing's poem, "The Milk of the Stars from Her Paps," in *Heavenly Tree / Soluble Forest* (Jersey City, NJ: Talisman House, 1995). The essay was originally published in *Hambone 13,* Nathaniel Mackey, editor.

...at times as if...

Elaine Barkin

Sandaya: The Spellbinding Piano of Burma Featuring: Sandaya U Yee Nwe. Shanachie. CD 66007 (1997). www.shanachie.com

A knockout, an absolute wow: utterly wild, wooly, strange, and far-out sounding piano playing and "piano music". But....

At first hearing: chaotic, random, anarchic, enigmatic—someone's, but not-yet-my, "music". For sure, I hear someone playing on an instrument I am familiar with, playing something in a way hitherto unimaginable. At times as if I'm hearing a free-floating, heavily surfaced 'foreground' with no inkling of any 'background'. How would it matter if there was one? Just how much and what kind of a listening-comfort zone do I want or need? If I 'get' it will the freshness—always a plus—of strangeness—not as sure about that one—be lost forever?

Listening for a way in:

Imagine hearing a recording of someone playing a piano slightly re- or dis-tuned—or maybe not—, playing the white-note keys 99.5% of the time, here and there a black-note key—an inflection? a Thelonious Monk-like flub?—at times as if each hand is being played by a different person, at times in octaves or staggered octaves or a recognizable r.h. melody with l.h. accompaniment—, white notes being struck together any & every which way, way up high much of the time, prickly-sweet-sounding and sounding at times as if any tone can be played with any other, windup-toy-like outbursts unrolling like Mr. way-back-when-lickety-split Tobacco Auctioneer—, each slippery-fingered hand busy, at times as if doodling, noodling around, ripples & runs & riffs, scribbly stops & starts that seem to happen anywhere, fracted contours, unmetered & metered freely scattered, like the sowing of wildflower seeds, like those 'play-by-ear' folks who sneak into basement practice rooms, spread their fingers on the keyboard and flap away.

(Bewilderment and incredulity accompanied the discomforting awareness of my being all-unknowing and incognizant. Yet the concomitant awareness of still being able to be baffled, stupefied, and shook-up became a source of great elation. U Yee Nwe is not playing on a piano in any way that is construable to me as "piano music". Rather as if a piano is being played in an alternate reality, in another time, from another planet, not in the time of my time. He sounds to know what he's about and I am clueless, it all being ontologically unfathomable to me.)

OK. Someone is performing a garrulous, loquacious music—more yackety-yak than those *yenta*-like piano sonatas of Franz Schubert's—, going on & on yet knowing when & how to finish. Someone, somewhere far away, in a milieu unknown to me, who finds ways to sound as if he's being individually expressive [1] as well as collectively responsive: Interspersed among the solo piano tracks are Songs (in which singer and pianist go their own way meeting up now & then), and Ensemble music (comprising piano, Asian flute, oboe, tuned drums, & timekeeper clapper), all with stretches rendered more or less in unison, a togetherness revealing planned "piecehood". [2] U Yee Nwe must be extemporizing, yet I'm on shaky ground insofar as not-yet-music is usually heard as unfettered to new ears; how then to distinguish between extemporized—not yet known—and predetermined—already known? What does it take to *know* a thing from a non-thing?, to grasp boundaries? What's all this ruminating about and why's it sticking in my guggle?

Detour:

Somewhere along the way, a listener determines her best way to hear and listen-in as not-yet-music/music unfolds. Some like to have a scenario in hand, others don't. My uncertainties about listening to and 'getting' Burmese Piano Music"as a music" would not be mitigated by reading liner notes or the available literature—however fascinating that might be—, nor by accounting for it as having been transcribed from Burmese harp, xylophone, or tuned gongs or drums. To paste such recognition onto/into my experience of listening might get me somewhere but would remove me from what I want to have as "music". Which is not "not-music"; which is "my 'someone's' music".

At the heart of the matter, at the heart of my quandary, lies a barrier between just taking Burmese Piano Music in and not being able to; between grooving on it and not being able to internalize it as "piano music"; pondering over with whom and with what I can identify. When I am 'gotten' or 'taken' or 'moved' or 'touched' or 'awakened' or 'enlivened' the "effects" are direct; no other "demands" are necessary; all channels of my person are open; all is taken in everywhere. But as I listen over & over to U Yee Nwe's Piano of Burma, I am flummoxed, confounded, nonplussed.

"] something needs looking into

" [3]

Another way in—in which I attempt to begin again:

Burmese Piano? how come? are all those white keys right notes?, are those black keys blue notes or grace notes?, one hand shoves the other, like letting someone with rubbery fingers loose on the keyboard; I try to visualize hands & fingers in order to see the keys popping up & down like a player piano, like someone spattering the keys and making them dance & sound; jagged-asymmetric-spasmodic, regularity infrequent, being made up on the spot?—as in, who could remember

that?—ends signified with quasi-arpeggiated ripples, anything else happening along with it?, what else—*could* go on?, music for whom? for what sort of occasion?, pauses-fits-snatches, a refrain or sequence now & then (specks of recognition, but are they—*enough*?), West-East jazzy syncopated licks, re-cycled same tones in short & long strings & curls; it *has* to be improvised within as-yet unknown constraints, how to account for (especially to a devotee of dissonance) what sounds dissonant—blatantly rubbed together Major 2nds, 7ths, 9ths—and how much of what there is *is* determined or hindered or abetted by the piano? [4]; is it something reincarnated?, why does it often sound like twaddle?, like reconstructed albeit damaged troubadour-trobaritz music?, now & then really *really* fast, now & then an 'Alberti-bass'-like passage, and songs and instrumental trios or quartets which reveal that all is not either random or improvised: pianist and instrumentalists play the same melody in the same rhythm in an almost—given a few cents here & there—unison! [5] Tuned percussion punctuate ends—or beginnings?—of segments and always prior to the entrance of the vocalist, a relatively slow piano passage ensues (but hard to tell if it's 'introducing' anything), and when the singer sings, the pianist leaps about willy-nilly, as if in his own time & tune & space. (Could be that I'm breaking through the erstwhile opaque unfathomable, on my terms and in my voice.)

Looking for a way out:

U Yee Nwe's piano playing has, no doubt, been internalized as Piano Music by Burmese audiences, yet no matter what I am able to grasp, to recognize, to remember, to identify as 'thing', a formidable chasm between 'knowing' it and 'getting' it remains unbridgeable. [6] Identities and name-thing-calling resolve little, discomforts and difficulties linger on. Perhaps something else had been expected? (Piano of Burma is unlike any other SouthEast Asian music I've heard.) Bumpy roads & bumpy rides still attach to crossing-over.

In *The Body Artist*, Don DeLillo writes about conversation gaps; despite disparities between speech and music, the disquiet I continue to experience with Burmese Piano Music is reflected in DeLillo's passage:

> "There's a code in the simplest conversation that tells the speakers what's going on outside the bare acoustics. This was missing when they talked. There was a missing beat. It was hard for her to find the tempo. All they had were unadjusted words. She lost touch with him, lost interest sometimes, couldn't locate rhythmic intervals or time cues or even the mutters and hums, the audible pauses that pace a remark....There were no grades of emphasis here and flatness there....all the references at an unspoken level, the things a man speaking Dutch might share with a man speaking Chinese—-all this was missing here." [7]

Whether you have already heard or might decide to listen to Burmese Piano, do let me know your thoughts, your takes, insofar as I might be barking up both the wrong and the worst tree in a misguided effort to maintain—so as to nourish rather than lose—the state of amazement (philistinic pique?) that has been companion as well as *bete noire*.

January-May 2002

Notes:

[1] Puzzling, given Myanmar's 12-year rule by the military, international economic sanctions, and censure by the UN. Then again, such attributions of 'expressiveness' are of "my own invention" and, as I was to discover subsequently, improvisation and free variations have played and still play purposeful and significant roles in Burmese music. Hence a simple 1 : 1 correlation between artistic expressiveness and "free speech/free thought" is unfounded. (Even as I write this, efforts are afoot to reintroduce less oppressive policies in Myanmar, along with the recent release of Aung San Suu Kyi a sign of progress.)

[2] The singers and their songs are stunning, easily heard as music and not as troubling to me. Joel Taylor says: "#4 is a great piece of music...the vocalist is awesome ["The Power Rains Down Upon the Kingdom", Ko Kyaw Swe, male vocalist] and it's probably worth the price of the CD".

[3] From J.K. Randall's "how music goes" (II.), in *Perspectives of New Music,* 1976; reprinted in *Being About Music*, OPEN SPACE (forthcoming).

[4] (which I have since discovered was brought to Burma by the Brits more than a century ago and which was rapidly assimilated into Burmese musical culture).

[5] The vocal and instrumental music is not at all as culture-shocking as is the solo piano music, an experience that recurred during the writing of this text, when I received White Elephants and Gold Ducks, Shanachie CD 64087 (1997), Burmese music played on traditional instruments as well as on piano, slide guitar, banjo, mandolin, and violin. Many of the same performers are on both CDs: pianist U Yee Nwe; vocalists Daw Yi Yi Thant and Ko Kyaw Swe (female and male vocalists, respectively); Ko Ba Htay, bamboo flute and percussion.

[6] Other responses to The Spellbinding Piano CD ranged from "weird" [T] to "annoying" [J] to "wrong" [L].

[7] Don DeLillo*: The Body Artist,* Scribner Books, 2001, p. 67.

Postscript: Marc Perlman and Robert Garfias recommended that I listen to the Burmese pianist, U Ko Ko. (Piano birman/Burmese piano: U Ko Ko. Productions UMMUS [University of Montreal] (1995).) U Ko Ko ripples and flies over the keys using the entire range of the keyboard; he sings and accompanies himself—his voice relatively smooth, his piano-playing as if in some sort of time-warp. Although I still don't *really* 'get' it, neither am I totally bewildered: I moved an iota closer with the final track, #17, 36 seconds of "Oh when the Saints..." in which U Ko Ko deeply embeds the tune in a flurry of flashy flourishes, and for the first time in all of these months a crack fractured the wall of all-ünknowing. Now, at last, I was aware of the complexity and intricacy of Burmese Piano. And now, too, I realized the concentration necessary for U Yee Nwe and U Ko Ko, as they listen to voices from deep inside their heads and freely invent on "Beautiful Angels" or "Mountain of Heavenly Flowers", tunes known to their audiences. But without the "...Saints..." title, I'd not have been able to excavate the familiar tune, it being buried so deep within. Thus, recognition of something familiar, access to an "already known" 'background' tune, was needed in order for me to be extricated from the morass of utter mystification and incomprehension, to say, yes, that's music. But....

A Review of *Music inside out: going too far in musical essays*, by John Rahn, with introduction and commentary by Benjamin Boretz. From the series *Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Culture*, ed. by Saul Ostrow (Gordon and Breach, 2001)

Scott Burnham

The first essay in this collection of composer John Rahn's writings about music is entitled "Repetition," and its opening plunges us into the singular world of Rahn's method and style. "Learning to be a musician always involves learning to repeat sounds, or more precisely, to repeat in a new sound some quality or complex of qualities heard in some previous sound." The first clause embraces musical experience and probably resonates with anyone likely to be reading this essay, for it reminds us of the fundamental importance of repetition in the process of becoming a musician. The next clause immediately qualifies the more general first clause in a way that at first seems merely to signal the presence of trained intellection. But the fussy conditions it imposes on the first clause imply that repetition is not the transparent process we might be likely to take it for. Before this notion sinks in, however, Rahn rushes ahead and drops some heavy hitters on us—the poet Valéry and the novelist Huysmans—opening up a historical space and aesthetic orientation, like a stage setting for some argumentative action. But no scenes play out on this stage, for Rahn immediately moves into a formal analysis of the relationship of structure and repetition, replete with Ss and Rs, and then follows this with an intriguing typology of repetition and an equally intriguing phenomenological analysis of a repeated musical event. Several pages later we are pondering the bounded temporality of music and its privileged relation to the unbounded, ungraspable temporality of life.

So go the hummingbird flights of these essays, from bloom to bloom. But there are some favorite spots in the garden. Rahn spends much energy pursuing the alluring rigor of formalized language, lighting many trails that begin with "If and only if"; in other sections, Rahn dances around with offhand brilliance, doing quick two-steps with notable (usually French) intellectuals; in still other parts, he offers exhaustively close readings of brief stretches of music, as if to show the fractal complexity of even the smallest bits of the music he admires most; other places are disarmingly intimate or indulgently idiosyncratic. In short, Rahn makes little if any attempt to transcend the local winds of his own intellectual particularity, to raise his voice to the volume of a larger audience. Instead, Rahn remains within "the scale of one-personhood," according to the humane formulation of Benjamin Boretz, whose introduction and afterword provide a generously cushioned enclosure for Rahn's essays.

What is the texture of Rahn's particularity? German Romantic writer Heinrich von Kleist said somewhere that people tend to think either by formula or by metaphor. John Rahn does both in abundance, and he upgrades these ways of thought for modern times by categorizing them as digital and analog. Rahn comes

by this hybrid modality honestly, for he completed a Ph.D. in the Music Department at Princeton University in the early 1970s, just when the digital and the analog streams represented respectively by Milton Babbitt ("...the most influential and articulate practitioner of digital modes of musical discourse" [p. 52]) and J. K. Randall ("...recent pioneer of the analog mode of musical discourse" [p. 55]) began to flow apart. Rahn, like few others, lives in the fertile delta between these divergent streams. Moreover, Rahn's sense of the musical experience would seem to demand this hybrid approach: "The marriage of a kind of broadcast touch with abstract function is at the heart of music's peculiarity and appeal." (*Open Space* 1, 1999, p. 44) Music is like touch, Rahn tells us more than once. It's not about communication in any linguistic sense but about experience. And yet, music has long been recognizable as an abstract, relational structure, whose "qualities...are quantitatively discriminable" [p. 32]. In line with this sense of "music's peculiarity and appeal," these essays value both touch and abstraction—the distancing of abstraction is countered by the intimacy of touch, the responsibility of touch disburdened by the impersonality of abstraction.

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My first reading of these essays was off-putting, because I felt the sudden modulations of thought and method as so many bumps and swerves—a kind of squirrelly, close-to-the-ground driving, in a small car with primitive suspension and a doomed clutch. I was also distracted by oddly opaque metaphorical images that seem to materialize out of nowhere. Take the following passage, in which Rahn is explaining how the repetition of a musical event creates a consequential change of context: "The context has been destabilized, opened. Meaning has descended upon it in thick contours, like a Connecticut snowfall." [p. 12] Suddenly I'm thinking about winter in New England: warm hearths, new snow, old money. In short, the image wrenches me out of the contemplation of musical repetition—but not for long. Rahn's very next sentence moves back to the discourse of logical analysis and completes the train of thought: change of context produces meaning. The possibility arises that an image like this is meant to destabilize and open the discourse in a radical way, thus bringing on the same snowfall of meaning brought on by musical repetition. Or, more in line with Rahn's general method, an image like this tempers the surrounding abstraction with an appeal to a more obviously humanizing experience.

But not all his images bring such comforts into play. In a discussion of the (sublime) importance of musical craftsmanship we come across this sentence: "...those who note each precise placement of the smallest musical entities making up the musical piece, know (like a toad under the harrow) where every toothpoint goes." [p. 149] What are we to make of this simile? That such knowledge is harrowing, like the ghastly precision of the knowledge of pain? That we are somehow a prey to this type of knowledge, pinned helplessly under its fatal penetrations? That such knowledge is thus a form of martyrdom? Or simply that this is piercing, high stakes knowledge, likely to affect our entire being? At the very least, we are stopped in our tracks by this image (like a toad under the harrow?), either distracted and annoyed by what we may suspect is a gratuitously shocking

image or intrigued by the implications of such a conjunction as musical literacy and the knowledge of pain. If the latter, then these images are like doorways into spaces inviting reflection and elaboration.

Another kind of distracting doorway found throughout these essays is created by sudden bursts of erudition, often in the form of casual references to classics of Western literature, including the Bible. Rahn's cultural range is apparent in everything he writes. Is such "scholasticism" (Boretz's term for this [p. 2]) simply the sign of Rahn's intellectual presence, an involuntary accompaniment to his every theme? Or are we to understand it as a studied commitment to a vision of high Western culture as a synchronic presence, eternally available and relevant, and to music's hallowed place in that culture?

Let's take one example, from a paragraph asserting that music without a beat "frees the crowd from the ritual violence that affirms identity in community." [p. 42] In a list of composers who do without a beat, Rahn includes "the intricated implications of Milton Byron Babbitt (a beat like a 'bush, with frizzled hair implicit')..." [pp. 41-2] Before registering the origin of the internal quotation, we notice the music in the chain of alliteration and assonance linking "Babbitt" to "implicit": Babbitt, beat, bush, frizzled, implicit. We may also notice the bouncing rhythm (and alliterative double dribble) enforced by the addition of Babbitt's rarely heard middle name. Then we might take in the etymological link tying "implicit" to the earlier "implications," all of which folds into a related discussion about replication in an earlier essay. Not to mention the striking notion that a beat could be diffused into the complexity of a bush (or the irony of marking that notion with a passage whose own beat is so emphatically explicit). The citation is from *Paradise Lost*, book VII, during Milton's description of the creation of the Earth, a passage fairly bursting with procreative energy:

> Forth flourished thick the clustering vine, forth crept
> The swelling gourd, up stood the corny reed
> Embattled in her field, and the humble shrub,
> And bush with frizzled hair implicit...

Citing Milton in a discussion of Babbitt (who is known simply as Milton around Princeton) is a sturdy enough inside joke. And this particular citation connects to Rahn's earlier borrowings from *Paradise Lost* in the same essay. All told, the citation makes a rich addition to the text, its bush-like proliferation of linguistic and poetic connections exemplifying the kind of "intricated" complexity Rahn values in Babbitt's music.

There's an improvisatory energy in these texts, grabbing resonant associations on the fly, riffing within a large field of cultural reference. Sometimes Rahn brings vastly different worlds into incongruously close contact: in adjoining sentences, for example, we come across references to the Hindu festival Thaipusam and baseball's left-field wall [p. 132]. But at other times, the landscape of these essays seems littered with what one might sneeringly call "name droppings." At worst, these names may appear as little more than intellectual brand names, brandished within the

text like the names of sponsors. "For support and amplification, one can refer to Heidegger, Ricoeur, and Adorno."[p. 157] The footnote appended to this daunting triple reference begins with a suggestion so staggering in its disregard for the reader that it can only be read as a joke: "In particular, see Heidegger's *Being and Time* [no specific pages or sections cited]." It seems the point here is not to furnish a traditional critical apparatus that supports an argument through the citation of authority, but rather to create a fluid discourse that reminds us through a kind of shorthand where the author has been. The names and works that arise in these essays should thus be read as travel suggestions. Follow them if you will, but "way leads on to way"—you may not find yourself back in Rahn's essay.

However improvisatory and suggestive, Rahn's displays of erudition can still be exclusionary. Readers without Latin will always wonder how much they are missing when the next parenthetical quotation from Virgil or Horace glides by. Though such procedures may seem to function as a kind of defensive insulation from the traffic of a broader readership, in the end Rahn's essays are acutely exposed and vulnerable. For he hides nothing, speaking only in his own unedited voice, come what may. And his deepest commitments are absolutely uninsulated: there's no safety wiring here, and sometimes sparks fly that will be sure to ignite the ire of differently committed readers.

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Rahn's most fiercely defended ideal is that of the importance of "highly evolved art music" as a type of peak experience. The stakes are unabashedly high: "People need real art—art whose craftsmanship expresses the world and reconnects to the Sacred..."[p. 156] Craft is the sine qua non for music that is to perform this high office:

> "Without craftsmanship, the musical structure must lack the complex coherence necessary faithfully and imaginatively to express the world; and if there is high craftsmanship, there must be a structure of world-like complexity and coherence, whose expression is immanent in its existence. (Indeed, this gives some handle on how to begin to describe the distinction between music that is art, and music that is not.)" [p. 151]

In his enthusiasm for such a pre-eminent level of musical craft, Rahn bravely resurrects the Romantic view of artistic creation. He extols

> "the kind of craftsmanship that apes the divine, or from which the notion of divine creation is extrapolated. It is the grand tradition of a highly evolved art music, and whatever the virtues of traditions of less polished, less evolved music, they do not offer this sublime experience. Cultures which do offer such a tradition, such as our Western art-music culture or those of India or Japan, are incontrovertibly superior in this respect to those that do not." [p. 149]

Milton Babbitt's music is clearly the first best exemplar of Rahn's ideal of complex coherence. It would be hard to find a more fetching description of Babbitt's music than Rahn's declaration that it is "bubbling with energy, a nonhierarchical multidimensional network in which each element is highly polysemic, links stretching out in all directions."[p. 25] Or this simple and ecumenical formulation: "...whatever Milton Babbitt's music is, it is very much."[p. 141]

Babbitt has clearly been a divisive force in contemporary musical thought, and Rahn piously extends himself in the older composer's defense: "Hostile hands have wrapped Milton Babbitt as the serial blight, the phallocentric repressive power; people who know him (as I do) clothe him in the garments of a dedicated and caring mentor, the inspiration of generations of composers and theorists, the one who freed us to think, opening a space in what had been a musical environment even more stiflingly anti-intellectual than it is now"[p. 25]. Elsewhere, we encounter Babbitt as hub of human connectedness ("[The theme of August Stramm's collection of poems entitled *Du*, selections of which are set by Babbitt] seems to be the emotional relations, confusion, distinction, and identity among Du, Ich, Dich, Mich, and Wir—certainly an appropriate song theme for the relation of Milton Babbitt to (or vice versa) his music, his colleagues, his students, his performers, his critics, The Public, an analysis or analyst, this analyst or this analysis of *Du*."[p. 144]); or Babbitt as non-elitist bobble-head doll ("Babbitt the bouncing Bubi...exuberantly exemplifying in his music structures which are in fact incompatible with those of elitism and phallocentric control." [p. 25])

This last assertion—that the structures of Babbitt's music are not about elitism and control—involves Rahn in something of a paradox. For music such as Babbitt's "has difficulty with audiences anaesthetized by inability to perceive the elements from which the piece is constructed. They have ears but do not hear." This problem is "exacerbated by a cultural environment which legitimizes mass taste and commercial values above all else." Music exhibiting "the positive joy of musical craftsmanship...is independent of uncomprehending audiences, and dependent for its legitimacy only on members of the musical tradition, that is, those who are actually capable of perceiving the music." [p. 150] What this means is that one must be placed in a fairly elite cultural circle to realize that Babbitt's music is non-elitist in its structure. Knowledge of the non-elitist aspect of Babbitt's music is thus a kind of delicious irony, a secret taste lingering like the finish of a fine single malt: "if they only knew..."

A more broadly based commitment in Rahn's thinking about music is his spirited and thoroughgoing emphasis on the non-linguistic particularity of the musical experience: "The experience of music affords a person the chance to think without language, without snipping the experience into discrete "segments" wrapped up into "signifiers," and free of the consequent machinery of negation, polar oppositions such as subject/object, and the whole permutational heap of linguistic gravel whose constant grinding can be music to nobody's ears." [p. 31] To describe his own experience when listening to music, Rahn offers the image of a rapt coupling whose intimacy leaves no room for semiotic processing: "[D]uring the time I am coupled

with the music, there is little or no semeiosis going on. The music and I are too involved with one another for a space to open up between us at any time, so that I could constitute a separate it as a sign." [p. 30]

The rhetoric Rahn deploys in formulations like these often seethes with disdain toward what he perceives to be the usual forms of academic talk about music; he hears music as a kind of wholesome freedom from the pulverizing linguistic noise of professional discourse. To move through these essays is to encounter many such heaps of scorn, as when Rahn characterizes scholarly prose as "that least ambiguous, most impoverished medium" [p. 107], or when he positions a certain strain of personalized analysis at the lowest of Jaques' seven stages of man from *As You Like It*: "A theory of experience may degenerate into the whining, mewling, and puking of a perpetually infantile and unformed analysis so pathetically fragile as to avoid potentially "disturbing" intercourse with its peers, hiding behind the arrogance of an ad hominem self-justification." [p. 64] Rahn perhaps reaches the acme of such ridicule with his brutally hilarious dressing down of Douglas Dempster and Matthew Brown, in which he sarcastically suggests not that they have misread the work of Babbitt, Rahn, and Boretz, but that in a burst of invention they have created fantastical Borgesian doubles of these figures. [p. 72]

But if academic discourse, with its fundamental yet uncertain grounding in "linguistic gravel," fails to explain or even address the musical experience, what is left for us to do in this line? Rahn might say that our first obligation is to become ever more critical about the ways and means of our discourse, to acknowledge its limitations as well as its possibilities. Before anything, this asks us to think about the nature of explanation. "Any discipline that involves explaining things evolves to the awareness of the necessity of explaining explanation itself." [p. 65] So goes a footnote to Rahn's "Aspects of Musical Explanation" (1979), an essay that, considering the date of its conception, now burns with the foreglow of debates that would occupy Anglo-American musicology in the 1980s and 90s, debates in which blunt generalizations like "positivism" and "postmodernism," or "criticism" and "analysis," battled for a suddenly available moral high ground. The categories of musical explanation Rahn develops in this essay—analog/digital; top-down/bottom-up; in-time/time-out; and theory of experience/theory of piece—would have helped nuance those debates.

Rahn also encourages the creation of a discourse that acknowledges and celebrates music as a fully temporal mode of experience, a life alongside of life [p. 18]. For Rahn, music invites us not only to explore the "stimulating strangeness" of its temporal changes of context (much like those we encounter in life) but also to experience a fully temporal yet bounded wholeness (an experience unavailable to life, which is bounded only by death). [pp. 17-18] But while the experience of such wholeness is crucial, Rahn strongly cautions us not to "wrap" the ensuing whole, not to package a piece of music as signifying something other than itself, not to betray a piece's particularity to the governing forms of generality. [p. 24]

Rahn's own essays are very hard to wrap, and I confess that a good part of my initial discomfort in reading them was probably caused by their lack of the signs provided by so much other academic writing, signs that allow one quickly to

categorize whatever one is reading, to settle comfortably into an accustomed ride. And this, I suppose, is part of the dangerous attraction of these writings—the realization that you must, like Rahn says of the monster Minos, palpate your way through the labyrinth, and be ready for sudden onsets of "stimulating strangeness." Thus the experience of reading these essays is something like the musical experience as Rahn envisions it.

This quasi-musical quality of discourse associates Rahn with other composers who are committed to writing about music but are also committed to resisting academic business as usual. Compare these words of Benjamin Boretz: "My own personal mode of resistance...has been to radically immerse discourse in music, to saturate it with my own music-sense and voice, to enfold it within music by making it be music." [*Open Space* 1, 1999, p. 58]. To get into this game is largely to step *out* of academic space (into "open space"?), to move away from the ever-expanding edifice of self-regulating, self-supporting scholarship, from work that ostensibly seeks to "understand" music. For even this last, seemingly obvious, desideratum is open to question. Boretz again:

> "Is 'understanding' music really what people are after in seeking to receive or produce it? Is it perhaps something else, some way of thinking and expressing almost ontologically required to be opaque to the category of 'understanding'? [Ibid., p. 61]

This is a tantalizing suggestion—in its bid to overturn the basis of academic inquiry about music it is a real showstopper, and I am tempted to let Boretz have the last word here, tempted to stand beside him and gaze at this suddenly inviting horizon, wondering whether I am watching a sunset or a sunrise or both. But I am also reminded that Boretz has the last word in Rahn's book, offering a lengthy closing essay that amplifies and reflects upon the contents of the volume. This proves a great boon for Rahn, for it is like having his best reviewer hold forth even within the covers of his book, or like a built in resonance, ensuring the perfect acoustics for his performances. Above all, the contrast provided by Boretz's sustained and jovian level of thought profiles Rahn's mercurial thrusts and withdrawals, his jagged flightiness. Some readers may worry about Rahn being thus contained by Boretz, whose characteristic generosity in both introduction and afterword may prove too much of a good thing, and, like the interested intercessions of a benevolent god, become hard to live without.

But to listen to their "decades long conversation" (as Boretz puts it near the end of his essay) is to confront a challenging brand of high mindedness about the musical experience, one that takes seriously and self-critically the problem of creating and promoting discourse about music, one that refuses to accept uncritically the kinds of critical and analytical approaches to music that have sustained the academic profession, and—best of all—one that recognizes music as an opaque, irreducible activity, as an opportunity to think differently about life and to live differently about thought.

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Like the music he most reveres, John Rahn's writings will never venture into the mainstream, will always say more to the insiders (or outsiders) he often seems to be writing for. In flying so resolutely by his own lights, Rahn offers an unvarnished, highly particularized view of how a commitment to music as a complex craft and to music as a peak human experience can resound in a language other than music. He creates a theater of thought whose provocative gestures and shifting modalities stage music's freedom to resist, even while activating, the myriad stations of the mind—and then plays himself as the myriad-minded wise guy whose polemical put-downs and intimate come-ons speak from within academia about the fantasy of being outside of academia. That's how *this* caged bird sings.

John Rahn's *music inside out*
A View

Scott Gleason

I.

A proposed proof may... be found to depart from a given theoretical standard only in inessential ways; for example, by omitting as obvious certain intermediate steps in the argument; or by failing to mention certain premises, which are taken to be understood, and which can be specified explicitly if the need should arise. In such cases, we might say that the proof is *elliptically formulated*. On the other hand, the shortcomings may be crucial, as in the various proofs of the postulate of the parallels on the basis of the other postulates of Euclidean geometry.

In addition to providing standards for critical appraisal, the construction of rigorous concepts in mathematical proof has permitted the development of a powerful theory which has yielded far-reaching and often quite unexpected results concerning provability, decidability, and definability in mathematical systems of specified kinds.

Analytic models of scientific explanation, I think, can serve similar purposes, if only on a much more modest scale. As for the possibility of general systematic developments, we might mention, for example, the results established by Ramsey and by Craig concerning the role and the possible dispensability, in the context of scientific explanation, of principles ostensibly referring to unobservable "theoretical" entities. These results, and whatever insight they convey into the logic of scientific procedure, could be achieved only by reference to a precisely formulated, and to some extent schematic, conception of scientific explanation.[1]

John Rahn, *music inside out: going too far in musical essays*, with introduction and commentary by Benjamin Boretz (The Netherlands: G&B Arts International, 2001)

I would like to thank David Dies for his thoughtful suggestions regarding this text.

[1] Carl G. Hempel, "Aspects of Scientific Explanation," in *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 414-5.

Progressing from the concept to the law (synthetic generality) we arrive at the deductively interrelated system of laws that is a theory, statable as a connected set of axioms, definitions, and theorems, the proofs of which are derived by means of an appropriate logic. A musical theory reduces, or should reduce, to such a formal theory when uninterpreted predicates and operations are substituted for the terms and operations designating musical observables. That no musical theory yet has been presented in such a formalized manner is not in itself particularly consequential....[2]

We can then expect an orgy of creation of theories....[3]

A musical theory reduces,
or should reduce,
to such a formal theory when uninterpreted
predicates and operations are substituted
for the terms and operations designating
musical observables.[4]

We music theorists should also allow ourselves the freedom taken by physicists and computer scientists to express formal ideas in less than fully formal form without having their credentials impeached, so long as the underlying formal ideas are indeed sound. An explicit fully formal expression is most useful where the going is the most tricky, the idea the most subtle, the most far-reaching, or the least familiar.[5]

I sympathetically understand but cannot condone those who protest our theoretical enterprises initially by insisting that music is far too complex a phenomenon to yield any of its secrets to analysis; then—provisionally—defer to our examples of refractory, non-musical phenomena which have responded to such investigation; and then, when confronted by the procedures and considerations which seem to be required, though they are rudimentary by the standards of other,

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[2] Milton Babbitt, "Past and Present Concepts of the Nature and Limits of Music," in *Perspectives on Contemporary Music Theory*, ed. Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1972), 4.
[3] John Rahn, "Logic, Set Theory, Music Theory," in *music inside out: going too far in musical essays* (The Netherlands: G&B Arts International, 2001), 109.
[4] Milton Babbitt, "Past and Present Concepts of the Nature and Limits of Music," 4.
[5] Rahn, "Notes on Methodology in Music Theory," in *music inside out*, 74.

analytically more successful fields, finally cry, "Why should anything so direct and immediate in its effect as music require so complex an exegesis?" So music begins by being too complex, and ends by being too simple to demand a (relatively) complicated analysis.[6]

At present, formalization remains more useful as a tool with which to examine and polish theories than as a provider of explanations of pieces of music.[7]

In longer pieces, the model derivable for an individual segment of the piece will tend to be more maximally coherent on a more atomic basis than the models subsuming several segments, or those of the "total structure," a relationship (among the models) that is relatively "inside-out" by comparison with the situation normally encountered in traditional-systematic music.[8]

(Continue.) *(Pun: Turn inside out & & outside in.). Refold.*[9]

But when the young Venetian made his report, a different communication was established between him and the emperor.
...The Great Kahn deciphered the signs, but the connection between them and the places visited remained uncertain.[10]

Would you agree that a noun is just a place-holder for adjectives?[11]

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[6] Babbitt, "Contemporary Music Composition and Music Theory as Contemporary Intellectual History," in *Perspectives in Musicology: The Inaugural Lectures of the Ph.D. Program in Music at the City University of New York*, ed. Barry S. Brook, Edward O. Downes, and Sherman van Solkema (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1972), ¶ 33.
[7] Rahn, "Aspects of Musical Explanation," in *music inside out*, 55.
[8] Benjamin Boretz, *Meta-Variations: Studies in the Foundations of Musical Thought* (Red Hook, NY: Open Space, 1995), 252.
[9] J. K. Randall, *Compose Yourself--A Manual for the Young.* "Stimulating Speculation No. 3: Revelstoke" [1971] (Red Hook, NY: Open Space, 1995), 1.5.
[10] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (San Diego: Harcort, Inc., 1974), 21-2. My thanks to David Dies for the gift of this book.
[11] J. K. Randall, *intimacy (a polemic)* in J. K. Randall and Benjamin Boretz, *intimacy (a polemic)* and *language ,as a music (six marginal pretexts for composition)* (Open Space: 10, 1999), compact disc.

II.

Benjamin Boretz... calls "the mental configuration that interacts determinately with the received sound so that the piece acquires certain properties as a piece, uniquely traceable to its being heard in a certain way" a theory—an *attributive* theory.... [This] quotation paraphrases a definition that Boretz develops in the context of reading and only later transfers to music; I have adapted it by substituting "sound" for Boretz's "print," "piece" for "text," and "heard" for "read."[12]

Listening to Schoenberg, Brian Eno, John Cage, Morton Feldman, are very different experiences because of the ways that these composers design your presence. I notice, for instance, that listening to Feldman, for me, is an experience characterized by watching myself listen, while listening to Schoenberg means giving myself over to his demands. With Eno I notice the way the music colors my space, while with Cage I am totally confused. (These characterizations may seem orthogonal, but that's the point.)[13]

As theorists, they are artists....[14]

Music theory, like any discipline or science, is a process of discourse.[15]

This is why a history of absolute music cannot be a history of *music*. Rather, it is a history of a discourse.[16]

Unfortunately, music theory—unlike mathematics—has only recently been formulating the nature of its rigor (especially in analysis). We have no comfortable centuries-old position of naive rigor to examine, and from which we can retreat.[17]

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[12] Joseph Dubiel, "Composer, Theorist, Composer/Theorist," in *Rethinking Music* ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 273 and n 15; and Benjamin Boretz, "What Lingers On (,When the Song is Ended)," *Perspectives of New Music* 16/1 (1977): 104.
[13] Paul Lansky, "Happily Listening," *The Open Space Magazine* 3 (2001): 132.
[14] Rahn, "Centers; Dissenters (Music, Religion, and Politics)," in *music inside out*, 46.
[15] Rahn, "Notes on Methodology in Music Theory," in *music inside out*, 69.
[16] Daniel K. L. Chua. *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6.
[17] Rahn, "How Do You *Du* (by Milton Babbitt)?," in *music inside out*, 143.

❦

The jongleur didn't like this set-up.
In this din it seemed pointless.
Still, let's get on with it.[18]

❦

...One can determine that there are confusions about music and the nature of these confusions only by examining the confusions in the discourse about music.[19]

The principal object of his writings and of his polemics, in the end, cannot but be the great figures of the musical discourse.[20]

Such concerns with and, hopefully, contributions to verbal and methodological responsibility... must be central to the instruction of the student of music theory in the liberal arts college, only a rare one of whom will employ such theory creatively as a composer or professionally as a theorist, if he—as a student of contemporary philosophy and science—is not to dismiss the theory and—therefore, probably—the music as immature and irresponsible, or if he—as a student of predominantly literary orientation—is not to transplant mistakenly the prevalent verbiage of that domain to our, at least, more modest area of activity, and if he is to attain that rarest of all states: that of the concerned and thoughtful musical citizen.[21]

John Rahn's... is the true contemporary face of authentic humanism....[22]

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[18] Randall, *intimacy (a polemic).*
[19] Babbitt, "Contemporary Music Composition and Music Theory as Contemporary Intellectual History," ¶ 50.
[20] Leslie David Blasius, *Schenker's Argument and the Claims of Music Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 130.
[21] Milton Babbitt, "The Structure and Function of Musical Theory," in *Perspectives on Contemporary Music Theory*, ed. Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1972), 21.
[22] Benjamin Boretz, "Music As Anti-Theater," in Rahn, *music inside out*, 186.

III.

Learning to be a musician always involves learning to repeat sounds, or more precisely, to repeat in a new sound some quality or complex of qualities heard in some previous sound.[23]

Dannie Richmond opens with a written repeated rhythmatic bass drum to snare drum to sock cymbal figure that suggests two tempos along with its own tempo.[24]

A thing endures for us, temporally, by virtue of abstraction from changes-of-context; a thing's boundaries, which hold it in existence for us as a cupped hand holds water, are constructed for it by means of an act of abstraction, drawing the thing out from its context (*ab + trahere*)."[25]

Time, perfect or syncopated time, is when a faucet dribbles from a leaky washer.[26]

To fail to make sense of one's life, to give up on the project of the world-for-oneself, is to endure its repetitions as slavery.[27]

Stop! Look! And Listen, Sinner Jim Whitney![28]

Back to the drum opening—12/8, 6/8, 9/8, 3/4—whatever musical stenographers may care to title what the composer heard in his head, is part of a very old idea that someday all good music will return from its assorted labels which inhibit it with fashions, styles, and certain celebrated rhythms of pounding exactness that lead this composer to believe that either the musician or the audience playing or liking such repeated debuts of so-called musical inventions must be nuts to need drums, bass, guitar, and piano to pound out the already too obvious time night after night 'til actually if sanity can't be sustained one begins to like it without twisting or even dancing, popping fingers, or at least working out one's frenzy in ye old brass bed mama.[29]

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[23] Rahn, "Repetition," in *music inside out*, 7.
[24] Charles Mingus, *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady* (MCA Records, Inc., 1995): 2, compact disc liner notes.
[25] Rahn, "Repetition," in *music inside out*, 9-10.
[26] Mingus, 4.
[27] Rahn, "Repetition," in *music inside out*, 13.
[28] Subtitle of "Track A—Solo Dancer," in Mingus, *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady.*
[29] Mingus, 4.

IV.

...Let us return from the voyeuristic contemplation of the larger orgy to the closer pursuit of the particular nymph at hand.[30]

So the starkness with which discourse is exposed as compositional artwork in "Differences" is a surprising self-revelation; that it comes down as a discourse makes it almost too close for comfort: for it seems that the core metaphor for meaningful expression is *physicality*: (John's text:) "Music in particular, that nonvisual art, is as intimate and immediate as the maternal breast... we should, before listening to what the audible has to say, get in touch with touch." (Music people know that the audible is touching: it's the sacred secret of the otherwise interpersonally dysfunctional among us.) (John's text:) "INTIMACY/We have to ask music some very intimate questions. How does music feel when it entwines with its listener like two bodies sliding over and around each other?... Human life and music listened to by that life do not run parallel in straight lines never meeting, but rather intertwine closely, touching each other all over, each penetrating and being penetrated by the other, so that while they touch they almost fuse into one entity, one life-music or one music-life." It's touch, physicality, the intimacy of concrete pressure, that expunges semiosis from music, liberates it as (John's text:) "a sensuous mathematics, a calculus of life." It tells me the truth, the truth from John (if not the truth-for John) that music is not the subject of semiosis, but is in fact the ultimate *residue* of semiosis. Or, perhaps, even, reverses the semiotic transaction altogether: (my text:) "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 unameably 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,....)"[31]

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[30] Rahn, "Logic, Set Theory, Music Theory," in *music inside out*, 113.
[31] Boretz, "Music As Anti-Theater," in Rahn, *music inside out*, 174-5.

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In the midst of the motley throng
a lady notes that the song,
bawled into this din
by his jongleur, is,
in fact, a message.[32]

,

My text wanting to touch without molesting John's text gives me such questions. But gives me no more answers than I can get from anyone's writing, or their music.[33]

Isomorphism of such experiences is untestable. [34]

V.

There is a sense of emptiness that comes over us at evening,[35]

Music's essential deceit is its ability to encapsulate itself in such a temporal subworld, which Mary can live alongside her life and learn from, but which is bounded (however complex) and therefore is a thing.[36]

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[32] Randall, *intimacy (a polemic).*
[33] Boretz, "Music As Anti-Theater," in Rahn, *music inside out*, 186.
[34] Rahn, "Aspects of Musical Explanation," in *music inside out*, 59.
[35] Calvino, 5.
[36] Rahn, "Repetition," in *music inside out*, 17.

It would be tedious to merely innumerate likenesses and differences.... There are local trivia.... There are also resonances between larger spaces.... But what does it do for us...?

In making comparisons what, if anything, are we talking about? ...About their intermodulation; our perception of each modulates, warps, and informs our perception of the other, forming a third entity which is the pattern of their interaction and the object of comparative discourse. ...The essence... would lie in that realm of the intelligible inaccessible except to creative intelligence; that is, pretty inaccessible.[37]

Any further analogy along these lines... would be highly problematic.[38]

What kinds of *incompleteness* remain...?
Is this even a fair question?[39]

These important questions resist any definitive or absolute answer, intrinsically.[40]

...It seems that John's "advanced" thinking since 1994 has largely been formulated in music language directly rather than theorized verbally. And that impresses me as not just an interesting life-choice, but rather constitutes in itself a radical developmental assertion, a recognition that the pressure bearing on discourse in the aftermath of the conclusions of "Centers; Dissenters" can only be contained by thought formulated in the non-referential languages of arts themselves, by, essentially, the radical dissolution of the *autonomous* metalanguage.[41]

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In the lives of emperors there is a moment which follows pride in the boundless extension of the territories we have conquered, and the melancholy and relief of knowing we shall soon give up any thought of knowing and understanding them....[42]

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[37] Rahn, "D-Light Reflecting: The Nature of Comparison," in *music inside out*, 102-3.
[38] Rahn, "How Do You *Du* (by Milton Babbitt)?," in *music inside out*, 131.
[39] Ibid., 135.
[40] Rahn, "What is Valuable in Art, and Can Music Still Achieve It?," in *music inside out*, 147.
[41] Boretz, "Introduction," in Rahn, *music inside out*, 6.
[42] Calvino, 5.

PROLOGUE TO ("Whose Time, What Space"): [A Seminar Talk at Eastman]

Benjamin Boretz

Olivia Mattis was giving a historical seminar at the Eastman School of Music on composers who were also critics; Bob Morris suggested she invite two such living people who —not quite coincidentally — live next door to each other in the surroundings of Bard College in upstate New York — Kyle Gann was the other — to talk to the seminar about their accumulated insights from within that role — Kyle for the last fifteen or so years writing for The Village Voice and elsewhere, I having been Music Critic for The Nation during the 1960s. Kyle talked first, recreating expansively, in the terms of his personal history, the celebratory story his book tells of the rise of "his" new generation of American music (Later on he did remark that he had once tried to live in [my] world, but it was too suffocating — he needed more oxygen, he said.) Our listeners were graduate students and professors — I saw among them my old friend Bob Morris and my new friend Martin Scherzinger; Martin in particular leapt into the post-lecture discussion, with familiar laser-energetic sharpness, indicting and convicting my texts of an interesting if possibly illicit fusion of naive romantic mysticism and manipulative disingenuous duplicity, perhaps accounting for their strange transformation of the sound of the music we listened to at the end. The talk after that went on so long that Olivia had to disappear to get her bus home to Buffalo well before we all finally subsided to the coffee shop next door. [My offering, slightly modified by afterthoughts, follows.]

Composing music, playing music, listening to music, thinking and writing about music: each and all plausible as a person's possible self-gratifying, self-fulfilling occupation. Writing public music criticism or professional discourse, like teaching, create a radically different existential condition: a projection of

self-presence — the public enactment of a consciously constructed, self-overlayed persona rather than the localized being of a person — into the consciousness of others, where the effect at the receiving end is the main output of consequence. That's a vastly more complex and ambiguous social, ethical, intellectual, expressive situation. And pretty dubious and unpromising ground for self-realization, too. Looking back (it's been a long time) I wonder if there isn't just a terminal paradox in the idea of synchronously constructing a public-persuasive exterior persona alongside of an interior compositional-creative focus on the precise (it-)projection of such specific singular modes of being as: musical compositions. On the other hand inhabiting such a paradoxical duality does induce a singular intensity of self-reflection , a state of uneasy awareness that opens a perspective from which to view the entire host of paradoxes, confusions, denials by which the machinery of 'normal' public metamusical behavior is enabled.

Some such consciousness was at least implicit in some of my later — more radically "political" — pieces in *The Nation* during the late 1960s; and much of my work since then seems to have been written and composed in its shadow: so, in 1978, in *Language ,as a music,* I had my earnestly self-conscious professor-character say, in his letter to his old mentor:

> "We may not speak as we perceive, but we will soon enough be perceiving as we have spoken."

which, as I think about it now in the context of our subject, is less a sophisticated program for social action or epistemic self-analysis than a symptomatic expression of the radical insufficiency in the distinctions being made in that professor's world among wildly disparate phenomena which all go under the same names, under the pretext or delusion of having common denotations. So 'music' can be fully encompassed by any number of mutually exclusive rubrics, each of which not only encompasses it totally, but is totally opaque to — and incompatible with — any of the phenomena or properties denoted by any of the others. Such as:

1. History. Politics. Theory. Ideology. They do, unquestionably, exist, and they each have their fact-telling vocabularies, each of which creates facts of a

certain kind. But those predicates are not necessarily connected to the experienced facts of any person's life.

2. Take history: it is a determinate reification of the antecedence of our sentient existence, a demonstrated perspective on who we are, on where we are. Its truths are inescapable, and pervasively account for major aspects of the world that directly and significantly affect everyone's life. Nevertheless, persons do not perforce experience their conscious living as history, as historical events, or qualify their experience in the vocabulary of historical predicates. You could say that history proceeds, in a self-defined, self-contained way, on the outside of most people's lived lives, accumulating and accessible at any time by observations which can be perceived by anyone as true, without being, except in that sense, the actual content of anyone's experienced life-events. You could say that historical facts about your own time are public-global facts, and that there are what you might call person-localized facts which more likely constitute the experienced contents of being alive. So there are things which are unquestionably true of your lifetime as public facts about it, which are likely inter-opaque with your (person-local) experience of your own life.

3. So too there are truths about music as a historical phenomenon, as a public-in-the-world phenomenon: demonstrable historical facts, like aesthetic evolutions and contingencies, concretized meta-phenomena like "High Baroque", "Mannerist", or "Modernist", creating perceptions and associations; there are generalized categorical technical facts, as "tonal", "serial", "microtonal" creating wholescale substitutions in perception of named identities for raw sonic blips; particular theoretical facts like "6/4 chord", "Sonata Form", "hexachordal combinatoriality", "cadence", organizing perceptions into negotiable familiar packages; there are aesthetic-critical facts, like "post-Webern serial", "heavy metal", "world music", "indeterminate", "complex", "bubblegum", "post-Modern", "minimalist", "Gospel"; and cultural facts, like national identities, ethnic traits, sociological facts, like "glam", "academic.," downtown"; political facts, like "hegemonic", "socialist realist" or "decadent"; ideological facts, like "feminist" or "formalist"; value-judgment facts, like "immortal", "masterpiece", or their contraries — all of which help you to locate

yourself and some music in terms of appropriate personal distances and so-created typicalities — and whatever else. But how any of these predications, and which of them in particular, are going to determine or affect the experience of some music transaction at some person-time moment — or whether they will at all — is not given merely in that they are assertible and, given the pliability of music for any use words decide to put it to, demonstrable and — therefore — true. In other words, that something is true in its context doesn't mean it's relevant or palpable in every context; and in fact, all the different actual and possible contexts taken together — well, there's no way anyone can possibly take them all together at a time, even if there are no actual contradictions among them. In fact, there are — must be, at least in some initiatory phase of someone's life, purely private-seeming experiences of music which have apparent properties entirely unrelated to the whole array of public facts and images. Whether or not these private properties are discernible within the environment of unremitting public-music imagery, and however powerfully their experiencing is affected and inflected by the public discourse, it is still in their terms that anyone's actual experience actually takes place. That in fact underlies any intensity of engagement with which the experience of music is invested, any way that music is not simply received as a verbal-type utterance, just articulated by other means, in music sound The public-music imagery can create music experiences completely in its image: that is entirely evident and internalized within everyone in a common-cultural space, but in our common-cultural space at least, it's not what music, as music, as expressive art, ultimately does with, for, or to you.

4. Now every composer, in the act of composing, is composing in a historical time, in some historical way, some cultural way, some technical way, some theoretical way, some ideological way, some sociological way — but a composer, in the act of composing, is not likely to be consciously enacting these — at least, not all of these — ontologies within her composing-consciousness. It's unusual for a composer to think of her work as first and foremost an example of some category, a manifestation of some tendency — at least for the composer, there's something in the music outside, or at least

over and above those categoricals — perhaps, in some people, as a superior performance within their terms. But in any case, as something personally meaningful outside of the cultural-historical-political-technical-theoretical-ideological-sociological meaning it may have.

5. So a composer, in writing publicly about music, might particularly — paradoxically — want to project the uniqueness and mutability, rather than the generality and certainty, of any musical experience, against the grain of the supposed public "need" for music — in favor of possible person-local music-needs (say, for deverbalized expression) of any possible persons within that public; might transplant into the institutional world the language of the personal-experiential-ambiguous, rather than the external-world-certain, sense of some music. And so the music criticisms and descriptions composed by such people might reach for other vocabularies and grammars than those of the generalizing categories, to seek for a verbal territory commensurate, or trying to commensurate, with the sensed sense of music from within an essentially incompatible space. Which, naturally, tends in practice to produce confusions and incoherence — social, if not cognitive — not so different from those produced by the contradictions implicit in the institutionalized public exhibitions of the works of expression themselves.

6. Living, along with lots of other people, within this confusion-energized fragmented space, I've produced words, music, and committed persistent attempted pedagogy; the tensions and contradictions I've been talking about have been stimulating rather than inhibiting, like mind-sets that elicit particular intuitions whose ideological origins are not necessarily evident. An idea, that is, is not ever an illustration of points made elsewhere. But there's a piece called "(Whose Time, What Space)", which I first composed, performed, and recorded (for a school occasion) in 1986, and which I've recomposed for this event, which you may feel free to consider a continuation of this text by other means:

Prologue to ("Whose Time, What Space")

[Whose Time, What Space is, at first, a text which I performed by setting myself up as an overloaded one-person ensemble, hanging as many soundmakers of various types on my body as it could possibly hold, then adding a couple more. That physical situation was a significant score for this performance, as you can imagine. Four music-descriptive texts follow, interacting in various ways with the musics they engage.]

[The CD: "Whose Time, What Space", version of 4/2002]

April/September 2002

(whose time, what space)

Experiencing music is bringing into being a singular time-space identity, received from a singular perspective of location.

A peculiarity of any music experiencing is that no physical time-space-location-occasion (observable and quantifiable in referential, intersubjective terms) can be designated as being the time or space or occasion identity of a music experiencing.

The real time and space and occasion of music experiencing are psychic time and space and occasion.

And 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.

All the psychic and physical time, space and occasion identities are undetachably interdependent: are, in fact, indivisible and mutually create each other; a music experiencing is thus a comprehensive totality which comprises a particular convergence of identified psychic and physical times, spaces, and occasions.

(soundtrack 1)
(a Korean court music)

A five mile long
dragon moves through
a winding course,
all its parts,
organically connected,
following its head
around each corner at
inconceivably remote
distances, but always,
unimaginably,
inexorably, performing
the precise maneuver
predestined over a
humanly
unencompassable
space, from head to
inconceivably distant
tail.

Time
stretches
transcendently,
beyond any
measurable
flow,
by the
overwhelming
magnitude
of each
dragon-move
event.

(soundtrack 2)
(a Mozart symphony slow movement)

The universe is emptied of all but a droplet of matter, which as we enter it progressively metastasizes into a hermetically sealed unpeopled metauniverse composing itself in accumulating energies of complexly balancing dynamisms, growing again to the size of the whole universe again but now within our own transcendently reinitialized mental space. Time is invisibly undone, insidiously reconstituted under the force of the invisible inexorable intangible ferocity within the universe contained within this droplet of matter in which we are immersed, which is within our mind.

soundtrack 3:
(Milton Babbitt's First Piano Concerto)

You could call it unfiltered
megaSchoenberg in jazztime
continuity (not poptime or
modernmusictime, either)
but what I most love about
Milton's Concerto is its
gritted integrity being
defiant unregenerate militant
Positivist music, sternly askance
anent the softheaded stylewaffling
of the gegenwärtliche jugend,
a relentlessly uningratiatingly
polyfrantically multilayered
senseassertive discourse here
being socially publically sonically
displayed and exposed to be sure
but unmistakably demanding
for adequate reception ultimately
that it be studied minutely
and intently in printform
uncompromisingly exhaustively
inexhaustibly

(soundtrack 4)
(a panpipes orchestra in the Chilean Andes)

We walk together from church to ritual square, we breathe together as people breathing together breathe. Time is the natural sense of our flowing forward together, naturally infolding as movement and sense of movement together, unfolding as the unitary shape and space of our timeless, dimensionless being, together.

—may 1986/may 2002
[BAB]

Prologue to "Little Reviews" (Life in the Slow Lane)

Benjamin Boretz

Despite what you may have heard me say lately, I believe there actually is at least one real-life, music-affecting sense for "the history of music"; one that rises up sharply as I engage to write my responses to an assortment of CDs I've been listening to lately: in my (and your) personal life-history, there are living composers, there are dead composers, there are composers who were born after you were grown up, there are composers who were living and died during your lifetime. Everything about what you hear when you hear any instance of music is contingent on this history of yours — for me, it's especially noticeable how different it is to confront the image and sounds of an ontologically "dead" composer and of one who died after I ontologized them as living — most especially, of course, when I knew them personally. The strange unsettling sense of emptiness, of the aftermath of fullness of presence suddenly blanked out, has no resemblance to the complacent equanimity, the sheer enveloping comfort, of the posthumous presence of a historic master — even the historic masters who were living but quite aged when I first came into musical consciousness, and even — like Stravinsky, Varèse, Wolpe and Sessions — when I knew them personally. I think such history profoundly affects how I experience music, or, indeed, what music I hear, mutating radically — ontologically — as time passes. So when I think of Irving Fine, or Seymour Shifrin, or Earl Kim, or Bob Helps, or Kenneth Gaburo, or Earle Brown, or Herbert Brün, or Ralph Shapey (the list is getting very long) there's a spooky sense of immanence intensely present but infinitely denied, a spectre of enormous energy looming powerlessly over its own immutable absolute absence.

And the ones born in my adulthood, composing intensely just as if they had always been there, strenuously occupying conspicuous spaces in my musical consciousness that were never even there before — it has nothing to do with the stylistics of their music — produce a complementary but equivalently weird effect, sort of a blindsiding of fullblown energetic presence materializing fullblown out of nowhere. These are the ones I'm most insecure about listening to, or writing about, because I have a sense of being in the wrong place, from the wrong time — particularly, tuning in from the wrong 'social' position, to come at their music, to have it come at me, in an unmediated, uninhibited interaction. It feels like I need to distill my instinctual responses with a sense of, yes, all this history, to use that sense to distance reception from pure interpenetration, to be able to cultivate a meaningful aesthetic benefit, internally, and a considerate interpersonal

appreciation, socially, for the character and substance of their sudden presence in my expressive world

Another way of saying this — from the perspective of a reader or listener — is that everything you read about or hear in music is an output of a particular life history at a particular moment, and its truth or expressivity is the truth and true expressivity of that, and, really, only that, moment — as is this. What you get, if you care to, is access to that moment, as you compose it for yourself, out of your own moment. That I am 67 at this moment, male, born in Brooklyn, educated musically on the East Coast, perceive clearly that the world has been coming to a dismal end for some time now — and so forth — is objectively determinable; (and where that all crunches is anybody's call — and belongs to their story, of which mine is also one).

So, if you accept the conditions on this warning label, I invite you to read.

August 2002

little reviews

doug kolmar

Virtual sculptures, spaciously concretizing time with (despite? rigorously bracketed by?) uncompromisingly rudimentary sonic ingredients, hypercontextualized into a counterintuitively expressive formalism. Johnny Chatterbox is different, a vividly ritualized piece of pure sound theater, dramatizing its own sounds as personae.

twisted tutu

tutu will work; twisted's a stretch. or does straight get kinky at a sufficient extreme? still, playfulness is encouraging when it's not too transparent a put-on. as these little pieces illustrate (were they composed to do that?). voices as drum machines is pretty kinky fun too, though drum machines as drum machines I don't know. i guess most music exists for the same reason most other music exists, to exist.

martin boykan

sometimes beautiful, sometimes impressive, always admirable, never 'interesting'—which gives you a challenge to think about after listening—so often 'interesting' is gratuitous, and so obviously marty's eschewal of 'interesting' is a direct confrontation with that gratuitousness, in favor of an unswerving fidelity to the integrity of composition craft—it sounds Brahmsian in the telling, but integrity extends to a rugged anti-mimesis too—though every gesture is tempered in the crucible of 'musical'—as well as 'modern'—and none is without its counter-gesture, or its counterpointing offset.

sebastian currier

But something got lost : The rhythm died. Though a lot is nice: sometimes scintillating, even dazzling; and imaginative, even wild sometimes, in idea and effect; but always right next to it a lot is expressively inert — making a generic instrumental, musicsound sound, with strokes laying there unproblematicizing, unproblematicized. or is it unprocessed, just laying it out so straight it's irrecoverably concealed? So knowing so irreproachable, so determinately excellent.

roger reynolds

just an oldie, from 1978; but a gleaming icicle of a piece pointed straight up and down, glistening, shimmering, sparkling, pulsing, powerfully exploding but always in place not flowing forward— the imagery of—*gagaku*, the unfathomably ancient tradition of the absolutely alien others, an unkown , unknowable all-devouring space ennambulated with perfect control, consummate poise, insouciant polish, an Emperor's Nightingale in the heart of darkness...

* * * * * * * *

I've come to think that the (sound/time) identity, the perceived character, of any music doesn't derive primarily from its technique, or style, or materials, or medium, but from the attitude toward music, the conception of musical composition, it embodies. So when I listened to Bartók's 2nd violin concerto — a piece I listened to a lot as a teenager, and still was finding pretty intense — followed by Schoenberg's violin concerto, in Rolf Schulte's recording with Robert Craft — I was profoundly struck by a huge difference in substance between them, which I could absolutely experience as a palpable musical quality: the radical complexity of Schoenberg's conception of music, of that piece, not more 'serious' than Bartók's, but in a different class of commitment to embracing and realizing musical ideas of any degree of problematicity or difficulty; a lifelong vision is being pursued: this piece is not just 'a good piece' or 'a successful piece' but a piece of that lifelong effort, such that falling short of its authentic realization was more to be dreaded than the social rejection that might follow from its pursuit — no matter how acutely dreaded that rejection was, or how bitterly it was felt and resented (the egomaniacal conviction of infinite entitlement is also intrinsic to that music-compositional attitude). That kind of lifetime vision authentically pursued is surely what distinguishes John Cage and Morton Feldman and David Tudor and Merce Cunningham from the Downtown playboys and girls who idolize their coolness but have no stomach for their self-determination. The point is, you can hear it in —*as* — their music.

* * * * * * * *

louis andriessen

get past the wrong-note wrong-note music, the blatant in-your-face ripoffs (from a living anthology of American composers from Copland and Nancarrow to Reich — and doesn't forget Arthur Honegger's *Pacific 231*), the pooped-on Mozart and the souped-up *Earthlight* riffs, and there's a residue of odd, quirky sensibility, stripped-down aestheticism, cartoonish reductionist humor, deadpan negative expressivity (featuring some ice-cold vocal eroticism that's like terminal Kim), an extremity of chilled-out bare-note superdry unblinking what-you-hear-is-what-you-get surface (like Bennie Moten over a telephone wire) that makes, say, Lukas Foss's *Time Cycle* or *Phorion* sound like warm sticky sensuous romantic expressivity. within which somewhat strange terms there's a whole lot of musical invention, even a whole lot of music, somehow. it's an odd game, for sure; but it is about listening.

ralph shapey (1921-2002)

It wants to bloody me hurling itself against the wall of advancing time. To make it stop. To make it be space. To make it be here not now. To make it be necessary for total attention to be paid. To make it be Presence, to make Presence unerasable, timesafe, allpresent: Something. Someone. IT. Iterating permanently not reiterating again. Not initiating anytime ever. Over a desperately drivingly creative lifetime an unchanging aesthetic: a gutbasic monofocal vision: Greatness is Presence is Greatness. Always. But evolving aesthetically within, especially in the 80s and 90s from grey gritty miasmic soundliths of the 50s 60s 70s to some nuancing inner complexity some totally indigenous species of inflectional finesse, and even: sensory ingratiation. like in Evocations 4 where pairs of sounds, vibe and cello, piano and violin, wind entwining vertically bidirectionally tighter to the point of almost terminal circulatory inhibition before being holistically pulverized by a wipeout 2-tympani immolation; and here and also in Evocations 2 and Songs of Life an unexpectable new multichrome transparency recontextualizing the animistic bigdoglike immovably planted allforce primalsound (but still never ever insinuating mewly or padding deviously like cat or MortyFeldman mindhovering timesuspending soundloving surfacestroking). A lifetime of militant resistance, stonewall refusal, by the end a total still lonely old master of his own unimaginable oneperson solitary transcenmusical thing.

mathias spahlinger

he conjures silences in infinite varieties, creates spaces in between where you never imagined there could be spaces to be vibrantly vacant. their emptinesses sharp articulate colors of hyperaesthetic inhabitations. there are no episodes. so there is a sense in which nothing happens. a music that starts from that place has a long way to go: his music goes to places of undesignable character, of unspecifiable action, of unlocatable position, of unclassifiable color, places that have no knowable expressive meaning but still you want very much to be there. and creates a social dimension a politics dramatized in the persons and actions of composer conductor player individual group which is there as something heard not just referred to. and especially heard in the silences: a nonideological workbook not a textbook; a musical laboratory about relevance not about attitude; about reified activated resonance living it not ideological imagery symbolizing it. interesting that such multivalent silence/space/concept music comes to him via jazz, that nonstop immovable univalent stonewall utterance space; but although I don't know the jazz he plays it seems more out of the Jack DeJohnette and Anthony Davis/Leo Smith music of the 80s, the Georg Graewe and John Butcher music of the 90s — or even out of the venerable Monk — than from the massively overdetermined world of Coltrane or the totally soundconditioned environment of Miles Davis or the immolations of Mingus. but still, this creative flexibility somehow secretes out of the jazz sensibility and context and not much at all from the temple of self-consciously elevated creative purpose. in any event something puts him out of the range of the other composers on his CDs no matter that most of them are also considerably of interest.

CDs:

doug kolmar
Strange Attraction
(doug kolmar)
Vivendi CD

twisted tutu
t wis tedtu tu p lay n ice (1999)
music by eve beglarian, Duke Ellington, Robin Lorentz, Guy Kluvecsek, Randall Woolf, Kitty Brazelton, Arthur Jarvinen
(eve beglarian and kathleen supové)
O O Discs 66

martin boykan
Elegy (1982) (Jane Bryden, soprano / Brandeis Contemporary Chamber Players/David Hoose, conductor)
String Quartet No. 4 (1996) (Lydian String Quartet)
Epithalamion (1986) (James Maddalena, baritone / Nancy Cirillo, violin / Virginia Crumb, harp)
CRI CD 786

sebastian currier
Vocalissimus
Theo's Sketchbook
Whispers
(Mosaic / Susan Narucki, soprano / Ayoko Oshino, clarinet / Rolf Schulte, violin / Martin Goldray, conductor)
New World 80527-2

roger reynolds
... the serpent-snapping eye
(Edwin Harkins, trumpet / Cecil Lytle, piano / Daryl Pratt, percussion)
Pogus 21025-2 ["all known all white"]

bela bartók
violin concerto No. 2 (1937-38)
(Dénes Kovács, violin / Budapest Philharmonic /Ervin Lukács)
Hungaroton HCD 31041

arnold schoenberg
violin concerto
(Rolf Schulte, violin / London Philharmonia / Robert Craft, conductor)
Koch 3-7493-2 H1

louis andriessen
De Stijl (1984)
M is for Man, Music, Mozart (1991)
(Gertrud Thoma, Astrid Seriese, voices / Shoenberg Ensemble / Aksa Ensemble / Orkest de Volharding /Rombert de Leeuw, Jurjen Hempel, conductors)
elektra nonesuch 79342-2

ralph shapey

The Covenant (1977)
Rituals for Symphony Orchestra (1959)
Incantations for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961)
(Elsa Charlston, Bethany Beardslee, sopranos / Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago / London Sinfonietta / Ralph Shapey, conductor)
CRI CD 690

Evocation II (1979)
Songs of Life (1988)
Sonata for Cello and Piano (1953-54)
Evocation IV (1994)
(Joel Krosnick, cello / Gilbert Kalish, piano / Joel Smirnoff, violin / Lisa Saffer, soprano / William Trigg, percussion)
arabesque AR 26728

mathias spahlinger

Apo Do ("von hier") (1982)
(Arditti String Quartet)
Montaigne MO 782036

"und als wir" (1993) (for 54 strings)
(SWF Sinfonieorchester / Lothar Zagrosek, conductor)
col legno WWE 1 CD 31875

Extension (1979-80)
(Hildegard Kleeb, piano / Dimitris Polisoidis, violin)
hatART CD 6131

Interactive Music-Making: A Commentary

BANNED REHEARSAL & NYQUIST: CD Reviews

Elaine Barkin

Improvisation. Music-experimenting. Real time music-making. Autonomous group music-making. Interplay. Freeplay. Socio-musical interactivity. The profusion of descriptive names indicative of the difficulty of pigeonholing collaborative practices, practices wherein attitudes of participants may range from cooperative to competitive to confrontational; practices which are not Popular, which might remain Private, where Merit Badges are rarely acquired. A decision to collaborate is hardly an assurance of smooth sailing; along the way dissonance or conflict may arise, yet in truly extraordinary—and often transcendent—collaborative experiences, a new way of being in the world with others is unearthed. Each person —"aroused by a desire to personalize and be *directly* engaged with others in order to achieve realness"—is co-worker, cohort, co-composer, colleague; each re-discovers ways to attend to idiosyncrasies and sensitivities of others.

BANNED REHEARSAL:
Teach Yourself to Drive. **BR No. 483, February 6, 1998 & No. 486, February 28, 1998, Seattle, WA. Karen Eisenbrey, Keith Eisenbrey, Anna K, Aaron Keyt, Neal Meyer. Skald Records 062498 (1998).**
——*Slow Blues.* One, Keith Eisenbrey, piano, August 19, 1999 & Three, Karen & Keith Eisenbrey, Neal Meyer, September 20, 1999.
Skald Records 021799 (2000). http://www.bannedrehearsal.org

BANNED REHEARSAL: The name, expressive of ideology, gives a listener a way in. *Teach Yourself to Drive*, two sessions worth, sounds as if each member of the ensemble is following a notated part, inter-& pro-actively intent on producing a musical work emanating out of a parallel Classical-music universe, notwithstanding or perhaps due to their highly idiosyncratic sound-making resources, some of which are "real" instruments—violin, tenor saxophone, cornet, piano, suling, mbira, ocarina, ukelele, accordion, didjeridu, percussion, conch, clarinet—some of which aren't—bottles of Amontillado, Czech toy chicken, bicycle horn, socks [?], Russian bear toy, wheelbarrows, tops, party favors, music box innards—the lists go on. Banned Rehearsal might have had an entirely different scenario in mind or none at all, yet for me, the Classical archetype fits well. Imagine a Classical chamber symphony project reconceived as interactive performance art, eternally varied instrumentation, no intersection of motive and timbre, filled with soft, sweet, and truly lovely melodies. Moreover, it is not essential for any player of any instrument to be—"proficient" on his or her instrument of choice at any sounding moment, nor, for that matter, is it a no-no for a player to be, in fact, proficient. What makes up for the absence or conscious eschewal of super-chops is the ubiquity of super-listening, discretion, attentiveness. I can listen to how each player finds or makes ways in and out; every so often a player re-patterns, Morton Feldman-like, what she or he has just heard; now and then a rhythmic pattern is

repeated, but getting in a beating groove is not their thing. More often characteristically gentle than aggressive and ever-evident that Banned Rehearsal, respectful of and attentive to one another, has been playing and listening together for a long time.

On *Slow Blues*, Keith Eisenbrey plays a bluesy piano solo filled with minor, major, and poly-triadic successions; he propels himself from one soundstretch to the next, overturning any expectations a listener might have. In fact I had to work overtime and make a conscious effort to refrain from anticipating anything or pre-composing what I thought might be coming next and just take it in or not. Keith's *One* [an homage to Ben Boretz's 3 CD box, ONE, OS 2] teeters between a piece a naive musician might make and a piece that only an experienced musician could make: neither accidental nor calculated, except for 1st and 2nd species passages, the keyboard under his control at every touch. *Three*, a trio, on track 2, is again overtly 'about' piece-making, bits of distilled, filtered, slow and draggy blues, in meters of 1s, melody and triadic 'comping', recurrent motifs, Karen Eisenbrey's drums syncopated if not metrically and contrarily conflicting with Neal Meyer's cornet and Keith's piano, mostly in minor modes, misfiring now and then but always hanging in and re-trenching, perhaps emerging from having just listened to someone else's Slow Blues.

NYQUIST:
***Some Statements*. Seth Cluett, Scott Smallwood, Joel Taylor. Troy, NY. Wavelet Records WA 300 (2000).**
——*Dispersions*. Curtis Bahn, Seth Cluett, Scott Smallwood, Joel Taylor. Wavelet Records WA 301 (2000). http://www.ir-music.org/wavelet/

NYQUIST*: In *Some Statements* I hear a convergence of individuated, discretely produced and worked out, patterns; never cute or pretty; rarely overtly chops-intensive; busy and full sounding, not much air, but not overbearing; occasional twitters erupt out of marshy gelatinous but penetrable environments; instrumentation is limited to fretless electric bass, voice, amplified steel drum, electronics, shakuhachi, suling, synthesizer, percussion. Signature white-noised squiggly lines, shakuhachi tunes in a warbling electronics sea remind me of now Paul Klee, Raoul Dufy, Mark Tobey, or Jackson Pollock—if he'd used colored pencils—might sound. One track on *Some Statements* is especially 'piece-like', fluttering bamboo flute and jangly rattly chain-like backdrop. These guys jam well together; they inhabit the same space in the same equally mixed bandwidth, aware of and attentive to each other, not responding in an overt way but it's hard to imagine that any participant, in such a situation, would not, could not, be directly affected by what's going on around him and would certainly react but not necessarily conventionally 'answer'; it's hard if not impossible not to be both unself- and self-conscious in such milieus; awareness is all.

The tracks on Dispersions are less jam-packed, deeply colored with static—noise sound—and the static—as in, not going anywhere. Most tracks allowed time for solo and are compositionally articulate. Occasional sequences crop up, there's less change

* Harry Nyquist, as I discovered in a recent review by Tildy Bayar, was the mathematician-engineer who formulated the "ratio that determines the amount of information that can be converted from analog to digital within a given system.

per time-segment, and all is permeated with Nyquist's characteristic drips, taps, bends, tickles, strokes, brushings, creaks, bumps, rushings, whooshes. On the last and most video-arcade-like track, Number 9, they let it all hang out with chains, buzz-saws, gongs, wall-of-sound much of the way through, a brief minute of calm before the return to knockdown dragout. Still and all, a sense of group listening is paramount. Now and The tracks on *Dispersions* are less jam-packed, deeply colored with static—noise sound— and the static—as in, not going anywhere. Most tracks allow time for solo and then, when played at full volume—and on *Some Statements* as well—the blast overwhelms, yet it's not as dense as Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* (what is?) and only comes in short swatches. The dubious advantage of CD listening, as opposed to being there live, enables me to turn the volume down if I sense my ears splitting, "dubious advantage" insofar as I'm then the one in control, the "author" of the text as some would have it, a role I take on willingly though aware of its potentially contradictory-reversal consequences.

(Unlike Banned Rehearsal's focus on complete sessions, a majority of Nyquist's tracks—*Some Statements* has 5, *Dispersions* has 9—sound to me as if they're from longer sessions, thus giving listeners a chance to experience 'best moments', a way of re-composing and putting out group-session work that I've also done.)

> Would I want to be an observer/listener, see/hear them doing their thing? I think not, and not only because of volume, and clearly 'there's a rub' there. But I do know, and with certainty, that I'd want to fully participate. The old itch wants scratching. Body and mind still tingle with memories of place, sound, discovery, vulnerability, intimacy, conflict, enlightenment, being touched and moved, being player-composer-partaker-consumer-listener all at once. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty has said:'"I give ear...in the expectation of a sensation, and suddenly the sensible takes possession of my ear...and I surrender a part of, even my whole, body to this particular manner of vibrating and filling space..."

In a recent e-mail, Paul Humphreys wrote: "I can't help but recalling that in our discussions of composing vis-á-vis improvising, one of the things we both liked about improvising was the absence of layer upon layer of attention accumulating toward overall lavish expenditure of time on a relatively brief span of time [directed to and] as perceived by a listener."

In 1999, on a visit to Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, Jack Body and John Psathas asked me to give a public Group Improvisation Seminar. On the evening of my arrival I met with five young players all of whom do avant-garde, experimental improvisation (: Daniel Beban, Philip Brownlee, Johnny Marks, Xenia Pestov, and Thomas Voyce). The session that evening—'let's just play, no public'—was wonderful, except for an occasional overpowering outburst on the organ. We played Javanese metallophones, keyboards, electric guitars, percussion, and a full gamut of recorders. The next afternoon, at the scheduled Seminar, we "performed" and it 'went fine', and afterwards several attendees asked'"why don't we do more of this at VU?"—but our awareness of audience and level of self-consciousness were high; no one showed off, no

one took over, but so unlike the night before which had had that feel of "realness" as we sniffed each other out in private. Soren Kierkegaard knew what that was about when he said: "Wherever there is a crowd, there is untruth."

Participators in collaborative endeavors experience strong, vital and multi-sensory awarenesses of being with others—friends, strangers, intimates, old-timers, new-timers—, of being near, with them and in their presence; of conceiving and nurturing with them, being touched by or touching their bodies; moving within and around a space, taking his warm seat, picking up her put-down sound-maker, tasting or smelling what exudes from their bodies; fingers on keys or strings or wrapped around a mallet, lips on a mouthpiece, hitting-rapping-striking-stroking-singing; manifold senses of exhilaration or revelation emergent in the acts of sounding; sitting still or listening in; eyes open, eyes closed; exterior and interior melding, getting lost or found, struggling to 'get it' or 'find it', enraptured, enraged, exposed, engaged and all in between; always a journey to an unknown time-sound-place. As Jean Baudrillard says: "...go to the limit of hypotheses and processes, even if they are catastrophic....For, facing a world that is unintelligible and problematic, our task is clear: we must make that world even more unintelligible, even more enigmatic."

Along the way the traveler may verge on giving up. Thresholds to the unknown frighten and frustrate. Or having found herself in the midst of a milieu-with-music she'd desired but never imagined she'd find, she wants to hold on tight, grasp it, but then it's gone, slipped away, out of mind and earshot. Yet there have been times when all have felt that exquisite delight, that libidinous energy exploding into group-sound, that consciousness of having in fact communally conceived that extraordinary once-in-a-lifetime, often not-for-public, music which overflows with human, organic, and mechanical ambience, presence, and life. There's nothing like it—there just isn't.

Now, decades later, still-vivid recollections continue to nourish. As I listen to a taped session from way back, I recall or imagine"'place, time, situation'—the Balinese life- & context-defining *desa, kala, patra*—which gives my listening experience a physicality and a sensual dimension lacking under most other listening-to-music conditions. Those many studios, living rooms, basements, rooftops, barns, and classrooms; those lit, dimmed or darkened spaces; indoor stairwells and outdoor staircases; sculpture and botanical gardens; indoor, outdoor and experimental theaters; alongside freeways, in woods, deserts, parks, trees, and canyons; any time of day (although evenings were most propitious for these mysterious, unpredictable journeys). Sounds of the outside—reminding us that there is an outside—entering in: engines, animals, insects, wind, thunder, bells, other voices, other music.

All during these interactive engagements, encounters, and sonic psychodramas, the search for communal expression gives a sense of purpose; an abundance of realities is contemplated and expressed, each sounding body-mind responsible to, but not obligated to, each other. Both a terror and an ecstasy come from discovering how to dance inside your head, to get into your interior and expose yourself, to commune with the interiors of others. Such alternative, egalitarian, and

uncommodified music practices and cultures widely diverge from most culturally sanctioned practices, significantly and manifestly in the senses in which participants have genuine vested interests in and are co-owners of their pursuits, their music, their experiences, and, for the moment(s), their lives.

July-November 2001

POSTSCRIPT: After Tildy Bayar read the above text, she asked if I was up for writing "a more radical kind of description...involving the tension between 'musical' and"interactive'..." Tension in every sense, I opine, plus an abundance of variables. For sure, thinking of oneself as being musical or being—as in subsisting as, getting by as—a musician are no guarantees—*an sich*, by themselves, that interactive experiences will be 'musical' or that participants will go to or allow themselves to be taken to places they've not gone to before. (That is, why stay in the same place?) Conversely, not being a musician or not thinking of oneself as a musician do not, also'*an sich*,'preclude the possibility of bringing forth remarkable musical outcomes in interactive environments, where ideas about and definitions of music and musical can be stretched far out beyond prior limits—for some stretched out way too far, for others not far out enough—not easily discussible but always available audibly. And then there's interactive—in all of its relating-mutually-to-or-with, all of its socio-politico-musical meanings. Persons not inclined toward or not comfortable with group interaction often bring their discomfort levels with them, whether they are musicians or not. Nonetheless, interesting, though not necessarily satisfying, sessions have occurred with non-interactively prone persons. Nor is being up for group interaction,—*an sich*, a guaranty of an extraordinary experience. Variables are at play at every moment, as are *sotto voce* attitudes affecting interpersonal behavior, or how one feels about being inclusive or exclusive, or what one wants to preserve or is willing to relinquish, or what one conceives the purposes of such activities are. Maybe there are pheromones that behave as stimuli for remarkable interactive music-making; who knows? But I don't think I've answered Tildy's question; some answers are far too close to the bone, too close to where the 'rub' lies.

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Two by Four Tangents to a Text by Chris Mann

Newton Armstrong

1. The Sonority of Words

Vocality

Chris Mann is a verb. (Oskar Mann)

The body feels the word; the entire organism resonates with its enunciation, swept into the vortex of its component sonorities. The word requires that the body is committed to its expression. As a sound complex, the word consists in a theatre of the body; the manipulation of motor elements, vibrating cords, resonating cavities. The tongue, breath, teeth, flesh combine in a drama which is at once fluent and turbulent, and which has as many temporal trajectories as harmonic strata. Before all else, signification is an activity of the body. The acoustic contour of the word, its inflection and intonation, are not distinct from its intention. That in its primacy the word is, and always has been, sound. That verbal activity, the generation of sound complexes, the melodic outline of word aggregates, emanates from the body but only acquires signification in its exteriority. To read Chris Mann is something quite different to experiencing him perform. When typography becomes the site of poetry's cultural embedding, a distinction has been drawn between sound and sense. Meaning originates in the grain of the voice, the sonority of the word, the theatre of the body. To experience Chris Mann is to have rendered audible the necessity of reviving the urgency of words, of resensitising the lived engagement with the oral. It is vocality; a de-anaesthetic. Real enunciability emerges from the reinvestment of a tactility in the word.

Cartography

A composer defines the modalities of composing only to the extent that any incidental histories of composition are presupposed. Should those histories proscribe composition, composing could not, of itself, be proscriptive. A composing that erodes the distinctions embedded in the histories of composition recasts the modalities of composing. Not through negotiating histories; assaulting culture is a mode of participation in its dialectic. Rather, through repositioning composition within culturally untenable domains; hypothetical territories where the imperial impulse is incapable of submerging its etymologies in the terrain. In the first instance, it is a composition of cartographies; the refrain which is at one and the same moment the map. The cartographic refrain catalyses the emergence of those hypothetical territories. Chris Mann sings a landscape of flows, drifts, splits, ruptures, twists. In the distorted projection of the cartographies which are immanent in the melodic flow of words, a collective territory of exteriority is circumscribed; domains of the not known are gridded into a functional, organic space. Composed in a land partitioned into mythical cartographies, living refrains of collectivity, in ages exterior to the capitalist repartitioning. Through the cartographic refrain, time is lived as interior. Exterior time, the flattened segmentarity of economics, falls within the rubric of culture. The cartographic refrain sings a time of relativised exterior synchronicities, in which time is again the intensive interiority; the nucleus of the hypothetical

territory. The dimensions of the sung domain are plotted in an experiential, polyphonic time. It is only in polyphonic time that the modalities of composition radiate beyond interiors.

Fluency

The logic of sound projects outward through gradations of structural resolution. It emerges not only from a temporal linearity of language expression, but from a structural synthesis of temporal succession. The body is in motion with the word, carried by the rhythms of vocal activity. Word flow is gridded through that same strata, the formal logic of language, which has always resided beneath the impulse to vocality. As the organism is swept along by the trajectories of the word sequence, interior time is exteriorised. A linear-structural overcoding of words. Stratified flow trajectories articulate stratified structural dimensions. The rhythms of vocal activity emerge at the interstice of spontaneous expression and the already heard, depositing traces of the structural flow for in-time recoding; so many residual waves resonating in the wake of the sound. The flows are more or less turbulent, propelled toward or emanating from, accumulating or disentangling layers. They carry the authority of words. A hegemony consists in contouring the flows from above. Distorting the flows is a more substantiable project. Chris Mann's vocality catalyses a fluency of rhythmic distortion. There is little more than an ironic redolence of the already heard in the reprojection of the temporal structural flow. If the cartographies could be graphed on a page, they would already be interior.

Inflection

Signification is already intonation. Intention is already inflection. The project of voiding the signifier of its accumulated integrity takes aim at writing; at the text. The word as sound has inner forces of resistance; a resistance which consists in its pliancy. The acoustic morphology of the word is contoured by the history of its soundings. It is shaped by the forces which bind it to a point within the flow; the contingencies of a context which is expressed inside time. The word is compelled to lean. The cartographic refrain materialises as the aggregate of so many leanings. It maps the intonational flow of words into a collective territory. The compunction of the word to sound, the impulse to vocality, is the unleashing of the soul of the word towards the exterior. Inflection is the in-time recomposition of the heard sonorities of the word. A qualified spontaneity; a theatre of the body. Not only contextual but residual. The capacity of the word to incise; to carve into zones of unfocussed intention. Chris Mann bends words more often than he allows them to lean. He sings an integrity into them which emerges from the reprojection of the force of the signifier, the will of the verb. His intonation has an awkward dignity, demanding that the word be only that which it hasn't already been; releasing its vitality from beneath the weight of its cultural sedimentation. The vibrancy of the word-song in motion.

2. The Commotions of a Language

Slippage

...that sense of the incomplete/complete is present so that the containment isn't quite contained, yet it is contained...there's always that slippage, that breaking off point...(Robert Smithson) Language is a volatile material. It is composed in the effort to hold together despite the insurgency of the elements of which it is composed. The

tangle of structural linearities is unsteadily dense; the collision of intents, the drift of semantic echoes, spill out in vortices of incoherency. Aesthetics is that which is grafted over language; the frame which serves to position it in a site of cultural enunciability; of consensus. It is not even a circumscription. Its territory is demarcated by straight lines and right angles; its spillage is redundancy. A communal disentangling takes place within the area enveloped by the community's own frame; the domain of received assumptions. A language without a frame is a language where the containment isn't quite contained, yet it is contained. Chris Mann composes with a language that is more a material than an agent. It is already fluid, already viscous, already tangled. Because language refuses consistency, it has to be composed. In an environment increasingly submerged in that which it has already filtered through the frame, Chris Mann enunciates the co-ordinates of the slippages. Rather than commanding a language to do, he allows it to propel its inconsistencies into a space which renders the surplus visible as surplus. He animates a system that doesn't add up. The rationalisation of language, its commodification, can only be said from beyond its perimeters.

Embedding

A context leans toward one of two distinct orders of saturation. The hegemonic context is composed of self-similar, selfaffirming elements. The anarchic context is composed of elements of independent force and volition. The hegemonic context might acquire presence within itself; its sense is interiorised. The anarchic might acquire presence in the exterior; the assemblage is of non-integral dimensions, without closure. Neither extreme admits the commotions of a language. A language is cellular; a hierarchialised aggregation of object-parts which, once aggregated, speaks. It is open and closed, consisting in analogical twists and the compulsion to name. A language is a means to an end. Chris Mann composes a language of segments. Its segments do not resolve up or down but radiate through one another. They accumulate a discursive rhythm; abrupt decontextualisations and unsteady recontextualisations; layerings of interpretative and articulative modes. Stratified designs for making sense; for saying that which is exterior. The awkward elegance of the assemblage as a whole is composed in the aggregations of parenthetic enclaves; a twisted scaffold held together by the contingency of the clause to its neighbours. The sense beneath the narrative is illuminated by the impossibility of the geometries that the narrative projects. As though a recursive emanation was possible.

Metaphor

Consensus is produced within the aesthetic apparatus; beneath the hegemonic canopy. A different mechanism is required for manufacturing the sense which is exterior to the domain of received assumptions. A word is only one way of naming. It is not enough. A language consists in the grammatic demand that the word will reveal more than itself. The transcodability of a language, its cybernetics, emerges from the commotions between the word and the grammar; between the object and the contingencies of a temporal linearity. Prior to naming, a language is already a metaphor of the motions it sets out to articulate. It is already the in-time transduction of a structural aggregate. Chris Mann composes a language which is uncomfortably conscious of its mimetic bind; which contrives that a structural innovation will radiate beyond its projected sense of autonomy, and return as added commotion. Its circuitries, its volitional substrates, are animated by their own structural dysfunction. A metaphor does not exist prior to a distinction being made.

Chris Mann composes an art of distinctions; he takes aim at the elasticity of boundaries; he enunciates the co-ordinates of the slippages. A language is the logistical prototype of an industry as much as it is its rhetorical tool. Composing the distinction opens a door to the apparatus. It establishes the possibility of creative sabotage.

Stacking

of course recognising something as a lie is a way of participating in manufacturing the truth (Chris Mann) Composition is not as much a putting together as it is a taking apart. Disassemblage is already commentary. The project has to do with clarity; the composition of a capacity to hear the pulse beneath the source. The exegete is engaged in a discourse with the commotions of a language. There is more than one way to state the obvious. While exegesis consists in the continuous return to the source, it leaves traces in so doing; a sedimentation of readings. With each return to the source, with the composition of each added assemblage, the necessity of disassemblage re-emerges. The longer the structure remains intact, the more vulnerable it becomes to internal corruption. Decomposition is either active or passive. Exegesis is the demand that an extant source will make sense; that its layers might be disentangled through applying a different criterion of tangles. Chris Mann composes an art of tangles, of unfoldings and infoldings; a meticulously assembled disassemblage of an already corroding assemblage. He composes a language which folds out towards the exterior, towards a naming, and which folds in towards the inconsistencies of its very own substructure; the wayward presuppositions of its grammar. The entire stack is animated with each successive stacking. An insurrection circulates through the tangle of sedentary layers. The space in between exegesis and its source, the commotion, is the living space. Although the first source never surrenders its primacy.

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Stepping outside for a moment: narrative space in two works for sound alone

Katharine Norman

I believe we have a need for a new kind of literature to explain works of art for sound, one that listens differently to what is going on and allows for subjective interpretation as a valued tool. In my personal interpretation of the two works I have chosen[1] – by Paul Lansky and Luc Ferrari – I have found more resonances in the rich, multi-layered diversity of the novel, and the varied narratives of fiction than in music. This chapter itself explores fiction and non-conventional presentation, as a vital way of illuminating narrative in two works for sound alone.

Stepping outside

'Things She Carried'—first movement of *Things She Carried*, by Paul Lansky

The movement begins with a loud, fairly low-pitched note, recognizably of electric guitar origin. Then a female voice announces the title of the movement (which is also 'Things She Carried') in a matter-of-fact way. Slow, guitar-like drones continue, and a steady rhythmic patterning commences on percussion, continuing throughout most of the movement. Whilst this is going on the speaking voice lists a series of objects, those likely to be found in a woman's pocketbook or handbag. Some time after the voice has stopped the music fades.

There is, of course, far more to it than that.

1
A few seconds into the piece, a female voice announces the title. Although the loud guitar note which opened the movement decreases in amplitude at this point, the voice is not unequivocally at the forefront of the texture. There are no clear clues as to either what, or who, the voice represents or its function here: it could be that of a radio continuity announcer, a narrator, or someone about to read a poem. It could be an actor playing any of the above. Regardless of this dilemma, in annunciating a title the voice initiates the expectancy of an ensuing narrative of some kind, albeit one that does not yet claim a genre.

2
The 'guitar' notes amble in slow, consonant intervals around a central pitch. They are generally lower in amplitude than the speaking voice, though not always. It should be relatively easy to relegate these aimless drones to the 'background' as an attractive aural wall-paper, but there remains a disquieting sense that something isn't 'right'. Wall-papering is difficult when the dimensions of the hypothetical space are impossible to gauge. Several familiar listening cues as to space have been 'corrupted' by the way that sounds are presented. For instance, the electric guitar sound is compromised on at least two counts,

proximity and timbre: the long notes have rather too large and mobile a timbre for a 'real' guitar, some sounds are less 'guitar-like' than others; subtle differences of reverberation and a lack of attack on some of the notes indicate that the sound might emanate from a distant point in a large space, on the other hand fluctuations in amplitude sometimes hint at precisely the opposite.

3

The 'gamelan'-like percussion pattern starts pottering around pleasantly when the voice comes in. The sound is immediately and unnervingly 'close': if this were a 'real' instrument our understanding of its proximity to our listening ears would be informed by the small sounds that close-mic-ing picks up and the resonance created by the space. But these sounds – like the guitar notes – have a tendency to treat the stereo field to a game of spatial hopscotch. Their timbre is more reminiscent of pots and pans than gongs and bells, yet these kitchen implements are perfectly tuned and played with machine-precision accuracy. There is nothing new, now, in the hyper-perfection of quantized, synthetic timbre from which 'human' intervention has been somehow miraculously erased, but there is something that doesn't ring true in the conflicting spatial and timbral signals implied individually by this patterning, the guitars and – as will be discussed further - the nature of the speaking voice. They refuse to sit down together. Nevertheless, the innocuous timbres, harmonic predictability and the static rhythmic patter contribute to a relaxed feel and a sense that, though something will happen soon, there's no hurry.

4

The piece is framed, the title is announced. Let action commence – 'and now, Radio 4 presents *Things She Carried,* starring Hannah Mackay'. Imagine the scene: as the guitar soundtrack fades we'll tune in to the foreground sound of a bag being emptied, perhaps a few contextualising mutterings from the female character and the scraping of wood against a tile floor. A room, a bag, a table, a chair, a woman sitting down . Safe in the knowledge that we are now equipped with the requisite clues for visualisation – since in radio drama the audience is asked to provide the set - we can settle back as the action (even a monologue is active internal dialogue) unfolds before our ears and inner eye.
We can almost see it. Right?

ASIDE: The lure of the open door

Perhaps paintings can have a soundtrack too, if we broaden our definition to include the internal music of the observer's response in looking at a work of visual art.[2] Lansky is not unaware of that possibility, drawing analogies to Vermeer's *The Love Letter*, in alluding to what he is trying to achieve.

'You're standing in front of Vermeer's painting, *The Love Letter*. Looking through a doorway, you see a woman holding a lute. She has just been handed a letter by another woman. ... ...You could invent a different story [to 'explain' the painting's subject] each time, and it wouldn't matter. What does matter is the way the painting creates a vibrating moment – the consequence of some things that might have happened - and the way you, the viewer, experience the painting through that imagined moment.'
(Lansky, liner notes to *Things She Carried*, 1997)

In trying to pin down the potent attraction of *trompe l'oeil* painting, Baudrillard attests that it is our appreciation of the *un-realness* of the depiction that 'lures' us into being seduced by the painting's charm. In his view it is the *absence* of a dimension which creates this sense of 'almost

but not quite' and gives the image its strength. Our senses are mystified so that we are at once aware that we are not seeing a real object, but are attuned to the 'immanence' of the real.[3] By extension we might judge that trompe l'oeil attunes us to the immanced of the real sense of – in this case – seeing. We know we are looking at a painting but, in our mystification, respond as if we are looking at the objects depicted, rather than their depiction. This latter subtle variation of trompe l'oeil reception, I suggest, need not be confined to visual works, and has important implications for our response to narrative in sound.

To use Vermeer's *The Love Letter* as an example: the composition of the painting is, indeed, 'as if' seen through a doorway, and is typical of his work in this respect. The composition is framed, in addition to the physical frame, by the frame of the door in the painting itself. We look through, we see. We could almost be there.

Almost.

The painting is not concerned with trompe-l'oeil objects but has an element of trompe-l'oeil with regard to *seeing*. By inserting the frame of the painted doorway within the frame of the painting Vermeer lures us into believing that we are 'seeing through his eyes' or perhaps that he has somehow 'stepped out' of the painting and has joined us in seeing - that the story of the painting, in these terms, exists now, in our time. The skewed composition - a partial view through a doorway, off-centre, deliberately 'un-composed' – exploits a visual 'trick' or lure that film and TV has cheapened and done to death: consider the numerous shlock horror movies where we 'see' through the unseen villain's eyes as he stalks his unsuspecting prey, or the hand-held shaky camera movement exploited by numerous 'real life' documentaries or cop shows. Vermeer is more subtle – he doesn't paint his paintbrush into the scene. This is a *trompe l'oeil* with regard to experience rather than recognition and, though he does not 'lure' us into thinking we are seeing the 'real thing', he does lure us into thinking we are *really* seeing the thing. That is, that our seeing is unmediated, in the present, and it is happening now. In terms of narrative the painting conflates third and first person voice, and is ambiguous in tense: he saw it and we see it; he is seeing it, and we are seeing it. And we are seeing it – just a trick of the (narrative) 'I' – under the impression that the act of seeing is unmediated by the painter's brush. Yet we are at no time convinced that this is not a painting. This appreciation of the 'artefact', as Baudrillard suggests, offers a more satisfying and involving experience than the 'perfection' of virtual reality which, as he puts it, can 'expel the reality out of reality'.[4]

The absence of dimension that Baudrillard identifies as empowering the painted *trompe l'oeil* is the absence engendered by the lack of real three-dimensional space. The two-dimensional painting seeks, instead, to magically create an illusion that should – that must – be recognized as just that in order to acquire its alluring mystery. The space which things occupy defines their reality – and this is no less true of sound. So, is there a comparable nuance of aural 'trompe l'oreille' in which we can be lured into the experience of, not 'hearing the real thing' but of 'really hearing the thing', in which we can be gripped by the same illusion in relation to listening to sound? I would argue that while a great deal of energy has been expended on theories relating to the notion of hearing sound objects as 'real' (or by reversal, 'not real'), the notion of 'real' listening in a work of 'fictional'[5] sound-art is underexplored. Yet the conviction that when we listen we are 'really hearing' the narrative before us is a powerful tool. Once convinced of this, the narrative can travel to all sorts of unreal places and rely on us coming along for the ride, and even doing the steering. And, like *trompe l'oeil,* the power of this tool emerges from an absence of dimension.

5

Wrong. (To pick up the narrative thread).

This piece does *not* encourage our visualisation of an imaginary stage set. We are *not* supplied with the necessary aural clues to point towards visual objects – chair, table, bag, woman. The list of 'things' is not illustrated with any audible 'evidence' - nobody audibly unwraps the chewing gum, shakes a bottle of pills or (and more of this later) places coins on a table. However, although we should not underestimate the relevance of this sonic absence, the use of overt visualisation clues is arguably more often an optional 'extra' to sound's narrative – their removal does not constitute an absence of natural dimension in Baudrillard's

sense. In this example of sound-art the dimensional absence, I would argue, comes – as with the visual equivalent - from the 'removal' of real space.

We already know that Lansky's space isn't real. Everything about it *lacks* 'virtual' reality – this is not a '3-D' environment. Surround-sound assumes our ears are at the focal point of its virtual reality, it places us (literally) in a passive armchair listening position: we recoil in our seats as the freight train bears down on us, or the plane passes over us.Lansky's presentation of 'trompe l'oreille' hearing (as opposed to trompe l'oreille things) is encouraged by its lack of '3-D' reality. Fixed spatial boundaries – and by implication a fixed flow of time – are the *absent* dimension. Just as in *trompe l'oeil* painting it is the obviously 'unreal' surface that provides the lure, here it is the removal of the real acoustic space and its replacement with something that doesn't 'make sense' in real terms that both 'spaces us out' and lures us in.

6

Filtering out the 'reality' of any sense of place is extraordinarily difficult. It is not enough to turn the volume down. Record a woman speaking in a room and, however much you remove every scrap of extraneous noise or ambience, you will still have a recording of a woman speaking in a room. It will just be a different room – even if it is the dead 'non'-room of a radio studio (perhaps the most recognizable space of all).

In order to obliterate space, time and place, something has to step in to muffle the loud silence of reality's departure. So, bring on the giant guitars that, in Lansky's space, provide not the hyper-reality of film music's emotional colour-wash, nor the un-listened-to sedative of Musak , but a music which heightens the absence of dimension.

ASIDE : A different space

In the radio play music can serve as both outer and inner space, to accompany both scene-changes and 'internalised' thought. In cut and dried cases the music is indeed 'incidental' in that it amplifies events in a foreground narrative, in a similar manner to the emotional narrative supplied by music in film. Whilst in radio plays background music frequently comes to the fore, takes over for a few seconds or carries on while the drama continues it generally subscribes - unless chosen for particularly specific ends - to the conservative norms for the genre; it is harmonically regular, predictable, illustrative (in terms of mood) and has no longterm goals.

Watching a film we have no difficulty in creating separate spaces for 'seeing' and 'listening' to narrative and 'hearing' music. Indeed, often we are even listening to music without even consciously acknowledging the fact. The rescued kid gets a big close-up hug and a cheesy crescendo from surging strings triggers our emotional empathy to such a point that tears are inevitable. But it's well-nigh impossible to *listen* to two things at once without a visual (or visualized) narrative without trying to relate one to another in the same conceptual space. In a musical work we can certainly prioritize as to 'importance' – the lead guitar, the solo violin, the loud acousmatic gesture – but only in relation to the other sounds we hear, at the same time.

Lansky's piece has a slightly more interesting hold on the division between background and foreground *musical* gestures, partly precisely because it both exploits and undermines some of the 'easy' listening foibles of incidental music and the solo/accompaniment relationship traditional to many forms of abstract music. It places us in a listening 'comfort zone' in which we might feel at ease with the seemingly unchallenging harmonic and timbral ambience. The guitars and percussion are 'music' in conventional terms whilst the voice isn't. This background music plays tricks, and

raises questions as to what might be meant by 'background' in the context of a work such as this, for sound alone. To be in the background means to occupy a different space from the foreground.

7

There is more to speak of.

Given that this is patently not a radio play or straightforward recitation, we might expect a defined relationship between voice and 'music accompaniment' to emerge: either she starts to rap, breaks into song or the percussion should start to do something a darned sight more interesting. If it's that rather uncomfortable hybrid, poetry recited over music, the voice should be an up front recitation, situated apart. But the voice is definitely part of it – whatever 'it' is : the sound of the speaking voice is subject to just enough sonic processing and manipulation to bring disembodied voice and 'music' into the same strange, unquantifiable space inhabited by extremely large guitars and a hyperclean-living percussion section.

The use of the voice in this movement fuels interesting dilemmas as to genre. The composer describes the work as a 'musical portrait of a woman' in a similar way to the Vermeer he refers to (which, like *Things She Carried*, is anything but a simple likeness). Whereas many of Lansky's works use deliberate obsfucation to enhance the 'hidden' meanings inherent in the timbres and rhythms of natural speech, this voice presents words that are, for the most part, completely intelligible. Indeed, a measured recitation of a list of mundane objects, read by a softly-spoken, attractive voice provides a peculiarly one-dimensional perspective that borders on monotony. This would serve well as a means for focussing on sonic content – lifting the material into the abstract plane of acoustic metaphor (think of Normandeau's *Spleen*, for instance, an acousmatic masterpiece in this vein) but here it is verbal meaning that matters. It is the subtle complexity of what is going on in the use of voice, text and narrative perspective that gives this movement – and the whole work – conviction as a work of fiction for sound alone.

8

The opening section of the text (which divides broadly into 'verses', with 'things she carried' serving as a recurring refrain) is spoken in normal, if measured, tones. The sound is quite 'realistic' in that there is none of the overt comb-filtering that characterizes much of Lansky's previous work with speech (though - perhaps as a gentle, even unconscious, aside – the text describes a comb at length) but there is a great deal else going on.

Each short phrase is presented as a close layering of very slightly different versions of the same spoken material. The small delay, a deliberate spatial 'spread' between the simultaneous voices, and the minutely de-tuned timbres all heighten the disembodiment of the voice. Though delay or reverberation has almost become the norm for indicating a move from foreground present to internalised thought or 'dream state' in radio and TV, this is far more subtle. Although each component 'voice' is separately audible – but only just - the aural effect is undoubtedly that of a single 'real' voice observed simultaneously from very slightly different perspectives; the aural equivalent, perhaps, of looking in one of those hinged mirrors that offers a three-way reflection from left, right and centre.

In terms of narrative voice, too, we are engaged in a game of magic mirrors in which we hear, alternately, a voice, a reader, a character, the eponymous 'she', or ourselves listening. Sometimes - contorting ourselves in front of grandmother's dressing-table – we catch an enchanting glimpse of all our reflections at once.

ASIDE: stepping outside for a moment

In a novel the author, as narrator, can assume an omniscient viewpoint, or can write from the point of view of a particular character – either in the first or third person or by slipping, by various devices, from one to the other. So the narrative voice in fiction can shift imperceptibly back and forth between different points of view, different 'points in space', different minds. It is possible to direct narration as if from a hypothetical 'reader' who observes external action without knowing the inner thoughts of the characters, and with whom we – as actual reader – can identify. Similarly, self-conscious (and, dear reader, by their nature 'fiction-conscious') asides to the invisible audience can allow a narrator to 'step out' of the text for a moment. The way in which words are presented – in particular the subtle ambiguity of free direct speech[7]- can place the reader in a state of flux with regard to where they are currently situated in terms of tense (or time) and point of view (or place).

In drama there is, generally, no narrative voice[8] since drama is action and dialogue played out before your very eyes and ears. Instances of 'narrative voice' within a play are quite unusual, because it is difficult to convince an audience that the play is no longer the thing. A character can play the role of narrator from within the plot (often, in an interesting piece of cross-pollination, acting out on stage the *invisible* 'voice-over' narration that more often occurs in film.)[9] But when a character on stage 'steps out of character' he or she 'steps in' to another, equally 'acted' role. It is *very* hard to convince an audience that a character has 'dropped the act' in making an aside – the fool is still 'in character' when he tells us a joke – though performance art, in particular, plays with appearing to dissolve these boundaries.

In dramatic art, rather than literary fiction, an audience – those 'within hearing' – can be asked to cross the divide and become 'present' in the play: one could argue that when Hamlet soliloquises, the stage extends to encompass the auditorium as the audience 'joins' him, each member of the audience playing, at that moment, the character of Hamlet's internal listening – 'really listening' to his thoughts. So when we applaud Hamlet, we applaud our own performance too.This kind of involvement, perhaps, is comparable to the kind of 'real listening' that, I suggest, is enabled by Lansky's spatial lure. Once hooked, we are gently inveigled into different narrative relationships to both the sound of the voice, and the words spoken.

9

The voice – as with the guitars and percussion – is a mobile entity.
The manner of speech is measured but fairly natural. Significantly, there are no extraneous 'human'sounds. The voice is placed, rhythmically, within the surrounding texture – the transparently composed placing of the vocal fragments assures us that the voice inhabits the same ambiguous place as guitar and percussion, and takes its time from their measure. The 'she' of the title is still uncreated; she is neither here nor there because neither 'here' nor 'there' has been defined with any reliability. 'She' might be the omniscient narrator looking down, or a third-person character musing as she holds up 'a comb, a fine comb, a broken comb' then, quietly and fading towards a resolution, 'three pens and two pencils'

'Things she carried'

'A cheap comb, a comb with several teeth missing'

This minor shift in the text invites our evaluation and possibly kickstarts mental journeys (what kind of person would keep such a comb, and why?). It is accompanied – using the word reservedly now – by a shift in the guitar-like sounds, which dissolve into a quieter, warmer ambience. As a result, the voice moves further forward on our listening 'stage'.
'Three pens and two pencils', again; but this time the voice is in the foreground, louder and definite in tone. She – narrator, reader, reciter? – has reached centre stage in our listening. She is still separate. Her world is a third person narrative, apart from our first person listening. She is 'inside our head' but we are not inside hers.

ASIDE: Feeling tense

There can be no narrative without tense whether that tense is past, present, or a fluctuating No-Man's-Land between the two. A narrative – at least in the English language - requires the inclusion of verbs in order to proceed through time, in order for things to 'happen' convincingly. The deliberate obliteration of tense is difficult to achieve, and is perhaps more usually the province of haiku's encapsulated images, or the deliberate opacity of found-object sound poetry. Even so, it is very rare to find narration with no time at all.

Perhaps, in the same way that, as Lansky suggests, a painting can invite the viewer to create their own story (or stories), poetic imagery can invite the reader – by their subjective response to its allusions – to create their own temporal narrative and set their own clock running. But in general, once the narrative clock is ticking, careful engineering is required in order to move back and forth in time. Consider a common device in film: we hear a character in voice-over, telling a story from her past. As we listen we see the past happening on screen before our eyes – our eyes share her internal memory. Then, by a simple closing in of the shot, we 'enter' the memory and the past becomes present. The characters on screen take over the dialogue in their present, the voice-over fades. This kind of shift of focus is a simple device, regularly exploited in film, and sometimes literature, since visual (or visualized) information can help us go with the flow. There is a temporal counterpoint between two media - the aural 'past' and the visual 'present' – and we can easily isolate one tense at a time. It is much harder to appreciate that kind of separation in works for sound alone since – as with any 'single media' work – the nature of the material is elemental. There is certainly a counterpoint between the work and our reception of it but – especially in the case of sound-art – within the work tense can be usefully entangled with the abstract 'no time' of musical process.

10

Up until this point there has been no tense to this narrative other than that of the intermittently repeated 'things she carried', a phrase which tentatively imbues the a list of objects with a reported past and keeps us at a comfortable listening distance.

But, during the course of two lines of text there is a seemingly minor shift where, I suggest, everything changes. From this point forward, we – listening – know that nothing will be the same. Though there is no verb, these lines are in the present tense. Hannah Mackay's expertise – and Lansky's use of it - is such that a couple of subtle vocal inflexions take our listening from then to now.

'Change purse with one dollar and coins'
A brief sigh, an inhalation on the word 'change', then the smallest of pauses before the word 'coins'. It's the first audible breath in the piece and the implication of human presence couldn't be louder.

She is looking at the coins. They are in front of her – we now know this. The disembodied narrative voice has gone, instead we are listening to – no, *with* – a first person narrative, speaking now.

'Change purse with a dollar and 25,35,45 cents.'

She counts the change deliberately, pausing as she lays out the coins - '....25....35...45 cents' We don't hear the coins – in fact it is essential that we don't for then the work would tumble into the kind of 'radio play' genre that is the least of its concerns. Instead we are there, 'inside her head', listening – *really* listening – to the music of her thoughts.

After a pause in which we can only contemplate we hear her voice again – 'Things She Carried'. Whereas the first time around this was merely the title of the piece, now we are together, *really* listening, and she is there. The voice speaks to us, the volume and placing of the sound is close to our listening ears – she has looked up to tell us something, in an explanatory aside. She has entered our listening – and we have entered hers - just as we look through the door by way of Vermeer's sight.

And things sound different from the inside.When the voice returns the processing is more apparent. The real (almost) unprocessed voice is layered with versions of itself that are blurred and sonorous rather than clearly intelligible as speech. Now the distinction between processed and unprocessed is apparent – a division between verbal meaning and emotional association is implied, indicating the personal narrative of 'feeling' within the character with whom we now listen and through whom we hear. The emotional highs and lows that accompany inward reflection are often unpredictable and inconsistent, similarly, the balance between music and meaning fluctuates here. For instance, the phrase 'a packet of homeopathic insomnia tablets' is heavily processsed and tuned – perhaps by some poignant association on her behalf - while 'rumpled kleenex' - perhaps a very ordinary and expected thing to find in a bag - is set up front, sounds 'real' and appears emotionally insignificant.

The voice stops, but the sound of her time and place continues for quite a while. And all the while we are still with her in the listening space that she, too, continues to inhabit. The sounds we hear are the sounds of inward listening. And we are still listening with her when the next movement starts (*Things she noticed*), we are still in her thoughts as her story continues to unfold.

The twist of narrative time and place that takes place in this piece is achieved not by words – not by verbs, tense or descriptive language - but by a narrative sensibility with regard to the composition of *sound.*

For a moment
Presque rien avec filles, by Luc Ferrari

The activity of listening can make us vulnerable; by apprising us of associations that we might not expect, or want, to encounter, or by prising all kinds of emotional resonances from the depths of our memory banks. This is no less true whether we are listening to Mozart or the cry of a newborn baby. But at least, listening to either *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* or a child's bedtime wail, we know which listening clothes to put on: we understand the boundaries of the experience. Perhaps the kind of trivial sampling trick that produces a chorus of dogs barking the National Anthem is mildly amusing because it makes a play on the discrepancy between these two listening attires. At the other extreme, it can sometimes seem as if the proffering of listening 'theories' to delineate the abstracted timbral gestures of acousmatic music, is an attempt to fit us out with 'musical' clothes of a predetermined style.

Well, in these terms Ferrari's *Presque rien avec filles* forces us to run around naked half the time. Once, at a concert, I observed someone listening to this piece with an ostentatious display of boredom and watch-glancing frustration. His behaviour partly indicated he was trying – and trying *very* hard – not to listen. The piece evidently didn't sit well in a concert situation, but this particularly obvious discrepancy between one listener's expectations of a 'tape piece' and what he actually got, made me wonder about what might be contributing to his 'being bored' so angrily. He was left waiting - for something that didn't turn up. And, as Adam Phillips remarks 'in this familiar situation, which evokes such intensities of feeling, we wait and we try to do something other than waiting, and we often get bored – the boredom of protest that is always a screen for rage.' (Phillips, p. 82)

Or course, it all depends on what you're waiting for. *Presque rien avec filles* breaks all the rules of engagement for both abstract music and, what might be construed as its counterpart in this context, a straightforward recording of the natural environment. At times it has a beat, yet in some respects it is an amorphous anecdotal fabric made of soundscape recordings. There are overtly *musique concrète* gestures and acousmatic abstraction, but there are also birds, wind, and distant gunshots. There are words, but there are no easily intelligible phrases. There is no story. Or rather, there are as many conflicting stories as you care to make. This is a piece that defies – that *defends* itself against – any revelations through formal analysis, and refuses to acquiese to a single genre other than being a 'work for sound alone'.

At many levels *Presque rien avec filles* draws attention to the several boundaries it fails to respect: those between music and sound, between coherence and confusion, between subjective and quasi-objective analysis. And between listening and being bored. The transgressing of boundaries is always risky, since it can place us with our feet in unknown territory. And we should beware of this, for if you accidentally step on the cracks between the paving stones, a bear will come and eat you up – there's a danger of a nasty surprise. But, for me, what makes *Presque rien avec filles* an interesting study in narrative terms is that by stepping on the cracks 'accidentally on purpose' it makes us aware of the space between, for a moment. And surprises are not all bad.

The intent of this piece seems deliberately opaque and alienating, and yet it rails against attempts to decipher it in other than subjective terms. The structure is an aural hotch-potch of disparate sections and sudden juxtapositions. Events don't seem to 'go' anywhere, and yet many things happen without apparent rhyme or reason. There's no point scrabbling to pin down the facts since facts, in Ferrari's world, are slippery events. So, to hell with both bears and boundaries; perhaps a personal approach to his sonic fiction is all that's left in terms of useful explanation. And a subjective, disjointed plurality is common practice in that epitome of the inclusive form - the novel. As a form, the novel can fruitfully accomodate all kinds of genre 'transgressions' - from letters, diary entries, and travel writing, to poetic imagery and even factual journalism. Just possibly there might be intimations that works for sound alone can have more allegiance to the literary than is audibly apparent. And that would be worth waiting for. So listen dangerously, up close and personal.

SOME KINDS OF NOW

Last Spring they had moved to a new house. She hadn't wanted to. Even now she lies in bed each night trying, with increasing desperation, to retain her image of the old house by cataloguing its details. With the child's inherent conservatism she longs to keep things 'the same', and so she drags her half-asleep consciousness on an internal journey, forcing herself to remember - the blousy red flowers on the sitting-room wallpaper; the little varnished pile of coins that served as a magic doorstop in the study; the hall carpet with its mysterious cobweb patterns; the smooth perfect rail of the banisters; the big tree in the back garden, that creaked against the wind like a ship at sea.

Third-person narrative by omniscient narrator who is privy to the memory and emotions of a character within the text. The 'now' is that of the character who is observed. We are not explicity aware of the narrator as a persona. Fiction – could not happen in real life.

Actually I made most of that up (did you believe me?) Well, on reflection it is mostly true, but the facts get a little more Proustian in the re-telling and poignancy has been laid on thick. Some facts have been changed to aid the flow. The memories have been infiltrated by a general comment on child behaviour in the third sentence, and a rather lame simile near the end. Of course, the purpose has also changed. Thirty-odd years ago a petulant kid in a strange new home wanted a 'security blanket' memory to grasp hold of. Now I'm older, sitting at a distance, in a different chair – and there's an audience.

First person 'confessional' aside by 'the author': a narrator self-consciously aware of the reader and the text. Implication of veracity – a false 'truth'. A shift in chronology ('thirty-odd years'...I'm older) brings time forward. Now, it appears, the narrator is stepping out of the text and speaking 'to camera'. The first paragraph is, in retrospect, revealed as a fiction.

And that was fiction, of course.
Yet even as I write this I find that I, too, can still take my internal journey around my own childhood home. And now, led back by details, I have retrieved the differing sensations of the cold tiles on a kitchen floor, stale air in a fusty conservatory, and the rough bark of a towering Ash, warm under my small hand.

Fiction. Now a new narrator implies that the time of writing is 'now': 'as I write this' claims the authority of *real* truth for the last paragraph and also draws the reader back to the 'real' time of writing – *before this was made fiction.* The authority of 'truth' is accentuated by the fact that now the reader is being invited to share a private moment of reflection, apparent fact in contrast to the preceding fiction. The narrator who speaks is 'the true author'. The second paragraph is, in retrospect, revealed as a fiction.

And that was fiction too, of course.
And that was fiction, too, of course.

+++

And that was fiction too. Of course! - pure fabrication, knocked together to illustrate a point about shifting narrative voice. Such shifts of inflection can merrily play havoc with our evaluation of the difference between fictional truth, fictionalised truth and the 'real' truth of non-fiction. Now I am telling the truth. But beware of the cracks: a change of font is an unreliable test of authority.

Presque rien avec filles is subject to similar unreliability in its transitions; between different narrative presences, and between where 'fiction' ends and 'truth' begins. One ostensibly straightforward narrative voice is the actual sound of the composer. At times we hear foreground sounds that are undeniably evidence of a human presence – breathing, movement and, just twice, a male voice. We deductively construct the narrative voice of 'the composer' who moves – now – in the natural landscape, listening, and recording material for his piece. Except that this *is* his piece that we are listening to. Like a dream within a dream, in which we wake to find we are still dreaming, Ferrari's apparent presence within his own piece provides an invasive irritant that draws attention to boundaries we might otherwise not have noticed.

Listen...

At about 3:40 a male voice – a single word (perhaps 'vont', 'vente'? - I can't be sure), quite loudly in the foreground. Unexpected. And then the sound of someone moving -

the composer?

In retrospect it's as if the opening minutes of the piece were just an overture to something that will now unfold more clearly. But instead he pulls across the curtain and ushers in a more 'realistic' section of outdoor, natural sound. A forest or mountain landscape filled with the sound of the wind in the trees, birdsong and open space.

Much later, the sound of feet moving over the undergrowth, and again the crunching and scrabbling that indicate small sounds of movement writ large by proximity. The foreground sounds of breathing and the rustle of movement.

At the very end of the piece, his voice again.

It sounds like 'caché dans la main' – 'concealed in the hand'. If so, this is perhaps an explicit reference to the microphone, the act of recording and of his 'being there'. But, whatever he says, his voice is a reminder of his continuing presence.

and then a faint female voice speaking to a companion in the landscape to which he listens, his breath audible to us but not to her.

The woman who speaks to her companion is a distant part of the 'now' of the observed landscape of Nature. Her voice is almost blown away on the breeze. It is his nature, and hers – but she cannot hear him listening.

The sound of his breath, and feet moving- in the landscape. Finally, the sound of his breath again – but moving inside, into a room acoustic without any sounds from the natural landscape. Indoors.

In the different 'kind' of now we now inhabit, the 'real' composer is making the piece, or listening to it. Making it up now – as we listen.

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Each entry of 'the composer' comes as a minor surprise - like meeting a friend in the street, though we knew they lived in the vicinity. At these points – most noticeably when he actually speaks – we are suddenly aware of the difference between the 'first-person' fabricated 'composer'and the apparently unmediated natural environment. When he was absent, we were not especially aware of the absence - we did not *hear* the absence. When he comes back, we notice he wasn't there- and we perceive the difference: bumping into our friend we yell - 'hello! I haven't seen you for *ages*!' rather than 'there you are!'. And the friction between absence and presence reveals something in the space between: while absence and presence are jostling together, another voice is made explicit for a moment, that of the piece itself. We notice that which is usually taken for granted – the compositional equivalent of the authorial voice of the novel. The tantalising, barely perceived, awareness of a separate 'personality' who relates the text we read is precisely the voice that gives the novel the authority of being (for the duration of our reading) 'true'. An authorial voice is part of the novel and cannot be perceived as distinct from the work itself just as, recorded inside the landscape, 'the composer' is an elemental part of *Presque rien avec filles.*

But it is not Ferrari's voice, or movement, or his words that, ultimately, reveal the 'authorial voice' of the piece – it is the moment at the end of the piece when we hear him 'outside' the natural environment. We have been prepared for the sudden 'shift' by the friction between hearing 'the composer' in the landscape and hearing the landscape alone. But the last few seconds of the piece, where we hear 'him' in a different acoustic with no 'outdoor' ambience, show 'the

composer' divided from his text. The ending of a piece is a powerful moment, and this disruptive revelation places all our 'memories' of how the piece 'went' at risk – its as if we've peeped behind the scenes and seen how it's done. Things will never be the same, no matter how many details we try to remember.

Some music...

Now a low drum slowly beating, gradually emerging as an almost regular pulse. The timbre is muffled and indistinct, but quite loud.
Now, over the drum, there's a hissing, flanged sound – it is looped repeatedly, almost three to a measure. An intensification of volume and timbre. But some kind of 'real-world' environment - birds, thunder, wind? - seems to be leaking through from beneath the surface.

Now a change – to a less regular drum beat. A new, harsher flanged sound that could be processed wind or thunder. Then a higher-pitched sweeping sound over this. Again, repetitions over the drum beat. The sounds move, panning left to right. 'Off stage' sound interrupts and comes forward for a few moments– something dark and thundering.

Now a new section, *più mosso*: a metallic hammering sound moving left to right in a regular rhythm, plus a quicker pulse - like a rather energetic bird that can keep time. Possibly a dog barked a couple of times – somewhere in the distance, outside.

Everything stops. A male voice utters a single word, quite loudly and 'to audience'.

+++

Ferrari's authorial games are just one aspect of an extraordinarily disruptive ethos. An ethos which values insecurity, subjectivity, and choosing to be lost.

This opening passage of *Presque rien avec filles* functions primarily as abstract music: its formal processes are clear – extremely simple in fact – and though the timbres are fairly complex, the way they are orchestrated is easily comprehended. Though the music is not explicity programmatic, there is something ritualistic, perhaps processional, about the repetition over a slow drum beat. It goes on for nearly four minutes. Listening to this as the opening of an abstract work we might have certain crude expectations – namely that it will probably get louder and louder and then there will be some kind of bang. The tam-tam player is counting furiously, or the drummer has both sticks poised. In this world time and place are measured in pulse and pitch. All the indications are that this stuff is music, so we listen accordingly.

But although this passage might seem conventional on the surface, it is engaged in an under-the-table battle with sounds that don't ask for 'musical' listening. Whenever musical phrases stop for a breather some ambiguous sound from the

real world leaks through – as if the music is screening some neighbouring eyesore that, though it can't be removed, can at least be concealed from view.

There's another problem: the expected 'bang' doesn't happen. The tam-tam player stands idle and instead we get a brief utterance from 'the composer' to introduce a natural, outside environment, dripping with birdsong, the resonance of wind in the trees and echoes from the hills. These sounds invite – require - a different listening; more than that, they appear to defeat musical listening. It's just one thing after another.[10] Our evaluation of 'what this work is' is undermined. The opening minutes commit us to musical listening – despite a few dodgy moments – and then, just when we'd got comfortable, the carpet is pulled from under our feet. Of course, the piece can't pull that trick twice since we're now wary, ready to hop from one foot to another. But the bang will come – later – when we're least expecting it.

In narrative terms these juxtaposed passages perhaps reveal the difference between one kind of literary variety and another. Turning the page we find the next chapter starts with an epistle. But although the narrative is deliberately fractured, we are not yet lost.

Some more music...

In the natural landscape, almost nothing going on: one ear on Ferrari in the foreground and the other on the sounds of birds and the wind. Here's a dog – a hot dog, panting for a drink. A bit too close – and the sound pans from right to left, the repeated sound of his panting becomes a regular pulse. And then he's gone. Some very distant gun shots.

+++

In the natural landscape, *almost* 'almost nothing' going on: one ear idly listening to the familiar natural landscape, the other noticing that distant gun shots have started. Perhaps they're shooting birds. Was that a cuckoo? Forty seconds later the landscape seems to have started tapping its feet – short gestures that sound a bit like the guns, bits of cuckoo and a little plink occasionally. Some of those timbres came out of the percussion cupboard. The texture is gradually getting more complicated and louder. Music.

+++

In the natural landscape, almost music going on: those fragmentary sounds have become less shy; louder and there are more of them. The 'musical' patterning they make is clearly distinct from the continuing natural landscape. Just then a fragment, suddenly, of a female voice 'mmm...', speaking in the landscape.

+++

We've been listening to two worlds, attending at one moment to the sounds of a natural landscape and at other times to a distinctly 'musical' structuring. With two rule-books open on our laps, we're able to mix and match, and to appreciate the contrast between the (apparently) natural landscape where things just happen, and the (apparently) musical landscape where things are composed, and need to be deciphered. The fragments of sound that become 'notes' for a more rhythmically structured patterning are drawn from the natural environment, or sound as if they could have been, and the composed rhythms infiltrate the natural rhythm of the landscape before coming to the fore as 'music'. We appreciate the sounds of the natural environment in their new role as musical objects – a cuckoo makes an interesting ostinato, guns are quite convincing as percussive instruments – and we appreciate the two 'varieties' of listening. Unlike the opening of the piece, 'music' here arises out of the natural landscape. The trick now is to somehow detach this music from the surrounding landscape without removing either from view. Its as if a juggler has picked up some objects from the kitchen table, and now delights us with an increasingly daring display of throw and catch. But its only natural that he'll drop the pepperpot eventually.

With a bang...

In the natural landscape, almost nothing going on: one ear on Ferrari in the foreground and the other on the sounds of birds and the wind. Here's a dog – a hot dog, panting for a drink. A bit too close – and the sound pans from right to left, the repeated sound of his panting becomes a regular pulse. And then he's gone. Some very distant gun shots. *Bang!>>>>>> an unidentifable gesture that cuts across without warning. But its gone before you know it, and isn't very long. Perhaps a processed gun sound. The birds don't stop singing.*

In the natural landscape, *almost* 'almost nothing' going on: one ear idly listening to the familiar natural landscape, the other noticing that distant gun shots have started. Perhaps they're shooting birds. Was that a cuckoo? Forty seconds later the landscape seems to have started tapping its feet – short gestures that sound a bit like the guns, bits of cuckoo and a little plink occasionally. Some of those timbres came out of the percussion cupboard. The texture is gradually getting more complicated and louder. Music.

BANG!>>>>>> an unidentifiable gesture cuts across without warning. And this time its much louder and more disruptive. But the birds continue.

In the natural landscape, almost music going on: those fragmentary sounds have become less shy; louder and there are more of them. The 'musical' patterning they make is clearly distinct from the continuing natural landscape. Just then a fragment, suddenly, of a female voice 'mmm...', speaking in the landscape.

The music travels through the landscape and we shift our listening view from one to the other, without too much confusion. These first two 'bangs' which curtail events and bring us back to the natural landscape are unexpected but not completely alien. They are different in 'shape' from what we are used to but, like the dog who padded past a while ago, we can allow them a surreal familiarity. But there is an underlying friction here: in Barthes' terms we move from externalised

listening to the internalized listening we employ for music, and yet we are cheated. The way in which 'music' arises from the landscape might seem to allow us to hedge our bets, but in fact the slow refocussing encourages us to commit far more to musical listening than we might if the piece cut suddenly from birdsong to Beethoven, and back again. But the 'music', despite its implications of 'going somewhere', is repeatedly thwarted by a disruptive gesture. We are once more aware of the natural landscape, and unsure of how things will 'go on'.
We don't know where we are, and we look at our watches in frustration. We are aware of two ways of listening, and of listening in two ways at once, but we are not yet aware of the space between.

IN TRAIN

I am sitting in a train, at the back of the carriage, facing forward. The carriage is nearly empty – just four or five other people dotted about. The walls are yellow, the seats are a deep blue. Even though it is mid-morning, the fluorescent strip- lights are on. All sitting in bright isolation, staring straight ahead.

Now I lean against the cold, greasy glass of the window – fingerprints and smudges show it for what it is. The world is outside: rain, trees, houses, office buildings, cars and people. A man is walking his dog across Walthamstow marshes, they are alone. Only we know this.

Then I turn away from the window to look directly down the train carriage again. The outside world exists only in peripheral vision as a blur of green and grey.

But then, for a moment, it seems as if the train carriage is a long tube of separate space - real, bright and stationary – travelling at speed through an equally stationary world. Both are perfectly in focus. Nothing moves except the difference between them.

+++

Sometimes we transcend our normal interpretation of the facts: we manage to shift our narrative construction of experience and the invisible is made visible for a while. Perhaps Ferrari's offering of 'now it's music' and 'now it's landscape' is like being in the moving train and looking at the outside world. We can flit from observing one view to another – the train carriage or the outside world - and we can certainly apprehend both at once, but we do so by a process of comparison. This involves choosing one view or the other as our point of reference in relating the two. But the train is also *moving* through the world, just as the music 'moves through' the landscape of *Presque rien avec filles*. How would it be if, for a few moments, it was not music or landscape we listened to, but the *movement* of one thing through another.

When we followed 'the composer' around in the piece we accompanied, at his invitation, an audible narrator who himself moved through the landscape. We were walking around in the piece with him. But when we are walking in a landscape we do not perceive our movement as separate from ourselves and we do not, as a rule, perceive ourselves as apart from the landscape – like Ferrari, our feet are on the ground and we are 'doing' the moving. But when we listened to the distinctly musical textures that detached themselves from the landscape of natural sounds, it was as if we were sitting – motionless - in the train carriage; at these times we were listening *inside* a music that itself travelled forward through a surrounding sonic landscape that, like the blurred view outside the window, had retreated to the background.

It would take something extremely bizarre to refocus our perception so that we could be not only aware of both worlds at once, but be aware of being 'inside' both music and landscape – *at the same time*. A shift in our subjective narrative would have to occur that meant what we were listening in two different ways simultaneously, in a manner that what we perceived was beyond the point of moving from one state to the other.

In the natural landscape, almost music going on: those fragmentary sounds have become less shy; louder and there are more of them. The 'musical' patterning they make is clearly distinct from the continuing natural landscape. Just then a fragment, suddenly, of a female voice 'mmm...', speaking in the landscape.

BANG! >>>>>>> a very loud, very sudden and very surprising 'drum-kit' riff. Everything else stops while this is going on.

+++

As the cacophonous drum-kit clattering sears through the landscape we, along with the birds, fall off our listening perch. All we hear is movement. In isolation. The gesture is astoundingly unexpected – unpolished, unexplained and derivative of another world. It marks the point where the 'visible' narrative voices of music, of landscape and of the two together, are kicked out of view. Now there's yet another narrator – who smirks knowingly, sitting behind a drum-kit with both sticks poised – who reveals all that 'went on' before as fiction. Even the stuff we thought was real.

Female voices. One German, one Italian, one French - to left, right and centre. Their words are intelligible some of the time, but the phrases are fragmented-*....der blick... s'importante...quasi remoto...*and sometimes masked by the sounds of the natural landscape. This is not a conversation. There are intermittent loud percussive gestures. Fragments of speech – sibilants and parts of words - interspersed with wood-block plinks and fragmentary temple-block glissandi.

Ferrari presents us with a sound that is the least likely to 'succeed' as abstract music, and he uses this sound to build a musical texture – an obviously composed music. In normal circumstances we just cannot separate normal speech from the

natural landscape of our experience – speech can be acted, made artificial in its rhythms and inflections, fragmented so that words become meaningless, spoken in a language we don't understand - but it is still speech and part of our world. Many composers have celebrated this fact and the effect on our listening when the normal role of speech is undermined.[11] And Ferrari does this too - the voices speak in different languages, together but in isolation. It is essential that they do not speak the same language, for even if their phrases were unrelated, we would attempt to make linguistic connections.[12] We hear intelligible speech, but for various reasons cannot quite make out what they're saying. Listening to these relaxed voices, speaking together within the natural landscape, we accept the sounds as phatic: expressions of human sociability – humans *being* - rather than carriers of narrative meaning. And this is a real achievement, since we generally grab hold of speech as a useful narrative lead – a while back, when 'the composer' spoke just one word to us, we followed him around for *ages*.

But we don't feel the same now. For a start, we're still reeling from a narrative bang that snatched away all points of comparison. Previously we had perceived a gentle friction between music and landscape, but then we stood on the cracks for a moment. Now perhaps we are mistrustful of what is going on – or *how* things are 'going'. We don't listen only to the words, we don't listen only to the music. We are ready to listen to the space between.

The texture grows more frantic – faster, and more rhythmically defined. Low pitched sounds – vocal?- start to contribute a tuned pattern. Small sounds – a whistle, percussion, voice.

This passage – for me, speaking subjectively – is where time, and movement in time, shifts a notch: listening, I hear the *presence* of the movement of one thing through another, and not the moving things themselves. There is something external to my perception of a music that uses the sounds of landscape and a landscape that *is* music. The invisible is apprehended for a while.

Perhaps we are made ready for it; we have been moving from one view to another, comparing, contrasting, wondering what might happen and entertaining certain expectations. Things might not have happened quite as we expected, but we managed to adjust our reading of this diverse narrative to incorporate the fictionalization of Ferrari's scufflings, an over-heated dog, some musically inclined guns and a cuckoo that put itself about a bit too much. Even the percussive twangs made for interesting structural diversions that we, looking back, could relate to the kind of music that had bubbled up out of the sounds of the natural world. Everything had made sense until that big bang that recreated our listening universe. And now, in retrospect, one aspect of Ferrari's compositional 'simplicity' becomes apparent: if either the music – our view of the train carriage – or the landscape – our view of the world – had been too engrossing, we might have become too interested in the way things looked. It's ok to be bored.

Then there's the faint sound of human movement – inside a room, in another place. Just when recognisable birds begin to sing, everything stops.

For a moment.

Notes

1. I have chosen these specific pieces for several reasons: I like them and they interest me; they are both quite widely obtainable on CD; they are very different from one another, yet neither sits well in the 'tape music' concert tradition and both are concerned with issues markedly outside the preoccupations of abstract music or art. This chapter is deliberately written to offer interest without necessarily requiring the works to hand on first reading.
2. In my opinion gallery concerts, in which music is commissioned 'to go with' an exhibition both recognize at some level this likelihood, and fail to understand the importance of a silent auditorium.
3. Liner notes, *Things She Carried,* Bridge, 1997.
4. '*trompe-l'oeil*, by taking away a dimension from real objects, highlights their presence and their magic through the simple unreality of their minimal exactness. *Trompe-l'oeil* is the ecstasy of the real object in its immanent form. It adds to the formal charm of painting the spiritual charm of the lure, the mystification of the senses. For the sublime is not enough, we must have the subtle too, the spirit which consists in reversing the real in its very place. This is what we have unlearned from modernity – subtraction is what gives strength; power emerges from the absence.' (Baudrillard, 1997, p.9)
5. 'All the utopias of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have, by realizing themselves, expelled the reality out of reality and left us in a hyperreality devoid of sense, since all final perspective has been absorbed, leaving as a residue only a surface without depth. Could it be that technology is the only force today that connects the sparse fragments of the real? But what has become of the constellation of sense? And what about the constellation of the secret?' (Baudrillard, 1997, p.12)
6. I will come back to what fiction and non fiction in sound-art could mean in relation to Ferrari's *Presque rien avec filles.*
7. 'The writer moves from narrative to direct speech without the use of the usual markers (e.g. *Mary approached John. Did the man see you yesterday? John looked away*).' Crystal, 1987, p.77)
8. In certain genres that inhabit a world between dramatic play and epic narration there can be a narrative voice, of course – consider the chorus or messenger of Greek Tragedy.
9. For instance, the narrator of 'Our Town'. And this 'cross-pollination' also extends back to the novel, the 'Private Dick' detective novel being a prime example of a genre that borrows back the knowing voice-over from the B-movie film. The sixth movement of *Things She Carried* – not discussed here – makes hommage to precisely that.
10. Roland Barthes provides a useful reflection on two different kinds of listening, if one ignores the woeful generality in his musical references: '"listening" to a piece of classical music, the listener is called upon to "decipher" this piece, i.e. to recognize (by his culture, his application, his sensibility) its construction, quite as coded (predetermined) as that of a palace at a certain period; but "listening" to a composition (taking the word here in its etymological sense) by John Cage, it is

each sound one after the next that I listen to, not in its syntagmatic extension, but in its raw and as though vertical *signifying*: by deconstructing itself, listening is externalized, it compels the subject to renounce his "inwardness".' Barthes, 1985, p. 259)

11. I discuss this more specifically my contribution to *A Poetry of Reality: Composing with recorded sound.* (Norman, 1996)

12. As with Glenn Gould's sound documentary, *The Idea of North,* which plays on the tension to be had from connected meanings in a contrapuntal texture and thereby *encourages* a dual appreciation of 'music' and 'speech'.

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Musical Intuitions and the Function of Music Theories

Scott Gleason

I. Introduction

In our sense of the development of music theory as a discipline over the last forty years, there is a turn we seemed to have missed. At one point, in the transcription of a lecture published in *Words About Music*, Milton Babbitt hints at the role of a single word in the creation and discussion of music:

> Still, the *Jakobsleiter* hexachords are combinatorial; Schoenberg was *intuitively* thinking ahead to twelve-tone things. I use the word *intuitively* because he obviously was unaware of it at the time in any conscious way. Those of you who are aware of the remarkable relation between any two complementary hexachords will know that two hexachords will always have the same intervallic content—the same intervallic content but not necessarily distributed in the same way.[1]

What makes this more interesting than we may normally expect, is that in the actual lecture, Babbitt pauses to clarify his use of the word "intuitively," in a sense stepping outside of the discussion:

> Schoenberg was even so intuitively thinking ahead to twelve-tone things (I'll use the word intuitively and... you know, and, infer what you will from it... uh, but I mean he obviously was unaware of it at the time in any conscious way is all I mean) that he took two very very different hexachords, for example, please notice that they are different. Those of you who are aware of the remarkable relation....[2]

In the published version Babbitt seems sure of his word choice and meaning; in the actual lecture he hesitates, and this hesitation betrays a sense that the word and connotations that accompany it are important and may be potentially misconstrued.[3] This word is loaded, has important ramifications. Thus while the published version may lead us to overlook the centrality of this notion for Babbitt's characterization of Schoenberg, the actual lecture calls it to attention. And to generalize, while we have largely overlooked the appeal to intuition in the discourse of recent music theorists, the notion lurks just beneath the surface of our discourse, functioning in not unimportant ways.

II. Intuitive/Counterintuitive

John Rahn's "Logic, Set Theory, Music Theory" (1979) discusses a tonal theory of his own devising, one based on Heinrich Schenker's conception of musical levels and Benjamin Boretz's *Meta-Variations*, conceived as an extension of axiomatic set theory yet intended to be pedagogically useful and directed toward musical experience (in this case, Rahn's own experience of

Mozart, K. 331, mvt. 1, ms. 1-8).[4] In his opening declaration, Rahn gives us the origin and ostensible goal of his theory:

> Starting from the presumptuous assumption that our interest is primarily focused on particular pieces of music—after all, we never musically listen to anything else—the following statement becomes a useful if controversial characterization: an analytical music theory is a device by which someone communicates his insights about a particular piece of music. (114)

Thus Rahn begins his article with general meta-theoretical considerations in which, by virtue of the locution "analytical music theory," music theory is considered to be a subset of analysis, which is directed toward deepening our experiences of individual pieces. An "analytical music theory," for Rahn, is a "device," a vehicle through which one's "insights" are encapsulated in an act of interpersonal communication. Rahn goes on to say that theories of individual pieces may borrow from more general theories (such as Schenker's), but that they "differ significantly" because they are agent and piece centered. Thus the communication of knowledge about an individual experience of a piece is held to be the *reason* for our theoretical discourse. As will become clearer, our intuitions play an important role in this process.[5]

Rahn continues by discussing the importance of formal logic for a theoretician's work (an importance attributed to its "neutrality" as a means of communication) and by identifying concept-formation with definition-formation. Thus his goal in the system-building section of the article is to create a string of definitions which is an extension of axiomatic set theory and which will formalize, as concepts, his "insights" into the Mozart piece. More immediately, however, Rahn prefaces the exposition of his theory by characterizing it as "a rudimentary but complete theory for tonal music."

> Its virtues are that it *is* rudimentary and therefore extendible into particular more detailed theories tailored for specific pieces.... Moreover, it is a theory of both pitch and rhythm. "Level-analysis" is *defined* in this theory, as a predicate, and examples of level-analyses satisfying this definition will be given. Every level in such an analysis is expressible in unmodified musical notation, and thus may be performed—on a piano, for example. This kind of direct connection between the analytical and the audible is invaluable. (117)

While the first section of this quotation would seem at odds with his goal of creating a theory particular to K. 331, it becomes clear that certain basic definitions are applicable to any piece, so analyzed, but that certain modifications and additions to the theory will suffice to explain the uniqueness of *this* piece. Again important is the musically audible impact of analytical decisions, here expressed through performability.

Example 1 presents Rahn's system.[6] As noted, definitions constitute Rahn's theory, and we are told that they proceed "in a natural order; earlier definitions are used in later definitions." (118) There are ten in sum (with various alternatives supplied in order to allow for a fuller treatment of pieces that may require a subtler shading), ranging from such atomic concepts as "note" and "rest" to time and pitch adjacencies, neighbor notes, prolongation, level-

analysis, and finally, the concept of "level" itself.[7] Boretz has commented recently on the form of Rahn's theory:

> John's preoccupation with the formalization of time-dimensions is evident in the conceptual-hierarchical parity he assigns to the predicates "note" and "rest," "pitch-adjacency" and "time-adjacency" in "Logic, [Set Theory, Music Theory]" for example.... "Logic" wants to extend formalization to the foreground limits of individual compositions and to the analytic predicates of Schenker-derived "levels."[8]

Example 1: "Rahn's Definitional Tonal System"

I x is a note
IFF $x = \langle z, \langle T_1, T_2 \rangle\rangle$ for some value of z, T_1, T_2.

II x is a rest
IFF $x = \langle s, \langle T_1, T_2 \rangle\rangle$ for some value of T_1 and T_2. (s is a constant.)

III x and y are time-adjacent
IFF x and y are notes or rests and T_2 of x equals T_1 of y or T_2 of y equals T_1 of x. (One note begins where the other leaves off.)

IVA x and y are pitch-adjacent
IFF x and y are notes whose pitches are a minor, major, or augmented second apart.

IVB x and y are circle of fifths pitch-adjacent
IFF x and y are notes whose pitches are a perfect fourth of fifth apart.

IVC x and y are pitch-adjacent with respect to C
IFF C is a cyclic ordering of pitch classes and x and y are notes whose pitches are less than an octave apart and belong to pitch classes that are adjacent in C.

IVD x and y are chromatically adjacent
IFF x and y are pitch-adjacent with respect to the chromatic scale.

IVE x and y are diatonically adjacent
IFF x and y are pitch-adjacent with respect to a major scale.

IVF x and y are extended diatonically adjacent
IFF x and y are pitch-adjacent with respect to a major or harmonic minor or melodic minor scale.

IVG x and y are circle of fifths adjacent
IFF x and y are pitch-adjacent with respect to the circle of fifths.

IVH x and y are triad-adjacent
IFF x and y are pitch-adjacent with respect to any (cyclic) ordering of a major or minor pitch-class triad.

VA x and y are neighbors
IFF x and y are time-adjacent and pitch-adjacent (IVA).

VB x and y are N* neighbors

IFF *x* and *y* are time-adjacent and circle of fifths pitch-adjacent (IVB) or circle of fifths adjacent (IVG).

VC *x* and *y* are neighbors with respect to *C*
IFF *x* and *y* are time-adjacent and pitch-adjacent with respect to *C* (IVC).

VIA *x* and *y* N-prolong *z*
IFF *x* and *y* are neighbors and *z* is a note whose pitch equals the pitch of *x* or of *y* and whose initiation (value of T_1) is the earliest initiation of *x* or of *y* and whose release (value of T_2) is the latest release of *x* or of *y*.

VIB *x* and *y* N*-prolong *z*
IFF *x* and *y* are N* neighbors and *z* is a note whose pitch equals the pitch of *x* or of *y* and whose initiation (value of T_1) is the earliest initiation of *x* or of *y* and whose release (value of T_2) is the latest release of *x* or of *y*.

VIC *x* and *y* NC-prolong *z*
IFF *x* and *y* are neighbors with respect to *C* and *z* is a note whose pitch equals the pitch of *x* or of *y* and whose initiation (value of T_1) is the earliest initiation of *x* or of *y* and whose release (value of T_2) is the latest release of *x* or of *y*.

VII *A* arp-prolongs *B*
IFF *A* is a set of notes or rests and *B* is a set of notes and a pitch is in *A* IFF it is in *B*, and all initiations (T_1) in *B* are equal to each other and equal to the earliest initiation in *A*, and all releases (T_2) in *B* are equal to each other and equal to the latest release in *A*.

VIII *A* is a next-background to *B*
IFF *A* and *B* are distinct sets and for at least one set A^1 and at least one set B^1, A^1 partitions *A* and B^1 partitions *B* and there is at least one one-to-one correspondence, *X*, from A^1 to B^1, such that for every member of *X*, $<a,b>$, $b=a$ or *b* NC-prolongs *a* or *b* arp-prolongs *a*.

IX *A* is a level-analysis of *B*
IFF *B* is a set of notes or rests and *A* is a set of sets of notes or rests and *B* is an element of *A* and every member of *A* except *B* is a next background to exactly one member of *A*.

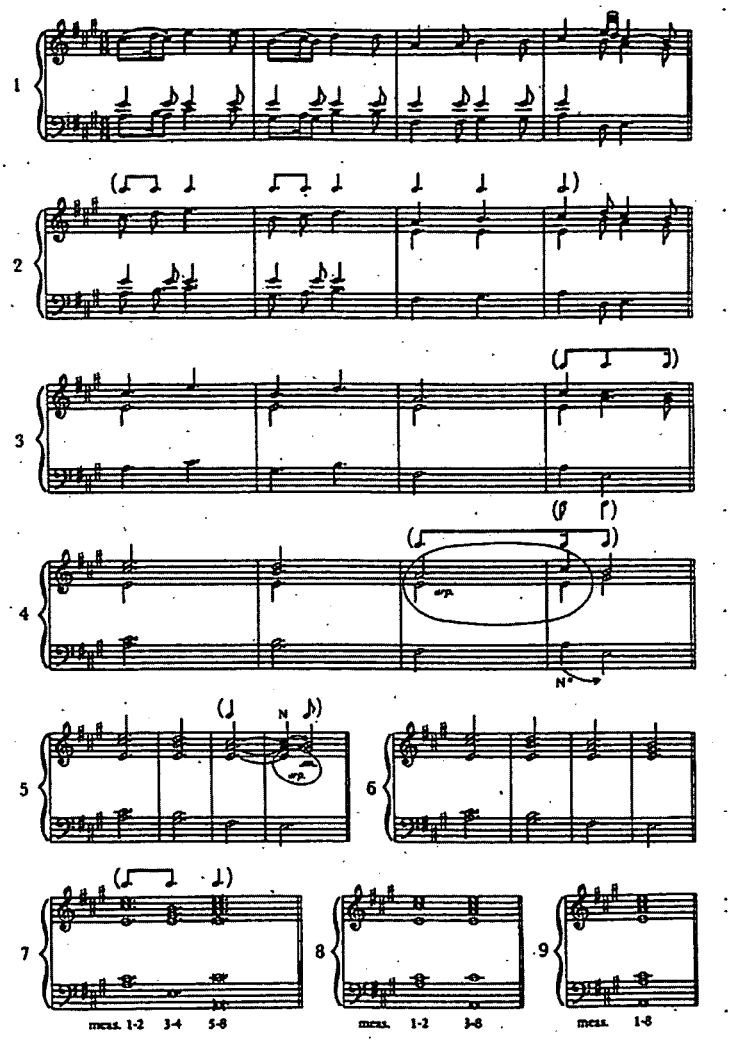
X *A* is a level
IFF for some value of *X* and *Y*, *A* is an element of *X* and *X* is a level-analysis of *Y*. (*A* is a level if *A* is a member of some level-analysis.)

Only after the system has been presented, and formalization introduced, does Rahn offer an analysis of the Mozart passage which demonstrates and actualizes the system he has created, one allowing him to communicate his perceptions of the Mozart piece. As he says: "I do enjoy hearing the piece through this analysis." (124) Example 2 reproduces Rahn's Example 7. (125) Here we can see that the analysis casts itself as a "level analysis" in the vein of Schenker.[9] Yet while such an analysis does fall out of his theory,[10] these strands of the music most emphatically are not what Rahn draws to his reader's attention in his prose. They are subsidiary to "the rhythmic-motivic inter-level

structures that contribute coherence to this analysis." (124) Basically, what Rahn likes to "hear" in this analysis are the various instantiations of three rhythmic motives that appear at various levels of the music.

Example 2: Rahn's Ex. 7: Mozart K. 331, mvt. 1, ms. 1-8

Ex. 7: Mozart, K. 331, measures 1–4 (1–8).



This is most curious. For example, what one might call "motive a" appears on Rahn's level 3, ms. 4, rotated *and* augmented.[11] While I sense a *correlation* to the "original" motive, I honestly cannot *perceive*—i.e., actually hear in the moment of listening—it as an ordered rotation and augmentation of the "original" motive. Indeed, it seems counterintuitive, even strange, to suggest that the version of motive a which occurs at level 3, ms. 4, is an ordered rotation beginning with the third member of the motive, at the ratio of

augmentation 1:2. This is especially so given that although we can sing, play, or mentally hear level 3 in isolation, and thus concentrate on the rhythmic-motivic relationship, in terms of an experience of the "surface" of the piece, we will need to hear C# "through" E and D, mentally realign the right hand A-C# to begin on the last eighth of beat one, compare the resultant rhythm of the right hand in level 3, ms. 4 to the right hand in level 1, ms. 1, recognize that it is an augmentation at the ratio of 1:2, and recognize that it is an ordered rotation beginning with the third member of the group, all of this during the span in which that measure occurs. While surely we will have intuitions along these paths, thus linking some of these notions, my experience tells me that we will not be able to perceive all these relations in this amount of detail, and thus Rahn's claim that the Mozart piece is "hearable" through this analysis at best seems in need of explanation. In sum, it seems utterly counterintuitive.

Of course, I have offered here a construction of how one might hear Rahn's analysis through the Mozart piece, overlooking the fact that before the analysis Rahn states that he enjoys "hearing the piece through this analysis." Thus, I have inverted this relationship, assuming a symmetry which perhaps does not truly hold. My difficulty "hearing" the steps outlined may thus stem from the fact that this reconstruction does not seem to be Rahn's goal. Maybe he intends that one should listen to the various rhythmic-motivic relationships within the levels of his analysis (aided by the example), thus allowing the piece to be absorbed into the analysis, not the other way around, and hence that a musical listening to this piece is actually a musical listening to his analysis.

This construal of the author's intentions, though, itself seems counterintuitive. I invoke the notion that the analysis and my reading of it is counterintuitive partially because before focusing our attention on his analysis, Rahn makes a fascinating statement:

> This is not the place in which to discuss the *intuitions* by which this particular analysis was arrived at, or the ways in which analytical decisions in this theory closely reflect decisions in performance and in listening. (124, emphasis added)

This is the moment in Rahn's article that I find most intriguing: in the transition from a discussion of the theory to a discussion of the analysis the reader is asked to make a leap of faith. Rahn's silence regarding his musical intuitions about the actual analysis is problematic. We, as his audience, are not allowed to know what led to his analysis; we are only told that there were "intuitions." Although Rahn's theory is meant to be systematic, it is not meant to be self-enclosed; it is intended to explain hearings of pieces. But again his analysis seems counterintuitive. This is especially the case given what Rahn himself says about the essential audibility and performability of the examples which demonstrate his theory. These rhythmic motives are not musically hearable, or if they are, the degree to which they are seems remarkably limited. In retrospect there even seems to be a defensiveness to his claim to the audibility and performability of his analysis.

Thus a further question: what kinds of entities are these rhythmic motives? They are so very abstract; Rahn offers no discussion of diminutions which may have produced them. So, in what sense do they have a presence? For even though they appear in different musical voices, these "voices" do not interact

with the motives in a tangible way. Our received notion of "motive" is very much one of the nineteenth century, in which motives are generative and audible, but Rahn's rhetorical sense does not accord with this notion. These seem to be less "motives" than permutational sets of durational values. In an aural sense, it seems that these are not "things," but rather traces or tracks of something else. We cannot speak about them directly; they are not perceptual realities, but rather metaphors or analogies, reflecting or implying the sounding music yet distinct from that music.

Boretz gives us a clue towards understanding Rahn's motivations:

> Alongside this formalist fervor, there is in ... "Logic"... a nascent, evolving awareness of the predestined shortfall of any formalized pitch-time theory in reaching its own music-explanatory aspirations, because of its essential indeterminacy with respect to the experiential ontology of perceived music—at minimum in the Wittgensteinian sense in which the logicized rational reconstruction of cognition actually occupies a cognitive territory incoherent with respect to what it wishes to explicate. And, too, an awareness that the issues those [Rahn's] texts so completely and comprehensively aspire to handle occupy a domain completely inaccessible to the aesthetic and expressive issues and qualities for which music is most immediately compelling to its most avid consumers and practitioners. So the poignant question about what that "music" is which is being explicated arises monstrously, and John's texts are increasingly responsible to it.[12]

We are now in a better position to understand Rahn's methodology and previously "silent" meta-theoretical point, and his analysis seems less odd and even more intense for the way in which it changes how we now think about—even hear—this passage.[13] Whereas Rahn may have been silent as to his musical intuitions, he has not been completely silent as to his methodology. All of the sudden his earlier language seems to make sense. Thus we should revisit some passages that I had skipped-over during my initial outline of the article, with the goal of uncovering some of the hints that Rahn has given us regarding his methodology and the aims of his article.

As I have said, the piece we experience in Rahn's analysis is not the same as the foreground of the piece as heard and played. This is due largely to the rhythmic "motives" to which Rahn draws our attention; they seem to exist not in the realm of the phenomenally perceivable, but rather in a set-theoretical, mathematical, realm. There is a sense in which we cannot talk about the piece directly; our most intense musical intuitions are verbally silent, just as Rahn has been rhetorically silent as to his own musical intuitions. However, this should not be taken to imply that *nothing* could be said about the music. Indeed, earlier in the article, while contrasting the present theory to a more complex one of his creation, Rahn evokes the notion of intuition in describing his sense of the Mozart passage:

> There does exist an evolving enriched version of the theory presented here, a version that attempts to express even subtler intuitions, especially in regard to the integration of the degree of backgroundness of pitch/timepoints with the music's perceived development toward an

> arrival, in a sense of "arrival" that counterpoints metrical and non-metrical structures. (113)

Here Rahn intimates a theory with intuitions of unity ("integration") and teleology ("the music's perceived development toward an arrival") which he perceives in the music. Indeed, this is exactly what his analysis of the piece demonstrates: a musical "filling-out" or thickening, progressing as the phrase unfolds to its arrival at a half cadence, coupled with generative motives which correspond in many layers of the music. If we look more closely we can see that the majority of the rhythmic motives Rahn segments are located in levels 3-5, ms. 3-4. Thus it is not only the end of the phrase which presents multiple motives but also the middleground which holds these rotated motives. Further, for the end of the phrase, these motives do not exist in the far foreground and far background. Rahn says that he "perceived" the developments I have been describing, yet I read this statement of "perception" more as a *sense*, possibly even an intuition, of the phenomenological growth of the music. The music seems to tumble over on itself at the end of the phrase and widen in the middleground, even though the middleground appears to be the least complex of the levels (save for the far background), given Rahn's reductive analysis. As I stated earlier, through Rahn's analysis, the Mozart piece becomes something other than a purely perceived entity; it also becomes perceptually metaphorical yet abstract, exceptionally complex.

Taking a step back and considering the trajectory of the article, which is directed towards the Mozart analysis, we are forced to ask the question: does the system lead to the analysis? Given that the pivotal juncture between the two occurred so dramatically, with the notion of silent intuitions marking the breach, it may seem that the system does not lead to the analysis. However, in a subtle way it does. After defining note, rest, and time and pitch-adjacency, Definition IVC presents "the idea of so using adjacency within an ordered, 'syntactic' collection." (119) It reads:

> IVC *x* and *y* are pitch-adjacent with respect to *C*
> IFF *C* is a cyclic ordering of pitch classes and *x* and *y* are notes whose pitches are less than an octave apart and belong to pitch classes that are adjacent in *C*. (*ibid.*)

While this ostensibly defines ordered rotation solely within the context of pitch considerations, it includes rhythm because "note" (and thus pitch) was defined previously as holding "times of initiation" and "times of termination" analytic to it. Thus when Rahn moves, in his analysis, to consider ordered rotations of rhythmic-motivic sets, in a sense it is arranged beforehand, and in retrospect these motives seem, if not less abstract, at least less unprepared.[14]

As stated, there is a drama to the article, to the way it proceeds and especially to the turning point in which Rahn introduces his silent intuitions, although we can now sense the ways in which the "crisis moment" of the piece was prepared for ahead of time. For Rahn, intuition enters the discourse when the counterintuitive is made concrete. Intuition becomes a marker for inexpressible yet real perceptions and "arises monstrously" (to borrow from Boretz) when we move between the worlds of meta-theory and theory, theory and analysis, analysis and intense experiences of individual pieces.[15]

III. Intuition as Crisis

Given Benjamin Boretz's acuity in reading Rahn's project, it seems appropriate to turn to his own work. The "Ivy" movement of Boretz's "Language, as a Music" comments more generally on the role of "intuition" in music-theoretical discourse by also pondering the status of "music" itself and our interactions with it.[16] For Boretz, "intuition" identifies our "deepest, most passionate" experiences of music, experiences which we really do not have the words to accurately describe in our traditional music-theoretical "rhetoric of discourse." (172) We begin, however, by discussing the advantages of this rhetoric:

> I perceive that our invariant, and perhaps unreflective, profession of such a rhetoric of discourse is motivated primarily by social considerations, as providing an accessible, shared, medium of professional intercommunication, a medium whose very neutrality of form and expression conduces to the sense of maximally intersubjective cognitivity of content, yielding such content explicitly and lucidly, even at a single reading, with a minimum of impedance by such idiosyncratic stylistic qualities as are considered more appropriate to the privater precincts of works of art, thereby enabling the widest range of discussion, criticism, and reformulation by the largest number of interested colleagues. (171)

Thus our "rhetoric of discourse" avails us of a wide range of tools by which we can, as music theorists and academics, communicate with one another (Rahn's discussion of axiomatic set theory and Schenkerian theory come to mind) and even with music. Herein is the problem, though. This "rhetoric of discourse" has allowed us to understand certain "facts" in our musical worlds, yet at the same time has prevented us from examining that rhetoric in which we breathe, so to speak, because we assume it to be a neutral medium. The language we have invented to understand and communicate with each other and music remains largely unquestioned because it is the very medium in which we experience music. Hence the paradox: our discourse prevents us from examining music itself, but also prevents us from examining it; we are, it seems, unremediably suspended within the medium.

Page 172 of "Ivy" begins with the clause, "And yet,". When we turn the page and read or hear "And yet," we sense that we, as co-experiencers of Boretz's work, will now examine the linguistic world in which our ideas about music are formed, and, redemptively, that such examination is possible. The conjunction followed by a disjunction combines with the page turn to signify a turn in the dialogue: "and" continues previous thoughts, "yet" breaks the discussion (and the following comma helps to separate this from what follows).[17] The first sentence of page 172 states a premise, a reflection of the writer/speaker, not a conclusion: "And yet, I have been thinking that our deepest and most passionate work of thought is, first and foremost, intensely personal to each of us...." On the face of it, this seems tautological: our deepest, most passionate thoughts are just that, *our* thoughts. Actually, this would probably be more clearly expressed in the first person singular: *my* deepest thoughts are fundamentally personal to *me*. But this "tautology" functions on many levels; it continues yet breaks with what has preceded, a discussion of the interpersonal

nature of *our* "rhetoric of discourse," our ways of communicating with each other, suggesting now, though, that we focus our attention on the *in*commensurability of experience by drawing a distinction between linguistic communication ("rhetoric of discourse") and personal "thought," proposing that not everything that is thought is expressible in language.[18] To recite Boretz's comments on the Rahn article, this incommensurability occurs "at minimum in the Wittgensteinian sense in which the logicized rational reconstruction of cognition actually occupies a cognitive territory incoherent with respect to what it wishes to explicate."[19] Further, Boretz creates a locution, "work of thought," which seems to be asked to be read as implying that "thought," in this context, also stands for perceptual experiences of music.[20] Thus, after considering its implications, it seems to be less tautologically self-enclosed, and more of a starting point for further discussion; it is an axiom which *begins* discussion. Our ability or inability to verbalize our intensely felt realities *needs* to be and indeed *can* be discussed, not assumed.

And indeed, it does not appear isolated in the text:

> And yet, I have been thinking that our deepest and most passionate work of thought is, first and foremost, intensely personal to each of us such that our need to capture it in configurations of language which express its most specific and individual significations might be supposed to be far more deeply exigent than the service of however worthy a social convenience. (172)

The premise may be paraphrased thus: most thought is driven by an *attempt* to capture the deeper sense of things and this is traditionally how music theory has approached its job. Music-theoretical discourse has been very good at expressing "things" in music with a great degree of portability—many of our theoretical tools are generalizable and hence widely transferable between pieces and styles; indeed, this fact is often the locus of its claim to "theoryhood"—but this very portability or communicability is what robs theory of any possibility of reaching that core of our deepest musical experience.

Boretz illustrates this notion with a wonderful turn of phrase:

> Such specificity of configuration is virtually the province of the socalled creative artist, who is disenabled to produce the curvatures he paints with such instruments as rulers and compasses, because the results of applying the latter are simply too approximate to achieve the precision of what he had clearly envisioned. (172)

Compasses and rulers (tools used for absolute precision and depth in certain visual fields such as architecture) and axiomatic set theory and Schenkerian theory (tools used for absolute precision and depth in certain auditory fields such as music theory) are *imprecise* compared to the intensity with which the artist creates a configuration and envisions, knows, *intuits,* her work;[21] the specificity of configurations produced by the artist exceed those produced by the theorist precisely because the former does *not* use tools to create, she creates intuitively.[22] The word "configuration" allows us to map this discussion onto the language(s) of music theory because Boretz earlier uses the phrase "configurations of language" and we can create a similar phrase here: "configurations of artworks." Through this mapping, which we should read ironically, we can compare the intensity of our perceptual experiences of music

to our music-theoretical discussions of music; the former are "too precise" for the linguistic tools we have created within the latter category, which were originally created to explicate and deepen our intensely felt, or heard or experienced, lives with music. While on the one hand a music-theoretical term gives us a certain precision and specificity of meaning, on the other it is this very precision which is least precise because it cannot bend, cannot live in the ways our experiences with music do.

This state of affairs is, however, terribly inconvenient (to say the least!) because our discourse is based on assuming a portability of theoretical language that *does* map our musical experiences; there is here a lot at stake. "Ivy" continues:

> For the more highly specific the sense of something, the less interchangeable with it, in sense or color, can any paraphrase be, the less that thing lends itself to plausible glossification or reformulation, without irreparable rupture. (172)

We have seen one such rupture in the Rahn article, where the brokenness of Mozart's phrase was intensely felt and the sense in which it was felt to be "Mozart's phrase," and not something else, was a specific indicator of that brokenness. More fitting for my specific discussion, here in "Ivy," as in the Rahn, "intuition" serves as *the* rhetorical catalyst for that rupture, for it is in the following sentence that Boretz discusses the notion of intuition:

> With respect to those socalled works of art, our inability to satisfy ourselves that we can duplicate, paraphrastically, what they say, leads us to speak of our apprehension of them as "intuitive," or, more usually, "purely intuitive." (172)

Thus the markers "intuitive" or "purely intuitive" signify a defensive move in our rhetoric at precisely the moment when we are *not* sure that we have expressed what we most passionately want to express about our experiences of artworks; as with Rahn, "intuition" becomes a second best attempt to verbalize what we feel doomed to misrepresent. We use it in a functional sense, dividing the domains of our music-theoretical realities into that which can be stated and is thus "real," and that which cannot be expressed, that which is "intuitive," and which is thus, in a sense, *not* real. Yet Boretz began the section by saying that it is our "intuitive" experiences of music that are *most* real to us, are most intensely personal, deepest, most passionate, and Rahn spoke of his analytical musical intuitions, his perceptions, as providing the origin and goal of our theorizing. "Intuition" itself, then, becomes a *tool* in music-theoretical discourse, even though we intend to use it to convey something, musical reality, which lies *outside* of our discourse, outside of our devices for communication. This contradiction, then, is a contradiction in our experiences of music when we become schooled in music theory. When we attempt to express what we feel most intensely in music, we label that experience "intuitive," and by so doing effectively relegate that experience to the status of the *un*experienceable.[23]

As stated, in a certain sense Rahn's rhythmic-motives are unexperienceable. The portability of our formal language(s) for music is not congruent with the works themselves, works that carry an inexpressible, qualitative reality in our experiences of them. The assumption is that music is *not* language, thus the possibility of language as a music comes under pressure and this fills us with

insecurity; we are always, and only, discussing representations of music. Boretz says that we "apprehend" these artworks as being "intuitive" or "purely intuitive," and here I understand that verb to signify both a sense of understanding, and dread. He continues:

> And, in the condition where we feel helpless to formulate extemporaneously, and in the common rhetoric of discourse, an intelligible duplicate of what we have received, we suffer acutely the insecurity of being unable to verify that we have understood, to identify what, in fact, was there to be understood, or even whether anything was. And how can we be persuaded by, assent to, disagree with, or correct, anything which merely is, even if what it merely is, is thought, but thought which has signally failed to address us in the rhetoric of discourse which we know how to receive, and in which we know how to respond?[24]

On page 172, "intuitive" or "purely intuitive" are labels or markers for that linguistically/music-theoretically unapproachable core of music which, when we try to paraphrase it in configurations of language, we feel apprehensive about this very act, and we even feel insecure as to the actual existence of the thing that we were trying to explain in the first place. On the one hand, intuition is a category of knowledge and the things existing in it are knowable, but on the other, if something is "purely intuitive," it would seem that we have no access into it. If something is pure, complete, replete, and self-enclosed, then it cannot open to us such as to allow entry into it. This is a logical quandary because if an artwork is "purely intuitive," it speaks to us, but if it is "purely intuitive," it does not speak to us; the paradox interrupts the dialogue. In Boretz's writing, "intuition" is the locus of a contradiction and is a hypostasized notion.

Boretz then gives us a hidden repetition, so to speak, which in a sense restarts his discussion, and in which he describes the sense in which artworks *communicate* with us: he personifies music.

> But I have been thinking that the "purely intuitive" epithet we use must in fact refer to objects and mental episodes whose principal interest and personal value to us must be, for their own sakes, to learn them intensely and quest earnestly after their qualities; in which they are radically divergent from our own rhetoric of discourse, cultivated essentially for the benefit of others, and for ends outside its own configurations. (172)

"But I have been thinking..." connects to the beginning of the page ("And yet, I have been thinking..."), again signifying a break in the texture, and here is indirectly followed by a personification of artworks themselves: "for their own sakes." Discourse rests on a different sociability. Artworks are there to be communicated with; music demands that we try to bring it into the realm of discourse and, even though it stands outside of the discourse we have created to increase communicability, we are now not so sure about this.

This last point is emphasized as we work from page 172 to 173. We are here given a move which urges the rupture in thought which accompanies our apprehension of the nature of musical intuitions, by now allowing that rupture to enter into Boretz's meta-theoretical argument: the quotation marks around intuition are dropped.[25] No longer is this a label; it is now a lived reality. We do

receive something from artworks and "intuition" as a marker seems no longer valid. This counterargument forces a reevaluation of the original premise, and it now seems that even words about music that claim to stand outside of music really do share some qualities with music.

> And yet, that we do, in the rhetoric of discourse, attempt to characterize such obscure objects of purely intuitive nature, suggests that we do receive from them an intuition of sense. Perhaps we could even agree that in language of any degree of individuation, from outright plagiarism to total unparaphrasability—and not excluding, certainly, any instances of the rhetoric of discourse—it is possible, depending on the circumstances and content of utterance, that something is being said.[26]

But the critical abandonment of the quotation marks makes its appearance in a difficult locution: "intuition of sense." All of a sudden, what seems a simplification stands the argument on its head. The earlier phrase, "the more highly specific the sense of something, the less interchangeable with it, in sense or color, can any paraphrase be," (172) might seem to map onto "intuition of sense" and imply that we receive from artworks something specific, but that what we receive is a *sense,* nothing quantifiable. Yet one cannot but be confused as to this notion of "sense" and its meanings. In fact, "sense" seems to destabilize the meaning of "intuition," which earlier seemed to be used to *denote* "sense," but which here seems to mark a kind of perceptual knowledge of a kind of perceptual knowledge, a second order perceptual knowledge, a sense of a sense.[27]

Boretz recently explained this notion and its contexts:

> "Intuition of sense"... can be read (in words, rather than terms) as, roughly, "the sense that there's some sense there"; not in any way like the "purely intuitive," which is a kind of metaphysically obscure gesture to cover the threat of vacuity, or to disguise the problem that the discourse implies such vacuity, which is counterintuitive to those for whom there is, yes, "an intuition of sense."[28]

From his cryptic palindrome we glean that "intuition" (as used earlier, with quotation marks) is a vacuitive gesture, sweeping over our experiences of artworks (or failures thereof), and is a fallout of the discourse of analysis and theory. Intuition (without quotes) then means something similar to my description of Rahn's use of "perceptions" to describe his understanding of the Mozart piece: i.e., *Rahn said that he "perceived" the developments I have been describing, yet I read this statement of "perception" more as a sense, possibly even an intuition, of the phenomenological growth of the music.* Thus, "intuition of sense" suggests the phenomenological intuitions we receive from music, intuitions which we can describe and discuss, contemplate and challenge. Indeed, in one sense, this is what a musical intuition *is*: a perceptual or theoretical *concept,* which we can, and do, use as a basis for discussion, a heuristic. The suggestion that music theory *cannot* tell us things about our experiences of music, that music is "purely intuitive," is actually *counterintuitive.* Because we attempt to communicate with artworks, because artworks communicate with us, and because we communicate with each other, "pure intuitibility" is a spurious gesture. Language about music, then, even if it makes claims to neutrality, shares some quality with music, and the move to label

certain experiences "purely intuitive," to denote them as standing outside of theory, is *not* valid.

Given this, the last quote from "Language, as a Music": "that we do... attempt to characterize [artworks] ... suggests that we do receive from them an intuition of sense"; and further, "in language of any degree of individuation... it is possible... that something is being said" (172-3) suggest that this "something" should be taken as substantive, deeply passionate, and shared with, accepted from, artworks themselves. Indeed, in the prefatory remarks ("some background notes") to the Open Space edition (1995) of *Meta-Variations,* Boretz acknowledges our ability to mediate between the musically "intuitive" and the musically "theoretical":

> And it was obvious to us [Boretz and J. K. Randall] too that we did not want to "logicize" or "scientize" music.... What we could do and wanted to do was represent how our musical *intuitions* could be externalized and specified with the assistance of logic, "scientific" models, or any other appropriately rigorous language as literalizing notations and sense-analytic (or nonsense-diagnostic) tools.[29]

In Boretz's interpretation, then, he and Randall "could" and "wanted" to theorize their musical intuitions. And indeed, why shouldn't they have wanted or been able to?[30]

One cannot overemphasize this point, as it is central to "Language, as a Music," and as it is so surprisingly *dissimilar* to statements in his, "Music, as a Music" (a converse yet complementary work). For example: "Deprived of linguistic explication, music, in a verbal world, really doesn't signify anything; it doesn't even signify nothing." (59) And more pointedly: "As music, music has to be its own interior discourse, its own, only, fully concrete metalanguage." (63) Although this seems quite congruent with the line of thought begun on page 172 of "Language, as a Music," the author of "Music, as a Music" is *not exactly* the speaker of "Language, as a Music." In the earlier piece, Boretz is less prescribing and more suggesting, less sure, more hesitant. He allows himself to fall into a logical quandary, and while he does come out of it, pull himself up by the bootstraps, as it were: "Mr. IVY is clearly uneasy and strives to be correct."[31] He *strives* to present a coherent argument, to put his point across logically, but does not quite attain this goal.[32]

To return to the text, "Mr. Ivy" then returns to the discussion of the "rhetoric of discourse"—yet with the quotes around intuition missing, suggesting that his earlier line of thinking did not quite survive unscathed the weight of the claims made on its behalf.

> What we communicate is what is communicable, leaving the rest for the higher sensitivities of pure intuition. I have been thinking that we are deceived in this belief, that while we may not speak as we perceive, we will soon enough be perceiving as we have spoken. (174)

Here, again, pure intuition is not a spurious or even contingent notion (it is not surrounded by quotes), so what is asserted is a belief in the commensurability of deepest experience, and subsequently a notion that our language(s) about music will indeed infiltrate our experiences of music. Yet he challenges this assertion with the clause, "I have been thinking that we are deceived in this

belief...": soon enough, our language(s) about music will come under pressure, and therefore, as a defensive move, we will once again place quotes around "intuition," thereby denying music-theoretical access to the most intensely personal realm of our musical experiences. It is as if the speaker abandons the too dangerous possibility that music theory could actually give us profound insights into music because he "strives to be correct" and backs away because this possibility threatens to upset the oppositional posture which opens "Ivy," a posture he needs to retain in order for the argument to "hold."

But by reading "Ivy" as an argument, not as an artwork, searching for "meaning" and then evaluating its "claims," we (myself included) do a disservice to the sense in which it honestly frames itself as an artwork, as a music. Thus we make an analogous move to that which "Mr. Ivy" sees in music-theoretical discourse as it discusses, or avoids discussing, intuitions. Yet, again, "Language, as a Music" is as much an argument as it is an artwork (its second movement is entitled "Argument," but it is performed—on a piano, for example). It asks to be read and heard as much for "meaning" as it asks to be understood for its perceptual, musical aspects (an experience which is heightened by listening to the recording of its performance and by hearing it as a music).[33] It is as much "conceptual" as "intuitive."

IV. Concept versus Intuition

I have borrowed this last contrastive pair from the *Aesthetic Theory* of Theodor W. Adorno,[34] an opposition which has been weaving in and out of the texture of our discussion and which may—specifically as Adorno describes it—develop our reflection on the notion of intuition as it functions in music-theoretical discourse. Adorno frames the "intuitive" character of artworks in a social environment similarly to the manner in which "Ivy" began; yet his social reality is perhaps broader and more subversive than Boretz's "rhetoric of discourse," because for Adorno, "intuition" is defined *solely* as a social function. Unlike Boretz, who wavers on the reality of intuition and thus allows it, at times, to exist in a realm outside of the collective social consciousness, Adorno does not allow the "intuitive" to denote a pure reality of artworks themselves, nor does he allow for a conception of "intuition" as a genuine mental function or perception. Indeed, Adorno is at once more certain and more severe: "intuition" is no reality at all; it must retain its quotation marks.

Adorno sees the attribution of an "intuitive" character to artworks as a hypostization of the "Bourgeois consciousness." This is a false consciousness—and, correspondingly, a false description of artworks—because in it "intuitive" artworks become conflated with artworks understood to be "spiritual." This creates a false "spiritualization" of artworks, resulting in the opposite condition of that for which Adorno so vehemently argues: "intuition" comes to denote, as "Mr. Ivy" discussed within the realm of music-theoretical discourse, an immediate grasp of the transcendental. Adorno argues, however, that this notion of "intuition" is an impossibility for cognition because it ignores the material concretion of artworks—in music, the sounding notes as imagined. This labeling completely reifies artworks as "other," and thus, completely unreal. This falsification betrays the phantasmagoric ideology constitutive of the Bourgeois mind, one that cannot escape its own social situatedness: "Behind the cult of intuitability lurks the philistine convention of the body that lies

stretched out on the sofa while the soul soars to the heights." (98) When we appeal to "intuition," it seems, we are not even aware that we have been so thoroughly captivated by a phantasmagoria, so thoroughly mind-controlled.

Again, the delusion of the Bourgeois conception is based on an inability to realize the dual character of artworks. The claim to art's "pure intuitability" is spurious because it is precisely this claim that misrepresents art's refractedness, its proper domain as located in a tension between "concept" and "intuition."[35] Within music-theoretical discourse, we have discussed some of the ways that, for Boretz, the label of "intuitive" implies circularity and attempts to divide domains of experience such that an artwork becomes something unified and complete, not changing and complex. Adorno furthers this discussion by noting the ways in which the concept of "pure intuition" heightens our sense of the unity and impenetrability of artworks, an inauthentic movement:

> Bourgeois consciousness entrenches itself in the sensuously unmediated because it senses that only its intuitability reflects a gaplessness [*Bruchlose*] and roundedness of artworks that then, in whatever circuitous fashion, is attributed [*gutgeschrieben*] to the reality to which the artworks respond.[36]

Thus Bourgeois listening is "work" without work: there is no intellectual effort involved. If the artwork is sensuously immediate, if it discloses all of its reality in a single hearing, then what effort, what struggle, could there possibly be in understanding the piece? None, or so we think.

The Bourgeois mind understands music as equaling the "intuitive," taken as an unproblematic, unexplored, yet "certain knowledge" of artworks. Hence, since for Adorno there is a certain drama inherent in how artworks problematize and negotiate between their sensuous moments and discursive components, for the Bourgeois there would seem to be *no* genuine drama inherent in artworks; they simply are.

Perhaps we might understand this discursive drama to be restaged in *Aesthetic Theory* through a dialectic of what might be called "true" and "false" senses of such themes as intuition, concept, spirit, and authenticity. These notions are presented as doubles, as those "inside" and those "outside."[37] Each word is bifurcated into the actually real and the logically unreal. Having discredited the Bourgeois conception of "intuition," intuition has to survive somewhere, but in a limited, decidedly *not* totalizing sense. Thus Adorno smuggles intuition back into the equation as the genuinely "spiritual" in artworks. "Intuition" is a label for the ("false") immediate availability of musical experience, and yet intuition can describe the "true" spiritualization of the artwork in a Hegelian, dialectical sense, where perceptions—limited intuitions—and conceptions are taken to engage in a (however, somewhat dysfunctional) dialogue with one another. "Spiritualization" stands-in for, takes the place of, a second intuition, and as such creates a struggle: it both authorizes and demands a discourse about artworks, yet resists that discourse.[38]

In the sphere of music-theoretical discourse, pieces themselves are taken to be discourses, to make propositions and arguments, and Adorno would seem to condone this conception because he identifies the conceptual with the

discursive and includes both within the structure of artworks themselves.[39] Although this reading would imply that theorists are to be lauded for this frank acceptance of and working with the conceptual in their hearings of pieces, as shown, theorists (or analysts) commonly make appeals to "intuition," thus running the risk of relaxing into the sofas (or couches) of their Bourgeois neighbors. Furthermore, when theorists complete their analyses, when *their* work is done, *the* work is done. The piece is "understood" and often implicit is the claim that we can now understand it "intuitively." It is as if our work day is over and now we can simply sit back and hear the many attributions made to the piece, all of the things we purport to hear, now in one gapless, rounded, completely immediate experience.

But perhaps theory wrongly conceives itself as mending these fractures, as though it must always accept an "intuitability" as authorization for analysis. Perhaps, then, the "counterintuitive" may *expose* these fractures.

> Precisely in its great and emphatic forms, music embodies complexes that can only be understood through what is sensuously not present, through memory or expectation, complexes that hold such categorical determinations embedded in their own structure. It is impossible, for instance, to interpret as a mere continuation the at times distant relations between the development of the first movement of the *Eroica* and the exposition, and the extreme contrast to this exposition established by the new theme: The work is intellective in itself, without in any being embarrassed [*schämte*] about it and without the integration of the work thereby impinging [*beeinträchtigen*] on its law of form. (98)

The development section of the *Eroica* could not be expected during the exposition. The work is tense and fractured in itself, hence certain interpretations are impossible. Here "form" is conceived as a "law," as lying outside of the compositional procedure which dictated the development, thus producing a sort of intellectual work which is not equal to, not identified completely with, the artwork itself. Musical forms determine our experiences. Memory and expectation normalize our worlds into that which is "intuitable"; they bind the whole because they give us a sense of what *will* happen based upon what *has* happened. Yet, here Adorno himself seems to accept hypostasized music-theoretical tools, perhaps as the very agents or markers of memory and experience. He presents a coherent theory of the *Eroica* and believes in the traditional "stuff" of music theory: themes, exposition and development sections.

We discussed the possibility that merely labeling art "intuitive" threatens to invade art itself, because by so doing we abstract from our experiences and "mental episodes," and attribute to art that which *we* perceive. Soon enough, what we perceive becomes what the work *is*. Further, we discussed the ways in which art *is* intuitive, sensuous, perceptual, for if it were not, it would be theory, mathematics.[40] For Adorno, intuition is that which keeps music from collapsing into theory. Authentic intuitions are thus here defined negatively for Adorno: intuition equals the nonconceptual, and the nonperceptual equals the conceptual.

Given these equations, Boretz's writings seem even more remarkable, as over the course of his career he seems to locate both the purely discursive and

purely intuitive. Boretz turns from a conception of a music-theoretical discourse devoid of metaphysics (circa *Meta-Variations*) to one that is entirely "metaphysical"—music as pure "intuition" (circa "Music, as a Music").[41] Intuition in "Ivy" is *not* stable, completely "there" or "not there," located, and this flickering between figurations is precisely what keeps the work alive. Intuition enters at a pivotal juncture in Boretz's writings and spins around it a dramatic, problematic web. This recreates the situation Adorno prescribes. However, we can read Boretz's earlier and more recent works, writ large, as providing a critique of Adorno's conception. *Meta-Variations* seeks to purge music and musical discourse of all metaphysics through a complete rationalization of musical cognition (though not musical cognition in a gross sense).[42] By contrast, his more recent multitexts and improvisations, his performative works, are extraordinarily ritualized. His own renderings of "Ivy" and "Music, as a Music,"[43] for example, are slow and quiet... every gesture is meaningful. Thinking in music, thinking music, *being* music, becomes spiritualized. Adorno tells us what the world would be like in the case of the "purely conceptual" or the "purely intuitive," yet insists that either extreme produces a false conception of the artwork: Boretz attempts both; he puts this to the test.

Nevertheless, Adorno continues: "the criterion of artworks is not the purity of intuition but rather the profundity with which they carry out the tension with the intellective elements that inhere in them." (99) Adorno is less arguing for the absence of intuition in artworks, and more arguing against appeals to a "pure intuitability." To extend this, we might claim that if music is both sensuous and conceptual and, as was demonstrated in reference to Rahn's analysis of the Mozart passage and in the discussion of Boretz's "Ivy," music theory and analysis, and even meta-theory, can heighten the tensions that we experience within artworks, then our goal should be less to totalize the experience of an artwork and more to reexperience what we hear as conflicting and even conflicted. We might accept the challenge that "aesthetic appearance cannot be reduced [*aufgehet*] to its intuition, [thus] the content of artworks cannot be reduced to the concept either,"[44] and further, in our various musical discourses, seek to foster and intensify "the aporia of the concept of aesthetic intuition." (97)

Because artworks retain their conceptuality, and because they have a certain "logic," the notion that "intuition" could somehow relegate these factors to non-existence, such that those works would bear no structure and would show their intuitability without difficulty, in one fell swoop, as it were, actually does more to harm the notion of an "artwork"—even if, as we saw with Boretz, this notion is precisely what is intended to retain the immediacy of artworks, their intensity, depth. When we label artworks "intuitive" we abstract away from their multifarious perceptual *and* conceptual surfaces, we forget the complexity of our own experiences with them, we forget the *mediatedness* of our artistic experiences (our experiences of art are *not* immediate), and we create a "petrified" copy of the original that in no way matches the complexity with which artworks present themselves to us. By allowing artworks to become "intuitive," we inflict wounds upon them that, oddly enough, as Adorno now tells us, *require more abstraction* in order to be healed!

> It is evident that artworks can heal the wounds that abstraction inflicts [*schlägt*] on them only through the heightening [*gesteigerte*] of

> abstraction, which impedes the contamination of the conceptual ferment with empirical reality.[45]

This is the sense in which I read Rahn's motion to analyze the Mozart piece by pointing to abstract "rhythmic-motives" under the guise of "intuition"; once the notion of intuition was introduced, it is as if Rahn had no choice but to push his musical discourse further into the counterintuitive, the conceptual, thereby critiquing his own appeal to "intuition," and, even, allowing himself to reunify the Mozart passage in a way that heightens its fractures. Rahn was able to demonstrate the conceptual in the Mozart piece by analyzing—and in a sense, creating—specific motives, thereby disturbing our usual perceptions of the piece.

Yet for Adorno this move is odd and strange, even contradictory, for all along he has been pushing us to *avoid* allowing art to "heal its wounds," urging us instead to acknowledge the sense in which artworks are "broken." Adorno seems to want it both ways, and this fractures his meta-theoretical argument. But perhaps this idea, also, can be reintegrated. Indeed, it locates a virtue of the Rahn analysis, for although on the surface this analysis seeks unity, it also intimates some of the ways in which the Mozart is not somehow a "complete piece," but by so doing, reinscribes a sense of unity. I read Adorno, then, as suggesting that there is a sense in which our analytical decisions, even when they seem or seek to demonstrate the *dis*unity of a piece, in the attempt to map our experiences, will inevitably reunify the work, which is a (second) counterintuitive motion. Rahn's analysis revolves around "the rhythmic-motivic inter-level structures that contribute *coherence*." (124, emphasis added) His reading itself, though it may leave room for, or even imply, other readings, is complete. This is analogous to the place where I left Boretz's "Ivy": quotation marks, and "intuition" as marker, intact. Again, this level of unity is arrived at for Adorno by the "heightening of abstraction." Thus "intuition" is reified on the surface, yet concretized in the background,[46] but is an aporia: that which we cannot name.[47]

Before leaving Adorno we might indulge in a different perspective on these problems. J. N. Mohanty offers a critique of Adorno's notion of "intuition" from a phenomenological position.[48] Essentially, Mohanty criticizes Adorno's conception for being too limited; it does not allow for intuitions of concepts, an authentic formulation that Mohanty credits to phenomenology:

> Phenomenology has brought about an extension of the domain of intuition. It was generally held that intuition of whatever sort provides, as it were, the springboard for thought to take off the ground, in which case thought either recovers that intuitive basis or, as in some philosophical theories, arrives at a higher mode of intellectual intuition at the end of its journey.[49] Phenomenology has shown that this picture is misleading. For at every level of thinking... one can speak of "intuition" pertinent to that level. The proper contrast then is not between thought and intuition... [instead] this situates intuition within the structure of thinking, instead of locating it at its boundary. The Kantian opposition is removed and replaced by a dynamic movement of thought and understanding.[50] Intuition, then, is not opposed to logical structure, for that structure itself is a possible object of categorical intuition. Structure

> does not annul intuition, but rather requires it to be raised to a higher, though founded, level. (42)

Performing a simple substitution, we read: "[Adorno's] opposition is removed and replaced by a dynamic movement of thought and understanding." While Adorno would most likely argue that such a removal of opposition would itself result in a removal of the dynamic movement of thought and understanding, rendering our interactions with artworks whole and thus static, if we grant that Mohanty's argument holds, we will certainly find ourselves in a different location from whence we started.[51]

Mohanty gives us a more optimistic take on the mediation of the extremes of structure and perception, concept and intuition. If we have intuitions of concepts, senses of laws, this must entail a more fruitful relationship between theoretical formulation and perceptual experiences of individual moments. No longer will theoretical propositions simply and necessarily challenge perceptions of pieces, thus disallowing for a critique of theory from within the confines of the "intuitability" of artworks. Ironically, under this interpretation the phenomenological position would stress that any observation-statement will contain a theoretical content, and thus that there are no descriptively "pure" statements, be they attributions of "pure intuitability" in the hypostasized sense, or, less strongly, those of a "purely observational" nature. This seems to map our experience, as we normally analyze pieces by shifting between perceptions, intuitions of theoretical propositions (in this newly enriched sense) and other ways of thinking and hearing. Thus when Brown and Dempster call Schenkerian "laws" of tonal motion "intuitive generalizations" (see note 7 above), we can concur that as concepts, certain "laws" are indeed intuitive; certain music-theoretical findings become knowable in the immediacy of perception without conscious recollection of the manner in which they were formed, nor with a conscious formulation of them as such, thus creating renewed intensity of experience. This substantially displaces the notion of intuition as we have been using it. No longer is it relegated to the perceptual sphere and separated from the conceptual.[52] The two do not, as Adorno would insist, dance together in a tension of opposites, never touching yet always near, such that the seeds of the other's critique is inherent in each. Rather, the two are allowed a certain sociability, allowed to influence, to communicate, to function—and thus to be shared with other theorists.[53]

What, then, do we now make of the "counterintuitive"? In the Rahn article, we saw that the counterintuitive, the conceptual, was the means by which the intuitive, the perceptual, or, more precisely, what is commonly taken to be intuitive and perceptual, was challenged, and eventually, renewed. If we can have intuitions of concepts, much as we had intuitions of senses in Boretz's explanation of "intuition of sense," then strictly speaking, there is nothing that is necessarily, literally, counterintuitive, save for that which is unconventional. We may still say, colloquially, that Rahn's motives strike us as being "counterintuitive," yet when we do so, we will merely mean that given our training, they demand more effort to be properly, or interestingly, fruitfully, understood. Or as an aesthetic judgment, that we do not like "hearing" the piece in that way.[54]

V. Postscript

And yet, our musical intuitions are extra-rational. It is striking how frequently, intensely, they are snuck into an ostensibly rational discourse. For instance, David Lewin is perhaps the most methodologically transparent of theorists; his rhetorical pattern is pretty stark. We begin by appreciating moments in pieces on their own, then hook into some abstract method or model, and our final analysis lies somewhere in the middle. But that "appreciation of moments on their own" Lewin often calls an "intuition," and as such becomes a rhetorical gesture. For Lewin, "intuition" is reserved *just* for special moments; it does not denote a mechanism that is always functioning. Thus there is a sporadic, unpredictable quality to it, a play. It finds itself in interesting places in pieces. In this way "intuition" serves as a catalyst, a heuristic, to coax the dialogue into motion. "Intuition" points to those places in pieces which, in a "Bourgeois" sense, would be counterintuitive; it becomes an apprehension of some sort of meaningful signal through the noise of a piece. But there often seems to be less "intuition" at the end of the process than when he began, because some has been consigned to discursive (theoretical) knowledge, and it is difficult to say that this process *simply* recovers its intuitive basis. There is a point of apprehension before, behind, and beyond the direct perceptual experience of music, which we call "theory." With theory we can stand outside of hearing; indeed, we can even stand outside of our own minds. This should not be discredited. Lewin often uses "intuition" in the same sense in which Babbitt used it: as a presentiment, to feel beforehand. Before what? Before concepts.

Perhaps, then, we experience an aporia when we attempt to *conceptualize* our intuitions. This implies that in themselves, musical intuitions are *not* aporetic, but rather that it is our discourse which is blocked because it stands outside thinking (in) music. Thus the degree to which we can regard music-theoretical discourse as conceptual may also be the degree to which our discourse is aporetic. The degree to which music theories are conceptual may also point to the ways in which they are futile, even confused. But, the degree to which we may regard music as a discourse may also uncover the manner in which our musical intuitions themselves may be aporetic. Music itself may embody certain aporias.

For Adorno, "intuition" covers everything, but he actually comes to seem similar to the "Bourgeois" that he so violently opposes, in that both seem to lack the ability to *generate* intuitions. There is something standard to Adorno's reading of the *Eroica*, as there would be in a Bourgeois "reading." But he does authorize the motion of the counterintuitive (and its necessity) as a means of avoiding the tropes of a too-optimistic phenomenology, one which always threatens to degenerate into idle chatter.

All of our authors, in a sense, erase "intuition," but its impression is still visible. For Rahn, "intuition" implies that in every piece (or at least in the Mozart passage) there is a moment that *should* pop-out at us as being something odd and strange, unique, uncanny. Initially, "intuition" cannot make sense outside of Rahn's system, thus in its place he inscribes the counterintuitive *within* the system. In the Boretz piece, "intuition" overtly loses its quotes, yet the implicit

reinscription of the word with quotes acts as a way of controlling something that is too dangerous, too real. In order for "intuition" to function in music-theoretical discourse, it seems that all possible definitions, once advanced, need to be removed, but then reinscribed, sometimes hurriedly, sometimes covertly.

In our discussion, "intuition" has served a rhetorical function by virtue of its ability to change meanings. In music-theoretical discourse, "intuition" generates an array of locutions in its place or space, and this situation may be seen as a kind of attempt at a cure through discussion, through discourse: Rahn's "analytical music theory"; Boretz's "rhetoric of discourse," "work of thought" and "intuition of sense"; Adorno's use of *Anschaulichkeit* ("intuitability"); and my "silent intuitions." In trying to express the ostensibly inexpressible, to make the "purely intuitive" concrete and apprehensible, in trying to intuit the counterintuitive, our language in a sense becomes curved and creative, spawning new words and theories, new analyses and meta-theories, new perceptions, and thus, new intuitions. And perhaps it is this very *resistance* to discourse inherent in our intuitions that is creative of our music-theoretical discourse and musical theories. In a sense, "intuition" functions in music theories by *not* functioning; it appears dysfunctional, a crisis, and our discourses—our theories—function as attempts to remedy this. Perhaps, then, the most fruitful way to understand the function of music theories is to allow a notion that stands outside and by so doing refine and challenge our sense of what theories are and what they do.

Notes

For their many insights, I would like to thank Leslie Blasius, Benjamin Boretz, Stephen Dembski, Brian Hyer, and John Rahn.

[1] Milton Babbitt, *Words About Music*, ed. Stephen Dembski and Joseph N. Straus (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 15, emphasis added.

[2] Transcribed from the recordings of these lectures, which are housed in Mills Music Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

[3] This statement intimates the complexity of the word's use in music-theoretical discourse, the consideration of which is the goal of this paper. While one may take the tack of beginning such an examination by rigorously defining "intuition," this approach would seem to pass quickly into issues of cognition, which have recently been examined by Mark Debellis (in "What is Musical Intuition? Tonal Theory as Cognitive Science," *Philosophical Psychology* 12/4 [1999]: 471-501, an article which discusses the notion of intuition in the work of Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff). While some notion of intuition underlies theories of cognition, the word itself takes on an array of functions and it is the play of these different usages which has heretofore gone unexamined in music-theoretical discourse. In a conversation with Benjamin Boretz I made the mistake of referring to "intuition" as a "term," which it most certainly is not, and which I would like to thank Professor Boretz for pointing out (personal conversation, 19 October 2001). As Boretz has written, "You can distinguish a 'term' from a 'word' in that terms have (must have) definitions and words don't (can't); in this sentence, single quotes enclose terms." ("Music as Anti-Theater," *Perspectives of New Music* 39/1 [2001]: 186, n 17). Indeed, its meanings in philosophical discussions since at least the time of Aristotle are incredibly mobile. (See K. W. Wild, *Intuition* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938], a book which examines and catalogues the various usages of this word; see especially pp. 211-33).

[4] John Rahn, "Logic, Set Theory, Music Theory," *College Music Symposium* 19/1 (1979): 114-27.

[5] This is not to imply that Rahn has no use for or is not interested in more general theories. Instead, it is meant to convey the sense that for Rahn experiences and thus theories of individual pieces are primary, and that from them we can understand the limits of more general theories

(see p. 114). This also hints at another aspect of Rahn's methodology, which I will discuss in connection with his analysis of K. 331.

[6] Ciro Scotto, "A Hybrid Compositional System," *Perspectives of New Music* 38/1 (2000): 219-20. Scotto's rendering of this system is extracted faithfully from John Rahn, "Logic, Set Theory, Music Theory."

[7] On the topic of the terms defined, Matthew Brown and Douglas J. Dempster criticize Rahn for "invok[ing] numerous undefined primitives" within the definitions he does offer ("The Scientific Image of Music Theory," *Journal of Music Theory* 33/1 [1989]: 77). They acknowledge that "some of these undefined primitives may be defined in a more elaborate system indebted to *Meta-Variations*, but as it stands, the present system is not fully reductive." (*ibid.*) Brown and Dempster's take on this article, however, does not quite give us what we want: a fuller understanding of Rahn's methodology. As Rahn himself alludes, in an earlier paper he had created a much more rigorous system, "but this present paper angles towards a different, tonal-theoretical illustration of the methodology that is its message." (Rahn, 117) That methodology lies seemingly dormant, beneath the surface of the defined tonal theory and the Mozart analysis which exemplifies it, and I will discuss it shortly. Also of interest for the topic of musical intuition is Brown and Dempster's own use of that word. After critiquing Rahn's "Logic, Set Theory, Music Theory" and Boretz's *Meta-Variations*, Brown and Dempster offer their own theory of tonal music, based upon Schenkerian "laws" of tonal motion, "laws" which they call "intuitive generalizations." (88) Indeed, they go on to suggest that, "of course, the theory assumes some independent and perhaps intuitive criterion of tonality." (*ibid.*) And further, that they "understand analyses as attempts to explain the aural intuitions of listeners, but those listeners need not be able to hear everything postulated in the explanation." (96) Here we are presented with (at least) two notions of intuition: the first seems to be theoretically foundational; the latter seems to stand outside of system building as they conceive it. I will discuss these roles for the word more extensively in relation to Rahn's analysis of the Mozart passage.

[8] Benjamin Boretz, "Introduction," in John Rahn, *Music Inside Out: Going Too Far in Musical Essays* (The Netherlands: G&B Arts International, 2001), 3.

[9] An interesting comparison can be drawn between Rahn's present analysis and Schenker's analysis from "Fortsetzung der Urlinie-Betrachtungen," in *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, vol. 1 (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1925), 189.

[10] It is interesting to note that "level analysis" is included in his theory as definition IX, and indeed, a definition of "level analysis" seems to be the goal of his theory. This is so much the case that Rahn stipulates "level" in definition X, as being an "element" or "member" in a level-analysis.

[11] Although one could speak of the relation between these motives as being that of an order inversion between elements, I adopt Rahn's "rotation" for consistency. (124)

[12] Boretz, "Introduction," 3-4.

[13] It is also interesting to note that, partially answering Boretz's question as to the ontology of the Mozart piece, Rahn presents only eight measures, and thus for Rahn, Mozart's piece is in a sense only eight measures long.

[14] Another example occurs in Rahn's discussion of the definition of "neighbor-note, for which the previous definitions of time adjacency and pitch adjacency are ancillary." (120) Thus temporal considerations are collapsed into pitch considerations.

[15] Interestingly, Rahn himself seems to read Boretz differently: "Boretz's 'monstrous' 'what music is' deMonstrates the degree to which all these conundrums may be construed as ontological" (personal communication, 3 February 2001).

[16] Benjamin Boretz, "Language, as a Music: Six Marginal Pretexts for Composition," *Perspectives of New Music* 17/2 (1979): 131-95.

[17] In Boretz's recorded performance, the audible page turn before "And yet," and ceasura after, along with the moderately slow tempo, convey this feeling more directly. J. K. Randall and Benjamin Boretz, *Intimacy (a polemic)* and *Language, as a Music: Six Marginal Pretexts for Composition* (Open Space: 10, 1999), compact disc.

[18] However, being that it is stated in the plural, at least we *share* an *in*ability to communicate our most passionately held (musical) thoughts.

[19] This is a nice instance of self-borrowing, for Boretz uses this exact phrase both on p. 4 of his "Introduction" for *Music Inside Out* and in "Music, as a Music: A Multitext in Five Movements," (*The Open Space Magazine*, no. 1 [1999]: 62). Additionally, given that this is the second time Ludwig Wittgenstein has been mentioned, perhaps a few words regarding his use of "intuition" would be fruitful. Wittgenstein generally uses the word in the context of a critique of all intuitionist philosophies of mathematics, which, on one level, argue that mathematical reasoning involves an "intuition" at every step, thus an extra-rational component in mathematics. Wittgenstein, though wavering in the specifics of his counterarguments, asserts that in understanding a number series from an intuitionist perspective we would need an intuition to proceed from each number to the next. Unhappy with this situation, he states instead that "it would almost be more correct to say, not that an intuition was needed at every stage, but that a new *decision* was needed at every stage." (*Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1958], § 186, emphasis added). And later: "((Intuition an unnecessary shuffle))." (§ 213) It is interesting that for Wittgenstein, in all of his discussions of the notion, "intuition" occasions an array of other notions in its place: a "decision," "discovery," "guessing right," "insight," "choice," and perhaps most intensely, "Intuitionism is all bosh—entirely. Unless it means an inspiration." *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, ed. Cora Diamond (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 237. See also, *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), 141-3; and *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, ed. G. H. Wright, R. Rhees, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. G. E. M. Anscolme (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1978), 235-7, 247, 347-8.

[20] It also suggests a correspondence between "works of art" and "works of thought," which readers/listeners have been pondering since the beginning of "Language, as a Music" (or *Meta-Variations*). This seems to contradict the distinction between the two which is being suggested, yet I will consider this after I have worked through more of the section I am currently examining.

[21] I have here substituted a (back-)form(-ation) of "intuition" for Boretz's "envisioned" for interpretive reasons, and, indeed, we would seem to have an etymological justification for this move: the Latin origin of "intuition" is *intueri*, to look upon, to contemplate. (*Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989], s.v. "intuition"). Thus metaphors of vision, knowledge and thought often coalesce into the notion of intuition.

[22] This, it seems, is the sense in which Babbitt appealed to intuition in the quotation which began our investigation: "Schoenberg was *intuitively* thinking ahead to twelve-tone things. I use the word *intuitively* because he obviously was unaware of it at the time in a conscious way," which means that he was not consciously using combinatorial hexachords, that those tools of analysis were not used by Schoenberg and this situation is precisely what allowed him to create, and create with intensity. "Intuition" was a compositional energy, not an analytical or theoretical one, one that was relegated to the unconscious and not, for Schoenberg, available for investigation. Although it may seem that I am conflating musical "perception" as used by Boretz and, earlier, Rahn, with "composition," I think that for all of these writers our "deepest, most passionate" experiences of music can occur in either situation, such that this coalescing of experiences is viable. An interesting addition to these events, however, is Babbitt's own use of combinatorial hexachords. I read this move in two ways. On the one hand, we could argue that Babbitt considers the use of combinatorial hexachords as a pre-compositional move in which composition itself is a process that occurs intuitively, thus his division of domains remains intact, on the other, we can read it as a move in which what was on one level taken to be intuitive ("unconscious"), became counterintuitive, *not* intuitive, conceptual, because it has become something that can be theorized. Yet this communicability, the fact that we can theorize combinatorial hexachords in order to compose, implies that they *are* intuitive because we can use them in composition, to create intensely. Thus pre-composition and composition shade into one another. As with Rahn's rhythmic-motives, what once seemed counterintuitive became intuitive, yet at the same time, because it became intuitive, it is also counterintuitive. This process of shifting between what we take to be intuitive and what we take to be counterintuitive, I think, should not be thought of as rendering the word obsolete, rather it shows that the pliability of the word is precisely what allows us to evoke it in our discourse; it moves the way pieces do, and as I will show, this last notion lies at the heart of Boretz's discourse in "Ivy."

[23] In terms of the authorial voice in this text, Fred Everett Maus has described "Ivy" as being "in the voice of a student contacting a former professor," and further, "needless to say, the voice is no more (nor less) Boretz's authentic voice than elsewhere in the set." ("Masculine Discourse in Music Theory," *Perspectives of New Music* 31/2 [1993]: 286, n 8). Elaine Barkin has also commented on the autobiographical nature of this movement: "To me, there's a paradox, a duality which derive [*sic*] from IVY's academic-surface-voice received within the context of Ben's life and role within the ivied academy; how Ben himself might then have been (and might still be) perceived by some members of The Academy to be speaking IVY 'in his own voice' (a subject which Ben mentions in his CD notes)." ("Reexperiencing Language ,as a Music revisited," *The Open Space Magazine*, no. 2 [2000]: 167-8). This is an interesting twist because in Boretz's "A Note on Discourse and Contemporary Musical Thought" (1966) he states the following: "The advantages of such methods [those which may be borrowed from then current linguistic and scientific philosophy] over *purely intuitive* or trial-and-error procedures both in arriving at individual 'creative' solutions and in providing a basis for genuine development from solution to solution as well as from one creator's work to another's are obvious (or so at least they seem to composers who have wished to be able to accept musical and intellectual responsibility for their work), and would be ludicrously beyond question in any field, but, unhappily, ours." ("A Note on Discourse and Contemporary Musical Thought," *Perspectives of New Music* 4/2 [1966]: 79, emphasis added). Boretz, here writing in an early, Babbittesque modality, becomes quite animated about the "irresponsibility" of composers who would rely on "purely intuitive" appeals in music-theoretical discourse, thus I now reread his comments in "Ivy" as coming from a certain honesty about his own use of the "rhetoric of discourse." I also cannot help citing Boretz's opening tautological, ontological axiom and extension from "Interface Part IV, II, 2": "To speak of your identity is to speak essentially of your ontology. It's fundamental: your sense of being sane requires that your *intuited* ontology be sustained." ("Interface I-V: Texts and Commentaries on Music and Life," in John Rahn, ed., *Perspectives on Musical Aesthetics* [New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994], 131-2, emphasis added). Thus there are certain tensions, sustained in Boretz's writings, with the notion of intuition caught in the middle.

[24] Boretz, 172. Boretz performs this "question" as a rhetorical question; i.e., in answer to this "question," Boretz would seem, by virtue of his performance, to reply, "we cannot." Randall and Boretz, *Intimacy (a polemic)* and *Language, as a Music*.

[25] Boretz, 172-3. This performance-in-text literally, visually, draws a contrast between "intuition," with quotes, signifying the hypostasized notion which is replete and enclosed, and intuition, without quotes, signifying our actual, "elusive experiences."

[26] Again an important rhetorical break is signified with "And yet," and, upon reflection, I hear this hesitation similarly to how I heard Babbitt's.

[27] Or, an intuition of an intuition? As Boretz says elsewhere: "'The description of the theory'... might be done... by the logician's method—the offering of a box of parts with instructions for assembly—or by the novelist's method—the composition of a text whose aim was to capture and convey the *sensed sense* of a music." "Experiences with No Names," *Perspectives of New Music* 30/1 (1992): 274.

[28] Personal communication, 6 November 2001.

[29] Benjamin Boretz, *Meta-Variations: Studies in the Foundations of Musical Thought* [1968-9] (Red Hook, New York: Open Space, 1995), no pagination, emphasis added.

[30] This, however, seems to resist the notion that each artwork is inimitable, unique, and has a certain charisma. In his "Interface II: Thoughts in Reply to Boulez/Foucault: 'Contemporary Music and the Public,'" Boretz echoes these thoughts: "In music, as in everything, the disappearing moment of experience is the firmest reality; but the fictions of permanence, invented for the benefit of discourse and contemplation, are so much more firmly graspable by the conscious minds whose invention they are, that they, rather than the vanished traces of elusive experience, are the referents on the which the firmest conceptions—*intuitions*, even—of reality are built." (123, emphasis added) It is a line of thinking which can also be found in Boretz's "What Lingers On (, When the Song is Ended)," (*Perspectives of New Music* 16/1 [1977]: 102-9), an article in which he discusses (among other things!) the *dis*similarity of the opening three right-hand notes of Mozart K. 331. This formulation of the problem of musical discourse betrays a shift in the use of

"intuition," for whereas before Boretz discussed the use of "intuition" as a label for our firmest experiences of music, experiences which we really do not have a vocabulary to express, here that word signifies the very opposite condition: the rhetoric of discourse creates a "reality" in which the rhetoric itself, as conveying invented objects of contemplation, is mistaken for actual experiences of music. Although this *creates* intuitions upon which our discourse rests, these "intuitions" are "false" intuitions, as it were. Our discourse, then, never gets outside of itself, out of the objects it creates for its own perpetuation, objects which convey a sense of permanence, in order to experience more intensely the ostensive entities which are its reason for being in the first place, the changing auditory perceptions of and exceptions in musical experience, and even makes intuitions out of theory, that which was originally taken to be the counterintuitive. This also reflects back upon the status of Mozart's piece in Rahn's "Logic, Set Theory, Music Theory," and becomes generalized in the following statements: "A description can even be regarded as creating the object that it specifies, in that the set of relations provided by the description is identifiable both with the description (its content) and with that which is described (the set of relations provided by the description). Insofar as a description of an artwork is isomorphic either to that artwork (for a formalist) or to the perception/ cognition of that artwork, the description may be identified with the artwork (the analysis becomes the piece)." (John Rahn, "Aspects of Musical Explanation," *Perspectives of New Music* 17/2 [1979]: 205). Further, I now reread Rahn's discussion of the "neutrality" of axiomatic set theory in "Logic, Set Theory, Music Theory" to be more than ironic; it reveals a critique.

[31] Barkin, 167, n 8.

[32] The following quotation from "Music, as a Music" shades this discussion in a number of ways, probably too many to expand upon here: "why is it *counter*intuitive to musical practitioners to read musical discourse more like poetry, say, than like mathematics or geology? ...One reason, as I've suggested, is in the yearning to quantify, and justify, the *intuition* of 'meaning' received from music." (60, emphasis added)

[33] For example, "the unscheduled (and still unfortunate) crescendo/decrescendo toward the end of Part I ["Thesis"]," as Boretz states in his CD liner notes, "works" for me; I like it, and part of the reason I do is because for me it heightens the sense in which "Language, as a Music" is music, that performance is not trivial when considering meaning (although it is certainly not as subtle as Boretz's breathing and changes in voice, two of the many ways in which this piece is performed musically). Randall and Boretz, *Intimacy (a polemic)* and *Language, as a Music.*

[34] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 94-100. Immediately a problem presents itself upon reading Adorno in this context, for he never uses "Intuition," the German cognate for "intuition," instead preferring "Anschauung," Johann Gottfried Herder's locution "Anschaulichkeit" or some other variant. Without delving too deeply into the interesting etymology of German historical usage, eighteenth century philosophers used "Anschauung" as a type of "Intuition" in order to emphasize the immediacy of perception and knowledge coalesced in an act of "looking," and it seems that Adorno, in turn, emphasizes these aspects through his usage. (See Keith Spalding *An Historical Dictionary of German Figurative Usage* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952], s.v. "anschauen"). Hullot-Kentor uses "intuition," and while I applaud his translation, his word choice may at other times misdirect our reading of Adorno, especially when considering Adorno's remarkable diction and when reading for his pertinence to music and its theoretical discourse. For example, Hullot-Kentor habitually translates "Moment" as "element," and while at certain times in Adorno's writing the notion of an element inhering within the artwork itself does seem to be his intention, at others the more direct "moment," connoting a perceiver's real-time experience of a piece, seems more to Adorno's intent. An example of the latter situation: "Ihre [Kunsts] Vermittelheit ist aber kein abstraktes Apriori sondern betrifft jegliches konkrete ästhetische Moment; noch die sinnlichsten sind vermöge ihrer Relation zum Geist der Werke immer auch unanschaulich." (Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie,* ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedermann [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970], 148). Hullot-Kentor's translation: "Its [art's] mediatedness, however, is not an abstract apriori but involves every concrete aesthetic element; even the most sensuous elements are always unintuitable by virtue of their relation to the spirit of the work." (96) Working from his translation, I would alter this sentence thus: "Its [art's] mediatedness, however, is not an abstract apriori but involves every concrete aesthetic moment; even the most sensuous moments are always unintuitable by virtue of their relation to the spirit of the work." Additionally, it seems

that Hullot-Kentor's translation conveys Adorno's arguments clearly, yet in so doing also papers over Adorno's neo-Marxist critique. In other words, Adorno's sometimes virulent language is toned-down in this translation. Still another issue arises in quoting Adorno: so much of his writings are quotable that, ironically, to rest an argument on specific extracts seems deceptive. While I have attempted to limit my quotations of Adorno's words, I have undoubtedly overindulged.

[35] Perhaps my metaphor has gotten away from me, for Adorno claims that the "conceptual" and "intuitive" elements *inhere within* each artwork, and thus that artworks do not lie in between or outside of these poles, as the original sentence would suggest.

[36] Adorno, 94. I would retranslate this as: "Bourgeois consciousness entrenches itself in the sensuously unmediated because it senses that only its intuitability reflects a brokenlessness and roundedness of artworks that then, in whatever circuitous fashion, is credited to the reality to which the artworks respond." Adorno's metaphors of art's "roundedness" and the Bourgeois' circular reasoning echo Boretz's metaphors of the "creative artist," whose precision of "curvatures" are disenabled, become rickety, by the use of tools such as "compasses." While these notions appear at different stages of their author's respective arguments, we might coax the two into motion by reading "Mr. Ivy's" curvatures as authentic, deeply passionate moments during the creation of the artworks in which they appear, yet Adorno's "roundedness" *requires* mediation—tools of analysis and theory—in order to become authentic. For "Mr. Ivy," "compasses" are agents of inauthenticity similarly to how for Adorno, "roundedness" is a marker for inauthenticity, yet for Adorno "compasses" might actually be agents of authenticity. Thus there seems to be a fundamental disagreement, because for "Mr. Ivy" intuition is a catalyst of authenticity, whereas for Adorno, "intuition" is a creator of inauthenticity. The former fears that music theory is truly "outside," false, and falsely "inside," yet for the latter, music theory is "truly" inside, and "falsely" outside, but for the Bourgeois consciousness, music theory seems to be truly "outside" and falsely "inside," a situation that Adorno sees as inauthentic, yet one which "Mr. Ivy" might see as authentic.

[37] Adorno does not present these notions in such a crass manner as I have: instead he presents them directly and then reworks them, refigures them. Adorno never leaves the core notions alone. Consequently, I seem to understand less of his writings the more I read or attempt to explain them. In the Rahn and Boretz pieces, it seems that language is conceived as a limiting gesture; as with concepts, it is the negation of intuition: language negates, yet the possibility of reaffirmation exists. For Adorno language comes largely to stand for music, concept for intuition, thus no restatement seems possible, hence Adorno's pieces, ironically, are sealed.

[38] An interesting twist is Boretz's recent notion of music as a discourse, from "Music, as a Music" (quoted earlier): "As music, music has to be its own interior discourse, its own, only, fully concrete metalanguage." (63) To comment on the ways this would play out in relation to Adorno's writings would undoubtedly require more time than I can afford to invest.

[39] "Whereas the norm of intuitability accentuates [*urgiert*] the opposition of art to discursive thinking, it suppresses [*unterschlägt*] nonconceptual mediation, suppresses the nonsensuous in the sensuous structure [*Gefüge*], which by constituting the structure already fractures it and puts it beyond [*entrückt*] the intuitability in which it appears." (95) If retranslated: "Whereas the norm of intuitability urges the opposition of art to discursive thinking, it misappropriates nonconceptual mediation, embezzles the nonsensuous in the sensuous fabric, which by constituting the structure already fractures and transports it [beyond] the intuitability in which it appears."

[40] "If, however, art were totally without the element [*Moment*] of intuition, it would be theory, whereas art is instead obviously impotent [*ohnmächtig wird*] when, emulating [*Pseudomorphose*] science, it ignores its own qualitative difference from the discursive concept." (95) A possible retranslation: "If, however, art were totally without the element of intuition, it would be theory, whereas art is instead obviously swooning when, falsely taking the form of science, it ignores its own qualitative difference from the discursive concept." Adorno comments further: "The advancement of intellective mediation into the structure of artworks, where this mediation must to a large extent perform what was once the role of pregiven forms, constrains [*verringert*] the sensuously unmediated whose quintessence [*Inbegriff*] was the pure intuitability of artworks," (94) which I would retranslate as, "The advancement of intellective mediation into the structure of

artworks, where this mediation must to a large extent perform what was once the role of pregiven forms, abates the sensuously unmediated whose essence was the pure intuitability of artworks."

[41] In contrast, Martin Scherzinger, in his recent dissertation, does not allow for either of these possibilities. He writes-off (or dismisses) Boretz's contradictions, yet we can trace connections between the two. See Martin Rudolf Scherzinger, "Musical Formalism as Radical Political Critique: From European Modernism to African Spirit Possession" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2001), 127-63.

[42] "Metaphysics" is perhaps unduly broad, but seems fitting within the context of *Meta-Variations'* "Quinean/Goodmanian implosion in empiricist epistemology and its linguistic origins and consequences." (2)

[43] "Music, as a Music: A Multitext in Five Movements," (performance at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 19 October 2001).

[44] Adorno, 97. If retranslated: "aesthetic appearance cannot be lifted up to its intuition, [thus] the content of artworks cannot be lifted up to the concept either."

[45] Adorno, 99. Retranslated: "It is evident that artworks can heal the wounds that abstraction beats on them only through the heightening of abstraction, which impedes the contamination of the conceptual ferment with empirical reality."

[46] Although in a different context, Adorno says elsewhere: "It [music] is perceived purely as background." Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening," [1938] in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader,* ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1983), 271.

[47] This statement deserves further investigation from the perspective of my reading of Rahn's piece. If my locution, "silent intuitions," may be read as a genuine marker for Rahn's "intuitions," then Rahn's "intuitions" would be an inauthentic name. This is an aporetic situation because what Rahn's actual intuitions were is *not* named; their absence is named or described. Yet if my phenomenological description of Rahn's intuitions holds, and Rahn's intuitions have been named, then we are able to pass *without* difficulty from Rahn's rhetoric to his musical intuitions. Indeed, we would seem to have secured Rahn's authorization for this movement: "Your appreciation of the unfolding drama of thickenings and so on, is right on, in that it expresses exactly what I was hearing. (It's ironic, I suppose, that this analysis comes from such an anti-representational theater.)" (personal communication, 3 February 2001).

[48] J. N. Mohanty, "The Concept of Intuition in Aesthetics: Apropos A Critique by Adorno," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 39 (1981): 39-46. For a discussion of the notion of intuition in recent philosophy, see Jaakko Hintikka, "Intuitions and the Philosophical Method," (*Revue internationale de Philosophie* 35 [1981]: 74-90). This latter article is interesting in what at first seems to be a trivial way, yet is significant: it directly precedes J. N. Mohanty's "Intentionality and 'Possible Worlds,'" an article which discusses possible worlds semantics. I see this as being symbolic of a coalescing of two possible worlds/modal logic philosophers' presentation of important discussions of the notion of intuition. This is also interesting because philosophers' historical appeals to the notion of intuition in possible worlds and modal logic discussions occur roughly contemporaneously to its appeal in recent music theory. One reason appeals to intuition became so widespread in the philosophy of this time was that the notion of a possible world seems counterintuitive. Possible worlds theories grew out of studies of modal logic, which in turn grew out of logical positivism, for whom the notion of a possible world was anathema: thus the appeal to intuition was very much a defensive strategy, an attempt to "ground" speculation. See, among others, W. V. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1960), 36, 195-200; W. V. Quine and J. S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief* (New York: Random House, 1970), 54-62; Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972); Michael J. Loux, ed., *The Possible and the Actual: Readings in the Metaphysics of Modality* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979); and David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Cambridge, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1986).

[49] This process seems implicit in Brown and Dempster's use of the word. See note 7 above.

[50] It is interesting that in the section of *Aesthetic Theory* I have been discussing, Kant is the only thinker whom Adorno quotes directly, and only twice. More importantly, Adorno applauds Kant for inadvertently allowing his own wounds to be shown, for allowing the very tension in the dichotomy of "concept" and "intuition" to hold, such that Kant's rhetoric slips and shows its author's own aporia of the concept of aesthetic intuition: "It is admirable that Kant's aesthetics let this contradiction [that between 'beauty pleasing universally without a concept' and allowing 'an aesthetic judgment about the beautiful'] stand and expressly reflected on it without explaining it away. On the one hand, Kant treats the judgment of taste as a logical function and thus attributes this function to the aesthetic object to which the judgment would indeed need to be adequate; on the other hand, the artwork is said to present itself 'without a concept,' a mere intuition, as if it were simply extralogical. This contradiction, however, is in fact inherent in art itself...." (97) In his last sentence, Adorno performs a personification of artworks similar to that which took place in "Ivy," and in my rereading of Rahn's analysis.

[51] Thomas Clifton has written about the notions of intuition and phenomenology in music theories. See "Some Comparisons between Intuitive and Scientific Descriptions of Music," *Journal of Music Theory* 14/1 (1975): 66-110; and *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). For a critique, see Taylor A. Greer, "Listening as Intuiting: A Critique of Clifton's Theory of Intuitive Description," *In Theory Only* 7/7-8 (1984): 3-21.

[52] It also supports my initial construction of hearing Rahn's rhythmic-motives. There must be some sort of pedagogy we could develop which would make those motives, at the end of our learning, intuitable within the immediacy of experience, with the full specificity implied by my initial reading.

[53] Ian Quinn presents a recent and interesting account of the notion of intuition, perhaps along these lines. See "Listening to Similarity Relations" *Perspectives of New Music* 39/2 (2001): 108-58; see especially pp. 138-45.

[54] "I'd say we use 'counterintuitive' to express some inexpressible and fundamental repugnance on our part—no way, yuck, I don't want to hear it that way" John Rahn, (personal communication, 3 February 2001).

Robert Morris's *Playing Outside*

Mary Lee Roberts

Last Fall Bob Morris launched his piece *Playing Outside* at Webster Park near Rochester New York. *Playing Outside* is a large composition for multiple ensembles (scored for about 65 musicians: chorus, orchestra, four improvisers, and gamelan) and soloists. All in all there are about 40 sections of music, "each of which has a name, location, starting time, and duration from one to eleven minutes." *Playing Outside* was situated in a wooded area where the ensembles had the separation of being multiple acres away from their counterparts with no sound barriers other than those naturally provided by trees, rocks, and other park-like objects. Certainly the essence of space is a special feature of *Playing Outside*; here is the opportunity to situate yourself in a spot for ideal listening, on a rock far away from the musical sound source (low pass filter on everything, everything sounds mysterious and the weirdness of voyeuristic listening kicks in), or moving around (especially by bushwhacking from ensemble to ensemble) with the inevitable Doppler effect on both ears. Somehow the normal sit close and listen didn't fit with the scheme for me; and at times I didn't have a choice for my listening spot as a saxophonist from a creek bed below me piped in, or the ensembles started to march about.

Playing Outside is 100 minutes long.[1] Bob Morris provided a schedule of each musical event with maps of how to find the locations for each performance in the park. I found myself doing a kind of combined hike/listening, making a concerted effort to not stress if I didn't make it to one event or another on time. The music was lovely at all times, a kind of integration of flowing serial gestures with an anticipation of crow solos, chipmunk percussion, and the occasional airplane obbligato. Most striking were the moments when a flurry of pitches excited the air, then there was the space of the woods. Unlike in a concert hall, where there is the opportunity for dead air, with *Playing Outside* we got the alive air at all times: from the composer, from the players, from the forest. *Playing Outside* is a huge piece, the amount of music is absolutely astounding and one could imagine that combined with the immensity of park space the piece could be overwhelming. Interestingly enough I found myself enjoying a kind of intimate feeling. There was one instance particularly where some cellists were playing together in what seemed to be an off-the-beaten-path area where the trees were dense and disorganized. This was an especially beautiful scene, the cellists were sitting at picnic tables, and picnic like, I sat with about 5 other listeners at the picnic tables. Everything seemed small, the musical gestures were tiny little communications, I think that

[1] *Playing Outside* was performed twice on September 30, 2001. There was a brief interval between the performances.

they were improvising part of the time, the woods were very quiet there, and we were all sitting so close. I heard a descending melodic figure get tossed about by the cellists, so quietly, so expertly tender in essence. I heard sounds that reminded me of some of Bob's other music: sounds that come from intertwined lines and intertwined silences, sets of pitches that I can guess are some of Bob's favorite groupings. Everything sounded referential to Bob's music and Bob's relationship to the woods. When the cellists finished playing, I noticed I was holding my breath, I noticed that the sound just went out to the woods, I noticed the piece just ended, no clapping, the composition prolonged itself into my hike through a mud bog on to the next piece.

When I was driving up to Rochester I did some thinking to prepare myself for *Playing Outside*. I was enchanted by the thought that I could combine two of my most beloved activities: hiking and listening to music, into one event. I thought of Cage, and I dug out his, "Music Lovers' Field Companion". Cage says: "I have come to the conclusion that much can be learned about music by devoting oneself to the mushroom." He goes on to discuss the importance of knowing exactly how to identify various fungi in order to avoid life-threatening experiences (caused by ingesting poisonous amounts of fungi, whatever these amounts may be). Cage laments, or simply notices that many audiences do not take listening as seriously as a mycologist might take mushroom identification. In fact, if I'm not misunderstanding his gist, I draw a conclusion from Cage's article that the act of listening should warrant the same type of attention given to say, learning how to swim with sharks, skydiving, or fill in the blank with your own analogous life threatening activity. Bob Morris's music, if you are familiar with it at all, seems to demand a super rigorous listening, so I knew that *Playing Outside* was not going to be a "walk in the park" so to speak, and it certainly wasn't. For example, when I was negotiating a bushwhack across two ravines with *Mesang Teduh*, a gamelan part of *Playing Outside*, as my guide, a couple basic instincts kicked in for me: 1) I had to use Bob's music, the Gamelan, as a compass. I could hear Bob's piece in the distance, and indeed it sounded like Bob's music: beautiful intricate phrases lingering in the air, then moving, moving on, into another related, yet different context. 2) I had to watch where I was going and hustle or I was going to miss the visual part of the gamelan piece. I had to move, move fast, carefully, and listen carefully. I felt that semi-terror feeling in my stomach, was I getting lost? What if the gamelan quit before I found it, if it did would another ensemble pipe in and would I be able to find it? Nothing like a tiny bit of survival instinct to perk up my otherwise lazy listening skills. When I reached the gamelan encampment they had finished; this meant that I heard all of Bob's *Mesang Teduh* as part of a low level panic induced by bushwhacking. I heard *Mesang Teduh* as a guiding call, as a signal, as a destination. I think now how I have usually relied on the sun to give me a sense of direction, always keeping my eyes open; this was a rare moment for keeping my ears open.

Bob Morris writes about how the idea of flow defines *Playing Outside*. Bob writes that his form is flow, there are no strictly defined musical devices like repetition, instead he used processes of growth and decay to define the flow form[2]. But flow did not imply that things ran smoothly: the time where trumpet fanfare calls sliced through the woods sounded like a beacon, like a signal call to relocate me in the concert situation, a startling situation for me as I had been eyeing/listening to a blue jay squawking away and gotten sidetracked. Particularly there was a composition, "Vines and Undergrowth" where the flow was most apparent for me, here I heard gestures of sound that so integrated with the forest sounds (a trio of squirrels chattering in the overhead area) that I immediately felt like I was within the composer's head, the intentions were so clear, the intention to create spaciousness with little sounds blending into the forest.

Bob Morris chose the title *Playing Outside* because of the reference to a style of jazz improvisation, and the references to sports: where the game can include time for play and time for non-play. I also think of the childhood idea of "playing outside". I immediately think of my mother telling us to "go play outside" essentially giving us permission to escape parental policing and go out into the outside to find adventure. There is definitely something like childhood play with Bob's piece. He gave every audience member a map of the park with instructions on how to get to every performance, kind of treasure map style, he encouraged bushwhacking, giving permission to hike "outside". The sense of adventure was a lot of fun. An enhancement to the treasure map feature was the varying texts that Bob used from fragments of Japanese Haiku, the *I Ching*, the Old Testament, Emerson and Beckett, and Kalidasa's play *Shakuntala*; I really had no idea what I was going to hear from location to location.

With Bob's *Playing Outside* the musical experience extends beyond the space of composition to include the space of the trails, the space of the sky, sun, weather, trees, animals. I remember after hiking to a distant location to hear a vocal ensemble, then hiking further to end up missing a chamber piece, but catching the chamber group on their march in the opposite direction down the trail, all heading toward their next playing location, that I wandered back toward the center of the park. It was here that I ran into a solo violist, standing by the road, playing what sounded like a concert piece. His piece was craggy, it had sharp points, he was playing seriously difficult Robert Morris music. I caught myself wanting to get rid of the woods for this piece, I did not want to have the woods integrate with the viola here, this piece was too challenging for the woods, the scope of this music extended the boundaries of the woods and drew me into to center of the viola sound. Up until then I had not thought it was possible for me to segregate the woods from Bob's music.

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[2] For example: I heard the electric guitar solo ringing wildly through the woods – sound as a growth spurt, then the pine-breeze blew/decayed it all away.

Playing Outside culminated with a grand finale in a large open area, an opportunity for the entire assemblage to play together. This was a good opportunity for me to take stock of what had been spread out over the acreage of the park. The diversity and character of *Playing Outside* rang through the woods during this finale. *Playing Outside* created a lovely day, a perfect day for a woods enhancing piece, and a lovely day for a composer who has come the closest, as far as I have experienced, to integrating the outside with the playing.

Musical Form, Expectation, Attention, and Quality

Robert Morris

Someone asked, "When one is confronted with disaster how shall he avoid it?" Josho said, "That's it!"[1]

For many years, I have been creating unique forms for my music. Many of them are based on the idea of traversing a musical space in the most efficient and combinatorial way: all the ways to do X or be in Y or be Z. Others play with the idea of recontextualizing musical materials and passages by juxtaposition and overlap. What these forms have in common is a concern with a process of transformation that places things in new contexts, and new things in existing contexts. But what are these "things?" Certainly not themes or motives, but various states of mobility and gesture, which are identified not so much by their content but as an emergent effect that arises from the features of the materials and their combinations. This supervenience does not have the character of a thing or state, but rather of a characteristic shape evolving in time, a flux or conflux of musical movements.

Until about a year ago, I did not give much thought to what kinds of formal principles I was satisfying in my music. But it occurred to me then that musical form is just and completely a matter of change not invariance, summed up in the phrase: form as flow. This means that music is process, a forming and reforming, not a matter of sound-objects that follow one another in time, not just the best sounds in the right order. But as simple—and I think natural—as this idea is, I've found it poses some problems for the music listener. The problems are not technical, but conceptual, and they are woven into the ways at least Western concert music tends to be conceived by music professionals as well as the musical public.

To address what I see as the main problems, I first have to identify some peripheral issues that aggravate things. First, I do not assume that listening to music is passive. If you see the listener as passive, then the listening experience has to be managed by someone else. I'll return to this point later on, but I'll say here I do not consider music listening as different in kind from composing, performing, or thinking about music.

Another exacerbation is that concert music has to be "successful" on its first hearing. If not, it won't be played again. Fortunately, new music is also available on CD and video so one has at least a chance to hear it more than once. It's not often admitted these days that pieces that are now considered "classic" or "great" were once difficult for their audiences, and that if they had not been played often they would not have entered the canon. In this connection it's interesting to note that people who lived before the advent of recordings didn't learn pieces only by sheer listening, but by reading and performing them in piano reductions and arrangements. They also sang. Also given was a common musical language, the tonal syntax of music, which enabled one to understand a new work from what one knew of another. In any case, those of us who want to make music that has the richness and multidimensionality we admire in earlier music may have little chance for an adequate first hearing.

A further problem is that the concert audience tends to accept and value music of one kind over another. This means the generic character of a piece is more important than its particularity. For many listeners, music that is familiar, or has a beat, or has a program trumps other kinds of musics. This can happen even in concerts of new music, where music that is fashionable and trendy is accepted more readily than music of a more individual cast regardless of issues of quality

Up to now, I've skirted issues of value and taste, and for the moment I want to continue to set aside such issues, for considerations of the good and bad in music tend only to confuse what I want to talk about. (Of course, talk about music value can lead to an awareness of the cluster of habits and dispositions that constitute what we ordinarily call taste.)

So I'll return to the problems that arise when we take "form as flow" seriously. And from now on I'll be talking about any music that has this character. This includes such genres as church music of the early Renaissance, Japanese shakuhachi music, alap and alapana improvisation of India, and a good deal of Western contemporary music, especially computer music.

I've noticed that musical experts—professional or amateurs—are often the ones who have the most trouble with music that cannot be easily reified into objects and events. It is often these people that claim that such music is "faceless," "boring," "doesn't go anywhere," "bad," "without quality," "incompetent," and so forth. Why the often extreme reactions?

One reason might be that the expert's investment in terms and explanations is compromised. Form as flow makes it more difficult for the musical expert to operate effectively and keep his/her hold on the prestige and power that expert knowledge provides, for it's hard to point things out in music when it is continually changing and disappearing into the past. If music is transient by nature, it can't really be owned. Ben Boretz has said that considering music as if it were objective, as an object, helps to make it seem valuable as something to be bought and sold. Moreover, if music is literally memorable, it can be objectified because it is mentally palpable. In order for music to be easy to remember some theorists say it must have certain properties known and discussed by cognitive scientists. Some of these properties are linearity, simplicity, chunking, hierarchy, and specification. Music that is given in relatively short phrases, hierarchically organized (in pitch, rhythm, and gesture), identified in some notational scheme, and not polyphonic is exactly that which can be more easily reified into musical objects, although there is no necessity for us to hear or consider such music as reified. And as an aid to memory, we have musical notation, which enables us to objectify music to the point where the piece is the score rather than the performance. Perhaps this is justified only if the score is considered a description of the (ideal) piece rather than a mimetic or prescriptive tool. Once again, scores need not suggest that the music encoded in them is not flow; my point is only that it is easier to objectify scores than performances. So if music value depends on material or conceptual reification, we should expect at least certain music critics to ignore or marginalize other kinds and conceptions of music and balk when these underrated musics are asserted to be equally valuable.

Musical experts, as distinct from music journalists, however talk more about excellence than value and assert high standards for musical excellence and taste. Certainly I have no desire to argue against the development and maintenance of the highest degrees of musical skill and knowledge, provided such skills and information

are not considered normative so they function as prerequisites for "authentic" musical engagement.

But inasmuch as the concept of musical value is thought to be universal across time and space, the ebbs and flows of music have to be only apparent, for only some deeper musical permanence can have value since value itself cannot change. Taking impermanence at face value short circuits a Platonic urge to locate value in the unchanging essences of things. This was not a problem for Plato, of course, since for him music and art were only poor copies of reality. But if the flux of music were thought to have value then value itself would also be Heraclitian, changeable and relative, or at least context sensitive. These are not positions that most music listeners would find comfortable or even sensible, even though such views are not uncommon in non-Western cultures and philosophies. But a point has been raised: does a commitment to form as flow really imply relativity? If the locus of value is in stability and perpetuity, then of course the answer is yes. Nevertheless, as I will continue to argue, such an emphasis actually excludes much of what people do or could value in music.

But still I haven't given a reason why form as flow is problematic for music listeners. A common definition of form asserts that form is a matter of musical sections in permutation and repetition. Moreover, not just any permutations, but only certain fixed forms. This is formula, not form. Beads on a string, not the string. While it is obvious that this definition has limited scope and is too simple to apply to anything but simple pieces, it is accepted by many musicians and scholars alike. But what are these beads, the musical sections? If one thinks about it, musical sections are constructed in memory, never heard in the "present." One re-members, that is, reconstructs the section from the parts—the members—that are memorized. Sectionhood is mental. What we actually hear is a flow of sound. If this flow can be heard as belonging to one strand and it has features that can be learned to stand for the beginnings and endings of strands, it can be memorized and conceptualized as a series of sections. It's important to see that there is nothing inherent in the flow of sound that makes it a section or even a strand. The point is that a sound-flow can conform to the mental notion that form is a matter of sections, providing it has the right properties, which are given by the definition of form. Of course, only some sound-flows will satisfy a section-oriented notion—or any other particular notion—of form. Others will not. The trouble begins when we begin to think that the notion of form is inherent in the sound-flow. With this supposition, the flow now not only satisfies but also *represents* a notion of musical form, with the consequence that sound-flows that do not satisfy the concept of form at hand are dismissed as formless or irrelevant to form. The situation is the same with more complex and sophisticated definitions of form.

If musical form is conceptual and has to be learned, then definitions of form are not only mental, but conventional. And even within the same music culture there will be different and opposing notions of form. So why must we have top-down definitions of form to which sound-flows must comply in the first place? Why not start with the sound-flow, bottom-up, and see what can emerge?

Clearly what's at issue is order and control. Sound-flows can get out of hand and threaten to ruin not only the hierarchies within the structure asserted by a definition of form, but the political hierarchies of presentation and reception within a musical community. What's more, form as flow also destabilizes and calls into question musical meaning itself, for when music has the properties of objects, it is most

powerful to assert meaning. In order to elaborate this point, I will provisionally identify music meaning within a cultural context and posit two functional modalities, identity and protest.

Music often functions to arouse and celebrate cultural identity. It joins separate people into a union through song, dance, and other musical activities. In this way music can help assert a culture's presence and values within an uncertain, volatile, and complex world containing other, perhaps hostile cultures. For this, the music has to have definite traits and features that are distinct from other musics. Ironically, as Stockhausen once pointed out, while the tunes and texts of national anthems are different and distinct, their character and presentation as strophic tunes harmonized in traditional four-part harmony makes them sound quite alike. This shows us that if music is to assert identity, it has to have features that identify it as music to another culture. Only then can it play a part in the conflict and negotiations among different cultures. Obviously music that is not "memorable" won't be very useful for such ends.

Music can also be used to protest and destabilize cultural norms from within the culture itself. It can be used exactly as it is used for asserting musical identity, but in this case to single out and assert the solidarity of the protest group. Once again, clear and definite traits work best. But in cases where the protesters might be suppressed or oppressed, a music that easily identifies the counter-culture would be a liability. One way is for music to inject counter-cultural values surreptiously via forms of camouflage into the sanctioned forms it takes in the culture at large. Another way is for music to destabilize aspects of the culture as a whole. Music that is considered violent in the culture or will promote violence can be useful to instigate change. Such music will be often be condemned and/or repressed. One would think that music that is unreified and volatile would be very useful in promoting political unrest, for its "meaning" as I have discussed it so far calls into question any assertion of the universality of what are really conventional hierarchies and differentiations. On the other hand, its freedom from the limitations of such conventions associates it with the (universal) struggle for a people's autonomy. Yet, volatile and fluxy music is really not very effective as a technology for political change. One can't depend on it to always have the focus, predictability, and object permanence that makes it serviceable as an emblem or code. It can backfire into chaos and indeterminacy. Although chaos can be useful to disarm and destabilize the power structure, once that has been accomplished, form as flow is useless to continue to participate in the struggle to completion and victory.

On the personal level, music that resists reification can also call into question one's hierarchies of musical thoughts and values. Just as chaos can be used to destabilize a cultural institution or political establishment, a music of flux and unpredictability can threaten to undo one's thoughts and values if one takes it to heart. This is why I think such music is often ignored or condemned. Considering experience as flowing and changing can be felt to be dangerous. One fears that one's center, discrimination, taste, identity—in short, the Ego—will be eroded and ultimately destroyed. These fears come with identifying one's Ego or self with objects, things, and unchanging thoughts and ideals. It is felt that one's good habits and proprieties will be ravaged. So one doesn't feel safe in the presence of flux and unpredictability, for it is felt that in order to maintain and continue one's culture and personality one has to be protected from untoward and possibly violent reversals of fortune. This is a completely natural and human reaction to unwanted change, but it is based on the strategy that rigid boundaries and reservoirs of accumulated force are the best or only ways to protect ourselves. (I will discuss another strategy to deal with change later.) So a person (or a community) ends up maintaining a rigid and reified conception of his/her/its identity,

of who I/we am/are. Anything that might be unpredictable and destabilizing has to be domesticated and subject to limits and rules. Musical experience must be tamed and concepts such as form as flow avoided. The most drastic measure is to establish a cast iron canon, into which only the already familiar is admitted. Of course, to the unreflective person, form as flow simply makes no sense, but to the more insightful, it can represent a threat to identity and the associated values of permanence, stability, balance and harmony.

But are permanence, stability, balance and harmony necessarily connected? Yes and no. As musicians we understand harmony dynamically, as a way of coordinating conflict and resolution among musical moments. Harmony as a state of mind is not the same because, in order to maintain the state, we have to exclude anything that will compromise its unity. Harmony from this point of view is permanence. And, despite its dynamic features, tonal harmony also involves reification and exclusion. For instance, common accounts of harmony demand that musical events have to come in musical objects called chords which are considered and labeled as either consonant or dissonant; this doesn't cover all the possible chords (simultaneities) though because only a handful of chords can be generated by the syntax of tonal harmony. Thus harmony excludes or ignores many chords and anything that is not a chord.[2] The concepts of stability and balance connote homeostasis in which a system returns to a balance or identity after it has been perturbed. A state or system that can react dynamically by rolling with the punches, giving and taking, will last much longer than one that rigidly refuses to interact aside from simply resisting or ignoring change. But eventually things will change; and if one clings to stability or permanence there will be disappointment and distress.

But rather than accepting the fact that change will eventually occur, people often use change itself to arrive at better ways of resisting change. The move from a strategy of permanence to homeostasis could be viewed in this way. Of course, this only ups the ante, and the outcome will be the same; the dynamics of the system will change and/or decay in various ways. So it would seem that clinging to the identity of a system or thing will always result in frustration. And the attempt to keep the system permanent or stable by reifying it will only result in stress and strain. But, if one can accept change, things lighten up. The fear of change is replaced by an interest in experience: how change occurs and feels. The world is open and free.

This radical shift in value is not easy. Accepting change is a fluxy occupation. Sometimes it is easy, sometimes not. When we are calm and unthreatened and relaxed, the boundaries of reification and segregation are down and we can feel and think more freely. We can appreciate the context-sensitive nature of our values and distinctions. But when we become afraid and defensive, we hold on to our principles no matter what. In such occasions, we may promote these principles to the status of universal law. This leads to either conflict or siege, which in the end provokes change nevertheless.

I started this essay talking about musical form as flow and why it is hard for people to accept this ideal and take it seriously. Taking it seriously would mean that one accepted change and flow as fundamental—at least in music—over stasis and reification. One would have to understand that stasis is just relatively slow change and that reification occurs when certain mental functions are imposed on one's experience. My point isn't that if you will take form as flow seriously, then you will understand some music I care about and I'll be a happy man. I'm writing rather because there are some fundamental problems in music appreciation and the study of

music that may demote music from its potential as an expression and performance of freedom, to an activity and practice that only makes us feel defensive and oppressed. These problems are not endemic to music making however. So I've been using the idea of form as flow is a way to interrogate the assumptions and habits that I think make our (musical) lives unhappy and unsatisfying. But now I want to focus on what I think is at the heart of these problems, after which I'll return to identify and analyze some other syndromes and systems of thought and feeling that undermine the promise of musical experience.

We need to examine the quality of musical attention; how we attend to the sounding music, as opposed to how we might think about it at some other time. Why concentrate on attention? Because, as I will point out later, attention is the place/process from which quality itself emanates and arises. And if we can develop our powers of attention, the experience of music will become endowed with all kinds of qualities and virtues. I think that this is what we hope musical experience can bring to our lives, and why we devote so much of our time and energy to the practice of music in the first place.

I identify three levels of attention. The first is when the music is sounding but we ignore it. This happens when music is used for a social or cultural purpose and functions emblematically. The music is not there to be listened to, and if we start to do that too much, we may be considered ill-mannered or antisocial. But we can also ignore music meant to be heard when our mind immediately wanders away from the music to our own concerns and we wake up to the applause.

Intermittent attention is a second level. We may go off on tangents that are suggested by aspects of the music: how great or bad the music is; thoughts and feelings suggested by the music's program or narrative; anxieties about one's own competence to understand the music at some ideal level. Then, when our reveries dissipate, we return to the music. Non-musicians don't worry much about losing attention; they do hear some the music in an engaged way and their flights of fancy are not seen as problematic since these are usually related to the music. Music experts and musicians on the other hand often worry about intermittence; they will either blame themselves for not knowing enough about the music to follow it or blame the composer or performer(s) as incompetent or mediocre. This way of thinking puts a premium on knowledge. The problem is felt to be a lack of appropriate knowledge or the ability to use it; either the listener doesn't know enough, or the performers and composers don't know how to make music that captures attention.

Complete undivided attention is the third level. Here one pays attention to the music and never loses contact with it. Musicians are good at this because they cannot afford to lose attention when they perform music. But sometimes their attention may be limited only to the act of performance rather than what results; when some of them hear a piece that does not include their instrument or is in a genre that they don't play, they may encounter difficulty staying with the music as it sounds forth. Knowing how to read music notation also helps keep attention since more of our senses and mind are involved. In addition, the score gives us cues about what to listen for and also analyses into visually distinct notations what might be hard to untangle with our ears alone.

Musical attention would seem to be optimized when what we know how to hear is matched by the music. When we know how to hear a fugue—what textures, modes of progression, what processes of form we are likely to encounter—and a fugue is performed, we find it easy to pay attention to a fugue and follow it all the way to

conclusion. But when we don't know what to listen to or how to listen to a music that is unfamiliar, we can no longer depend on our knowledge and habits to hold our attention. So we see that musical attention based on knowledge does not really depend on an ability to attend in general, but is being managed by what we know. Our ability to attend is reduced to the state of the novice when we are not familiar with the music, and, as I said above, there is a sense of loss of control as one's habits and concepts don't seem to work any longer. The response may include bitterness and anger if these habits and concepts were learned and adopted to make music meaningful as a source of personal and social identity, and/or to avoid experiences that are scary or boring.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, composers entered into the management of attention by the way they composed. Before I used the phrase "capture attention," and this what many people today assume the composer is supposed to do. He or she programs musical consciousness by the use of musical rhetoric, by taking advantage of musical effects such as texture, accent, figure and ground, emphasis, and the like. Thus musical experience is guided by the composer, with the benefit that the listener need not know very much about music since the composer will show the way. The disadvantage is that the listener becomes passive in the process. This situation has led to the one-shot notion of musical performance I spoke of before and an emphasis upon a musical experience that is above all entertaining. And when the music fails to entertain the listener, the composer is condemned as incompetent or irresponsibly self-indulgent.

Some music theorists have been quite explicit about the kind of engineering the composer employs—or should employ—to control the listeners' musical reactions. Interestingly, the composer is to be congratulated when the music "works" according to the theory. This suggests that people are attracted to composition because it offers a way to control audience sensibility, to weld power, as opposed to provide multifaceted experience.

One of these expectation theories assumes that music sets up (structural and tonal) expectations that are satisfied in "good pieces." A repertoire of "sound terms" is established—things and processes that set up expectations in music. If the music satisfies too easily by presenting these terms too directly, or if it does not use these terms well (incorrectly, or "inartistically"), the result is boredom (bad music). If the expectations are creatively (read surprisingly) met (often by delaying the resolution of the expectations), then the music arouses feeling and is "good." The theory also gives a reason for the tension between innovation and tradition; after a while, all of the sound terms' potential for creative exploitation gets used up, and new terms and processes must be introduced. So as older music becomes too predictable, new music must be introduced, hence stylistic turnover. If this is correct, expectation theories characterize musical experience as a form of addiction, where the listener requires a greater hit on each new musical experience. The theory also explains why music will not have an effect on the listener outside the system (or style), one who does not know the sound terms and at least some their uses in existing pieces.

But despite what they explain, should we accept expectation theories as correct or apt? There are at least two problems, one of which we have already discussed. This is stated beautifully by John Cage. Speaking about deceptive cadences he writes in Lecture on Nothing:

> Progress in such a way as to imply the presence of a tone not actually present; then fool everybody by not landing on it. What is being fooled? Not the ear, but the mind. The whole question is intellectual.

To which I add: that is, intellectually constructed according to a category system. Thus by a change of thinking we are no longer under the spell of such theories.

The other problem has a moral dimension. As we've seen, the composer is characterized as a manipulator of the listeners' feelings—the former works to satisfy the expectations of the latter. The essence of composition is therefore reduced to programming the listener's consciousness; and, if so, who or what gives the composer the right or privilege to practice such control? The crassness of this depiction may be mitigated by showing that a "good" solution to resolving the expected is a creative one as well. Nevertheless, the whole business seems simply a subset of marketing technique. No doubt there are creative and entertaining commercials, even including elements that seem "artistic," but isn't there more substance to making music than simply programming desire? After all, the theory hasn't told us anything about music *per se*, only about a particular use of music. Moreover, the states induced by manipulating the resolution of desire are not usually the ones conducive to the appreciation of anything at all. The theory says only that we just want to reach future satisfaction rather than revel in the moment or appreciate the flow. Appreciation always involves contemplation, even if we become excited by what we admire and esteem.

But I believe the listener may not be so interested in gratification after all, because unless the music makes the listener feel safe and sound, gratification is not so compelling. And composerly programming without playing games with desire can reassure the listener that all will be well, somewhat in the way a tour guide in a foreign country can provide security to a tourist who would be unwilling to venture out on his or her own. But something else can achieve the same end as the composer's invisible hand. This is related to the set of sound terms mentioned above.

Events in a piece can be obliged by fiat, convention, or tradition to follow predictable orders. If event B always has tended to follow A, we may state this condition or tradition as a rule: A goes to B. With other such conventions, we may construct a grammar that models use. Tonality is one type of musical grammar, having syntactic rules such as "the IV chord must follow the I, II, III, or VI chord and never follow V." By legislating convention we enable the listener to predict with some assurance local progressions in the music. Of course, as I noted above, this type of tonality—ordinary harmony—obliges the musical events to be reified.[3]

Being able to predict what happens next in music represents another way for the music to project a sense of safety in the face of change. Order helps reassure the listener that things will not go awry. It also allows the listener to believe that there is purpose to musical change, in the same way the argument from design has be used as a "proof" for the existence of a deity. This sense of purpose, based on the order provided by syntax, can be so compelling that the listener begins to think of the connections legislated by syntax as a kind of natural law that implies that musical progression is essentially teleological. Of course, this is no more than a belief. As Hume and others have pointed out, just because B has up to now invariably followed A, there is no reason to believe that B must follow A, or that A causes B, or that B is the goal of A. All we can say with any certainty is either that a rule is being followed

or that it is rational to assume that A then B will occur since the odds are in favor of this outcome.

Despite these well-known arguments against teleology and causality, listeners will hold on to purpose and teleology, for these fictions allow them to believe that in music at least, one can predict the future. If so, then music can be more open to change, because if something problematic will occur later, we can take measures to avoid it, since we know about it ahead of time. This is not such an irrational idea, for this mirrors our regard for the predictive power of science and technology. (And not insignificantly, science operates by reifying experience into objects or processes that can be examined and tested out of context.) Of course, science does not always predict flawlessly. If music "technology" does not have the predictive power of science, it is nevertheless comforting to think of music as a safe haven for our thoughts and feelings, provided it has syntax and predictability. Then it can entertain longer and more elaborate sound-flows with less reification. So it is not so surprising that once the syntax of tonality was established at the end of the eighteenth-century, composers began to expand the tonal forms and processes resulting in the so-called Romantic music of the nineteenth century.

However music of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries evolved away from the predictive syntax of tonality, and even began to call its tenets into question. (And as many have noted, there's a parallel move in Western intellectual history, where the certainty and causality of Newtonian Physics, along with certain teleological assumptions in Biology, were turned on their head by developments in Quantum Mechanics and concepts such as natural selection.) Today, few people see modern extensions of Western classical tonality as any more than one of many modes to compose music, none of which guarantee much more than the preservation of convention or the operation of rules. Even the most cherished of Western musical traditions must be situated among the complex, sophisticated, and established musical systems found in the Near East, India, Indonesia, and elsewhere.

In the face of this failure of music thinking and structure to provide any essential foundation to music, it has occurred to more than a few people that it may have been a mistake to consider music as a form of thinking in the first place. Maybe we should give up any reliance on learning, knowledge or habit and make and take music as it comes, without thought and worry. This would be in effect to erase or disable one's own memory, for skill and habit are as much a function of memory as knowledge itself. I think this would be a mistake if the aim were to return to the innocent bliss of a child. Relieved of the weight of the past, one would not fear what the future might bring. To separate oneself from one's past however is only another willful act of segregation and would only reinvent the wheel of problems that led to the desire to solve them by repressing memory. But to question whether or not cognition supports musical attention at least clears some ground and suggests that we ought to examine what remains: the nature of attention itself.

So, is it possible to attend to music wholeheartedly but without the support of learning, knowledge or habit? I'd rather not answer this question right away but simply insist that attention does not depend on cognition. If this is so, then the qualities of music are available to anyone who will listen. But this would mean there is quality without knowledge. Unfortunately, there is no way to prove by reasoning that quality is non-cognitive. We can only try to develop our powers of concentration and see what happens. When we do, we find that pure attention is exactly the agency that permits the experience of quality in the first place. So if there is something to hear

and we pay attention, its qualities will be heard in all of its particularity (but not apart from its particularity). Since quality has connotations of value and hierarchy, I prefer to use the term "suchness." Suchness is what we perceive when there are no thoughts about perception, before we recognize something as X. Suchness is without a cognitive component. It can appear at any level of awareness, whether one is engaged in perception, the consideration of an abstract thought, or the heft of indefinite feeling. Suchness is experiencing the awareness that we are aware of something. Thus we do not have suchness unless we attend to our experience. Suchness is what artists and musicians are after when they make their work. But it doesn't really matter whether they attempt to program the listener's attention or not, for suchness depends on the quality of the listener's attention, which is maximal when it is free and undivided. But lest I give the impression I am discounting the cognitive side of music appreciation, I want to point out that attention and quality is not opposed to knowledge and skill, for attention is totally intertwined with knowledge and skill since we must *attend* to them if they are to be improved and developed. In any case, knowledge and skill will heighten the quality of the work by providing more subtle and ramified occasions to appreciate.

So if we want to learn how to cultivate our attention we will immediately have to encounter things and events we can't predict or know ahead of time, things that can be disturbing and interrupt attention. As might be expected, it is very difficult to learn this in ordinary life with its reversals of fortune, not to mention our desires to avoid pain and maximize pleasure in cultural and societal settings that demand compliance and responsibility. The traditional way to develop the capacity for pure attention is to limit attention to itself, with or without an object to which one attends. This practice is identified as meditation in a number of religious systems, but it can be practiced without reference to any specific religious belief or doctrine.

There are musical practices that function as types of meditation. We may practice breath control, bowing, scales, counterpoint to focus attention of musical matters that underlie and coordinate more complex musical actions. When we practice music in this way, the point is to keep the mind focused on the task at hand. This is not easy at first since our mind wants to wander away, and may we encounter all kinds of interesting and attractive thoughts or others that can frighten and disgust. We have to learn to keep our attention focused until these thoughts die down, no matter how boring or arduous the experience is. After a while the experience is not so boring and we make progress. Eventually, it becomes easy to enter this state, which can be applied to other musical tasks such as practicing a piece of music and further to composing or performing or listening to music. Since there are no musical attention exercises for the listener (except perhaps ear training), he or she will not be able to develop musical attention unless s/he takes up an instrument or learns to sing. A while ago, most music listeners had some experience in the making of music. Nevertheless, any exercise of music attention has some limitations in that it promotes only certain forms and occasions of attention, not all. But at least one has the potential to generalize the process of music practice to other forms of music or other activities.

A quicker way to perfect attention is to attend to nothing at all. Then it is possible to study the nature of attention itself. If one is able to quiet the mind so thoughts stop interrupting one's concentration, we find that it is our conception of the self or Ego that governs the quality of attention and therefore the suchness we are able to engage. I won't say more about how the self changes as a result of meditation except to say after one has practiced it for some time, the world (including music) is subtly

transformed. It seems a better place in which to live. This is because we are better able to perceive, delight, and share in the suchness that is all around us. We begin to lose our fears of change and thus more experience is open to us. Music form as flow is now appreciated for its qualities, along with all the other kinds of music which will also seem to flow. We can now appreciate music that is designed to be unfinished, illusive, vague, ephemeral, erratic, mercurial, and so forth—that is, designed to present any kind of qualities to the listener. (Even "deceptive" cadences are heard as interesting ways the music can go, playful and open as in a game with people you love.) And we understand why the composer wants to share these states with the listener. We begin to understand that taste is a cultural, personal value, so it becomes context-sensitive. This is not the same as relativity, for we now have an ability to determine what has suchness at different times and places, but only if we know the local rules and proprieties. Only then can we detect the difference between sham and authenticity, habit and intuition, and beauty and appropriateness. So we see that knowledge plays a role in the appreciation of suchness, but it does not enable or heighten our ability to detect suchness. While we learn to cultivate suchness in one context, or even without context, it can only be apprehended if one knows how to "read" the situation in context. We can't appreciate the suchness of a French poem unless we know French.

Directly addressing attention helps us enter a realm of freedom. Not a freedom *from* oppression or bondage, but a freedom *to* choose anything for any reason whatsoever. This means that my use of form as flow as a lightning rod can now be dropped, because if music involves, accepts and participates in change, then there is only a difference of suchness between those forms that are quantized and others that are continuous, and one can flow into the other. When music form is heard as flow we can feel this wonderful, incomprehensible freedom manifested as sound. We no longer need to be programmed to understand the music. The problem was fear, and with fear, reification, control and segregation. Practicing attention helps root us in the present so we feel confident that we can accept change and adjust to it.

But as they say in Zen, enlightenment is easy to get, but hard to keep. We are likely to keep desiring that our expectations will be satisfied even though we know that to truly satisfy expectation is to do away with it, the occasion and the syndrome. We will encounter music that will seem to wander without direction but we will know that it is really our mind that has wandered away from the music. We will find ourselves annoyed when music takes a turn we do not like, or dismayed when the qualities that were so clear yesterday have seemed to disappear today. And we will have to practice just as hard as before to learn a new musical idiom or language. All that this means is that we have to keep practicing attention in order to keep in touch with freedom. As long as we do, we are immune to cynicism, doubt, anxiety, and indolence.

We've come a long way from where I started, talking about my own compositional preoccupations and observations. This was the most natural way for me to begin. As I said in the middle of this essay, I'm not trying to explain what my music is about, or to suggest how the listener might go about understanding it. My purpose has been to offer some ways of thinking about music that have not often been expressed, as well as to suggest how one might continually reanimate one's love of music and what that means to those of us who have devoted ourselves to music, in all of its splendors and inanities.

While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.[4]

[1] Japanese Death Poems: *Written by Zen Monks and Haiku Poets on the Verge of Death* complied and with an Introduction by Yoel Hoffman (Rutland, Vermont, and Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle: 1986, p.72). The exchange is followed by Hoffman's explanation: "The disaster lies only in the consciousness of 'disaster.' When you are in a given situation but do not define it, it is not 'good' or 'bad'; you simply react according to the circumstances."
[2] More sophisticated accounts of harmony within a notion of a "tonal system," include notes that do not literally form chords by interpreting them according to tonal functions specified by the system. The point here is that relatively poor accounts of musical structure help continue the project of reification and exclusion.
[3] In contrast, Schenkerian tonality allows strings of events to have similar syntactic connections by allowing a chord or note to stand for a string of chords or notes, which are considered also to be contrapuntal nexi. In this way Schenkerian tonality accommodates flows of sound in a less rigid manner than ordinary harmony, and the look of the graphs makes this point visually.
[4] William Wordsworth, from "LINES COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR. JULY 13, 1798."

Does Pauline Exist?

Renée Coulombe

More accurately, the above question might read 'does Pauline's *music* exist,' but in the context of late western capitalism, where one's creative output and one's public "self" are often confused, does Pauline exist? What does it mean to be a composer in our society, dominated by the idea of the individual discrete creative act, what does it mean to create collaboratively and work collectively? What does it mean to allow your music to be shaped, and determined by the creativity and personalities of many strong co-creators? Even more strangely, why is it that in the midst of Pauline's many collaborations and improvisations with musicians of incredibly varied backgrounds, genres and interests sounds so, well, "Pauline?" Why is it that something sounds "Pauline" at the heart of all these works? I went to *sounding the Margins: A Forty-Year Retrospective of the Works of Pauline Oliveros* listening for Pauline. What I heard, in the end, did less to answer that final question than one might think. This three-day homage to the mother of all things good and right in music composition at the 21st century showed me, in the end, one thing above all: there are many, many Paulines.

Then again, there would have to be.

For the subject of a 40-year retrospective, Pauline is inordinately energetic. A quick glance at the retrospective program (covers gorgeously printed by hand for the occasion), revealed just how much of Pauline was going to go around. Appearing with The Rocking Horse Trio, The Space Between, Ghostdance Trio, Circle Trio, Deep Listening Band and Timeless Pulse was only the beginning. Add to her collaborative performance output many on-stage interviews, off-stage encounters and one enormously powerful solo

performance over the course of just 48 hours, and one begins to get a glimpse of the energy that drives Pauline after all these years. A 40-year retrospective would be difficult for less prolific composers – with Pauline, there was simply no chance that the retrospective could be at all comprehensive. Sadly, there was none of her early electronic music scheduled, which I missed greatly. To be fair, while her electronic music is one of the reasons she is so important in the mainstream history of composition in the second half of the 20th century, it can be difficult to program for live audiences outside of traditional concert halls with good sound systems.

The San Francisco location seemed appropriate for a look back, as Pauline's on-again off-gain presence in the Bay Area has spanned the entire period of the retrospective. San Francisco seemed to have returned the favor, as the spring weekend was awesomely beautiful and the venues, the Lorraine Hansberry Theater and Dolores Park, lend an unapologetically hippie atmosphere to the proceedings. As the audience gathered Friday evening for the opening performance, the sheer size of the Sounding the Margins Orchestra (convened as one might guess for the occasion) used in the first piece gave the large theater a circus-like air. This "circus air" was augmented greatly by the stage design – the set of "*Ain't Misbehavin*" still graced the sizeable stage in all its vaguely psychedelic neon-painted glory. In other words, it was perfect. As I entered the concert hall where I would spend most of the festival the din inside hit me like a tidal wave. Pauline herself was at the center of a good deal of it. The reunion of Oliveros' friends and collaborators, it would seem, was a large and boisterous affair punctuated by musicians warming up on stage in bursts of scales, longtones and arpeggios. I might have walked in on a performance in progress, and in honor of Pauline I quickly chose a seat and sat, eyes tightly closed, listening intently to the rollicking sonic landscape happening spontaneously around me before the first note of the festival had been officially sounded. It seemed prophetic.

I didn't have to wait long for my prophecy to be fulfilled, either. The opening work, *Four Meditations for Orchestra* whisked half the crowd onstage, freeing up seats for the near-capacity crowd to settle down to silence quickly. During the four movements of the work, the orchestra moves through a variety of chaotic textures, long silences, and flickering sonic interactions. With so large an ensemble (there could have been as many as 60 onstage, though 45-50 is a more likely number – counting was impossible in the tight crowd), the complex nature of Pauline's work came to the fore almost immediately.

While it is unclear that Pauline *would* ever write the actual notes and gestures played in this performance, the music sounded very *Pauline*. What is the nature of this "essence" of sound that is Pauline? How could this essence come through such a chaotic, tumultuous musical system – or was it in the chaos and tumult itself?

This opening perception of the nature of Pauline's sound was quickly challenged, as the second work in the first evening's program was a set of Variations for Sextet, written in 1959 and 1960. This work, with the distinctive "mid-century" dissonant contrapuntal texture *still* sounded like Pauline, though a much less relaxed one to be sure – but then again, who could relax in 1959? From all accounts I've read this would be disastrous. In fact, it is important to note here too that the entire weekend juxtaposed new works against old, fully composed works against freely improvisational ones. There was no attempt to form a distinct teleology of her development as a composer, no distinctions made between earlier and later work. In context, the most beloved of her early works, including *Double Basses at Twenty* Paces and *Trio for Flute, Piano and Page-Turner*, never felt dated against contemporary works and improvisations. This revelatory programming decision is indicative of the extent to which Pauline's music has always been more about the "doing" than the "having done;" more about the being than the accomplishing. If there is an essential Pauline-ness it surely exists in action, not in fact. In other words, Pauline is a verb, not a noun.

The standout performances of the weekend reflected remarkable diversity – from women spinning silently on stones to capoeira practitioners sparring onstage, collage was the aesthetic of the day. My personal favorites included the Circle Trio's performance of "In the Time of One" in which Pauline, India Cooke and Karolyn van Putten took a welcome trip down to the river through the blues, washed themselves clean in gospel influences and finally came to rest on the shore of free atonality with extended technique to spare. *Saxual Orientation (1998)* written for the ROVA saxophone quartet was so chaotically cacophonous I wanted to shout out loud. I nearly did shout "testify brother!" when Tom Bickley, performing "Portrait of Tom Bickley"(2000), covered his balding pate with a length of metallic lamé fabric and slowly, silently turned his covered head from side to side. I felt as if the sonic and visual had been so indelibly linked during the festival that this move could have been a brilliant musical passage performed with sensitivity and nuance. Only at a festival on Pauline could gold lamé hold such intense artistic significance.

The highlight of the weekend, bar none, was Pauline's final improvisation. *Pauline's Solo*, sounding since 1992, took a surreal turn as she took the stage in jungle-print caftan, blue wig, and large "movie star" sunglasses. I confess I nearly wept to see this revered elder of musical experimentalism take the stage after an exhausting day and a half of performances and give of herself with such spontaneity and energy. Her willingness not to take herself too seriously, ever, is a sign of hope (for me anyway) that it is indeed possible to be an artist and remain completely connected to one's true self. What I was left with at the end of the retrospective was the impression that it was Pauline who exists in the eponymous margins that title of this retrospective — in sounding the margins, we were sounding her. In Pauline's Solo, she returned the favor and sounded all of us. It was enormously moving.

Pauline obviously gains incredible energy from her collaborations, and in turn makes that energy available to her audience. From the opening circus to the closing performance of the "Grand Buddha Marching Band" in Dolores Park, *Sounding the Margins* did indeed give voice to the subtle energies that guide and inform Pauline's musical oeuvre. If a container makes itself useful by the empty space inside, Pauline makes herself truly empty and allows each of us room to be fully present in her music. Her music is more about the space she creates than the sounds or gestures she fills it with. After the retrospective, I may be no closer to articulating what, exactly, it is that makes Pauline's music sound like Pauline. In compensation I know that Pauline's music exists within me, and in the imaginary space between us, making such articulation superfluous at best.

Request Response

Let the stones act on you.

Objects in free space are separated by their music.
One knows them only in the place of one, plural, the singular *they.*
Sex hides identity in the double fold.
Connection carves a grammar of *their own.*
Here we are at the threshold of cutting oneself off along the line.
Steady as she bounds.

There's a meaning between assertions the poem can hardly escape.
The line rides a wish but has none of its own.
Hearing sounds.

Language flags, the poem comes up from behind.

The young woman's mode of surviving early abuse sounded like *hyper-irony.*
Caused a flap but the feathers settled and everyone sat down to read.

These particular words fidgeted before surrendering to the eye.
They rushed back to their stones.
Things do so to speak.

She knew they were hyper and could barely help themselves.
Random access reversibility as optimal eros.
Diagnosis
is knowing itself between.

What lies under the flap?

The knowing that stands apart from me.
The stone's invitation was something you just felt or didn't.
Circumincision, the telltale grammatical rollover, divine fig lust in drag.

What if the head is only the title of the body?
Slam it in reverse.
Back into the present.
Precarious balance is the prayer of the edge.
Under the foreskin the eye divines.

This is a true story.

Do you trust a medium in which "This is a lie" is selectively paradoxical?
Are you yourself a trusting medium? she said to my face.
Careful, sequentiality is not for everyone, let's face it.
Have you been tested?
Your point?

Truth or Consequences, site specificity, habitat of certain people.
Certainty is not contradictory to the precarious—a boulder on the edge.
Do not think of wild stones.
How one sits the instant before a landslide.
The point of freedom, revealed, alas.

Access to the beyond. Wavecrest as infinite ledge.
Dialognosis.
Strictly speaking the between is not self-limiting.
A moment in every day that Satan cannot find.
Each one has a radically particular free point.

The voice of your conscience or the woman behind the stone?

There is not much danger of a counterfeit free point.

The interesting "sense of freedom" tends to evoke lyricism.
No slamming up against a boundary unless the song goes long.
The singing voice of light volume and modest range easily knows its place.
Lyric avoidance by contrast presses its nose against the pane.

Revised request: Think only of wild stones.

Voice of the poem, voice of your teacher, your lover's voice, *earth angel....*
Lyre of stone.
A breath is a singularity.

Declaring poetic vocation responds to a call to put it all on the line.
There stones lie where people lie, words in their sounds lie, lyres lie aligned.
This lies that paradox lie, once and for all time.
Otherwise the line is wide open.

Death is a singular rime. Like birth like earth. The big wake.
Like *being given birth to into death*—self-opening caesura.
Mind the gap, lest you entrain bodily.
A natural breath dies—at the limen of the pulse.
Present bardo, all this training, back & forth, back & forth.

Ahhh, fresh air.

Like stones attract in the sense, likeness in being itself is open.
Art gives me bright ideas at the end of the tunnel.
Light to read by as a lode in a line lies beyond the sense of ending.
Always already knows.

Couples

Imagine a city of language turning further into itself.
Far enough in it gets past all this.

Being the book's in the palm of your hand, were not this line your life?
Nonsense — grammar hides under time the living called home.

This line is my teacher — won't tell me where we're going.
Starting out erases where we've been.

The line won't let you be my friend but on its premises.
Makes me feel like I just tattled.

From word to word the still point
encenters, without breaking stride.
And if
encenter be not a real word the point were still between.

Straight ahead offering you stuck on the end of the line————my head.
By mistake I cut in face to face with the *ur*-typo transformative——*inmage.*

A line alone initiates in reverse of expectation.
What heads straight at me is where I'm coming from.

Speaking past sense is the unknown always tense.
Masking double talks the other hereunder.

Unconditionally indifferent but that it turn further.
It gets away with itself only to show its own trace.

Mother Tongue

by Alison Knowles and Joshua Selman

This proposal puts us back to the roots of radio, the live broadcast. *Mother Tongue is* driven by a select group of simultaneous translators from non-western European countries. Each is an individual who knows his/her culture—its poetry, history and sacred texts well enough to make an informed selection to represent that particular part of the world. The importance of these people to the piece and their commitment to the choice of texts is the most essential element of the work.

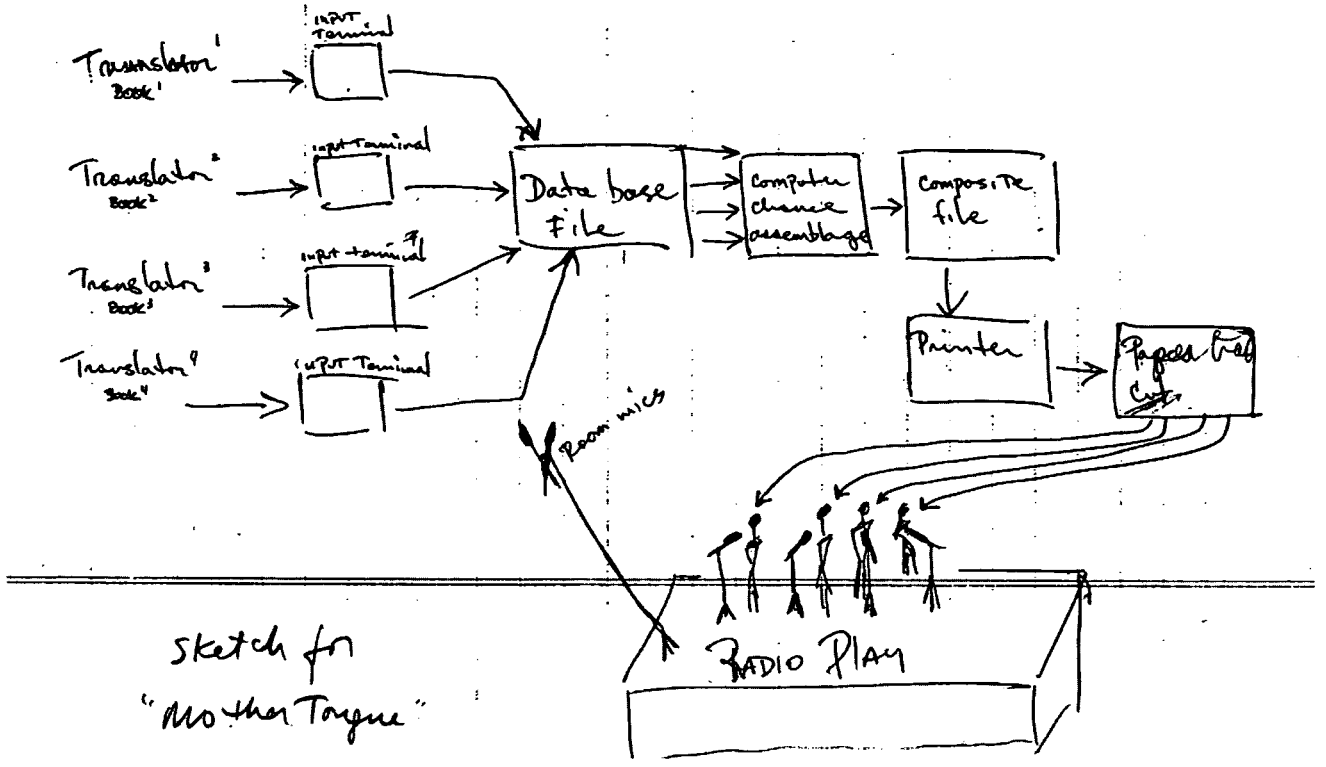
At the performance each translator is supplied with a computer input terminal. The translators bring the original selections plus rough translations to the performance and finalize them on the computer screen. The translations can be made in German, English or French. When the blocks of text are entered into a database the computer creates a random assembly of the unfragmented blocks into a continuous text collage.

As a dot matrix printer spews out the continuous paper trail runners dispatch the translation to a team of four broadcast readers who speak the provided text. Also in the text collage are directions generated from a special internal file housed in the database giving directions within the performance for space, silence and action (such as taking off a shoe or plucking an instrument).

We would search for a committed group of translators from Turkey, Israel, China, Tibet, India, and Native America, and inform them of the dimensions of the project. Those willing to enter the piece contribute their chosen selections. Substitutions from another country would be made where no native translator/voice can be located. The translators are the key to the success of *Mother Tongue.*

The entire process, whatever takes place in the performance arena, is miked in its entirety. Paper sounds, noises, voice exchanges are all amplified and continuously adjusted at the mix-board.

In using chance operations we help to reveal the archetypal mind of the *Mother Tongue.*



sketch for
"Mother Tongue"

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