



**THE ACOUSTIC SELF IN
ENGLISH MODERNISM AND
BEYOND**

WRITING MUSICALLY

Zoltan Varga



The Acoustic Self in English Modernism and Beyond

Drawing on the analogy between musical meaning-making and human subjectivity, this book develops the concept of the acoustic self, exploring the ways in which musical characterization and structure are related to issues of subject-representation in the modernist English novel.

The volume is framed around three musical topics—the fugue, absolute music, and *Gesamtkunstwerk*—arguing that these three modes of musicalization address modernist dilemmas around selfhood and identity. Varga reflects on the manifestations of the acoustic self in examples from the works of E.M. Forster, Aldous Huxley, and Virginia Woolf, and such musicians as Bach, Beethoven, Handel, and Wagner. An additional chapter on jazz and electronic music supplements these inquiries, pursuing the acoustic self beyond modernism and thereby inciting further discussion and theorization of musical intermediality, as well as recent sonic practices.

Probing the analogies in the complex interrelationship between music, representation, and language in fictional texts and the nature of human subjectivity, this book will appeal to students and scholars interested in the interface of language and music, in such areas as intermediality, multi-modality, literary studies, critical theory, and modernist studies.

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Z. Varga

Introduction

We Hear Only Ourselves

Jean-Luc Nancy poses the question in his *Listening*, “Is listening something of which philosophy is capable?” (1). If we ask instead, “Is listening something of which novels are capable?” further questions emerge about listening, reading, and meaning. Signification in music is non-verbal, and musical meaning cannot be fully expressed in words. What happens then when music enters the realm of narrative? Can we hear it? Does music sustain its supposed immediacy when it becomes entangled in this indirect representation?

Music presents a set of paradoxes in literature. Once it enters the realm of language, music can only be *spoken of*, not *heard*: the non-linguistic medium that seems to work against *logos*, i.e., verbal utterance, becomes dependent on it. But music also works against *logos* as reason in literary texts. Narratives often thematize madness via their characters’ musical experience. In several of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s tales, including “Ritter Gluck,” “Councillor Krespel,” and “Don Juan,” music leads to territories outside reason. A similar idea appears in Tolstoy’s *The Kreutzer Sonata*, where the art form also gains a connection with the devil due to its capacity to drag one out of her or his *stasis*. Thomas De Quincey’s *Dream Fugue*, a story that presents the reader with a sequence of dreams organized as a fugue, points to another territory outside representability, the realm of dreams. Music, madness, and dreams—depending on whether one locates madness and dreams at the same or opposite ends of the continuum—represent the pre-linguistic or the ‘beyond’ of language, unveiling a side of the self that is not accessible via reason and linguistic representation.

If music works against *logos*, music threatens the text through what John T. Hamilton calls the “unworking of language” (Hamilton 15). But what do narratives gain from music? The possibility of tackling the unspeakable: the self. From the combination of music and text emerges what I have termed the *acoustic self*, the subject in its impossibility. Dreams, madness, and music all reveal the same thing: we cannot talk about the self—it cannot be grasped solely on rational grounds. Music highlights this phenomenon in fiction and, thus, the musical and the textual become intertwined through the subject, not so much in opposition as in complementarity.

The musicalization of fiction thus enacts the drama of the self. Music becomes the engine of this turmoil, simultaneously enriching the narrative

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text while exposing it to risk. In his *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History*, Lawrence Kramer draws a parallel between the twofold nature of musical meaning-making and the constitution of human subjectivity: music, via its concurrent introversive and extroversive semiosis, enacts both our “absolute self-presence” and our “contingent” social constructedness (Kramer 3).¹ Music dramatizes this division of the subject, while introducing the non-representational and the *arational*² into the textual. Through the inherent aporia of this process, an in-between space is created from which an *atopos*³ subject is born: the acoustic self is brought into being—or per-formed—in the act of musical intermediality, the musical process within the text. In being *atopos* and performative, the acoustic self questions the very notions of selfhood and identity.

The readings in this book seek to show how the modernist English novel enriched the musicalization of fiction that already existed by unearthing existential, ontological, and aesthetic dilemmas regarding the literary text and its subjectivities. The structure of the book is based on three musical topics, namely fugue, absolute music, and *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which I will consider as three modes of musicalization. An additional chapter on jazz and electronic music will supplement these inquiries, pursuing the ‘beyond’ in the book’s title, while also further developing its key arguments. The choice of structure and works were governed mainly by the musical topics, rather than any attempt to provide a comprehensive overview or model for musicalization in the Modernist English novel. Musico-literary experiments were uniquely prominent in England during the first three decades of the twentieth century, making English modernism an especially rich field for intermedial investigations. I will explore the specificities of this phenomenon in Chapter 1, where I will also problematize the concepts of ‘music’ and ‘modernism’.

Recent decades have witnessed a steadily growing interest in the fields of intermedial and multimodal studies, albeit with an overwhelming emphasis on verbal-visual interactions. The present book engages with questions and topics related to musico-literary intermediality. One of my premises is that the double lens of semiotics and musical semiotics may prove to be a useful tool for exploring musical characterization and structure in narrative fiction. Following Kaja Silverman, I will position the semiotics of the subject as the *subject of semiotics* and contend that it is the ‘subject’ that connects musical and textual meaning-making (3).⁴

Chapter 1 introduces the project and addresses key theoretical concepts, while also situating the book within recent scholarship on the interrelations between musical and textual meaning-making, and developing the key concept for the study, that of the acoustic self. While this introductory chapter mainly focuses on musical semiotics, it is important to emphasize that the perspective is a literary one. The musical theories introduced often rely on literary theory and general semiotics, which will be familiar to the reader. I will spotlight musical meaning-making here, while, in the subsequent

chapters, I will rely on further theories and criticism in my analyses of the texts. In this chapter, I will also clarify the central focus on English modernism and my main emphasis on works by Aldous Huxley, E.M. Forster, and Virginia Woolf—each of whom employed “music as a method” in their narratives (Brillenburg Wurth 15).

Chapter 2 is an inquiry into the topic of fugue. While the fugue is generally associated with Bach and Handel, there will be as much attention paid to Beethoven in the texts analyzed. The three novels studied in this chapter present two modes of constructing the acoustic self through a fugal structure. Woolf’s *The Waves* introduces six voices that create an absent character, Percival, in a synchronic way: the acoustic self emerges from the concurrent narration of six voices. Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* also follows this ‘vertical’ model of fugal structure. In Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh*, the various voices of the fugue come from different generations of the Pontifex family, providing multiple versions of the same character via a diachronic, or linear, fugal model. My ultimate aim is to show how fugue, as a way of “mythical thinking” (Tarasti 35), flattens the vertical (synchronic) and synchronizes the linear (diachronic) models that are established in my reading of the novels—estranging the characters from themselves, as we witness their mythical construction evoked by their musical experiences. Whether the “Sirens” chapter of Joyce’s *Ulysses* is really a fugue has been a matter of debate for decades, yet it arguably gives voice to a “multi-vocal interiority” (Zimmermann 109) and, as such, serves as a foil to the reading of the other novels.

While Chapter 3, “Does Beethoven Kill? Absolute Music and the Self,” focuses strictly on narratives employing Beethoven’s music, it will show that the history of listening to Beethoven is as important as his music itself in these novels. I will examine the use of Beethoven in Forster’s *A Room with a View* and *Howard’s End*. Beethoven’s oeuvre and name are often connected with the idea of absolute music, a notion that is symptomatic of how Beethoven is used in fictional texts. Absolute music (besides being independent of extramusical references or other arts) carries the idealistic notion of the philosophical absolute, making it a sublime experience (Dahlhaus). However, this sublime experience will turn into an internal *katabasis* for the main characters of the novels investigated in this chapter. While music led to some kind of an essence and self-sameness⁵ in German Romanticism, the sublime musical experience becomes connected with death in the novels to be discussed. Music no longer serves as a bridge between conflicting aspects of the self in modernism. Instead, in its in-between-ness, the medium shows that no self-sameness, no essence, can be brought to the surface—as any such attempts will bring about the demise of the subject.

Chapter 4 tackles another awe-inspiring composer, Richard Wagner. The role of Wagner in English modernist literature has been widely explored, yet his influence has been scarcely connected to the semiotics of the subject. The use of *leitmotif* in literature goes beyond merely evoking a myth or mythical

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character. Since a *leitmotif* never turns into a rigid *forma formata* (formed form), but instead remains *forma formans* (forming form), it retains its inherent musicality through continuous development. Thus its employment allows us to witness the making of the mythical hero through the development of a novel's character. This reverses the logic of intertext and results in the deconstruction of the original myth. Forster's *The Longest Journey* provides a queer reading of Wagner's *Parsifal*—a reading that will never allow one to hear the opera 'straight' again. Wagner is, admittedly, somewhat abused in this chapter, as, in my reading, Forster turns the composer's use of myth against its ideological framework. The opera's plot, which reaches its climax in the annihilation of desire—achieved *via* the erasure of sexual and racial difference—becomes the tool for producing the exact opposite effect in Forster's work. *The Longest Journey* also examines the relationship between music and sexuality. Furthermore, the topic of music and gender receives an in-depth treatment in this chapter, inspired by the works of Susan McClary and Jean-Jacques Nattiez.

Chapter 5 expands the scope of the book both temporally and geographically. 'Jazz' and 'rave' fiction will serve to counterpoint the previous analyses and to probe the acoustic self in new contexts. My aim is not to turn the concept into a universal tool, quite the contrary: I explore how the postmodern musicalization of fiction further complicates the modernist questions from new vantage points. Rafi Zabor's *The Bear Comes Home* is a New York jazz novel that displays a different tradition and musical canon from the novels discussed previously, while the rave novel, Trevor Miller's *Trip City*, illustrates how electronically produced music does not abandon the human body, but instead intensifies the focus on embodiment. This chapter will also show that many of the Romantic ideas attached to music are still intact today, although the conceptualization of the subject itself has changed. Technical developments have played a significant role in these changes, while also altering the relationship between music and the human body.

The model I am proposing in relation to the three modes of the modernist musicalization of fiction is in no way prescriptive or exhaustive. What I intend to demonstrate is how the different ways of employing music in English modernist fiction and beyond correspond to a critique of the subject as a fixed entity. However, as the acoustic self reveals through its double semiosis, this critique of the subject does not mean an exclusive focus on inwardness and "the abandonment of any claim to participation in the shaping of the outside world," as Lukács suggests about modernist fiction in *The Theory of the Novel* (117). Instead, writing musically opens up an in-between space that reverberates the subject in its dissonance.

Notes

- 1 Kramer's model, along with all musicological terms, will be described in the following chapters.

- 2 Arational differs from irrational in that while the latter stands in opposition to logic and reason, the former is not based on or governed by either.
- 3 The Greek word literally means 'out of place' and as an adjective it means 'strange,' 'absurd,' 'paradoxical.' As such, it evokes a sense of ineffability.
- 4 The use of the term 'subject' will follow Silverman's conceptualization throughout the book inasmuch as it "helps us to conceive of human reality as a construction, as the product of signifying activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious. The category of the subject thus calls into question the notions both of the private, and of a self synonymous with consciousness. It suggests that even desire is culturally instigated, and hence collective; and it de-centers consciousness," curtailing its agency. "Finally, by drawing attention to the divisions which separate one area of psychic activity from another, the term 'subject' challenges the value of stability attributed to the individual" (130). The stability that the notion of the 'self' as a fixed, static entity connotes is undermined by both the concepts of the 'sonic self' (Cumming) and the 'acoustic self' in the following, as they both come into being through performance.
- 5 'Self-sameness' in relation to the musical experience will cumulatively acquire various layers of meaning throughout the book.

1 Let's Get Lost

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, music has generally been considered as a non-referential sign system where meaning is generated within the composition. One of the most influential representatives of this 'purist' view is Eduard Hanslick, whose dictum, "sounding forms in motion constitute the sole and exclusive content and object of music," strongly shaped the development of musicology way into the twentieth century (Bonds 107). Igor Stravinsky followed in these steps when famously stating in 1936 that "music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all," therefore excluding "feeling, an attitude of mind, or psychological mood" from its inherent properties (Stravinsky 53). Yet music is clearly also discourse, carrying external references, both acoustic and symbolic. As argued by Kofi Agawu, it is exactly where its two types of signification, the introversive and the extroversive, overlap that musical meaning happens (*Playing with Signs* 133).

The terms 'absolute music' and *Gesamtkunstwerk* indicate an emphasis on these introvert and extrovert aspects of musical signification respectively, the emblematic composer of the former being Beethoven, while Wagner's name evokes the latter. As I will show, the novels that engage with the works of these composers are informed by the aesthetic tradition of listening, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, and exemplify two modes of *musicalization*, one with more emphasis on music as a centripetal force, and another, where music suggests expansion.

Whether the musical experiment 'opens up' the literary text toward music or aims at emphasizing the inwardness of the textual universe, such instances of musicalization belong to the range of intermediality. Both intermediality and intertextuality are intersemiotic forms, but not all instances of intermediality are intertextual. As Werner Wolf, whose writings established much of the scope and vocabulary of intermedial research in musico-literary studies, points out, intermediality does not necessitate reference to a specific work or genre; it can appear as "a general involvement of more than one semiotic system in a given work" (Wolf 47). With this initial differentiation in mind, the working definition of intermediality that I will use in this book comes from Kiene Brillenburg Wurth:

Instead of being just an expanded form of intertextuality, intermediality refers to the process whereby medium x absorbs the 'method' or semiotic system of medium y . In this way, medium x turns into something (slightly) other from its own, no longer its familiar or traditional self, but not (yet) quite the medium it mimics either. Thus, it falls in-between x and y , between traditionally demarcated medial categories.

(14)

In this way, an intermedial engagement between music and literature opens up an in-between semiotic space. Exploring that space has taken multifarious paths. Although Calvin S. Brown published his *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts* already in 1948, thus establishing the field of musico-literary studies, the fact that a collection of essays was released under the title *Word and Music Studies: Defining the Field* more than 50 years later shows that the area "has been in a creative flux" for the last couple of decades and still lacks the coherence of a discipline (Scher 11). This may also prove to be an advantage, however, as a lack of coherence also means an absence of rigidity. As Eric Prieto points out, the underlying pitfall of musico-literary studies has been its aim at "establish[ing] a fixed set of rules governing the use of musical models" and metaphors (21). While these rules certainly offer some guidelines and intellectual rigor, pre-established typologies do not always recognize that music goes beyond *logos*, possibly making for the most exciting moments in musical fiction, where we lose our ground in terms of time, space, and logic. These moments may become the entry points for inspecting the modes in which musical meaning and the logic of musical semiosis create a discrepancy within the text, thus impacting its semiotic functioning.

One of the premises of this study is that music is always metaphorical in narrative fiction, at least in the original Greek sense of the word (*μεταφέρω*: carry across, transfer). The closer we get to allowing music into our reading, i.e., the more literally we take music's presence in the text, the more exciting our intersemiotic experience may become. I will argue that this presence is closely associated with the fictional characters, proposing that the agent of semiosis, the 'subject,' serves as a bridge between the two media of meaning-making.¹ Semiotics itself has been explicitly engaged with the 'subject' from its outset. As Silverman observes, "Semiotics involves the study of signification, but signification cannot be isolated from the human subject who uses it and is defined by means of it, or from the cultural system which generates it" (3). Indeed, the entanglement of subject, signification, and cultural system(s) remains central to the intermedial perspective of this book.

The Musical Text

Musical semiotics is no less concerned with the importance of the subject and cultural codes in the semiotic process. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, whose

Music and Discourse was among the first attempts at a general theory of musical semiology, posits the listening subject as the determiner of whether what they hear is music or noise. After providing a thorough ethnomusicological overview, Nattiez concludes that “there is no *single* and *intercultural* universal concept defining what music might be” (55, italics in original). Therefore, the closest one can get to a definition of music is “whatever people choose to recognize as such,” as opposed to noise, which in turn is “whatever is recognized as disturbing, unpleasant, or both” (47–8). As cultural codes are responsible for what is considered music and what is not, any statement about the universality of music is questionable. What is more, even within the same interpretive community “there is rarely a consensus” (48). The prominence of John Cage compositions on online lists like “Ten Pieces of Music to Make your Ears Bleed” or Spotify’s “Unlistenable: The World’s Worst Playlist” demonstrate this. While some people listen to certain pieces with tears of emotion in their eyes, others try and escape from the venue. In addition, cultural codes change over time, and the pieces that used to be considered by the majority as mere ‘noise’ are eventually being ‘heard’ as music, even entering the mainstream. An example of this is the inclusion of the Sex Pistols’ “Pretty Vacant” in the opening ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012.

While music may be best defined in contrast to noise, noise can be conceptualized in terms of sound. The three continually rearrange themselves in different constellations. Both music and noise depend on sound and are culturally constructed. What seems to be a constant in noise is that, as Makis Solomos writes, noise “has, incontestably, always constituted a nuisance” (46). Sound and noise keep on changing in connection with music, as they “gain meaning through their social and cultural environment” (*ibid.*), and certain types of noise may get accepted as musical sound in certain settings. The power of noise lies in the fact that it creates disturbance. In this sense, literature can become the “noise of culture”² and music may act as noise in the literary prose.

As we saw, Nattiez’s (non)definition questions the universals of music, and he claims that, if they exist at all, they are to be found in “poietic and esthetic strategies” rather than in “immanent structures,” that is, in the compositions themselves (*Music* 67). Counterintuitively enough, it is not music that is necessarily musical, but rather the creative and interpretative processes around the musical experience. The notions ‘poietic’ and ‘esthetic’ are based on Jean Molino’s *tripartition* that differentiates the poietic, the neutral, and the esthetic levels of interpretation. The poietic aspects of a work refer to the dimensions around the creation (*poiesis*) of the object, what we may call creative meaning-making, while the term esthetic, originally used by Paul Valéry, emphasizes perception (*aisthesis*). Esthetic meaning-making takes place “in the course of an active perceptual process” (Nattiez, *Music* 12). The neutral level of meaning-making is the locus of the “immanent and recurrent properties” of the musical composition, or *trace*, and, as such, it would be the only valid focus of analysis for Hanslick and Stravinsky (*ibid.*).

Via this tripartition, the borders of the musical work are extended beyond its beginning and end, and the semiosis takes place “in its dispersal between three spheres, in the *interaction* between its symbolic components, as a total musical fact; as poietic strategies, a resultant trace, and esthetic strategies unleashed by that trace” (ibid. 70). The inclusion of the creative and perceptual strategies in musical meaning-making opens the gates to emotions, and this subjective element of musical semiosis prompts Nattiez to call musical interpretation “*hazardous*,” due to a lack of certainty as to “what constitutes the expressive, the natural, the conventional, the analogical, the arbitrary association” (37). Musical interpretation thus creates a risk, as musical meaning cannot be secured (we should note that this actually points at a similarity with language) despite the long history of attempts to do so, starting with Plato. As Socrates, who intends to ban most forms—and modes—of music from the ideal state, declares in *The Republic*: “we shall not want multiplicity” (Plato 399C). It is simply impossible to secure musical meaning, however, as most of the time music has no concrete outside referent, and denotation easily turns into connotation, especially between the poietic and the esthetic levels.

If the Peircian interpretant represents at once an atom of meaning and an idea that serves as a point of departure for an account of semiosis as a phenomenon . . . what we ordinarily call denotation designates a *constellation of interpretants that are common to the poietic and the esthetic*. As long as an interpretant is situated, in isolation, on either side, then we have entered into the sphere of connotation.

(Nattiez, *Music* 24, italics in original)

This is a critical point for my further investigations, as this is one of those cases where music serves as a mirror for the working of language, as no a priori criteria can be set for distinguishing denotation and connotation, the dichotomy of which “cannot be resolved except empirically, on a *case-by-case basis*” (ibid., emphasis mine). This problem not only manifests itself between the poietic and the esthetic, but also overflows into the *trace*, thus de-neutralizing the composition, and this is exactly where musical meaning-making calls into question language’s capacity to represent reality. The issue may be best examined on the level of signs.

Since it is much more difficult to identify what a musical sign is than a linguistic one, it is tempting to fall into a false sense of security with respect to language. In actuality, the linguistic signifier—just like its musical counterpart—does not point at a segment of reality.³ As Raymond Monelle recalls, Saussure already noted in his *Course in General Linguistics* that “there are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language,” i.e., there is no objective content in linguistic denotation (de Saussure 112). If this is so, argues Monelle, “[t]he signifier cannot mean a pre-existent natural thing. Music, then, is not opposed to language in

being unable to represent the real world; on the contrary, it *shares this feature with language*" (12, italics in original). This will be of vital import for understanding the musical experiences described in the chapters that follow.

Still, Monelle, who is mainly concerned with the 'inherent signification' of music, finds it pivotal to identify the meaningful segments of a musical composition in order to carry out an analysis. For him, an "analysis engages with signifier and signified together," which point at a wider spectrum than the actual score, opening up what Monelle calls the "musical text" to its own inherent intertextuality (10–11). Each musical sign will be meaningful in its own musical *context*, in the manner of Nattiez's case-by-case basis. And indeed, the undefinability of the musical sign is one of the few points where musical semioticians tend to agree. Agawu, for instance, comes to the conclusion that

there cannot be a single definition for 'sign' in music, for each work's dimensions display a unique mode of signification . . . to insist on a stable definition of musical sign is, to my mind, to falsify the semiotic enterprise even before it has begun.

(Music as Discourse 16)

Each work, then, becomes a specific semiotic field with its specific logic of meaning-making, while also being interconnected with other such fields, i.e., the works in the musical repertoire. The interplay of these intro- and extroversive forces creates the musical text, which according to Monelle is:

a boundary between inside and outside, rendered problematic by the flow across the boundary and the interdependence of inside and outside. It is also an epistemic nexus, the meeting point of all its significations, indexical, iconic, and symbolic. It is not a transcendent essence, an abstract pattern, an object, an 'experience.'

(155)⁴

Monelle recognizes that an infinite network of significations is created by this model, but claims that this plurality enriches the process of interpreting music rather than making it impossible, while also ensuring that no one discourse or ideology can gain control over the musical text. Semiotically speaking, music is free. Musical semiosis is created by the interplay of the centrifugal and centripetal forces in musical signification, and it follows that interpretation becomes a form of play as well. As Agawu declares with respect to introversive and extroversive semioses in music: "it is precisely where the two processes overlap, a region described as 'the region of play,' that a semiotic investigation reaps its richest harvest" (*Playing with Sounds 133*).

To take an example, Virginia Woolf's "The String Quartet" illustrates how the interplay of musical inside and outside may appear in a literary text. The experimental short story records an unnamed narrator's

experiences while attending a musical performance. Neither the place, nor the musical piece is identified, and, at first glance, the story seems to be about everything but the music itself. Yet a more careful reading reveals that the story is precisely about the interplay of the levels on which music is experienced by a conscious, but probably musically untrained listener, who is “furtively seeking” (“The String” 29) for meaning. However, any graspable meaning seems to come from ‘outside’ the music, since instead of any description of the music itself, the reader only receives an account of the impressionistic, dream-like mental images it evokes in the narrator—not unlike those in De Quincey’s “Dream Fugue,” or the concert scenes in Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* and Forster’s *Howard’s End*, both of which will be discussed in later chapters.

A lot of details emerge, however, about the external circumstances, i.e., the cultural system, which envelops the musical experience in Woolf’s narrative, and thus shapes the semiotic process from the addressee’s part and also points at the different layers of meaning owing to the cultural embeddedness of the listener. The narrator recounts how people got there, using the Tube, trams, buses, and carriages, mapping a musical circulatory system of London as they reach the venue from all parts of the city. We hear the patrons’ chitchat about the recent happenings in town, the Royal family, and, of course, the weather, and are also presented with the narrator’s reactions to details of the clothes and accessories sported by the members of audience.

The only hint about the musical program is someone saying, “That’s an early Mozart, of course” (Woolf, “The String” 30) which might well be a false lead, but as Emilie Crapoulet points out, this lead (false or not) references absolute music, as there would be no lyrics or program for an early Mozart quartet (“Beyond the Boundaries” 5). It is remarkable then that Woolf describes exclusively the external elements attached to the musical performance of a composition that supposedly carries only internal meaning. Not only that, it is precisely this contradiction that makes the narrator upset about her own hermeneutic performance: making the music programmatic, telling a story.

Those parts of “The String Quartet” that refer to the actual music are sequences of a fragmented story that the narrator subconsciously projects on the music while listening to it. The only *accountable* part of the whole musical experience is thus its circumstances, societal and concert hall rituals, including habits that order one to “sit passive on a gilt chair” (Woolf, “The String” 29) in this sepulcher of music. Turning active—acquiring an agency in listening—against this backdrop becomes difficult, even impossible for the narrator. The ritual around music stiffens the audience. Everyone turns serious hearing the first, distant sound of an instrument, even before the musicians enter the room: “Was it the sound of the second violin tuning in the ante-room” that made “that elderly face ... a moment ago urban and flushed; now taciturn and sad?” (ibid.). The funeral-like atmosphere is strengthened with the appearance of the

four musicians, when the “four black figures, carrying instruments,” enter the hall and “seat themselves facing the white squares under the downpour of light” (ibid.). Finally, the performance begins with the “simultaneous movement” of the four bows getting lifted, poised, “and looking across the player opposite, the first violin counts one, two, three—” (ibid.).

What follows is a caricature of a musical *ekphrasis* in the form of a stream-of-consciousness-like sequence of images about fish, water, and rivers. In the interval, the narrator expresses her dissatisfaction with these images and her account of the movement: “What do I mean? That’s the worst of music!” (30), she laments. Before long, however, someone emits a “–Hush!” (ibid.), and with the music returning, more images follow: a river, a sinking boat, a storm. The narrator’s dissatisfaction just increases. “That’s the worst of music,” she repeats, “these silly dreams” (31). As usual, conventions save one from unpleasant self-rigor: “The second violin was late you say?” she hears, but soon enough the third movement begins after another “Hush!” What follows is a lovers’ dialogue, “the words are indistinguishable, though the meaning is plain enough – love, laughter, flight, pursuit, celestial bliss” (32). Fantastically, the images are not only visual, but audial: “the sound of silver horns, at first far and distant, gradually sounds more and more distinctly,” and the narrator hears “trump and trumpeting” and “clang and clangour” (ibid.), which are actually produced or evoked solely by the four stringed instruments. In the final part, an imaginary city is conjured up with amazing architecture, leaving the narrator without hope of gaining the meaning she was seeking in the music. “Back then I fall, eager no more, desiring only to go,” back into the world, into the everyday, to “find the street, mark the buildings, greet the applewoman,” and comment on the “starry night” (ibid.) to the maid awaiting at home, adding loneliness to the hopelessness resulting from the semiotic failure. The “region of play” between inside and outside, as proposed by Monelle and Agawu, is out of reach for the narrator. It is as if the extroversive and introversive musical semioses addressed each other in the last two lines of the short story: “‘You go this way?’ ‘Alas. I go that’” (ibid.).

There is more to the narrator’s musical experience, and it is exactly those subjective, dream-like sequences denounced by her that could allow her own unique listening self to take shape in the short story. But let us address the issues of musical intertextuality and subjectivity before we return to “The String Quartet” again.

Musical Intertextuality

The search for the musical sign led to the notion of the musical text as a *boundary* and an inherent musical intertextuality. Why did I make sure I established the differentiation between intertextuality and intermediality in the beginning if we ended up with *intertextuality* anyway? The argument has apparently come full circle, yet we did not arrive at the exact same

crossroads. Musical intertextuality provides a perspective to look for ruptures created by musical texts entering literary ones without bringing music under the aegis of *logos*. These ruptures will hopefully show the inconsistencies, *aporias*, and *paradoxes* within *logos* itself, as well as its incapability of fully representing the human experience. If musical semiosis can elucidate the uncertainties and shortcomings of language, as noted above, it may also very well do a better job than language in territories where words fear to tread. Through its analogy with human subjectivity—in its simultaneous self-sameness and social constructedness—musical semiosis serves as an attempt to sound the self in the text.

As outlined above, from the 1990s on, the reality of ‘music’ in itself has been questioned, and the focus has turned increasingly toward a text-context relationship. However, this does not mean that the proponents of musical semiotics dismiss the musical composition and existing analytical tools. Instead, this perspective is about acknowledging and, particularly, cherishing the multiplicity of meaning. The musical text is looked upon as discourse, in opposition to a strictly formalist view that attempts to uphold the boundaries of the composition. Another difference between the two approaches is not looking for a final meaning or understanding, but opening “paths to understanding” (Agawu, *Music as Discourse* 7).⁵

The text-context relationship raises the question of intertextuality. Leonard G. Ratner’s work needs to be recalled here as a precursor of musical semiotics, an important milestone in music theory, and also because it provides a general framework for how I am to carry out my investigations in the following chapters. Ratner’s *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* introduced a systematic study of what he called the *musical topic*, an important step toward intertextuality in music:

From its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early eighteenth century developed a thesaurus of characteristic figures, which formed rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor. They are designated here as topics—subjects for musical discourse. Topics appear as fully worked-out pieces, i.e., types, or as figures and progressions within a piece, i.e., styles. The distinction between types and styles is flexible; minuets and marches represent complete types of composition, but they also furnish styles for other pieces.

(9)

Topics were recognized and understood by the intended audience, and contributed to the perceived meaning of a musical composition, making tropes like allusion and irony possible within music. Though this may sound like stating the obvious these days, a look at the history of musicology shows

that, out of several centuries, it is only the last couple of decades that have dealt with those aspects of music which connect compositions on a higher level, yet which are rooted within the composition instead of external factors (e.g., history).

Many of the musicologists whose work I have evoked in the previous pages would claim that they theoretically do not offer anything new for literary scholars. However, juxtaposing music and narrative in a way that is informed by musical meaning-making is potentially a fruitful method for investigating how music functions in literature, while also reflecting on how literary language works. The three modes of musicalization that I label as 'fugue,' 'absolute music,' and '*Gesamtkunstwerk*' in the following chapters will be explained in further detail and explored as *musical topics* in modernist literature, providing the framework for the bulk of this book.

Returning to intertextuality: Nattiez's and Monelle's understanding of the musical 'text' opens the composition toward other 'texts,' whether they are contexts or other compositions. They both draw on Ratner's *topics*, and address the introversive and extroversive meaning-making within music. Topic theory, even if treated with some skepticism toward its actual pervasiveness and limitations, exposes new vectors in musical semiosis, which are implicative of a certain type of musical intertextuality.

Michael L. Klein provides a thorough analysis of such questions in his *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*. Bringing together the works of Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, and Harold Bloom (among others), Klein uses literary theory as an intertext to musical analysis. His conception of musical intertextuality is based on Robert S. Hatten's musical tropes,⁶ which Klein broadens to refer to "any sign in one text that is a transformation of such signs in another text" (13). The key word here is transformation, meaning that Klein maintains the metaphorical aspect of the process. Here, the word metaphorical points beyond the act of simply borrowing: a trope "turns into something (slightly) other" and remains "no longer its familiar or traditional self"—to recall our working definition of intermediality by Brillenburg Wurth (14). The reason for my apparent mixing of intermediality and intertextuality is due to their commingling when music enters narrative fiction. It is always an instance of musical intertextuality (in the Kleinian sense) that provides the basis for (musical) intermediality in these texts. To further complicate matters, let us recall Nattiez's poietic and esthetic levels, as it is time to introduce the notions of poietic and esthetic intertextuality. Musical intertextuality from the composer's end is poietic when using a *trope* or *topic* in a composition, while that composition may become an esthetic intertextuality for the writer who hears it, and in turn uses it in their fiction, thus engaging in poietic intertextuality that results in musical intermediality in the narrative text. The fusion of horizons is indeed somewhat bewildering in its complexity, and Klein adds yet another dimension: with a clear-cut separation from the notion of influence, which "implies intent or historical placement of the works in its time

or origin," he describes intertextuality as a "crossing [of] texts that may involve historical reversal" (4), and suggests that the western musical repertoire can be considered as a web of intertexts. This will be important in the readings that follow. Intertextuality is bi-directional, and the original text is also transformed by the process.⁷

Music and the Subject

The other bi-directional facet of musical meaning-making, as noted above, is what Agawu calls its introversive and extroversive semiosis. Kramer addresses these two forces in relation to autonomy and contingency, claiming that this dual character has been at the core of musical meaning-making, at least in the western canon. They both identify the *play* between the two as the "context and condition" (Kramer 2) of musical meaning. What Kramer takes one step further is drawing an analogy between musical semiosis and the construction of human subjectivity. He explains that although the interplay between autonomy and contingency may be central to sensuous, cognitive, and artistic experiences, in the case of music, the boundary between the subject and the object is broken down, and music (entering the subject) provides one with a "sense of immediacy" that evokes the feeling of "bodily self-presence, the intimacy of oneself with one's own embodiment" (3). While other experiences may suspend the distance between self and other, "in music we feel it in ourselves" and, thus, music has the capability to "articulate one of the core conditions of subjectivity," being "poised between a unique and absolute self-presence and a contingent social constructedness" (3). "Music," continues Kramer, "the art of collapsing distances, plays out this paradox as nothing else can" (3).

Often, music as lived experience occurs when it is not listened to for its own sake, but rather when the musical experience is attached to another—usually social—event. Kramer points out that music may be added to other things, supplementing or intensifying them, yet when it withdraws, it has not lost anything of itself, but remains unchanged. It is due to this, that

music may act as a *cultural trope for the self*, the subject as self-moved agency that remains when all of its attributes and experiences have been subtracted. Musical affect, expression, and association become pure forms of self-apprehension; music is known by and valued for its "transcendence" of any specific meanings ascribed to it . . .

(4, emphasis mine)

There is no meaning the subject can attain in itself, however, as it needs to identify itself in relation to an 'other' and music may serve as such, as we will see in Naomi Cumming's argument below. But the analogy works both ways: while music may and does act as a cultural trope for the self in the novels discussed in this book, the workings of the self illuminated by music

reflect back on music itself, showing that music itself may only become meaningful in its intertextuality, contextuality, and socio-cultural embeddedness. Thus, the materiality of music becomes interconnected with the materiality of the subject via this analogy.

The Sonic Self

It is the materiality of music that Naomi Cumming, drawing on first-hand experience as a solo violinist before also becoming a semiotician, uses to dismantle some myths about musical performance and experience. In her *The Sonic Self: Musical Subjectivity and Signification*, she describes how a “well-balanced physical adjustment to the instrument” during a musical performance may create a “beautiful tone” (23), thus giving rise to a new personality that does not pre-exist the actual sound that has been created. This ‘subjectivity’ emerging in the performance is what we refer to when talking about a soloist’s specific style. “The ‘sonic self’ is thus conceived. It is not a previously existing element of personality, but a creation that comes into being with sound” (ibid.). Cumming highlights the difference between delivery and interpretation in the musical performance. Since the emphasis is on interpretation, “[t]he performer’s individuality is thus expressed in the moment that she becomes the vehicle for giving ‘character’ or ‘life’ to the work” (27). However, it is practically impossible to provide a full account of this process due to the subjective aspects of each instance of (musical) sound production. ‘Character’ and ‘life’ are suggestive descriptions, but are not able to explain the specifics of an individual musical presentation. Cumming proposes that the phenomenon, if understood as an instance of musical sign production, becomes more comprehensible when understood in semiotic terms. In her example, the violinist’s physical movement creates a sound, which evokes the ‘singing voice’ in the listener, even though the sound does not actually have any physical attributes:

In Peirce’s terms, the material qualities of the sound are the sign vehicle, by which it comes to represent (to be a “representamen” or “sign”). The vocal grain it achieves is its “object,” what it stands for. A third element is, however, required to account for this counter-factual relationship. Without interpretation, no material sound produced by a non-human instrument can be heard as a voice. In the third logical position there is, then, an “interpretant.” It acknowledges two things: the conventions that allow violin sound to be heard as vocal in some contexts, and the act of recognition in a particular moment of listening. What transforms a dead, mechanical performance into a “live” one is the creation of sound as a sign—in this case, a sign for “singing” in an appropriate tone.

(29)

This Peircean transcription of the performance rounds us back to the question of musical text and its boundaries. “Where is the work, except in the

performance?” asks Cumming (41). We are back at the question of risk that the performer needs to take via the spontaneity and nuance in their performance that is necessary to bring the work to life, i.e., to provide an interpretation of it, not mere delivery. Bringing the work thus into play, it can become a semiotic field where musical signification can take off. But what are the exact risks of doing this? What does the performer have to lose? Some kind of musical essence? Only if the self is looked at as a static entity that preexists the performance. Cumming suggests that the answer lies in looking at musical performance as a performative act. The risks the performer faces gain a different light in this view: “Can you really be losing your ‘self’ if your selfhood is formed in activity?” asks Cumming.

If you are constituted in your acts, your performances, you are performing yourself through them. Your ‘self’ will appear in the act. You do not know fully who you are, but will discover yourself in the action of taking risk, as I discover—or perform—myself in taking the risk of writing this.

(42)

There is no musical self that pre-exists the production or the perception of the actual musical sound. The self, analogously with music, is *forma formans*, not a rigid form. In the process of shattering the myth of a pre-existent musical self, Cumming brings to light the *sonic self*, as an element of musical signification. With the emergence of the sonic self, the risks taken by the performer become more intelligible, while also being shared by the listener. Listening to the interplay between conventionality and individuality in a given performance is yet another act of interpretation, and as such, it involves risk and uncertainty. Listening as interpretation is also performative, and thus it also creates a new subject position.⁸

Cumming evokes Peirce’s pragmatism here, according to which “meanings are relational structures that emerge in active behavior, as an individual responds to some aspect of the environment” (48). Conventionality and individuality, along with thought and feeling, merge in these responses, and this necessitates a “recognition of continuity between these ways of understanding. . . . A self-reflexive negotiation of the relationship between something heard and learned criteria for critical analysis is demanded in the musical events at any level” (ibid.). Such self-reflexivity, however, does not arrive via either introspection or some kind of intuition, and this is where Cumming turns listening inside out: “Even ‘inner’ experiences—personal and even intimate—are not unmediated by a knowledge of musical signification as something that is learned within a community, and hence shared” (60), she reminds us. One does not have to be highly trained to share these cultural codes, as they are present at all levels.

A self-reflexive act of listening “leads not to the discovery of an inner musical self, but to the fact that selfhood even in music is a contingent

formation whose qualities derive from the signs over which it operates" (61). Following Peirce's theoretical model and terminology, Cumming differentiates three types of awareness in the active listening experience: feeling, reaction, and rationalization. First, the listener without reflection is "attentive to its felt quality" (63). Then, the 'otherness' of what has been heard awakens the 'self-as-perceiving,' which then evokes the third type of awareness that compares this otherness with existing knowledge, experience. The experience goes from affect to individuation, along with a continuous reflection on one's cultural embeddedness in an interpretive community. Self-consciousness enters in the middle of the process (on the second level), and it is pivotal to Cumming's argument that music as "other" brings about a sense of one's self:

A failure to encompass some experience in familiar terms, or adequately to predict it, leads to a knowledge of the "self" as one who is over-against something (or someone) in the environment. The "self" becomes apparent as one who had a will to organize things in a way known to it, that will be drawn to attention only by being resisted. An individual musical "self" appears as having distinctive expectations, based on a particular background in style, at that moment when its expectations are violated in some way. . . . If this self is an induction from felt "otherness," it is not known as a pure and unmediated interiority, or as an entity having the power to impose meanings on objects that resist.

(56-7)

Thus, the liveliness of the music, its 'uniqueness' and 'individuality,' provide the specific musical 'other' against which the listening self creates itself. One of the key elements of Cumming's model, which will be applied in my formulation of the *acoustic self*, is that she rejects the notion of an inner musicality and disqualifies the "self as a source of meaning" (57). Instead, Cumming reinstates the self as a process that emerges exactly at the moment that it ceases to be what it was or what it thought it was.

The apparent self-sameness and immediacy in the listening experience is eliminated. What seems an immediate quality in an experience is in fact due to the subject's social/cultural/historical embeddedness that created the quality in question (71). The listening self thus becomes a subject position that will not only be able to experience the three kinds of awareness during the musical experience, but may

recognize the limitations of the interpretive world within which she operates, and, opening up the way of listening available to her, allow others to respond from a position of difference. Listening, then, is not only a matter of musicality, but of hearing other selves,

(ibid.)

i.e., hearing how others listen. What seemed to be most inherently musical about music only appears so: it is actually the least authentic experience.

This is clearly one of the dilemmas of "The String Quartet," and perhaps the reason behind the narrator's experience of failure in making sense of music is due to the effort she puts into "recalling something, furtively seeking" (29). Seeking and recalling presuppose something already being there, as opposed to emerging in the process. It also reveals something about the narrator setting herself within the culturally assigned ways of listening to music. Already upon her arrival to the concert hall, she "begin[s] to have [her] doubts" about her semiotic project, whether she will find the meaning she is after (28). However, she is actually much closer to making sense of music than she realizes, and she operates on all three levels of awareness during her listening. *Feeling*: her reaction to the first movement evokes sensuous experiences: "I want to dance, laugh, eat pink cakes, yellow cakes, drink thin, sharp wine. Or an indecent story ..." (30). Scolding herself for the "silly dreams" that the music evokes in her is the second level of awareness, *reaction*, as she distances herself from her 'self-as-perceiving,' having recognized the *otherness* of the images that the music evokes. It is *rationalization* where her project fails, and it is not due to her lack of ability or competence, but more to her inability to release the presupposed selfhood that is assigned to her from the outside. The narrator's mistake is to blame herself, not *the limitations of the interpretive world in which she operates*. Music thus reveals not an inner self in the narrative, but the drama of the subject's autonomy versus contingency.

The Acoustic Self

As shown above, Cumming demystifies the emotional aspects (and fears) of music that have ruled in western culture for millennia. For Cumming, the listening subject is "a process of becoming aware of, and questioning, one's own presumptions about signs," which turns listening into a hermeneutic performance (*Sonic* 71). The listening subject is "so contained in the world that created it," that they never consider "to question the priority given to emotionality in this world" (*ibid.*). Although the issue is clear and the argument is sound, there is something that still *feels* amiss. Following Cumming's logic, one could argue that *it sounds so wrong that it must be right*, yet I do not think that Cumming's explanation fully resolves the questions of self-sameness and immediacy in music. Hence the need to incorporate Kramer's position into my own formulation of the problematics of listening.

The acoustic self, a central term in this book, thus combines Cumming's performative notion of the sonic self and Kramer's analogy between musical meaning-making and human subjectivity, as it manifests in narrative prose. If this engenders inner contradictions in my concept, it will also highlight the aporetic nature of the term and hopefully create an inner tension in the following analyses triggering further questioning.

Musical intermediality transfers (see: μεταφέρω) a way of thinking into narratives, and brings about a self-awareness of language, unveiling its own limitations. Music for language is like the pool Narcissus is gazing into. It draws the self, the text, and meaning toward risk. I hope to show in the following readings how musical structure and characterization unveil a side of the self that is not accessible via linguistic representation. What emerges in this process is the acoustic self. Through the incompatibility of music and language, writing the acoustic self reveals the impossibility of the self.

If the musical text is, as Monelle defines it, a *boundary between inside and outside*, then the intertextuality of the musical text is an inherent intertextuality. This is in alignment with Kristeva's concept of the text as a "permutation of other texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva 36, qtd. in Klein 2). As Klein sums it up, "dialogue is already inside the frontier of the text, by definition the site of several intersecting utterances" (Klein 3). Following Kramer's analogy between the self and musical meaning-making, intertextuality also appears to be an inherent condition of the human subject. It is the sense of 'something more' that music and human beings have in common. An inner essence is exactly what modernism questions and existentialists reject. The analyzed novels will clearly show that, without the help of an existing theoretical framework or vocabulary, the writers discussed not only address musical contingency and self-sameness in these texts, but also provide answers: there is either no reality of an inner essence, or if there is, bringing it to the surface will disable the functioning of the subject in their semiotic, cultural, or social framework. In a way, each of these novels dramatizes the introversive and extroversive semioses of music, text, and the subject. The 'crossing' of these three layers of aporetic tension per-form the acoustic self.

Writing the Acoustic Self in English Modernism

The contingency of the subject appears as a central dilemma in the post-Romantic era. Wylie Sypher's *Loss of the Self* draws the trajectory of the human psyche from the Romantic craving for freedom to its subsequent assimilation into liberal utilitarianism, and the resulting impulse for authenticity.⁹ This route correlates with the loss of center during the nineteenth century, both on a transcendental and a psychological plane, reaching its climax in a radical non-identity in the twentieth. One way the resulting existential *Angst* manifested in the arts during modernism and the avant-garde is that the Romantic notion of the sublime, instead of being in the center of the artwork as previously, moved into its very texture as Brillenburg Wurth observes (13). This semiotic self-reflexivity of modernism and the avant-garde may possibly explain the exuberance of musical experiments in the English novel between 1890 and 1930 (15–16).¹⁰ This observation also sheds new light on Lukács' description of modernist writers as

“contemporary virtuosos of form without content” (Lukács 60, qtd. in Prieto, *Listening* 269).

In this self-reflexive semiosis, the signifier and the signified are collapsed into one another, and denotation loses its capacity of meaning-making. The phenomenon of the modernist musicalization of fiction is thus, as Prieto confirms, “a symptom of a more general interest in those kinds of communication that are resistant to denotation” (Prieto, *Listening* 42). Modernist writers use music as a “model for the functioning of the narrative text,” and this way musical semiosis, providing a new narrative logic, transforms the way these “narratives make and communicate meaning” (ibid. ix). This unique aspect becomes the distinguishing feature of modernist musicalization. With no self at the center, characterization began to focus on cognitive and mental functioning rather than steady (or steadily changing) subjectivities. Consequently, modernism became more invested “in the exploration of mental reality than the representation or the physical and social realities of the outside world” (ibid. x). Music, with its inseparable denotative and connotative functioning, as well as its then generally accepted self-referentiality, presented itself as an opportune alternative for exploring “the inner space of consciousness” (ibid.).

As Alex Aronson also points out, it is the “interrelationship between the musical experience and the mental process it initiates” that turned novelists to “investigate the twilight where the encounter between music and human consciousness takes place” (21). Novelists, he goes on to say, “discovered in music an esthetic equivalent for the interior monologue, expressiveness uncontaminated by the *ambiguity* of verbal communication” (22, emphasis mine). However, the semiotic self-reflexivity of the modernist novel culminates in a specific dilemma in relation to this musical discovery: music as an alternative to express mental realities, free from the burdens of language, can only take the form of language in the narrative text; so, once more, it is language we need to turn to.

We can only construe musical meaning via language (acknowledging Schenkerian analysis as an exception), and despite the contradictory, and often troubled, relationship between music and language, language is arguably still the best analogy to music as a semiotic system. Music, in turn, provides the closest analogy to language while it also mirrors its (mal)functioning. The “ambiguity of verbal communication” that Aronson refers to is paradoxically due to the “semantic rigidity” (22) of language that stems from its denotative, referential function. The ambiguity lies in the fact that, as noted above, there is no way to predetermine the difference between denotation and connotation, and the latter always undermines unambiguous meaning. In music, however, the denotative and connotative aspects of signification already commingle, freeing it from referentiality and enabling what modernists often saw as its “pure expressiveness” (ibid.). What Aronson refers to as the modernists’ “need for increasingly subtler forms of evocation than the prose of everyday life” (29) is in Jakobsonian terms a

foregrounding of the poetic function in their literary language. Prieto marks a resistance to denotation in modernist fiction, which is not dissimilar to what Jakobson famously called the “organized violence committed on ordinary speech” when describing poetic language (Erlich, 219). This systematic violation of standard or ordinary language use is marked by excessive defamiliarization and indicates the difference between communicative language and literary prose.

As I will show in the following, especially in Chapters 3 and 4, the modernist musicalization of fiction is deeply rooted in the Romantic aesthetic and musical tradition. The Romantic influence appears on two levels: (1) this intermedial practice grows out of Romantic aesthetics; and (2) also reveals a traditional, unquestioned attitude toward the musical canon. While Beethoven and Wagner were typically those composers from whose large-scale tonal structures modernist musicians attempted to break away, their works seem to pervade modernist narratives.¹¹ The work of Wagner, who has been rightfully observed to have had “greater influence than any other single artist on the culture of our age” (Magee 100), had a double impact on modernist narrative: besides his operas, his views on Beethoven have been decisive in how the composer’s works are listened to continuing into our times, in a way hijacking the Beethoven experience for several generations, as will be demonstrated.

The modernist narratives explored in the book share an interesting feature: their almost exclusive focus on the German musical repertoire and a simultaneous investigation of Britishness. While questioning and redefining human subjectivity, the novels also explore one of the most evident contingencies of subjective identity: nationality. The dilemma of Britishness and a palpable sense of music envy are present in these novels, as if the two were inseparable. Indeed, the following readings reveal ways in which the contingent aspects of musical meaning-making and performativity provide a social and cultural critique in the texts analyzed. Music thus provides the grounds for a critique of the self and also of Britain in these narratives. A critique, but also a certain nostalgia for both.¹²

Notes

- 1 As indicated in the Introduction, the term ‘subject’ and different iterations of the ‘self’ will be problematized throughout the book from various angles. In this paragraph, the subject refers to the fictional characters in the narratives that will be explored, as well as the subject positions taken by the *poietic* and *esthetic* agents of semiosis, as further explained in the following section.
- 2 The expression comes from Schweighauser’s *The Noises of American Literature, 1890–1985: Toward a History of Literary Acoustics*, where he posits the literary text as a site for both representing and producing noise: “To claim that literature can, in the work of certain writers, become the noise of culture suggests that literary texts at times do make noise. From the double perspective of a history of literary acoustics, noise both designates the communicational and systemic force of literature and one of its objects of representation” (194).

- 3 This view is manifest in Saussure's notion of the sign: "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses" (de Saussure 66). While the following chapters will further complicate the relationship of semiosis and reality, for a thorough investigation of the issues related to Saussure's model in this regard see Colin Falck's article, "Saussurian Theory and the Abolition of Reality" For an account of Jakobson's turn from Saussure to Pierce, see Tony Jappy's "Iconicity and Inference: Peirce's Logic and Language Research."
- 4 It is in this sense that I refer to musical 'texts' throughout the book. The musical text conceived in this way is always a *writerly text* in the Barthesian sense, as it invites the listener to actively engage in the production of meaning(s). As Barthes describes in *S/Z*, "The writerly text is a perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed; the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticised by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages" (5, italics in original).
- 5 The reader may notice that musicology was in some respects "lagging behind" literary theory, as was observed by Susan McClary in 2002 (ix). This issue will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 4 in relation to questions regarding music, gender, and sexuality.
- 6 Hatten defines musical trope as "Figurative meaning in music. Troping involves a species of creative growth that goes beyond the typical articulation of established types and their hierarchy. Troping akin to metaphor occurs when two different, formally unrelated types are brought together in the same functional location so as to spark an interpretation based on their location" (295).
- 7 T.S. Eliot, in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" extends this bidirectional intertextuality to all works of art by what he calls 'simultaneous order': "What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them" (15).
- 8 While the performative aspect of interpretation is of course not exclusive to music, it will be specifically addressed here in relation to musical and musico-literary meaning-making in order to tease out some intermedial traits that are unique to these types of semioses.
- 9 For the full argument, see Sypher 19–28.
- 10 As Daniel Albright reminds us, the notion of modernism, as such, is a 'fiction' and the wide range of styles and ambitions under the aegis of modernism make it almost impossible to account for this prolific period as a single movement. What connects modernisms is their "testing of the limits of aesthetic construction" (xix). The beginning of English literary modernism is often associated with the *fin-de-siècle* artistic movements, while the end is often marked by the start of the Second World War. Of course, a movement that can be best described as testing or breaking the limits, will not necessarily abide by such boundaries. While Woolf, Huxley, Forster, and Joyce are considered canonically modernist writers, Butler has no membership in the group. But novels, like artistic movements, know no borders—either geographical or historical. I hope that the inclusion of Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* will be successfully justified in the fugue chapter, and the two novels in Chapter 5 that represent the "beyond" in the book's title will open the reader to new ways of listening.
- 11 This resonates with Franco Moretti's observation about the development of the novel: "Progress coexists with backwardness, indeed, depends on it. One level of

the work can be bold, *because* the other is crude and superfluous. It is a constructional split that runs through almost the entire twentieth century” (119). This is not to suggest that modernist writers did not engage with their contemporary music or that there is a uniform way in which they do. Brad Bucknell’s *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics* for instance, successfully explores the multifarious and complex ways in which Walter Pater, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and Gertrude Stein engage with music in their writing.

- 12 In accordance with the semiotic definition of the ‘subject’ provided in the Introduction, my readings will maintain an awareness of the subject being performed in its social, historical, and political context. While the musico-literary scholarship referred to in this chapter mainly focuses on the theoretical implications of music and literary modernism, this perspective is not exclusive. Emma Sutton decidedly tackles “the part that music plays in the socio-political vision of Woolf’s writing” (19) in her *Virginia Woolf and Classical Music*. Josh Epstein’s *Sublime Noise* and Sam Halliday’s *Sonic Modernity* also critically engage with the socio-cultural aspects of sonic representations in modernist writing.

2 Of Fugue and Other Demons

The Listening Subject

The British rock band Judas Priest was brought to trial in 1990 in Reno, Nevada, for the alleged influence of their music on two young men, Raymond Belknap and James Vance, resulting in a suicide pact. In the winter of 1985, the two teenagers listened at length to Judas Priest's *Stained Class* album before rushing out of Belknap's home and shooting themselves with a sawed-off shotgun at a nearby playground. Belknap died immediately; Vance passed away three years later as a result of complications related to the incident. It was their parents who initiated the case. The plaintiffs' original complaint targeted the lyrics of the songs "Heroes End" and "Saints in Hell," but when the case faced dismissal by judge Jerry Whitehead based on the protection of free speech, they changed course. The prosecution claimed that subliminal messages hidden in one of the songs of the album, "Better by You, Better than Me," triggered Belknap and Vance's actions.¹ As had happened so many times before, music was accused of possessing demonic power, providing a shortcut to the devil. The allegation was that the song included a hidden message—the instruction to "do it" repeated several times—and that this subliminally encouraged the two listeners to put an end to their lives. Leaving the important questions of free speech, liability, and pseudoscientific testimonies aside—a lot has been written elsewhere about those aspects of the case²—the incident raises interesting questions regarding the power of music and the myths that surround the notion of the voice and the listening experience in western culture.

As it turned out, the supposed subliminal message was and was not musical at the same time. In fact, the "do its" were not even on the same track of the recording, but the accidental product of Judas Priest singer Rob Halford's exhalation and a simultaneous guitar strum.³ Halford's breathing and the changing of guitar chords are both extramusical and extraphonological phenomena, which neither musical notation nor linguistics can account for: the dubious message emerged from the unmusical within music. An *other* voice appeared where the human voice faltered, resulting in an "intrusion of otherness," similar to that which Mladen

Dolar discusses when revealing the conflict of logocentrism and phonocentrism, by which the senseless quality of the voice turns it into “the other of *logos*, its radical alterity” (52).

The voice stands in a very intimate and intricate relationship with *logos*. *Phônê* first empowers *logos* (the voice carries articulation), thereby also undermining it (there is always the chance of the voice failing), and eventually overpowering it—both physically and metaphysically. This happens when *phônê* and *logos* do not pair up into a linguistic structure, resulting in a kind of phono-*a*-logy. As Dolar points out, voice operates outside of the symbolic; it is the pre- and post-linguistic, or “physiological,” materialization of the exteriority that “epitomizes the signifying gesture precisely by not signifying anything in particular. . . . The non-structured voice miraculously starts to represent the structure as such, the signifier in general. For the signifier in general is possible as a non-signifier” (28–9). Understood through this lens, Belknap and Vance had a transcendental experience in a linguistic sense. The one thing they did not know, however, was its source. Perhaps, they created an imaginary consciousness behind the message they heard, which eventually took control of their listening experience and, alas, their listening self. But, if this is the case, how did the message become “do it”? Why did these disturbed young men turn *phônê* (voice) into *phonê* (murder, massacre)—two words having curiously similar phonetic structures in ancient Greek?

Was it the subliminal instruction to “do it”? One of the plaintiffs’ experts, Howard Shevrin, claimed that subliminal messages are especially dangerous because while one can neglect or dismiss an overt imperative, subliminals are perceived unconsciously and the receiver of the message “attributes the directive or the imperative to himself” (Moore). As Timothy E. Moore, who testified on the defendants’ side, pointed out, the main problem with this argument lies in the total lack of scientific evidence as to the efficacy of subliminal commands in prompting the listener to action, let alone to act in a specific way. The power fallaciously attributed to subliminal messages seems to be just another myth about the “mysterious and almost magical force” (*ibid.*) that people tend to attribute to *alogical* auditory experiences, especially music. Moore called attention to another important factor: the plaintiffs learned about the do-its from Vance’s guidance counselor, who testified that Vance told her how the Judas Priest album “was giving us the message to just Do It” (*ibid.*). How could he account for a message that they supposedly received unconsciously? As it was a liability case, it actually did not matter whether the band planted the message deliberately or not, as long as it could be proven to be there and a direct connection could be established between the message and the suicides. And Vance’s (and probably Belknap’s) awareness of the do-its rule out the subliminal argument even if it were a valid one. In the end, Judge Whitehead based her acquittal of the defendants not on this fallacy, but on the impossibility of establishing a direct causality between the do-its and the boys’ actions. The ruling

ultimately claimed that the boys were of an especially high risk suicide group for reasons not related to Judas Priest, and that several other factors in their lives led to the tragic event (*ibid.*).

The teenagers, like all listening subjects, had a directedness in their listening; in Wittgenstein's terms, they *listened as*.⁴ The two were listening in for an answer in the music. As Vance wrote in a letter to Belknap's mother afterwards about the night of the incident, "I believe that alcohol and heavy metal music, such as Judas Priest, led us or even 'mesmerized' us into believing that the answer to 'life was death'" (Bromwich 244). The listening subject, expecting there to be a message, had to first identify that message, and then itself as the addressee of that message. Placing themselves as the *other* in the communication process, they in turn identified the origin of the voice, which in fact was not there, as the *other* of their own freshly emerged listening self. Conjuring a consciousness where there was none, they presupposed a *logos*, and thus anthropomorphized noise into *phônê*, not only as voice, but also as utterance, originated in a consciousness, which became their Other, and which was at least as imaginary as the connection between the expression "do it" and what they thought it was the answer to. Thus, the Judas Priest case has less to do with subliminals than with myth in—and about—music, the musical experience, and the birth of the acoustic self.

An anthropomorphization of music is pervasively present in both informal and formal musical discourse. As discussed above, Cumming draws on the example of the violin, which is generally conceived in musical discourse as an instrument that is able to "convey a quasi vocal 'innocence' or 'warmth.'" Thus, a myth "is established within a community of discourse—one which habitually links 'violin' with attributes of 'vocality'" (*Sonic* 77). Again, we are back to the Wittgensteinian "hearing *as*" where metaphorical listening results in the "emergent property of the sound-as-heard" (*ibid.*). The anthropomorphization of musical sound is related to the cultural embeddedness of the listener, whose mind draws an analogy between sound and "vocal emotionality" (75). It is important to see that while this anthropomorphizing takes place on all three levels of the musical semiotic process—composing, performing, and listening—we are specifically addressing the latter two at the moment: the subjectivity we are after "inhere[s] in the text of the work itself, as it is performed, inviting the listener's engagement in a manner that transforms his or her own subjectivity" (Cumming, "The Subjectivities" 17).

It is the imaginary subjectivity in music that has been the cause of endowing music with mythical meaning in the (western) history of listening. Plato recognized the potentially dangerous power music can have over the mind,⁵ but it was Augustine who first problematized the Janus-faced subjectivity within music that may lead the listener either to salvation or ruin. It does not come as a surprise that, as Dolar observes, sticking to the Word—i.e., *logos*—is the key to facing the right side of this duplicitous persona (50).

Eero Tarasti's *Myth and Music*, one of the first works in the field of musical semiotics, adds a new ingredient to this music-myth conundrum. Proceeding from the perceived connection between mythical and musical thought attributed to the listening experience since the birth of aesthetics, Tarasti scrutinizes the logic of myth in the musico-semiotic process with an emphasis on structure. He evokes the Lévi-Straussian view that the interconnectedness of musical and mythical discourse lies in the similarity of the functions they serve, especially in western civilization, where

[t]he heritage of myth was divided between two domains: music adopted the structural principles of myth while literature exploited mythical contents as a subject matter of narration. Therefore it was in the Western culture in which music in a certain sense occupied the place reserved for mythology in other societies. For us, listening to music assumes the same function as does listening to mythical stories in primitive societies.

(Tarasti 33)

This theory may prove problematic on several grounds, yet it is also very illuminating in many ways. Two of the most immediate critical questions that emerge are: (1) if music inherited only the structural principles of myth, how can it stand in for the mythical stories that supposedly carried the content? and (2) isn't this model just another myth being created about music—actually turning musical experience itself into a Barthesian myth, which simultaneously directs toward and becomes emptied of meaning? However, the Lévi-Strauss-based proposition demonstrates how the idea that music carries an inherent *mythopoetic* function still prevails in critical thinking. The reason for this is a convincing analogy between the semiotic functioning of myth and music, which is where the music-myth parallel may actually provide a good starting point for our investigations.

According to Lévi-Strauss, while myth and the mythical experience are supposed to lead the participant to some kind of a truth or essence, a mytheme makes sense not in itself but in relation to its variations, thereby creating a meaningful structure (210). Similarly, the elements of a musical piece gain their meaning within the system, the composition. Relating to each other, they create a web, a semiotic field that comes into play without external references. Remarkably, Lévi-Strauss uses the fugal structure to illustrate the resemblances between the two means of meaning-making. But this is only half of the story, as this introversive semiosis coexists with an extroversive one. Just as mythemes exist in their ethnographic context, musical compositions are created in relation to other musical instances (e.g., the sonata form), which are embedded in the musical repertoire, as shown by Monelle (see Chapter 1). Music, like myth (and also music as myth), leads to one's innermost self in the sense that, through the dramatic play of introversive and extroversive semioses, it conveys a meaning that cannot be fully expressed, only experienced.

After closer inspection, this model carries several implications for tackling the use of music in literature, especially in narrative fiction, where these two aspects (i.e., introversive and extroversive) of musical/mythological semioses can be brought into play. First, the claim that music represents a way of thinking in literature—as, for instance, Eric Prieto would suggest—is extended to include a possible direction of that thinking: a mythical one (98). Second, the mythical aspect creates a certain timelessness, in which the past is evoked in the present; chronology and linearity are cast away, providing a new temporal logic—that is to say, a new rhythm—to the narrative. The third aspect that calls for attention is the question: if music took the structural principles of myth, making musical structure mythical, then is mythical structure also essentially musical? Meaning: is every mythical narrative in some way inherently musical and vice versa?

While it would be impossible to argue for an overarching model (Tarasti himself limits his investigations to what he calls mythical music, a special brand, with overt mythical content), the novels explored in this chapter as examples of using the musical topos of the fugue are simultaneously musical and mythical from a semiotic perspective: these are novels in which music and myth seem to be interconnected, and which display how music and musical meaning-making may provide an alternative logic for narrative syntax. The statement that the function of musical experience replaced those of mythical stories in the modern world is problematic in itself, but Tarasti's model provides an exciting analogy to how musical structures in modernist fiction point at the very texture of the narrative, which thus becomes the subject matter of these texts. The three novels are Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, and Woolf's *The Waves*. In the concluding section I will also relate the argument to another usual suspect of modernist musicalization, the "Sirens" episode of Joyce's *Ulysses*.

The Way of All Flesh

Butler's novel *The Way of All Flesh* (written between 1873 and 1884 but published only posthumously in 1903) is a pre-echo of the modernist musicalization—in our case the treatment of the fugue—and a showcase for the reconceptualization of the self that took place between Romanticism and the Modernist period, as described by Sypher.⁶ Written in the Victorian period, the novel at first glance follows the traditional novel form, but with a satirical tone. As for the Victorian value system, however, it is dissected and discarded with a surgeon's precision, and so are the institutions that Butler investigates in the novel: the family, education, the Church of England, marriage, the justice system, and the art world. The methodical scrutiny of the novel evokes an interesting comparison to Huxley's *Point Counter Point*. Just as Huxley named Butler's anti-utopia, *Erewhon*, as the inspiration for his *Brave New World*, *The Way of All Flesh* is in many ways the *Erewhon* of *Point Counter Point*.

A Romanticizing tendency is perceptible in modernist writers' views on music—both in aesthetic and in semiotic terms—in the first decades of the twentieth century. Their experimental musicalization coexists with a somewhat nostalgic, backward facing, Romanticizing attitude, which is also discernible in their musical references.⁷ These Romantic affinities create a vivid contrast with the existential questions, as well as the musical innovations of their time. Romantic aesthetics, which we will explore in more detail in the next chapter, treated music as the way to the essence of the self, which itself dissolves via the musical experience. By the early twentieth century, one cannot talk about such an essence. These two poles, the aesthetic and the existential, repel each other and provide a philosophical tension within modernist musical narratives. We may speak of an aesthetic-existential projection of the acoustic self in this respect. Butler's novel provides an interesting middle ground between the Romantic and the modernist conceptualization of the self, while also clearly distancing itself from contemporary utilitarian attitudes and, famously, from Darwin's theory of evolution (as well as Romantic music). Depicting a reality distinctly different from the other two novels analyzed in this chapter, *The Way of All Flesh* presents an earlier point in the historical trajectory of the self, and arguably a proto-modernist instance of the musicalization of fiction.

This Victorian *Candide* is about the life of young Ernest Pontifex, raised by a despotic father, Theobald, and a manipulative mother, Christina, whose primary function in the text is to pull her husband's strings. Ernest himself does not appear until Chapter XXVIII; the previous chapters provide a detailed account of the earlier generations of his family. This scrupulous description of the protagonist's genealogy is not necessary for the story line, which would make sense without this thorough prelude, but gains functional importance for the plot and, as I will suggest, the musicality of the novel, so a brief summary is in order here.

Old Mr. Pontifex, the well-off carpenter of Paleham, is the first member of the family to be introduced by the narrator, Edward Overton. When Overton's father describes Old Pontifex as "not only an able man, but . . . one of the ablest men that ever I knew," he gives rise to the young boy's wonder about the old man (Butler, *The Way* 3). We also learn that Old Pontifex was an amateur musician who built an organ for the church and a smaller one for himself and who also tried his hand at painting. His son, George, who takes after his authoritative mother rather than his father, joins his uncle's publishing business in London early on in his life, thus exceeding his own family's rank, and eventually inheriting the whole company. Growing up to be a man without emotions, he becomes a ruthless father, who forces his son, Theobald, to become a clergyman, partially to further secure his own public image as the publisher of religious books. Theobald's upbringing and his inability to overcome his father's influence turns him into a prig and a father who is even stricter with his children, especially his first-born, Ernest, than his own father was with him. Theobald and Christina set out to forestall any sign of "self-will" (18) in their children's character, giving Ernest regular whippings from the age of two.

When Overton, who is Ernest's godfather and a childhood friend of Theobald, witnesses the cruel treatment of his godson, he distances himself from the family, seeing no opportunity for him to improve the child's situation, yet not wishing to witness it. A change comes in Ernest's life when, upon turning 12, he goes to a boarding school in Roughborough. Although the headmaster, Dr. Skinner—a wonderfully suggestive name for a pedagogue—is as peremptory as Theobald, he at least refrains from employing physical punishment in his school. It is at this point that Theobald's sister, Alethea, decides to turn her attention to the welfare of the child and undo the influence of his parents, whom she despises. She moves to Roughborough and starts working on a more humanistic education for Ernest. In an attempt to give him a project, she makes an agreement with him to build her an organ. The organ is emblematic of their relationship, as well as of their connection with Alethea's grandfather and Ernest's great grandfather, Old Mr. Pontifex. As Overton points out, it is these two members of the family (Alethea and Ernest) who inherited the positive characteristics of the old man. While Alethea's project is cut short by her illness and subsequent death, she hurriedly makes a will, leaving all her money in safe keeping of Overton to hand it over to Ernest upon his twenty-eighth birthday without letting him know about his fortune beforehand. This way, godfather and godson's lives are again intertwined. Overton witnesses the impressionable Ernest's long line of struggles: getting ordained, becoming a religious fanatic, getting swindled out of his money by a fellow-curate, ending up in prison for an assault on a woman whom he thinks to be a prostitute, becoming estranged from his parents, and marrying Ellen who previously worked at his parents' house and who turns out to have become a lowlife alcoholic. While Overton, an astute bachelor, often gets irritated with his godson, he abides by his promise to Ernest's aunt and maintains contact with the young man. Their strongest tie throughout remains their admiration of what Alethea refers to as "the best music" (113).

When it turns out that Ernest's marriage with Ellen is void, as she was already married when uniting with him, Overton springs into action to save his godson. He helps Ernest place his two children with a decent, working class family, he takes him on a trip to Italy, and teaches him accounting, offering him the job of taking care of 70,000 pounds sterling without letting him know that it is actually his own inheritance. Meanwhile, Ernest becomes a prolific writer. To Overton's dismay, however, he does not write literature but essays that are not too well-received except for his first volume, *Essays and Reviews*, which was published anonymously and became a moderate success. Ernest's answer to his own lack of critical acclaim is that "a younger generation will listen to him more willingly than the present" (340). In Overton's eyes, however, the cause of the problem is not only his godson's views, but also his failure to make alliances in literary circles, which Ernest, in his Othello-esque mindset, "hates not wisely but too well" (*ibid.*). This mindset, as Overton declares at the end of the story, could not be understood by Ernest's father or grandfather, yet "those who know him intimately do not know that they wish him greatly different from what he actually is" (340). A quite ambiguous and vague final account,

which leaves the reader as much in wonder as it does Overton himself, was left by his father when describing Ernest's great grandfather along similar lines, not for what he is, as much as what he could (have) be(en).

Both Ernest's likeness to Old Pontifex and the ambivalence of the characterization of the two touch upon the key issue of the novel: how human beings can become fully developed individuals in the light of (or even in spite of) their inheritance while also depending on their capacity for adaptation. The life story narrated by Overton suggests that the combination of these two attributes in the right ratio enables human beings to achieve their potential. And what of happiness, or even contentment, while being embedded in society? Well, that is the point where Butler's novel turns into a satire. *The Way of All Flesh* is as closely connected to nineteenth century realism as to Victorianism, but the novel also suggests that practically all Victorian values are false or have lost their original meaningfulness. It is not access to society that the protagonist gains by inheriting money at the end, but the freedom to disregard that society. The Victorian hero ceases to be Victorian in that he does not care about his contemporaneous social fabric, but unknowingly lives partially in the past (emblemized by Old Pontifex) and the future (by writing for future generations).

In its escape from the fatalistic logic of Darwinism, the novel shows that realism does not mean the precise reproduction of surface reality, as reality is now in the inherited features, and not visible.⁸ Darwinism for Butler is a framework in which one's inherited characteristics may be as evil as the congenital Original Sin of Christianity. Since Butler never published his novel due to its autobiographical elements, it may have also signified a personal quest to find his way out of this gridlock. Butler's central tropes for characterization—namely fugue and crossing—tackle these issues in the narrative.

The word 'fugue' originates from the Latin *fuga*, meaning 'flight' or 'escape'. As the *Oxford Companion to Music* points out, fugue is not a rigid form or structure, but "a style of composition" with certain characteristics. Generally in a fugue "three or more voices ... enter imitatively one after the other, each 'giving chase' to the preceding voice" (Tucker and Jones). A fugue's exposition begins with the first voice introducing

the principal theme, known as the 'subject'. After this theme has been presented, the second voice enters, transposing the subject to the dominant; the dominant entry is called the 'answer'. The third voice enters with the original subject (in a different octave), and so on.

(Tucker and Jones)

The exposition reaches full circle "when each voice has presented the subject or answer," after which the fugue continues with the "alternating sequence of episodes and middle entries—the latter in related keys—and conclude[s] with a final entry in the tonic" (*ibid.*). The terminology of this musical description itself showcases the tendency to anthropomorphize musical

notions/ideas and is suggestive of the shaping/pre-determination of musical experience. The network of metaphorical terms, such as ‘voice’, ‘subject’, and ‘answer’ echo the creation of a musical consciousness similar to the one described above in relation to the Judas Priest case.

XVIII.
FUGUE.
G-moll.

B. W. XXXVIII.

Figure 2.1 The exposition of Bach’s “Little” Fugue in G Minor BWV 578,” where the subject is presented in each voice

economically used. These characteristics have not universally been considered signs of inferiority: writing in 1789, Burney (*History*) called Handel ‘perhaps the only great Fuguist exempt from pedantry’. Marpurg in his treatise on fugue (1753–4) subdivided the genre into strict (*fuga obligata*) and free (*fuga libera* or *soluta*) which he associated, without expressing particular preference, with Bach and Handel respectively.

(Walker 2021)

Butler’s choice of the Handelian fugue reflects a personal musical preference, but it also works for the purposes of the novel. Although there are several references to concrete works by Handel, the novel seems to follow the ‘thinking’ of a Handelian fugue, not the structure of a specific work. It is this logic behind the characters and their ideas, as well as their transformations into one another, that provides the narrative syntax. Reading the text against a concrete composition would be forcing a pre-fabricated matrix on it; instead it is the characters and their ideas that can be taken to constitute the elements of a *fuga libera*, encompassing four generations and about a hundred years of the Pontifex family. The analogy between a musical theme and the idea(s) a character stands for is to be found in a description of Ernest in his youth:

Nor yet did he know that ideas, no less than the living beings in whose minds they arise, must be begotten by parents not very unlike themselves, the most original still differing but slightly from the parents that have given rise to them.

(Butler, *The Way* 168)

Right after this, the narrator Overton describes the logic of a fugue that overarches a century:

Life is like a fugue, everything must grow out of the subject and there must be nothing new. Nor, again, did he see how hard it is to say where one idea ends and another begins, nor yet how closely this is paralleled in the difficulty of saying where a life begins or ends, or an action or indeed anything, there being an unity in spite of infinite multitude, and an infinite multitude in spite of unity.

(*ibid.*)

But this in itself would be giving in to fate, which does not seem to be acceptable to either Overton or Butler. Heredity is but one aspect of human meaning-making, which—although it may show a limited amount of variation—will not in itself be held accountable for all of one’s actions and characteristics in the Butlerian model. Throughout life, one becomes exposed (or transposed in more musical terms) to the other tone

(counterpoint), as Ernest gets exposed to Alethea and Overton (overtone). Serving as an overtone, Overton tries to unsettle the pre-existing and none too satisfying harmony within Ernest's family. Overton is a constant 'dominant' in the semiotic field, trying to 'cross' Ernest. Also, Alethea, an earlier variation on the same subject that Ernest derives from (Old Pontifex), 'crosses' him to be more like he actually is, i.e., taking away the influence of the wrong type of crossing, as if in an attempt to re-graft a scion onto its original host.

As Overton explains,

all these things cross a man; whatever a man comes in contact with in any way forms a cross with him which will leave him better or worse, and the better things he is crossed with the more likely he is to live long and happily. All things must be crossed a little or they would cease to live.

(83)

Strangely, it is actually his surprise inheritance that nearly kills Ernest. When he comes of age and inherits his aunt's money, he becomes very feeble. Overton takes him to one of the "most eminent doctors in London" (291), who prescribes crossing as the right cure for Ernest.

'Cross him,' said the doctor, at once. 'Crossing is the great medical discovery of the age. Shake him out of himself by shaking something else into him.' ... He continued: 'Seeing is a mode of touching, touching is a mode of feeding, feeding is a mode of assimilation, assimilation is a mode of recreation and reproduction, and this is crossing—shaking yourself into something else and something else into you.'

(291–92)

Crossing with the right things, as well as an inherent affinity for harmony—and preferably for the music "of the highest class"—is the key for the self to succeed, the novel suggests. Yet, one also needs to recognize the shortcomings of the wrong voices, subjects, and thematic variations in one's own fugue. The two voices Ernest has to escape from are those of his parents, Christina and Theobald. Christina's voice was already false when ensnaring Theobald into marriage, but it is explicitly Siren-like when used to emotionally blackmail and manipulate her son on several occasions. The voice of the father is, of course, hardly ever harmonious in the western literary canon, yet Theobald is such a negative character in the novel that he is simply described as someone who "hated music" (34). Ernest's flight (*fuga*) from these malign voices makes up the diegesis.

Although both Alethea and Overton play an important role in Ernest's escape from his family, the boy also successfully eludes being overly transposed by these two seemingly beneficial characters. Alethea, due to her early

death, and Overton, in his ineffective attempts to shape Ernest's character, fail to fully exert their influence over Ernest. It is not entirely clear what Alethea's motivation is for becoming Ernest's benefactor besides getting even with her brother and sister-in-law, and it is solely through the filter of her admirer, Overton, that we get to know her. As for Overton, his relationship with Ernest may be a variation on the theme (a displacement) of his desire for Alethea and his rejected marriage proposals (eight); his involvement with Ernest may be an attempt to gain mastery over his past failure. Thus, Overton has his own fugue that remains unexplored in the novel. Ernest's luck is that no voices become stronger than his in his flight.

The voices of Alethea and Overton stand in for two forces in Ernest's subjectivity. Alethea's is a voice attempting to direct Ernest toward their common original theme (Old Pontifex), i.e., she directs him toward self-sameness. Overton goes out of his way to persuade Ernest to try his pen in more popular genres, thus standing in for the contingent self. As discussed in Chapter 1, it is precisely the incompatibility of these two aspects of the self that create the energy and the tension that bring about the emergence of the acoustic self. Yet, we also saw that due to the impossibility of the acoustic self, its emergence culminates in the subsequent destruction of the self. Alethea must have seen their incompatibility when rejecting Overton eight times.

Ernest's luck is that he never gets to the primal scene of the drama of his subjectivity. His failure to bring his real self to the surface, to realize his abilities to the full extent, may be the only way to save his life. As we will see, this is not the case in the other two novels analyzed in this chapter, where the acoustic self does emerge and bring about the demise of the subject. Musicalization is closely related to death in both Huxley's and Woolf's novels. While *The Way of All Flesh* certainly does not have a happy ending, but rather an ironic one, Ernest is still better off at the end than 'musicalized' characters usually are. Butler's 'hero' does not succeed in changing his society, but remains an outsider to it. Nevertheless, he achieves a life of contentment. The acoustic self, although posed as a problem in the novel, is not fully realized. The other voices do not gain full control over Ernest's character, and so the drama of his subjectivity evades a tragic outcome.

Point Counter Point

A metafictional agent, a writer figure, appears in Huxley's *Point Counter Point* as well. Philip Quarles, an experimental and somewhat muddled writer, provides the program for the novel while reflecting on the possibilities of the "musicalization of fiction" in his notebook, the often-quoted extracts of which make up most of Chapter XXII:

The musicalization of fiction. Not in the symbolist way, by subordinating sense to sound. (*Pleuvent les bleus baisers des astres taciturnes*. Mere

glossolalia). But on a large scale, in the construction. Meditate on Beethoven. The changes of moods, the abrupt transitions. (Majesty alternating with a joke, for example, in the first movement of the B flat major quartet. Comedy suddenly hinting at prodigious and tragic solemnities in the scherzo of the C sharp minor quartet.)

(295–96)

Philip evokes Beethoven's two late string quartets here, No. 13 and 14 (the former being the same one that played such a pivotal role for Woolf in constructing *The Waves*, as the following section will show). Then, he goes on to further elaborate the experiment:

More interesting still the modulations, not merely from one key to another, but from mood to mood. A theme is stated, then developed, pushed out of shape, imperceptibly deformed, until, though still recognizably the same, it has become quite different. In sets of variations the process is carried a step further. Those incredible Diabelli variations, for example. The whole range of thought and feeling, yet all in organic relation to a ridiculous little waltz tune. Get this into a novel. How?

(296)

Huxley's novel, which is a bricolage of London's upper and upper-middle class in the 1920s, manifests clear affinities with the literary experiments of its diegetic writer figure. Phillip's own concerns with the structure of the novel he is to write are also the central issues of *Point Counter Point*: they become the warp and the weft of its self-reflexive texture. Philip, whose wife becomes estranged from him precisely because of his detachment from his own life, sets out to write a novel in which the characters and situations are variations on a theme or an idea. There is, however, a price a novel has to pay to become a "novel of ideas," as the characters are turned into a "mouthpiece" for an idea, as Philip himself observes (297). He finds the approach artistically "feasible" as long as the "theories are rationalizations of sentiments, instincts, dispositions of soul" (*ibid.*), but reading *Point Counter Point* one comes to realize: it is not only the characters themselves who become "slightly monstrous" (*ibid.*), but also their treatment by the consciousness within or behind the novel—be it the narrator or the implied author. This makes the narrative a bumpy read, due to the continual disassociation from the narrator's surgical treatment of the fictional (and not too persuasively human) creatures. While *Point Counter Point* provides the panoramic view of a universal novel, it offers not a single character with whom the reader would wish to identify. Nevertheless, making readers want to identify with the dilemmas and existential problems facing these fictional characters is part of Huxley's craft. It is a satire without forgiveness, yet, Huxley's novel works. This kaleidoscopic depiction of a "whole range of thought and feeling" (295) via its plethora of characters does reach an organicism.

The material for this “human fugue” (23) is provided by London and the decadent life of its aristocracy. From the failing relationship of Marjorie Carling and Walter Bidlake, whose dialogue opens the novel, through the disintegration of Elinor and Philip Quarles’ marriage and the loss of their child, to Lucy Tantamount’s zealous pursuit of pleasure and to the sensual artist John Bidlake’s denial of his aging and illness, each parallel plot and character is a study on the possibility of working one’s way through the matrix of the human condition that is based on the opposing drives of passion and reason. With different degrees of egotism ascribed to each of the characters, they become possible variations of and solutions to the same puzzle. However, instead of solutions, they find escape routes at best: science for Lord Edward Tantamount, who totally ignores the world around himself; perversion for Denis Burlap, the literary editor and hagiographer, who specializes in deflowering religious spinsters; subversive social action, like fascism, for the politician Everard Webley or anarchism for Lord Tantamount’s assistant, Illidge; and nihilism for Maurice Spandrell, whose Dorian Gray-like adventures make him one of the most wonderfully portrayed dandies in English literature. Spandrell makes an attempt toward spirituality, but instead ultimately meets his end in a theatrical act of suicide.

The only characters that provide a coherent and livable value system are the artist Mark Rampion⁹ and his wife, Mary. Throughout the novel, Rampion rants about intellectualism, which he thinks destroyed humanity. His search for truth is an attempt to overcome the philosophical, artistic, and scientific over-emphasis on reason, which he dates back to the appearance of Christianity. He pronounces the human situation as standing “on a tightrope, walking delicately, equilibrated, with mind and consciousness and spirit at one end of his balancing pole and body and instinct and all that’s unconscious and earthy and mysterious at the other” (408–9). What tipped the human experience out of balance, according to Rampion, is the attempt to leave the bodily behind. The magnification of reason, along with abstraction and representation, resulted in a separation from real experience, from our self. These values appear as absolute, obscuring “[t]he absoluteness of perfect relativity” (409), which he believes to be the only absolute that can be reached. Rampion’s explanations provide a focal point to the montage of the characters and parallel plots that make up the novel. The title, *Point Counter Point*, already promises voices or melodies contrasted against one another, and the novel’s epigraph by Fulke Greville defines the main issue that is at stake:

Oh, wearisome condition of humanity!
Born under one law, to another bound,
Vainly begot and yet forbidden vanity:
Created sick, commanded to be sound.
What meaneth Nature by these diverse laws—
Passion and reason, self-division’s cause?

Ironically enough, the one who provides the only viable answer to the paradox (although his answer is a paradox in itself: the absoluteness of perfect relativity), a character who is based on D.H. Lawrence, denounces literature and linguistic representation:

Words, words, words, they shut one off from the universe. Three-quarters of the time one's never in contact with things, only with the beastly words that stand for them. And often not even with those—only with some poet's damned metaphorical rigmarole about a thing.

(Huxley, *Point* 212)

Rampion, who is foremost a painter, uses his art as an alternative to language. While the Rampions are the only positive characters in the novel, and through them Huxley leaves the door slightly open to the possibility of working human relationships, it is important to note that Rampion, who comes from a working class family, is completely freed from the hardships of everyday life and society through his marriage to the aristocratic Mary. Like Ernest Pontifex, he finds contentment (perhaps even more so than Butler's protagonist), but his ideas come from a safe position located within the very (financial) framework against which he rails.

Thus, in *Point Counter Point*, the painter problematizes language, while the writer is busy trying to musicalize fiction. Rampion, this card-carrying advocate of the *absoluteness of perfect relativity*, undermines Quarles' attempt at "telling a story" (296). What Quarles' musicalization may reveal, Rampion knows already: *logos* separates us from ourselves. His art, painting, reveals this as much as music does—the sister arts mirror each other's shortcomings. While the interrelations of the three traditional art forms—painting, music, and poetry—will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapters and a brief survey of the aesthetic tradition in Chapter 3 will put our inquiries in a wider perspective, this chapter focuses more specifically on music and fugue.

The reader is immersed in a musical experience early on in *Point Counter Point*. The setting of the second through to the fourth chapter is at one of Lady Edward Tantamount's musical parties, where the orchestra plays Bach's Suite in B-minor. The musical sensibility of the narrative is introduced through a detailed *ekphrastic* description of Bach's work. The narrator describes the Sarabande as a "slow and lovely meditation on the beauty (in spite of all the squalor and stupidity), the profound goodness (in spite of all the evil), the oneness (in spite of such bewildering diversity) of the world" (24). The musical *ekphrasis* practically sets forth the scope of the novel itself, in which musical thought is employed to explore "a beauty, a goodness, a unity that no intellectual research can discover, that analysis dispels" (24).

Yet, in the beginning of Chapter Three, with the music still playing, we find ourselves two floors higher in the Tantamount house, where Lord

Tantamount is working on his biological experiments. Music and science (analysis) are intertwined, they seem to be two sides of the same coin, or rather two languages that can lead one to think that we can embrace some kind of a great pattern in “the universal concert of things” (29). Similar to Philip Quarles, Lord Tantamount is also working on the issue of organicism in his experiments, by cutting off the tail-bud of a newt and trying to reattach it as a limb. The result is monstrosity, as in the case of the novel’s characters: “They manufactured a monster with a tail where an arm should have been” (31).

The narrator is well aware of the subjective element within the listening experience; besides the eloquent descriptions of the music, the individual experiences of the listening subjects are accounted for. While the narrator hears a meditation on truth and beauty in the Bach piece, Fanny Logan, in tears, “abandon[s] herself wholeheartedly to it” and lets the music “run smoothly but irresistibly through all the labyrinthine intricacies of her being” (25). The ecstatic experience evokes death (that of her late husband) and also consolation, creating a “sad and musical happiness” (*ibid.*) in her.

Music is heard as a quest for or meditation on truth and beauty, both of which are recurring motifs in the novels dealt with in this chapter. Truth is what the quest for self-sameness is seeking, and beauty appears as the measure of a life worth living. Both truth and beauty are connected to death in this context. Total self-sameness is the implosion of the subject and beauty’s worth lies to a great extent in its evanescence. What happens to Fanny here, staying within the limits of concert-hall etiquette, anticipates the last scene of the novel, where the musical experience, as a search for truth (via beauty), culminates in the actual death of a character. Fanny’s *petite mort*, however, is a clear illustration of how the musical utterance pierces through the subject in an acoustic coitus, through which “her body shook and swayed in time with the pulse and undulation of the melody” (26) that is emanated by the “swan-like undulation of the loins” (25) of Tolley, the young conductor. The listening experience not only becomes a subjective experience in this scene, but also the locus of the construction of the listening subject, or in our terminology, the acoustic self. While culturally accepted and controlled listening allows for limited portions of ecstasy, at the root of the experience is music’s ability to bring forth a complete *ekstasis*, a complete elimination of the self.

This self-elimination (in both senses) takes place in the last chapter, when Maurice Spandrell invites the Rampions over to prove the existence of God to them, via playing Beethoven’s A-Minor Quartet on his newly acquired gramophone. The proof, he thinks, would bring about his own salvation from his nihilism and the pointlessness of his life. Again, Huxley deploys musical ekphrasis—the device carries its own failure, as it speaks as much about its own impossibility as about the object that is being *spoken out*:

The ineffable peace persisted; but it was no longer the peace of coalescence and passivity. It quivered, it was alive, it seemed to grow and intensify itself, it became an active calm, an almost passionate serenity. The miraculous paradox of eternal life and eternal repose was musically realized.

They listened, almost holding their breaths. Spandrell looked exultantly at his guest. His own doubts had vanished. How could one fail to believe in something that was there, which manifestly existed?

(436)

However, Rampion is not fully convinced, and the experiment takes an unexpected turn:

Mark Rampion nodded, 'Almost thou persuadest me,' he whispered. 'But it's *too* good.' 'How can anything be too good?'

'Not human. If it lasted, you'd cease to be a man. You'd die.'

(436, italics in original)

And that is exactly what happens. There is a knock on the door, Spandrell goes to answer it, and Beethoven's music becomes the soundtrack of the murder/suicide that he has orchestrated for himself. Music and death are directly juxtaposed in this strange finale: While the Rampions and the three murderers are standing over the dying Spandrell's body a couple of minutes later, the music ends, and there is only the "scratching of the needle on the revolving disc" (437) to be heard. Life and music fade away simultaneously. Interestingly enough, the rest is not silence . . . It is noise.¹⁰ The scene leaves the reader with several questions, none of which can be definitively answered. What if Rampion had approved of Spandrell's proof? Was there a real chance of salvation or is it something else that is at stake here? Why is it music that Spandrell has to rely on? And, more specifically, why Beethoven?

Huxley leaves these questions open, and for good reason: the duality in musical semiosis may serve as a model for the search for truth, but it cannot provide the truth, or give definitive answers. It may actually point at the fact that there are no answers. The 'self-division' is there to stay—and Woolf's *The Waves* paints it darker.

The Waves

The novel is about the lives and friendship of six characters: Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, Louis, Neville, and Bernard. Through these characters' dramatic soliloquies, as Woolf referred to them (*A Writer's* 156), the reader learns about a more or less idyllic childhood in Elvedon where their friendship begins, the subsequent school years, their later meetings, and finally their aging, as well as Rhoda's eventual suicide. Their life stories are told in nine parts, broken by ten interludes that describe the waves, the course of the sun

during a day, and the sound of the birds. These interludes provide a frame for the narrative and initiate a cyclical conception of time within the text, thus ritualizing it while also veiling it with a Schillerian 'living wall,' which functions like a dramatic chorus. The novel starts as follows:

The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually.

(*The Waves*, italics in original 7)

Already in the first paragraph, the reader is promised a pursuit (*fuga*), which from the very beginning appears to work beyond the surface.¹¹ With the development of the characters' voices, the fugue comes to light, revealing the undercurrents of their subjectivity behind their surface narratives. This unmasking is done by a seventh character, Percival, who, although he has a central importance in the others' lives, does not speak in the novel and who, possibly due to a Forsterian influence, dies right in the middle of the narrative.¹²

Percival's death has a pivotal impact on the six characters' interconnected lives: the unity that they had possessed in his presence is broken, and they become unable to regain or relive their lost harmony. The parts after Percival's death are darker, emphasizing the incompleteness in the characters' consciousness both in the intra- and intersubjective spheres. In the final part, Bernard, who is a writerly figure in the narrative, completely takes over the narration and sums up the novel in his long, final monologue.

The six lives revealed by the six voices in the novel do not recount much factual information or many events. It is rather impressions, sensations, and reflections that delineate the characters, who occasionally repeat each other's expressions, sometimes altering them. If character is the form of action, there is not much action here to rely on, and the form is also quite fluid. Actually, the characters only seem to exist in each other's light. In fact, in Bernard's final monologue, all six voices merge into one, and turn out to be aspects of his own character.

But is there a character here at all? Everyone in the novel is struggling to gain a self, but they are unable to do so. As has been successfully shown by Makiko Minow-Pinkney in her *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*, the interludes tell the story of the development of the subject from an "amorphous pre-subjectivity" (157) to the state of separation and difference, through acquiring language. However, as the interludes lead us through the course of a day, we see how Woolf moves away from linearity, bringing the subjects' trajectory full circle, where difference and separation get dissolved, the day turns into night, colors and features merge into one

another, and the sounds die away. The subjects fail to identify their essence. An apparent skepticism toward linearity is expressed in the interludes, and it is closely related to a skepticism toward language, and consequently toward the subject (as the subject as such only becomes possible through language and temporality), expressed by the characters.

It is Bernard, the writer, who is supposed to render the narrative meaningful, according to the other characters, and who mostly takes the role of the narrator in the second half of the novel. As Neville exclaims, "Let him describe what we have all seen, so that it becomes a sequence" (37). It is thus assigned to Bernard to create a sequence, a story, a meaning. The question "Who am I?" (83, 291) is repeatedly asked by the characters, whose self-identification comes in different forms. Yet each attempt is related to language and difference: Louis says at one point, "I, and again I, and again I. Clear, firm, unequivocal, there it stands, my name" (167). Bernard asserts, "I am myself, not Neville" (240). Only Rhoda fails in this quest for carving out a separate self: "I am nobody. . . . This great company . . . has robbed me of my identity" (33). And later, "I am not here" (43). It is almost as if she were the blindspot from the beginning in Bernard's story, for as the characters themselves realize from an early point, "We are all phrases in Bernard's story" (70).

Yet, Bernard himself is a character in someone else's story: he evokes a "lady [sitting] between the two long windows, writing" (17)—maybe the implied author, the consciousness behind/within the novel. As a meta-narrative marker inscribed within a novel that is seeking to find itself and its meaning, this female writer is unweaving Bernard's story by pointing to its loose ends, the relativity of signification. In a way Rhoda and this enigmatic woman are the depositories of the knowledge that neither Bernard nor the reader is willing to accept. They know what is at the bottom of things and it is that there is no bottom. Bernard has to face that he may be a phrase in someone else's story, the author of which is a phrase in someone else's.

All subjectivities in the text get relativized, are floating, and Bernard himself proves to be highly skeptical toward narrative, language, and meaning, as if echoing Rampion's absoluteness of perfect relativity and doubt of language. He says,

I have filled innumerable notebooks with phrases to be used when I have found the true story, the one story to which all these phrases refer. But I have never found that story. And I begin to ask, Are there stories?
(187)

And somewhere else: "There is no stability in this world. Who is to say what meaning is there in anything? Who is to foretell the flight of a word? It is a balloon that sails over tree-tops," (134) and later, "speech is false" (138). Rampion's views are echoed here and they acquire a darker tone.

A fluidity of the selves ensues from this fluidity of meaning. Bernard notes, "To be myself . . . I need the illumination of other peoples' eyes, and therefore cannot be entirely sure what is my self. . . . I have been traversing the sunless territory of non-identity" (116). This non-identity is exposed through the multiplicity of identity:

What I call 'my life,' it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am – Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs.

(276)

It reaches a point where Bernard calls himself a man without a self, and has to face the question, "But how to describe the world seen without a self?" (287). There are no words.

What does the novel gain from this negativity, this dismantling of subjectivity? The seventh character, Percival, who is referred to as a 'hero' by the other characters, might be of help here. He is not only the object of desire in the text, but he is *eros* himself. As in Hesiod, Eros is the offspring of chaos. With Percival's appearance, "the reign of Chaos is over" (116), as Neville, who is deeply in love with him, observes. "He has imposed order," (122) Neville continues. Also, "[h]e is the first to detect insincerity," (39) he is continually connected to truth, desire, lack, and poetry, that is, a highly *erotic* presence in the philosophical sense of the word. He is the bridge between the other characters, he provides the structure of their story—and this is where we arrive at music again.

Woolf writes in her diary that it was while she was listening to a Beethoven quartet that she decided to merge all the previous voices in Bernard's final monologue (Woolf, *A Writer's* 159). The only direct textual clue is that Bernard buys a picture of Beethoven in a silver frame:

"Not that I love music, but because the whole of life its masters, its adventurers then appeared in long ranks of magnificent human beings behind me, and I was the inheritor; I, the continuer; I the person miraculously appointed to carry it on" (Woolf, *The Waves* 253). Elicia Clements, among other critics, identifies Beethoven's String Quartet in B-flat Major, Opus 130 with its original last movement, *Die Grosse Fuge*, Opus 133, as the intertext of *The Waves* (Beethoven agreed to remove *Die Grosse Fuge* and write a new last movement due to the fugue's bad reception). Clements provides a fine analysis of the connection between the quartet and the novel, identifying a correspondence between each movement of the quartet and one of the characters (Clements 168). Although the analysis is intriguing, especially in its recognition of the twofold function of Woolf's musicalization being "as much about reconstituting human interaction as it is about formulating new narrative structures" (162), I feel that the treatment of the interrelations between the quartet and the novel remain more

intertextual than intermedial and the exact identification of each character with a movement of the Beethoven quartet makes the interpretation a bit less fluid than the novel allows for. Also, identifying the revised last movement of the quartet (one that is missing from the novel according to Clements) with Percival limits his central role in the novel. Besides this, her analysis does not persuasively account for the discrepancy between the nine parts of the novel and the six (plus one) movements of the quartet.

Beethoven's late quartet, which is as experimental as *The Waves*, seems to have an important role in the writing of the novel, but I'd suggest that, instead of slavishly imitating Beethoven's musical texture and weaving a fictional texture that is in one-to-one correlation with it, Woolf, like Butler and Huxley, intended to employ the quartet's logic in her work. As Prieto points out, music offers an alternative logic for representing reality and the workings of the human mind in modernist fiction. While the established ways of representation are recognized as no longer adequate, music "suggests ways to bring narrative form into line with a search for truth that relies on perfecting the representation of thought" (Prieto 64). This implies the rethinking of the very texture of the narrative, which is one of the keys to modernist musicalization. The self-reflexivity of Woolf's novel, along with the thematization of this issue through Bernard's observations about writing, illuminate how the form and the texture of the novel enact its content. In a similar vein to Woolf's letter to Ethel Smyth, in which she claims to have been writing *The Waves* "to a rhythm, and not to a plot" (*The Letters* 204), in the novel Bernard claims that "rhythm is the main thing in writing" (79). The structure of the novel, along with the final fugue, is illuminated when he exclaims,

Faces recur, faces and faces—they press their beauty to the walls of my bubble—Neville, Susan, Louis, Jinny, Rhoda and a thousand others. How impossible to order them rightly; to detach one separately, or to give the effect of the whole—again like music. What a symphony with its concord and its discord, and its tunes on top and its complicated bass beneath, then grew up! Each played his own tune, fiddle, flute, trumpet, drum or whatever the instrument might be.

(*The Waves* 256)

It is here that mythical semiosis comes into play. As *Die Grosse Fuge* brings together the voices of the previous movements, Bernard's monologue brings together the voices of the narrative, which do not make sense without each other. Just as mythemes do not carry meaning in themselves, it is the relationships of these voices to each other that create the possibility of a meaningful structure. In a final (and futile) attempt to generate meaning, the final monologue—Bernard's *Grosse Fuge*—enacts the ritual: the voices are woven together through repetition and variation. Instead of nailing down a meaning, however, the monologue ends up leaving the reader with no solidified meaning.

GROSSE FUGE

(Grande Fugue, tantôt libre, tantôt recherchée)

für 2 Violinen, Bratsche und Violoncell

von

L. van BEETHOVEN.

Dem Cardinal Erzherzog Rudolph gewidmet.

Op.133.

Overtura.

Allegro.

Musical score for the first system of the Overture. It features four staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in 3/4 time and G major. The first measure is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The second measure is marked with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The score shows the initial presentation of the main subject in four different instrumental versions.

Meno mosso e moderato.

Musical score for the second system of the Overture. It features four staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in 3/4 time and G major. The first measure is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The second measure is marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The score shows the continuation of the main subject in four different instrumental versions.

Allegro.

Musical score for the third system of the Overture. It features four staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in 3/4 time and G major. The first measure is marked with a piano (pp) dynamic. The second measure is marked with a sempre piano (pp) dynamic. The score shows the continuation of the main subject in four different instrumental versions.

Fuga.

Musical score for the fourth system of the Overture, marked Fuga. It features four staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in 3/4 time and G major. The first measure is marked with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The second measure is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The score shows the continuation of the main subject in four different instrumental versions.

5579A

Figure 2.3 The Overture of Beethoven's *Die Grosse Fuge* introduces the main subject in four startlingly different versions

Percival, this mythical, heroic, and *Erotic* character is the one who holds the six characters/voices together. His pointless death breaks up their unity, but also seems to show that there is no real essence behind the veil of representation: not only him, but all of them are dead. It is Bernard who creates all these characters while embarking on an internal and infernal journey, and—like Odysseus, who also evokes and then returns the dead to a pool—he eventually lets them return to oblivion. He says about Louis, “Suddenly the sense of what people are leaves one. I return him to the pool where he will acquire luster” (244). Percival is the blood the characters need to drink to come to life. They all talk about him. A mythical layer opens up through him, whose name, as Maria DiBattista observes, “denotes in its original French, to pierce the veil (*perce-voile*)” (152), the veil of representation, language, consciousness, and ‘the everyday.’

A musico-mythological reading presents itself. Percival, who is necessary to bring the voices together, dies an ironically pointless death in India. His death has a big effect on the characters’ lives. Neville claims, “without Percival, there is no solidity. We are silhouettes, hollow phantoms moving mistily without a background” (122). Louis a little later observes that Percival is the one “who makes us aware that these attempts to say, ‘I am this, I am that,’ which we make coming together, like separated parts of one body and soul, are false” (137). The fugal logic shows how the self becomes a myth, and ceases to carry meaning any longer. Bernard also realizes this: “This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome. . . Here on my brow is the blow I got when Percival fell” (289).

Through his death, Percival becomes a lack; through his silence, he overcomes language. However, this mythical piercer of veils also cuts through a myth—that of the self—revealing it to be an emptied-out form in the Barthesian sense.¹³ His presence/absence shows that there is no self one can speak of. The self dissolves in the song of the chorus. In Bernard’s words:

And I am so made, that, while I hear one or two distinct melodies, such as Louis sings, or Neville, I am also drawn irresistibly to the sound of the chorus chanting its old, chanting its almost wordless, almost senseless song that comes across courts at night . . .

(246)

Thus, Woolf as a Barthesian mythologist deconstructs the myth of the self through music.

The structure of the self, the structure of Beethoven’s *Die Grosse Fuge*, and the structure of the novel are all juxtaposed in the text’s self-reflexive search for meaning and truth. As the text eventually reveals a hollow center, however, the emphasis shifts to the structure itself and the telling becomes its own subject matter. Bernard’s effort to turn “prose into poetry” (263) successfully suspends temporality and cuts through the falseness of

representation by evoking musical semiosis. Yet, the novel's negation of the self turns into a self-negation, which peaks in Rhoda's statement, "I have no face" (223). This is a symbolic suicide (heralding her actual suicide), which also foregrounds that each utterance in the search for truth kills a part of one's self: each statement distances one from oneself and from the possibility of self-sameness. If there is meaning at all, it is fleeting—something to which one cannot give voice again, i.e., re-present. Bernard's direct address to the narratee enrolls the reader-listener in a symbolic suicide pact. His statement "I am you" (289) turns the reading-listening experience around. Having created a consciousness in the text (and subsequently being shaped by it, as was shown earlier in this chapter), the reading-listening subject loses themselves as their basis for identification (the Other) is erased.

In Light of "Sirens"

An interesting tension emerges in the novels studied in this chapter. In these instances of musicalization, a Romantic view on music remains in order, but the medium is emptied of its Romantic task as it cannot fulfill the aesthetic role that had been assigned to it from Novalis, through Schopenhauer, to Nietzsche: reaching the essence of life. These novels clearly show that, as opposed to the Romantic view, music—through no fault of its own—cannot lead to one's essence any more. While characters do die and subjectivities do dissolve in Romantic musical fiction—for instance, that of E.T.A. Hoffmann—but there the *individuum* seems to dissolve into the primal flow of life, an eternal (Dionysiac) self-sameness. Music in modernism, however, cannot serve as a bridge between the two aspects of the self any longer, which thus remain irreconcilable. The possibility of reaching the self as such is called into question, and, consequently, so is the possibility of there being a self. De Quincey already suspected it, Butler pre-echoed it, but it only became clear with the rise of the sensibilities of modernism, when the man without qualities overtook the role of the Romantic hero.

This chapter started out with questions about myth, which prove to be relevant on account of the similarity between mythical and musical semiosis, and also insofar as this angle shows how music and the self both in a way represent a Barthesian myth: music reveals that the notion of the self is a myth constructed by language and ideology. However, it is also important to see that this myth is very 'real,' as the deaths of Belknap and Vance clearly demonstrate. The real power of music is undeniable, and it is connected to *ekstasis*, which makes it impossible to fully account for the experience. This is why music is connected to sexuality, transcendence, death, and suicide in these novels. While this chapter treats texts that employ the logic of the fugue, in the latter two novels, the question of death became increasingly connected to Beethoven. Beethoven's oeuvre, which is actually host for the birth of the Romantic myth of music, seems to be very strongly connected to death in modernist musical fiction. The next chapter

will thus explore the topics of the Romantic aesthetics of music, Beethoven, and death. Before turning to those topics, however, let us return to fugue and myth one final time.

A chapter on the fugue and modernist fiction cannot avoid at least mentioning the “Sirens” episode in Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Joyce’s ambiguous, if not misleading, comment about writing the chapter according to the rules of *fuga per canonem* triggered a long, albeit inconclusive, line of interpretations.¹⁴ The contradictions lie in Joyce reportedly calling the chapter “a fugue with all musical notations,” and later revealing how it follows “the eight regular parts of a *fuga per canonem*.”¹⁵ The discrepancy is twofold: first, *fuga per canonem* refers to the compositional technique of the canon rather than the fugue and, second, a fugue is not composed of eight “regular” parts. While some of these issues may have been resolved by Susan Sutliff Brown’s¹⁶ identification of the source of Joyce’s fugue references, the application of those sources is another question. As Brown notes, “Joyce was using the source as an inspiration—not as a template—for the structure, rhythms, metaphors, and themes in his musical experiment” (189). But Joyce’s inspirations also include the *Meistersinger*, his favorite Wagner opera, as documented by Georges Borach (Borach and Prescott 327), giving rise to another trend of critical engagement focusing on *leitmotifs*. To further complicate matters, Zack Bowen identifies “one hundred fifty-eight references to forty-seven songs” and foregrounds the special role of five “principal” songs in the chapter (53). Yet another important layer is the use of sound, and even silence, in the episode. This labyrinthine musical matrix makes a solely fugal reading futile or at least partial in my eyes.

Joyce’s radical musicalization in “Sirens,” which left the writer himself with a sort of music fatigue (Joyce claimed that after writing the chapter in five months, “I haven’t cared for music any more . . . I see through all the tricks and can’t enjoy it any more”),¹⁷ may, however, serve as a foil for understanding the different ways in which the three novels discussed in this chapter operate with fugue and myth. As I proposed earlier in this chapter, the fugue as a musical topos simultaneously plays a musical and a mythical role, and the two jointly weave an alternative syntax for the narrative. Among the numerous analyses, I find Nadya Zimmerman’s reading of “Sirens” especially useful in showing how Joyce creates polyphony in the text and how this affects the “narrative and temporality.” Zimmerman highlights the difficulty of translating musical simultaneity into prose which, “unavoidably, imposes linearity on the reader” (117) who follows the words as they appear on the page one after the other: “at any given moment, there is only a single line of narrative” (110). Joyce introduces temporal simultaneity into this linearity by recognizing that unlike in musical polyphony which relies on *difference* between simultaneous musical lines, “in prose, *similarity* supports verbal simultaneity” (112, emphasis mine). Verbal simultaneity is therefore created by introducing, repeating, and varying a main theme that is shared by the main characters, while continuously keeping the reader aware that the events are concurrent:

The “Sirens” chapter gives us the possibility of thinking vertically, in the moment, as well as horizontally and successively. Fugal music can be heard in two ways: we can listen horizontally to the development of independent lines of melody, and we can listen vertically for the various parts interacting in each moment.

(117)

The three novels studied in this chapter present two modes of constructing the acoustic self through a fugal structure. Woolf’s *The Waves* introduces six voices that create an absent character, Percival, in a synchronic way, i.e., the acoustic self emerges from the concurrent narration of six voices. We may call this the vertical model. Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* also belongs to this category with its kaleidoscopic method, but its search for harmony in the ‘universal concert of things’ also relates to a diachronic development. In Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh*, the different voices of the fugue come from different generations of the Pontifex family, providing multiple versions of the same character through a diachronic, or horizontal model. However, in each case (including *Ulysses* with its Homeric intertext), fugue, as a way of “mythical thinking” (Tarasti 35), flattens the vertical (synchronic) and synchronizes the linear (diachronic)—estranging the characters from their autonomous selves as we witness their mythical construction evoked by their musical experiences. Like mythemes, these selves only make sense in their relations, which involve both synchronic and diachronic dimensions.

The Butlerian fugue, *The Way of All Flesh*, maintains a traditional novel form, and it succeeds, since Butler’s idea is to show aspects of the characters’ subjectivity in its linearity, through generations. The narrative pattern and temporality remain intact in this intermedial experiment, and it is the characterization that is most enriched by the text’s musicality. The novel also serves as a foil to emphasize the modernist aspects of musicalization that are characteristic of the other two texts, including their treatment of temporality, narrative plot and structure, and, perhaps most significantly, their narrative self-reflexivity. Another difference is that while Butler does not question the possibility of an inherent self-sameness, there is almost no question about the lack of it in Woolf and Huxley. The emphasis on the analogy between the extroversive side of musical semiosis and *principium individuationis* is brought to light in the two modernist novels, exposing uncomfortable qualities and ideologies within and without the self. We will see more of this side of music in the novels studied in the following chapters.

Notes

- 1 This brief summary of the case is based on: Stan Soocher, *They Fought The Law: Rock Music Goes to Court*, 153–64.
- 2 For a detailed assessment of the case see Ewing and McCann, *Minds on Trial: Great Cases in Law and Psychology*, 103–13.

- 3 The master tape was an eight track recording, where the vocals and the guitar were separately recorded.
- 4 Lawrence Kramer uses Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit picture to show the simultaneously autonomous and contingent meaning-making in music, and our perception of music in the light of this duality. Michael Spitzer also invokes the image in his *Metaphor and Musical Thought*.
- 5 See *Republic*, Book III (398–403).
- 6 See Chapter 1.
- 7 For a more detailed exploration of this topic and exceptions to these tendencies, see e.g., Aronson, 37–39.
- 8 See his “Darwin among the Machines,” published under the pseudonym of Celarius in 1863, and *Erewhon*. Butler is clearly battling against what he perceives as the fatalism inherent in the Darwinian notion of evolution.
- 9 Several critics point out the character's similarity to D.H. Lawrence. See, e.g., Jerome Meckier, *Aldous Huxley: Modern Satirical Novelist of Ideas*, 19.
- 10 Evoking the famous logo of the His Master's Voice label (with Nipper, the dog, sitting on his dead owner's coffin and listening to his voice on the gramophone), Stephen Connor highlights the “cultural associations between death and phonography” in the modernist era (217). For the full argument, see: Connor, “The Modern Auditory I”
- 11 For a Wagnerian reading of the scene, see: Sutton, *Virginia Woolf and Classical Music*, 141–44.
- 12 Forster has a tendency to kill off his heroes somewhat unexpectedly in the middle of his novels. More on this in the following chapter.
- 13 See Barthes, “Myth Today,” 113.
- 14 Bucknell, who himself finds that “[t]he attempt to find a one-to-one analogy between fugue and ‘Sirens’ is ... probably not fruitful” (122), provides a thorough overview of the main issues and difficulties that the critics have revealed while attempting a fugal reading. See also: 121–31.
- 15 Borach and Prescott, “Conversations with James Joyce” 326–7; Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 462.
- 16 See: Susan Sutliff Brown, “The Mystery of the ‘Fuga per Canonem’ Solved.”
- 17 See: Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 459.

3 Does Beethoven Kill? Absolute Music and the Self

The connection between Beethoven and death in modernist musical fiction has as much to do with the history of listening to Beethoven as with the composer's works themselves. The deaths related to Beethoven in *The Waves* and *Point Counter Point* (as we saw in the previous chapter), and the two novels to be addressed in this chapter, Forster's *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*, carry important aesthetic concerns that stem from this history and are intertwined with the notion of 'absolute music.' In the movie adaptation of *Howards End*, the main characters attend a lecture on Beethoven at the Ethical Society, not a Beethoven concert as in the novel itself. The title of the lecture is "Music and Meaning." In a way, the novels addressed in this chapter undertake an analogous move: they are adaptations of a Beethoven composition that not only explore the applicability of Beethoven in fictional texts, but also tackle the question of music and meaning. The treatment of musical meaning at the beginning of the twentieth century, as at the beginning of the twenty-first for that matter, has been largely influenced by an aesthetic tradition that grew out of German Romanticism, and what Carl Dahlhaus calls "the paradigm of absolute music."¹ What is at stake, both in this tradition and in these novels, is the hierarchy and respective roles of the different arts—especially music—in the quest for the 'real', an unmediated experience of the world. As we will see, this aesthetic pursuit becomes very much a question of life and death for the characters in the novels. As the use and abuse of Beethoven in this quest is what this chapter is about, I will start by highlighting some of the principal milestones in the aesthetic development that established music as central to the Romantic notion of the absolute before turning to Forster's "Beethoven novels."

Aesthetic Reconsiderations of the Arts

In his landmark study, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, Carl Dahlhaus follows the intricate philosophical and literary engagement with music of the Romantic period that marks an important shift in the reception of music. While there was no "'romantic' music esthetics that was the esthetics of all the 'romantics'"

(52), Dahlhaus identifies an “overarching esthetic-historical-philosophical system” that provides a canvas on which the diverse conceptualizations of music and the absolute play out as an “interdisciplinary ‘Querelle des anciens et des modernes’” (55). The ‘Querelle’, the elements of which will also become apparent in the course of my brief outline of the aesthetic developments in the following pages, positions its various contributors in their relation to the musical aesthetics of Greco-Roman antiquity versus modern, i.e., Christian, music. The latter is also known as *prima prattica*, and is associated with polyphony, instrumental music, and ‘abstract’ qualities, such as spirituality and the infinite. The second practice marks a return to Plato’s doctrines and to monody. According to Plato, “a song or ode has three parts—the words (*logos*), the melody (*harmonia*), and the rhythm (*rhythmos*)” (*Republic* 398D). Furthermore, melody and rhythm “will depend upon the words” (*ibid.*). In absolute music, the double meaning of ‘absolute’ refers, on the one hand, to music being emancipated from this dependence on the word (*logos*) or a mimetic program, and, on the other, to its simultaneous ability to reach into the realms of the unspeakable, the infinite, as well as one’s innermost self.

E.T.A. Hoffmann, who experimented with the interrelations of music and language in several of his literary and theoretical works, penned a review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in the year of its publication, which is in effect a manifesto for Romantic music. Hoffmann immediately recognized the composition as one of the most significant pieces written by the composer and as the highest achievement of music as purely Romantic art. In his review, Hoffmann confirms that instrumental music gains its purity through being freed from everything that is outside itself:

When music is spoken of as an independent art the term can properly apply only to instrumental music, which scorns all aid, all admixture of other arts, and gives pure expression to its own peculiar artistic nature. It is the most romantic of all arts—one might almost say the only one that is *purely* romantic.

(“Review” 236)

Another important characteristic of instrumental music, according to Hoffmann, is its ability to externalize the innermost essence:

Music reveals to man an unknown realm, a world quite separate from the outer sensual world surrounding him, a world in which he leaves behind all feelings circumscribed by intellect in order to embrace the inexpressible.

(*ibid.*)

Hoffmann goes on to explain how program music failed to realize that music is the antidote of sculpture and therefore mistakenly made sculptural music, which has its object outside itself. Then he provides a definition of

Romantic opera, in which music is treated as the “miracle elixir” that elevates the worldly sensations expressed by the lyrics into “the realm of the infinite” (ibid.). This approach to the relationship between music and libretto is in accord with Ulrich Weisstein’s explanation of the difference between the Neoclassicist opera—where music only accentuates the text—and the Romantic view, which emphasizes not only the importance of music over text, but also that “poetry must be altogether the obedient daughter of the music” (18–19).

Music, as pure Romantic art, can help “burst the fetters of any other art,” claims Hoffmann, adding that while Haydn and Mozart, the founders of modern instrumental music, shared an “awareness of the peculiar nature of music,” Beethoven reached its very essence (“Review” 237). Haydn’s music takes the listener into a prelapsarian state, where there is “no suffering, no pain; only sweet, melancholy longing for the beloved vision floating far off in the red glow of evening” (ibid.). Man and the world are one in this state: there is no separation, no pain, no fissure between the signifier and the signified. Mozart’s music, on the other hand, is the “intimation of infinity”, the portrayal of a “magical quality residing in the inner self” (ibid.). It is Beethoven whose music fully expresses the Romantic view of the human condition: “Beethoven’s music sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain, and awakens that infinite yearning which is the essence of romanticism” (238). As Hoffmann further elaborates in *Kreisleriana*, all three composers share the “romantic spirit,” yet Beethoven’s music reaches an ultimate negativity, the only way in which a mortal being can experience the infinite sublime, through the “pain of infinite yearning” (*Kreisleriana*, 97). Hoffmann’s sublime vision opens the path to Schopenhauer and the terror of his listening subject upon catching a glimpse of the will, which underlies the world of representation. The will is a primal misery, the terror of existence. As our survival comes at the expense of others, the world of representations is in universal war. The craving to overcome this rupture of our existence provides the ground for the Romantic *infinite yearning*. Art, through the aesthetic experience, provides an escape from these horrors in Schopenhauer’s view, which in turn provides the basis for Wagner’s famous essay on Beethoven. Although Wagner will prove to be ‘the real villain’ in the analyses that follow in both this and the subsequent chapter, before turning to his “Beethoven,” let us retrace some of the key steps that led to music acquiring its association with the ‘absolute’ in German Romantic aesthetics.

In order to understand the Romantic shift in the aesthetic reception of music, one needs to consider a previous shift, concomitant with the birth of German aesthetics, marked by Lessing’s “Laocoön.” What made “Laocoön” especially influential was that Lessing reconsidered the notion of imitation (*mimesis*) and freed poetry and painting from their forced alliance, which grew out of Horace’s *ut pictura poesis*. Lessing opened the gates to Romanticism’s *ut musica poesis*.² “Laocoön,” however, produced its effect

on the re-evaluation of music indirectly, as Lessing does not address music in the essay.³ Nonetheless, his analysis of the differences between poetry and painting opened up these two domains of art for separate investigations through which the relation between poetry and music could be reconsidered, based on their spatio-temporal dimensions and their semiotic characteristics.

Like Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Lessing also revisits Aristotle's notion of *mimesis*. Neither Lessing, nor the Romanticists deny the presence of *mimesis* within the artistic process; it is rather a radical reconsideration of the significance of *mimesis* within that process that takes place during the period.⁴ For Aristotle, the purpose of art, which he identifies as imitation, lies in the "delight in viewing the most accurate possible images of objects which in themselves cause distress when we see them" (Lessing 6). The key for Aristotle is the pleasure in learning (*μαθησῶν*, which also means to understand, comprehend). This capacity is inherent in all humans, and it is "the reason why people take delight in seeing images; what happens is that as they view them they come to understand and work out what each thing is" (7). As opposed to learning, Lessing emphasizes the importance of beauty and the free play of imagination within the aesthetic process. He arrives at these aspects through a process of signification. While painting uses "figures and colors in space," poetry utilizes "sound in time" (81). Lessing calls the subjects of painting 'bodies', and those of poetry 'actions'. Nevertheless, bodies do not exist purely in space, nor actions only in time, and both the painter and the poet have the means to reach into each other's realm. While painting describes deeds through the suggestion of action, poetry paints bodies through the description of action.

For both painting and poetry there is an important focal point through which this can be achieved. In the case of painting, it is what Lessing describes as the pregnant moment: "Painting, in her coexisting compositions, can use only one single moment of the action, and must therefore choose the most pregnant, from which what precedes and follows will be most easily apprehended" (81). Poetry, in turn, needs a certain perspective to depict bodies. As the medium can represent only one single quality or property of the given body at a time. Poetry has to select the most significant characteristic or "the most living picture of the body on that side from which she is regarding it," that is, from the perspective the poet chooses for depicting the actions (ibid.). In both cases "that alone is significant and fruitful which gives free play to the imagination" (37). And this is the kernel of Lessing's view on the purpose of art. While he asserts that the ultimate goal of the sciences is truth, art functions within the domain of beauty. However, beauty acquires an ethical dimension for Lessing in that it shapes the thinking and value judgments of people. Lessing therefore stands closer to Plato than Aristotle in this respect, as his ethics are grounded on the idea of beauty, which is the "first law of art" (37), and which can be reached through freedom and imagination, or the freedom of imagination. This very idea elevates poetry above painting in Lessing's aesthetics for reasons that will eventually result in music becoming the paradigm for this freedom:

Unquestionably; what we find beautiful in a work of art is not found beautiful by the eye, but by our imagination through the eye, the picture in question may therefore be called up in our imagination by arbitrary or natural signs.

(53)

Painting works with natural signs, such as figure and color, while poetry works with words, which are arbitrary signs. The poet, explains Lessing, aims at making “the ideas awakened by him within us living things” in a way that we fully realize “true sensuous impressions” (87) of the represented subject matter, while also losing our consciousness regarding the means through which this effect is achieved. The means are the poet’s words, arbitrary signs, out of which beauty is created through the work of imagination. The painter, as opposed to the poet, has an object (or model) directly in front of them. The natural signs the painter works with do not differ from this object insofar as they both evoke sensuous impressions; therefore the free play of imagination is not invoked to the same degree as in the case of poetry.

Romanticism elaborated on the tendencies expressed in “Laocoön” and centered its attention on the freedom and imagination of the artist, whose inner feelings find external expression in the artwork. Expression became the core of the artistic process and imitation as the purpose of art was rejected: A.W. Schlegel called Romantic art “the eternal mode of symbolizing: we either seek an outer covering for something spiritual, or we draw something external over the invisibly inner” (qtd. in Abrams 90). Novalis went even further: for him, art was more real than the perceptible world: “Poesy is the representation of the spirit, of the inner world in its totality. Even its medium, words, indicates this, for they are the outer revelation of that inner realm” (90). The only medium that is capable of an expression of this invisible inner realm is the art form that is itself a fully self-contained system, one which had always been opposing art as *mimesis*: music.

Throwing doubt on Fichte’s ego-centric philosophy, which claims that the subject defines its own essence through its actions, Novalis argues that the subject is not capable of accurately defining itself, as its self-definition will never be identical with the essence thus pronounced. The subject is only capable of creating fictions of itself. Any real contact with its essence is possible only through *Gefühl* (feeling, sense), which is beyond reason, non-reflexive, and non-mimetic. Fictions about the subject can, however, be rewritten as a result of the work of the ‘poet’, through *Poesie*⁵ and result in *Gefühl*—through the musicality of language. Novalis compares music to mathematics, in that they are both self-referential systems which do not need to refer to the external world—an important comparison that reappears in Lévi-Strauss’ *Mythologiques* and certain schools of music theory, as we saw in the previous chapters. Music, for Novalis, becomes the metaphor for the world, the universe, and, due to its self-referential absoluteness, also the model of *Poesie*.

The working of *Poesie* is based on Novalis' theory of language, in which he detects two forces present: one he names the 'scholastic', which is based on logic and wants to solidify meaning, the other is the 'poet', which promotes change and arbitrariness. Neither of the two can fully achieve its aim, and this inner tension between fixity and arbitrariness provides the energy of language. The 'poet' lends musicality to language. As James Hodgkinson explains, this musicality eludes "the 'reflexivity' of language," and results in a "feeling of wholeness to the listener: such an expressive structure cannot be understood theoretically, but rather on the level of non-reflexive *feeling*" (15, emphasis mine). Thus music evokes *Gefühl*, the highest level of consciousness, the only possibility of self-recognition. The process works through the musicality of language. The rhythm of language provides similar points of transition to those of music, through which the relationship between the sign and the signified, as well as the 'I' and the 'other,' can be explored or challenged. Hence, music and poetry become sister arts.

As music does not have references to the external world of objects, it is the perfect medium for expressing the artist's inner feelings. It follows that music is the ideal form of art and therefore all arts should strive toward music,⁶ the ultimate form of *Poesie*. Music becomes the measure of all arts because of its 'absolute' independence from the outside world. Like E.T.A. Hoffmann, Wagner also saw Beethoven's music as the epitome of this freedom and absoluteness.

Wagner's "Beethoven"

Wagner's influential essay is significant not only on account of its way of approaching Beethoven and his art, but also art and music in general. The essay is arguably Wagner's most important contribution to the "philosophy of musical meaning" (Rather 136). Wagner, who in several ways signified a "culmination" of the Romantic movement(s),⁷ was highly indebted to Novalis, Friedrich von Schlegel, and E.T.A. Hoffmann, along with Feuerbach and Schopenhauer,⁸ thus tying together many of the threads discussed in the previous section.

One such thread is the hierarchy of the arts. The starting point of Wagner's "Beethoven" is an analysis of the process of artistic creation and the relationship of the arts to each other. Wagner argues that the closest one can get to Beethoven the musician is at the "point where creation passes from a conscious to an unconscious act, i.e. where the poet no longer chooses the aesthetic Form, but it is imposed on him by his inner vision of the Idea itself" ("Beethoven" 64–65). It is perhaps useful to clarify some of the notions Wagner utilizes here, such as 'inner vision' and his Schopenhauerian reading of the Platonic 'Idea'. Let us invoke Schopenhauer's differentiation between the will and the phenomenal world as proposed in his *The World as Will and Representation*:

[T]his world in which we live and have our being is, by its whole nature, through and through *will*, and at the same time through and through *representation*. This representation as such already presupposes a form, namely object and subject; consequently it is relative; and if we ask what is left after the elimination of this form and of all the forms subordinate to it and expressed by the principle of sufficient reason, the answer is that, as something *toto genere* different from the representation, this cannot be anything but *will*, which is therefore the *thing-in-itself* proper.

(Schopenhauer 162, italics in original)

Wagner positions music and the plastic arts as two antidotes between which poetry takes its position. These views are based on the aesthetics of Schopenhauer, whom the composer considers to be the first to philosophically clarify the position of music among the arts:

[I]t is the Ideas of the world and of its essential phenomena, in the sense of Plato, that constitute the ‘object’ of the fine arts, whereas, however, the Poet interprets these Ideas to the visual consciousness through an employment of strictly rationalistic concepts in a manner quite peculiar to his art, Schopenhauer believes he must recognize in *Music itself an Idea of the world*.

(“Beethoven” 67, italics in original)

Music thus takes the role of the Platonic Idea in Wagner’s aesthetics, which he connects with the Schopenhauerian will. Later in the essay Wagner reaffirms this: “Music does not portray the Ideas inherent in the world’s phenomena, but is itself the Idea of the World, and a comprehensive one” (106). A passage by Schopenhauer, in which he addresses the same issue also provides clarification: “music does not, like the other arts, exhibit the *Ideas* or grades of the will’s objectification, but directly the *will itself*,” and its strength lies in that, being the will itself, music also “acts directly on the will, i.e., the feelings, passions, and emotions of the hearer, so that it quickly raises these or even alters them.”⁹ Music thus communicates without representation, and the listener directly experiences the inner essence of things, not through objective knowledge, but through feeling, *Gefühl*, as already shown by both Novalis and Hoffmann. Schopenhauer separates two different types of consciousness through which these two types of apprehension take place. The first type of knowledge, which faces outwards, conceives of the objects of the world in their interrelations though time and space. Wagner calls this type of understanding the “visual knowledge of the outside world” (67). The other type faces inwards: the “consciousness of one’s own self” (68). This type of knowledge is able to understand the character of the thing-in-itself, which is the ‘will’. This inward function of the brain is achieved through what Schopenhauer names as the ‘Dream-organ’ and the phenomenon itself is ‘Clairvoyance’. Wagner applies this idea directly

to his music theory, claiming that this “inward-facing consciousness” takes over the function of “sight where our waking daylight consciousness feels nothing but a vague impression of the midnight background of our will’s emotions” (69). Music becomes the medium for this direct experience, as “from out this night *Tone* bursts upon the world of waking, a direct utterance of the Will” (*ibid.*, italics in original).

Wagner accepts Schopenhauer’s idea that while the outside world is perceptible to us visually, the other, ‘inner’ reality, which is graspable through the dream-organ, is a ‘sound-world’ that can express itself directly through music and is accessible through hearing.¹⁰ This move enables Wagner to position the poet between the painter and the musician. Through the conscious side of the creative process, the poet moves toward the plastic arts, while simultaneously moving through the unconscious side toward the realm of music.¹¹

Another cornerstone of Wagner’s theory, which is part of the Romantic current, is the move from the beautiful to the sublime in music. The critical tradition, Wagner maintains, has extended the criteria of imitation to music, but music does not have an outside object and musical representation is not based on semblance. Plastic arts represent a “sight around us” (70), uncovering its appearance, in the sense described above, and therefore are concerned with the surface of things, removed from the will. The result of this aesthetic tradition, Wagner continues, is “a will-freed contemplation,” in which the aesthetic experience becomes “nothing but the *show* of things.” This “sheer pleasure in the semblance” then became the model for each art form, providing the basis for all aesthetic beauty and pleasure (71, italics in original). The resulting overemphasis on sight and semblance can be traced even in the linguistic conceptualization of the artistic experience, “[w]hence, too, has come our term for *Beauty* (*Schönheit*); the root of which word in our German language is plainly connected with *Show* (*Schein*) as object, with *Seeing* (*Schauen*) as subject” (*ibid.*).

However, beauty is only the “very first effect of Music’s mere appearance” which “advances the most directly to a revelation of her truest character through the agency of the Sublime” (79). Sublime is the only category by which music can be judged, Wagner observes, as music elevates its listeners to the highest possible level of human consciousness, that of the infinite. Wagner regards this as the greatest achievement of Beethoven, through whose works music extended itself from the realm of the beautiful to that of the sublime. As quoted above, tone is the mode through which the will gains direct expression in music. It is then through rhythm that music, still keeping its essence, reaches toward the phenomenal world, thereby bridging mundane phenomena with the will, semblance with essence, the visible with the audible, and the beautiful with the sublime.

While Wagner recognizes harmony as the “most inalienable element of Music,” he notes how, “through the rhythmic sequence of his tones in point of time the musician reaches forth a plastic hand,” entering the world of time and space—i.e., the phenomenal world—

to strike a compact with the waking world of semblances; just as the allegoric dream so far makes contact with the Individual's wonted notions that the waking consciousness, albeit at once detecting the great difference of even his dream-picture from the outer incidents of actual life, yet is able to retain its image.

(76–77)

In this way, music makes contact with the phenomenal world through the rhythmic sequencing of its tones. This sequencing brings about melody, the surface that brings beauty to music, while the tones remain the essence through which music always looks inward, toward the will.

The next part of the essay is largely responsible for creating the image of Beethoven that has affected the way we listen to his music up to the present. Wagner here turns Beethoven the composer into a metaphor of his music, creating an image that still sways the general reception of Beethoven's works. In Wagner's view, Beethoven's music reached its apex when he became totally deaf and the outside world no longer distracted him from turning his focus inward. Wagner compares Beethoven's deafness to the blindness of Teiresias, which freed him from the world of appearances, allowing "the musician's eye [to grow] bright within" (93). From that moment on, all appearances were "illuminated by his inner light," which in turn "cast a wondrous reflex back upon his inner soul" (94). This fantastic musical synesthesia affirms the totality of Beethoven's apotheosis: Wagner calls this phase of Beethoven's oeuvre the "godlike period of the master's total deafness" that evokes a "divine revelation" and brings "deliverance" to the listener (*ibid.*). Beethoven the hero, Beethoven the prophet, Beethoven the Savior: an image that separates the musical experience from the music itself for several decades to come. As we will see, the relevance of these late works to the novels discussed here lies not only in their experimental freedom, but also in their contrast to the novels' secular perspective and spiritual angst.

To sum up the intertwined arguments: Wagner sees a great step forward made by music through Beethoven's de-hierarchization of its very elements: however, tone, the utterance of the will, remains the deepest essence of music for him. It extends itself through rhythm to melody and in turn gains new light through the world of beauty. Melody, up to then a subordinate element, gets emancipated by Beethoven and gains new importance in becoming the means through which the will reaches the world as we perceive it. Of course, Wagner has his own agenda with his appraisal of Beethoven's music and provides his readers with a manifesto of his own total artwork, music drama. In doing so, he seems to feel the need to overcome his own previous hierarchization of the art forms in the following order: music, poetry, and painting. He sees the solution in opera, which could be the territory where music and drama can be reconciled. However, with the move of marrying these two art forms, Wagner de-hierarchizes only music

and poetry. Painting remains a runner-up: “Drama towers above the bounds of poetry in exactly the same manner as music above those of every other art, and especially of plastic art, through its effect residing solely in the Sublime” (106).

To Wagner, drama is “the visible counter part of Music” (113). His music drama thus becomes the climax of *ut musica poesis*. However, even though music and drama intertwine in Wagner’s oeuvre, music takes a more central role in his post-1854 works. It is also important to note that while Wagner attempts to reach an inwardness with his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in which characterization does not focus on individuals but “lets them display their immediate selves” (106), Wagner inadvertently lays down the theory of an extroversive musical semiosis here in addition to an introversive one. If melody “reaches forth” toward the phenomenal world, it simultaneously points to the dependence of music on that world. Thus, Wagner’s work not only aims at direct access to the drama of the self, but also unearths the drama of the acoustic self. To relate it all back to the Romantic context outlined in the previous pages, in Wagner’s reading Beethoven puts Novalis’ *Poesie* into musical practice through the highest level of consciousness, *Gefühl*, and turns the sublime toward the internal infinite. To come full circle, this echoes Friedrich Schlegel’s *Introduction to the Transcendental Philosophy* from exactly 70 years earlier, according to which “the consciousness of the infinite in the individual is the feeling of the sublime” (244).

A Room with a View

Forster, an ardent Beethoven fan, was also an admitted Wagnerite, and his interest in “musical methods” was clearly influenced by the latter composer (DiGaetani 91). Although this chapter deals with what we may call Forster’s two “Beethoven novels,” and it is in Chapter 4 that I will discuss his most Wagnerian novel, *The Longest Journey*, there is one thing that is already manifest: Forster, who was well versed in German Romanticism, listens to Beethoven through a Wagnerian filter, i.e., presents a “Wagnerian Beethoven,” in these novels (Fillion, “Edwardian Perspectives” 274). Although Forster, especially in *A Room with a View*, applies the Wagnerian-Sopenhauerian contrast between visual knowledge and “inward-facing consciousness” in his attempts at an *expansion* toward *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a closer look at the two novels foregrounds the central role of Beethoven’s music and what it has stood for since Romanticism: the paradigm of absolute music.

In *A Room with a View*, Forster explores the way painting and music guide the viewer-listener to beauty and truth respectively (the visual arts pierce the surface of the Edwardian order while Beethoven’s music leads to the self-same, ‘absolute’ character of the protagonist). As in the brief aesthetic overview (from *ut pictura* to *ut musica poesis*) above, my reading of

the novel will navigate through the visual and arrive at the musical—following the protagonists' internal *katabasis*. As in his first novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, the writer sends his British characters to Italy in order to achieve the same goal as the classical infernal voyagers, that is, to gain knowledge. While the success of an epic hero's *katabasis* has a significant effect on the fate of his people, the protagonists of these early twentieth century novels are struggling for their own self-realization. Nevertheless, there is a dimension in these novels that ties the success or failure of the characters' journey to the fate of England, creating a social critique of Britishness and its construction. This Britishness is set against the background of an infernal Italy, where everything is real and unreal at the same time, where the highest achievements of western/Christian culture coexist with the primitive and the archetypal, and where the body, along with its desires and passions, is recognized. The British enter an uncanny environment that turns them inside out, making them visible to themselves and to one another. Italy is the *other* against which they are constructed, a discourse that opens up territories and experiences that have been buried deep under the individual's enculturation into British society. Italy as *other discourse* unveils and deconstructs the binaries of Edwardian culture and its subjects.¹²

Italy as inferno provides the horizon for many layers of other discourses in *A Room with a View*, by combining myth, painting, and music. Forster employs these layers in characterization and in plotting his protagonists' self-realization. The mythical layer sets up Italy as the infernal background, while painting and music serve a double role: on the structural level they *expand* the text, while on the hermeneutic level they guide both the reader and the characters to the body, to passion, and eventually to their innermost self, which are all forbidden territories in Edwardian British eyes.

The novel starts with Lucy Honeychurch arriving at a *pensione* in Florence with Miss Bartlett, her cousin and chaperon. It turns out that, contrary to previous arrangements with the owner, their rooms have no view of the city of Florence. The *pensione* is full of English tourists, among them an old man, Mr. Emerson, whom the newcomers immediately consider to be "ill-bred" based on his clothes and manners. He overhears their discussion about the view and offers to swap rooms, as he and his son have rooms with a perfect view. Miss Bartlett immediately rejects the offer. As two women traveling alone, they cannot be under an obligation to a stranger. At this point, Mr. Beebe, a clergyman whom Lucy and Miss Bartlett know from England, and who happens to be staying at the same *pensione*, enters the room and resolves the situation. Thanks to his mediating between the two parties, the women accept the exchange.

In the first chapter, not only do we get to know the diverse group of English people who are staying at the *pensione*, but we also learn that the establishment is run specifically for English visitors and provides them with a piece of England in Italy. As comfortable as if they had never really left England, they are protected from any real or authentic experience while

exploring Florence and Italy.¹³ The *signora* of the *pensione* has a Cockney accent, and there are pictures of Queen Victoria and Lord Tennyson on the wall by the dinner table. Also, all of them travel with their Baedeker, the ultimate guide-book of the time, ensuring that even sensory experiences and visual perceptions of Italy are directed through the filter of British authority. This is one of the many instances where direct experience and mediated representation are contrasted in the text, the Baedeker standing for the cultural barriers that these travelers cannot cross. The narrator, however, makes clear that Italy can become a carnivalesque place: the ticket to the carnival is c/losing one's Baedeker. That is when the story can really begin. Italy and the Italians themselves are archetypes, bearing a mythical character: the cab driver becomes Phaeton, his girl Persephone, the people sitting around the loggia "many a deity" (Forster, *A Room* 139).

Myth

The first half of E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1962) explores those features of the genre that are generally considered to be its necessary elements: story, characters, and plot. However, it is the subsequent chapters where Forster introduces those optional elements that seem to make a good novel in his opinion. These elements are fantasy, prophecy, pattern, and rhythm—all of which serve as possible ways to enrich the texture of the novel. The use of the supernatural is the topic of the chapters "Fantasy" and "Prophecy." Forster explains these two notions as

[s]omething that cuts across [novels] like a bar of light, that is intimately connected with them at one place and patiently illuminates all their problems, and at another place shoots over or through them as if they did not exist.

(*Aspects* 102)

Forster's language is highly metaphorical when describing these notions, in an attempt to defend these delicate aspects of the novel from the "claws of critical apparatus" (105). He compares prophecy to songs that "come out of different worlds" (118). These songs may evoke any of "the faiths that have haunted humanity—Christianity, Buddhism, dualism, Satanism, or the mere raising of human love and hatred to such a power that their normal receptacles cannot contain them" (116). Forster's examples include protagonists from the works of Dostoyevsky, Melville, D.H. Lawrence, and Emily Brontë, who all gain their prophetic character by transcending themselves in their faith, emotions, or passions. They all pursue a unity that cannot be "realized within the scope of human life" (117).

Because of their subject matter, prophetic novels have to show "humility" and suspend their "sense of humor" (*ibid.*), according to Forster. This is a price, however, that he himself does not wish to pay in his own fiction,

consequently he avoids it by making a much more playful ‘fantasy’ in his works:

An invocation is again possible, therefore on behalf of fantasy let us now invoke all beings who inhabit the lower air, the shallow water and the smaller hills, all Fauns and Dryads and slips of the memory, all verbal coincidences, Pans and puns, all that is medieval this side of the grave.

(104)

Forster’s Italy is replete with mythical elements and figures. Each scene, each Italian character has supernatural implications. “The power of fantasy penetrates into every corner of the universe,” yet the novel does not turn into a prophecy, as the protagonists do not strain “the forces that govern it” (105). The rules of the universe are not questioned, but rather re-cognized, rearranged in the Italian milieu, giving rise to a palimpsest in which, as Alexandra Peat rightly observes, “the past and present, the here and the there co-exist in a mutually informing dialectic” (Peat 140).

Through the layer of myth, the implied author communicates to the reader that the novel is not simply a story of boy meets girl (which would be very strange from Forster in the first place), but rather one of *hieros gamos*, the sacred marriage of heaven and earth—or to recall Samuel Butler’s term, the *crossing* of divine elements—where Lucy stands for light (the word derives from the Latin *lux*) and Mr Emerson’s son, George, for earth (*georgos* meaning ‘farmer, earthworker’).¹⁴

As for the mythical function of the setting, Mr. Beebe’s half-joking explanation of the Italian character clearly hits the mark:

The Italians are a most unpleasant people. They pry everywhere, they see everything, and they know what we want before we know it ourselves. We are at their mercy. They read our thoughts, they foretell our desires. From the cab driver down to – to Giotto, they turn us inside out, and I resent it. Yet in their heart of hearts they are – how superficial! They have no conception of the intellectual life.

(Forster, *A Room* 134)

And turning a person inside out is highly inappropriate, as we learn from the scene where Mr. Emerson utters the ‘s’ word, that is, says the word ‘stomach,’ in a lady’s company. No interiority, only superficiality is allowed. But ironically, it is the British themselves who prove to be superficial, not the Italians. They need to be guided in this underworld, “and if one god must be invoked specially let us call upon Hermes—messenger, thief, conductor of souls to a not too terrible hereafter” (Forster, *Aspects* 104–5). The Italians themselves take the role of Hermes, *psychopompos*, the guide of souls. As the narrator explains,

Italians are born knowing the way. It would seem that the whole earth lay before them, not as a map, but as a chessboard, whereon they continually behold the changing pieces as well as the squares. Anyone can find places, but the finding of people is a gift from god

(Forster, *A Room* 158)

Lucy enters this primeval pagan world when she leaves the *pensione* without her Baedeker. Her initiation takes place at the Piazza Signoria, which is itself described as a mythic place: its statues depict immortal mythological characters, all of whom, like Perseus, Judith, and Hercules, gained their immortality through suffering and experience. As the narrator describes the piazza: “Here, not only in the solitude of Nature, might a hero meet a goddess, or a heroine a god” (151). And indeed, this will be the locus of the primal scene of the novel. Lucy enters this space thinking, “Nothing ever happens to me,” but at this point the piazza transforms:

The great square was in shadow; the sunshine had come too late to strike it. Neptune was already unsubstantial in the twilight, half god, half ghost . . . It was the hour of unreality – the hour, that is, when unfamiliar things are real.

(139)

Suddenly, two Italians, who appear to be arguing over money, get into a fight. One seems to hit the other in the chest, but is actually stabbing him. Lucy is standing right in front of him when he falls, which becomes important because of her perspective:

He frowned; he bent towards Lucy with a look of interest, as if he had an important message for her. He opened his lips to deliver it, and a stream of red came out between them and trickled down his unshaven chin.

That was all. A crowd rose out of the dusk. It hid this extraordinary man from her, and bore him away to the fountain. Mr. George Emerson happened to be a few paces away, looking at her across the spot where the man had been.

(140)

George’s face becomes the *simulacrum* of the dead man’s face. Later we learn that the murderer tried to kiss his victim and that he gave himself up to the police. However, this and the true relationship of the two men remain enigmatic. Lucy and George share this scene of initiation; they are both aware that something significant happened, something bigger than themselves. Like the message of the dead man, however, this experience defies verbal expression. Here is where Light and Earth first meet, but the recognition of their selves, especially for Lucy, comes much later in the novel.

Forster's Pictorial Turn?

Forster's portrayal of the main characters takes the form of *ekphrasis* and the process of characterization strategically employs descriptions of paintings and sculptures. The Michelangelesque George wins Lucy's love, whereas Cecil Vyse, to whom Lucy gets engaged, is described as an ascetic and infertile gothic figure. Cecil is introduced to the story the following way:

He was medieval. Like a Gothic statue. Tall and refined, with shoulders that seemed braced square by an effort of the will, and a head that was tilted a little higher than the usual level of vision, he resembled those fastidious saints who guard the portals of a French cathedral.

(174)

Lucy's scopophilia is the correlative of narrative desire. George is the object of that desire in the novel. Lucy herself is the holder of the gaze, which puts her in the position of the *erastes* (the lover in Plato's *Symposium*) and George into that of the *eromenos* (beloved). As queer interpretations¹⁵ of the novel have successfully shown, the male body becomes the object of desire at significant points of the narrative, and this works against heteronormative

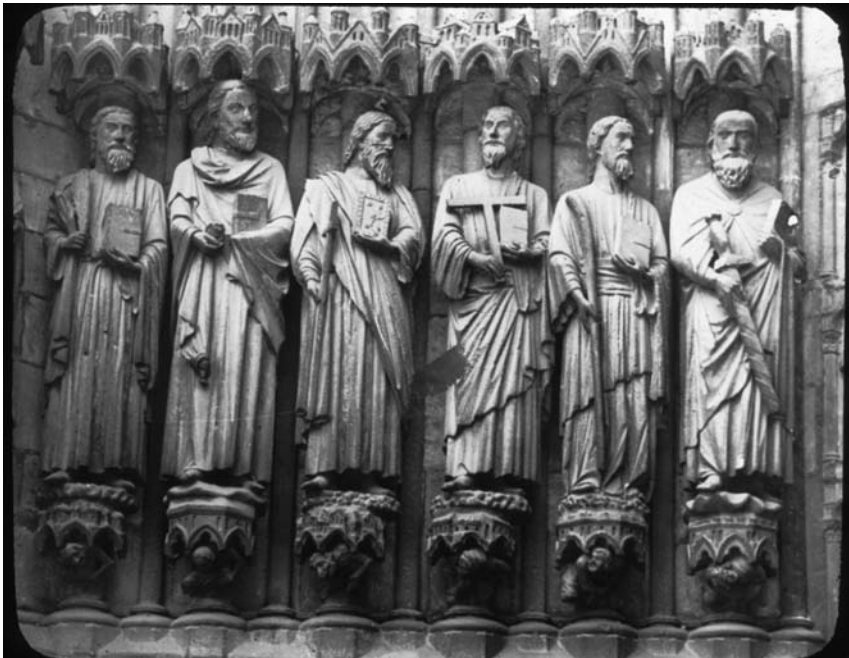


Figure 3.1 Jamb figures of the Apostles on the west façade of Amiens Cathedral

narrative strategies. The novel thus systematically reconfigures what Laura Mulvey—about seven decades later—defined as the male gaze:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.

(Mulvey 837)

Somewhat anachronistically, one might call Forster's *ekphrastic* practice of characterization his "pictorial turn." The notion itself was W.J.T. Mitchell's answer to Rorty's "linguistic turn" and is based on Charles Peirce's and Nelson Goodman's works, which "explore the conventions and codes that underlie nonlinguistic symbol systems" and question the hegemonic role of language in the construction of meaning (Mitchell 12). He notes that the pictorial turn is:

not a return to naive mimesis, copy or correspondence theories of representation, or a renewed metaphysics of pictorial "presence": it is rather a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality.

(16)

Both the male gaze and the pictorial turn are, of course, later developments in visual and cultural theory, yet Forster's use of visual elements in the novel certainly shares an affinity with both Mulvey's and Mitchell's notions and reveals a playful, if not strategic, subversion of established ways of seeing. *A Room with a View* can also be considered to be what Mitchell calls an 'imagetext': a composite, *synthetic* text that calls into question the relations of verbal and visual representation.

To further consider Forster's use of painting, one may return to *Aspects of the Novel* where Forster introduces the idea of *expansion* in the chapter called "Pattern and Rhythm," in which he asserts that "the more the arts develop, the more they depend on each other for definition" (134). He goes on to show how the novel tends to borrow certain techniques from painting and music. Pattern is related to the plot, which in Forster's formulation is the "narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality" (87). Pattern refers to the aesthetic experience the reader may recognize in the unity of the novel as a whole. Forster describes this recognition as experiencing beauty. Writing about this aesthetic process, Forster's language itself turns highly poetic:

We noted, when discussing the plot, that it added to itself the quality of beauty, beauty a little surprised at her own arrival; that upon its neat carpentry there could be seen, by those who cared to see, the figure of the Muse; that Logic, at the moment of finishing its own house, laid the foundation of a new one.

(136)

Although his words recall the Aristotelian relationship between beauty and logic in art, Forster clearly does not subscribe either to the superior role of logic or to beauty arriving “in too tyrannous a guise” (145). Beauty does not always appear as a whole, but often functions as a musical phrase that appears at one point, disappears, then reappears again—“waxing and waning to fill us with surprise, freshness and hope” (148). Forster emphasizes how these instances should not harden painting and music into symbols, but rather work to expand the text as a whole—though not into a whole.¹⁶ In his words, this strategy involves “Not rounding off, but opening out” (149). The idea is based on Walter Pater’s well-known passage (with its enigmatic reference) from the “School of Giorgione:”

[I]t is noticeable that, in its special mode of handling its given material, each art may be observed to pass into the condition of some other art, by what German critics term an *Anders-streben* – a partial alienation from its own limitations, through which the arts are able, not indeed to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces.

(Pater 110)

Both painting and music serve as forms of expansion in *A Room with a View* as both sound *other discourses* that enrich the fabric of the text. The final effect of expanding the texture of the narrative, explains Forster, is to enable “every item” to “lead a larger existence than was possible at the time” (Forster, *Aspects* 150).

When Lucy faints during the murder scene, she drops the pictures she has just bought. One of these is a print of Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*. George goes back to pick up the pictures, but when the two of them are crossing the bridge over the Arno, he throws them into the river. The reason for this is that the pictures are covered with blood and he does not know what to do with them. This all takes place after the scene of initiation through blood, the first crossing between Lucy and George. The blood may, of course, stand for passion, sacrifice, initiation, fertility (De Vries), and the painting, the image of a female body, a mediated experience, becomes symbolically fertilized with immediacy.

As quoted earlier, the narrator, in describing the murder scene, indirectly suggests that the hero and the goddess, or the heroine and the god, will meet “in the solitude of Nature” (*A Room* 151). This meeting, however, is a

metonymy of the primal scene. The attempted kiss of the murderer becomes a real kiss. Kissing repeatedly stands for the unspeakable, the inexpressible desires in the novel. It is as if the characters, when unable to communicate within the boundaries of reason, need to find another means of expression. Where reason fails, bodies meet and/or blood gets spilled. The description of the kissing scene is simultaneously an *ekphrasis* of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. Lucy falls out of the wood, onto a "little open terrace, which was covered with violets from end to end." She falls "some six feet," which is telling about where we have landed—again, the characters are in a primeval sphere (159). But we are six feet under only from the perspective of those who stayed in the wood. This is actually where life starts: the sea of violets, "covering the grass with spots of azure foam," is described as "the primal source whence beauty gushed out to water the earth." On the edge of this sea stands George, "like a swimmer who prepares"—or maybe it is the other way around, and he is just stepping onto the shore (159). We are witnessing the birth of Venus.¹⁷ The focalizer is Lucy again, and the beauty is George. When Lucy refers to this moment in a later part of the novel in an attempt to defend George's actions, her slip of the tongue gives a clue as to who desired whom at that moment: "It makes such a difference when you see a person with beautiful things behind *him* unexpectedly" (217–18). When the perspective changes, the reader sees Lucy from George's point of view: "for a moment, he contemplated her, as one who had fallen out of heaven" (159).

Not only does George become Venus, but Lucy's fall evokes another descent, namely that of Lucifer, the bringer of light (*lux-fer*), the angel fallen from the sky due to his/her excessive desires. The fact that George is seemingly fully clothed makes no difference regarding these desires, as we know that he is naked in Lucy's eyes:

[F]or a young man his face was rugged, and—until the shadows fell upon it—hard. Enshadowed, it sprang into tenderness. She saw him once again in Rome, on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, carrying a burden of acorns. Healthy and muscular, he yet gave her the feeling of grayness, of tragedy, that might only find solution in the night.

(128)

Painting is not simply a symbol of sexual desire here, but shows the workings of *eros*, which start with the physical and aim toward a wider sense of love. But what is the ultimate goal of evoking *eros* here? Two reasons offer themselves. On the one hand, as *eros* can never be hardened into solid form, this *erotic* model of expansion keeps the movement of the text alive, *not rounding off, but opening out*. On the other hand, *eros* leads to beauty, the objective of all the characters who set out to Italy to find what is lost in the London fog, which Lucy and George eventually have to escape in order to fulfill their narrative roles. Also, importantly, beauty and truth become closely connected in Forster's novel. As old Mr. Emerson exclaims in probably



Figure 3.2 Sandro Botticelli—*The Birth of Venus*



Figure 3.3 Michelangelo—male nude on right above the Delphic Sibyl

the most intimate part of the novel, “Am I justified?’ Into his own eyes tears came. ‘Yes, for we fight for more than Love and Pleasure; there is Truth. Truth counts, Truth does count’” (259). One must undergo the infernal experience to understand this. Not all the travelers can cope with it, though: as Mr. Beebe describes Mr. Emerson at the beginning of the text: “He is rather a peculiar man. ... He has the merit—if it is one—of saying exactly what he means. ... It is so difficult—at least, I find it difficult—to understand people who speak the truth” (117).¹⁸

Music as Truth

While the visual arts may aid Lucy in understanding what she wants, music exposes what she is. It is through playing the piano that Lucy realizes and recognizes herself. Music shows her how far she has to go to become real or true to herself. As we have seen, the visual arts serve in the novel as access to the bodily, to immediate experience, while also mapping vectors of desire by locating the gaze. While visual experience gestures toward the immediate, directing attention to the inner workings of the self (i.e., desire), it remains abstract and superficial, as we learned from the Romantics. In contrast, sound enters the body whether one wants it or not (one cannot close one’s ears), and the experience of listening also acquires a depth that is, by its very nature, beyond the visible. While painting serves as an entry point to Forsterian expansion, the real trip starts with music. The Hoffmannian-Schopenhauerian terror gets exposed in the musical experience. Having explored one infernal sphere—that of the body—through the visual, music helps our protagonists to turn inward and explore the abyss within. As seen earlier, music may serve to “introduce into a text the nonrepresentability of the self” (Hamilton 14). The musical text attempts to reach beyond language in order to explore the direct, the non-representational, the territory where reason loses itself. The musical intertext becomes the mode of self-recognition. The reader is informed through other listeners (and thus may recognize the mistakes of other listeners), and also through the narrator, whose *ekphrastic* descriptions are exact enough to identify some of the compositions without their titles being revealed in the text. The musical experience becomes an uncanny one, as it cannot be represented; it cannot be put into words. As we saw in the previous chapter, it is music that lets the real demons in.

The infernal aspects of this inexpressible part of the self lie outside the intellect; they reside outside any norms, culture, or language. This dark side of music has been emblemized by Beethoven since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and it was Wagner who laid down the foundations of musical characterization in his “Beethoven” essay: “As a drama does not depict human characters, but lets them display their immediate selves, so a piece of music gives us its motive” (106).

It does not come as a surprise that Lucy's playing has the strongest effect on both herself and her audience when she performs Beethoven. In a flashback, Mr. Beebe recalls the first time he heard Lucy playing the piano at a rural parish:

[H]is composure was disturbed by the opening bars of Opus 111. He was in suspense all through the introduction, for not until the pace quickens does one know what the performer intends. With the roar of the opening theme he knew that things were going extraordinarily; in the chords that herald the conclusion he heard the hammer strokes of victory.

(Forster, *A Room* 132)

He asks the vicar to introduce him to the young pianist, however, meeting the "young lady with a quantity of dark hair and a very pretty, pale, underdeveloped face" (*ibid.*) brings them both back to the everyday world. And Mr. Beebe is not interested in Lucy as representation, as part of the world's phenomena. Her encultured self does not imply a hero. It is her music that makes her complex, perplexing. "If Miss Honeychurch ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting – both for us and for her" (133), exclaims Mr. Beebe to the vicar, and he expresses the same sentiment to Lucy herself at a later point. And, indeed, Lucy's heroic interpretation of Opus 111 becomes her masterplot, as she eventually extracts herself from the muddle by living as she plays: leaving the everyday behind. Mr. Beebe, her astute listener, who is perplexed "that she should play so wonderfully, and live so quietly," proposes that "one day she will be wonderful in both. The watertight compartments in her will break down, and music and life will mingle. Then we shall have her heroically good, heroically bad – too heroic, perhaps, to be good or bad" (178). As we have seen in the previously analyzed novels, these watertight compartments, i.e., self-sameness and contingent selves (characterized by their extroversive and introversive semioses), do not give up their autonomous positions easily. Also, there is no place for the heroic in the Edwardian period. When these two worlds collide (music and life) and the acoustic self emerges, the inevitable result is death.

Significantly, Lucy plays Beethoven at the *pensione* just before she walks into the murder scene at the piazza. The narcissistic, self-mirroring, self-opening quality of the musical experience is revealed, as she becomes "intoxicated by the mere feel of the notes: they were fingers caressing her own; and by touch, not by sound alone, did she come to her desire" (132). Through the senses of touch and hearing, Lucy arrives at desire: her musical intoxication is not unlike *Gefühl*, the highest level of consciousness according to Novalis. She "enter[s] a more solid world when she open[s] the piano," a realm before and beyond language. The narrator describes this transformation, as well as its incompatibility with the mundane world:

The commonplace person begins to play, and shoots into the empyrean without effort, whilst we look up, marveling how he has escaped us, and thinking how we could worship him and love him, would he but translate his visions into human words, and his experiences into human actions. Perhaps, he cannot; certainly he does not, or does so very seldom. Lucy had done so never.

(131)

Not yet, at any rate. But her playing already gives an indication that she will succeed, and it is in playing Beethoven that Lucy shows her true stripes. Even though “some sonatas of Beethoven are written tragic,” it depends on the player whether they “triumph or despair ... and Lucy decided that they should triumph” (132). At this point of the novel, however, she is not able to transfer his experience into life. Language and representation fail, and Lucy’s conversation with Mr. Beebe ends abruptly: “Music –” said Lucy, as if attempting some generality. She could not complete it, and looked out absently upon Italy in the wet” (133). In order to escape the “tedious conversation”, she walks out into the rainy afternoon without her Baedeker, leaving both language and the written word behind. It is the murdered Italian who becomes her savior figure, taking the blow of the drama of Lucy’s inferno in his sublime death scene.

The two poles of the infernal and the sublime seem always to be interconnected in Forster. Florence is not just hell: it is the *omphalos*, the place of creation where heaven (*lux*), the earthly realm (*gē*), and hell meet. It is only here that George and Lucy recognize themselves as sublime beings. But this means that the novel’s protagonists have to depart from their reality: Lucy and George cannot unite in England. There are two reasons for this: first, George comes from a working class family, and second, they need an infernal/sublime horizon to realize their *hieros gamos*, the sacred marriage of heaven and earth, to “lead a larger existence than was possible at the time” (Forster, *Aspects* 150). England cannot provide this horizon. The two elope like the pair of young men at the end of Forster’s *Maurice*. While according to Forster’s famous epigraph, “Maurice and Alec still roam the greenwood” (Forster, *Maurice* 218). Lucy and George go to Italy, revealing England itself as hell.

In accordance with this, music is muted in the second part of the novel, which takes place in England; it is reduced to a mere children’s game. Lucy plays Schumann (whom Forster did not particularly like) for Cecil’s nieces and nephews, and she is not willing to play Beethoven, contrary to Cecil’s request. She is enchanted; she is hidden or, rather, hiding from herself. Schumann and Mozart display her self-negating state. Cecil, a “caricature of nineteenth-century aestheticism and Decadence” (Moss 495) to whom she is now engaged, is unaware of the reason of her musical rigidity. When Lucy wakes from a bad dream with a cry (yet another pre-linguistic mode of expression), the—by then—musically aroused reader immediately thinks of

Kundry from Wagner's *Parsifal*. This association is soon confirmed by the scene where Cecil asks her to play the scene of the Flower-maidens, having played the garden scene from *Armide* beforehand. However, Lucy is unable to play the piece when she notices that George is present. Music is unable to lie. Kundry is redeemed by Parsifal, the innocent fool, and as in the opera, the female protagonist undertakes a much more complex journey than the supposed "hero" of the novel. It is not until Lucy's engagement to Cecil is called off that she can play again. Music as truth seems to reach into territories that language cannot access, yet the aesthetic choices and the fairytale-like ending of *A Room with a View* highlights the contrast with the reality of the everyday that makes it impossible to realize one's self. *Howards End* paints an even darker picture of this scenario.

An interesting musical pattern seems to emerge in the novels discussed up to now regarding their Beethoven intertexts. In *Point Counter Point*, Maurice Spandrell orchestrates his suicide to Opus 132, specifically to the third movement, *Heiliger Dankesang*. Woolf admittedly structured *The Waves* around Beethoven's last quartet, Opus 130, and specifically *Die Grosse Fuge*, Opus 133; and Lucy plays Opus 111, Beethoven's last piano sonata, at the recital where Mr. Beebe first meets her. (We do not know exactly what she plays at the *pensione*.) These are all late period Beethoven, written by the deaf composer, who had already acquired his supposed "clairvoyance" by the time he wrote these pieces, which are often regarded as "the greatest works of genius in existence to read, but reading gives more pleasure than hearing" them (Marliave 221).

In contrast, in *Howards End*, Forster takes us straight to the peak of Beethoven's career, the Fifth Symphony, Opus 67. This symphony was much more popular than the late, experimental pieces that appear in the other three novels. As we saw above, E.T.A. Hoffmann developed his manifesto of Romantic music based on this opus, which thus became the key composition in the birth of the notion of absolute music—and its dark undertones. *Howards End* seems to follow the German Romantic tradition (and explicitly provides references to it throughout the novel, starting with the name of the Schlegels), making the Fifth Symphony an ideal choice for Forster.

Howards End

Foster wrote this novel after *A Room with a View*, and he seems to have fully worked out the role of music in his fiction by this time. If there is a sense of measuring or weighing the role of and balance between different art forms—a somewhat indecisive contemplation of what music really is capable of—in *A Room with a View*, Forster is more definite and definitely darker in his musical treatment in *Howards End*. The latter novel is much closer in its tone to *The Waves* and *Point Counter Point* than its predecessor. Another parallel with Woolf's and Huxley's novels is that the musical program for the novel is developed in one chapter, and the logic of

the novel as well as the fate of its characters are defined by one central musical experience.

Howards End follows the story of the orphaned, half-German Schlegel sisters, Margaret and Helen, who lead a cosmopolitan and highly cultured life in London. The girls' lives become entangled with the Wilcoxes, a business-oriented family, through Helen's brief affair with the younger Wilcox boy, and a subsequent friendship between Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox. After Mrs. Wilcox's untimely death, Margaret and the widower Henry Wilcox are drawn to each other and eventually get engaged. Meanwhile, the Schlegel girls get acquainted with a young clerk, Leonard Bast, at a concert, and they take an interest in helping him improve his life. The girls' meddling results in Bast's eventual downfall and death, and also in Helen's begetting an illegitimate child. The final tableau shows Henry Wilcox, Margaret, and Helen living together, along with Helen's son, at Howards End, the country house that the late Mrs. Wilcox, on a whim, wanted Margaret to inherit due to their friendship.

As opposed to *A Room with a View*, none of the characters are performers, but they are all listeners. The program is Beethoven's Fifth, and the concert takes place in Chapter Five: "It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated the ear of man" (Forster, *Howards* 23), the chapter begins. This sentence picks up on several key ideas of the aesthetic outline provided at the beginning of this chapter and acknowledges the place of the composition in the aesthetic tradition. "All sorts and conditions are satisfied by it" (23), the paragraph continues, but the narrator goes further than this in describing these different sorts of people, who become characters of varying significance in the novel: there is the polite, British, middle class listener; the Romantic; the down-to-earth; the educated; the proudly German and her devoted lover. All in all, there is more German blood than British in the six listeners described, as Margaret, Helen, and their brother Tibby are half German, and their German cousin and her German fiancé are also in their company. One more person is needed to create a balance, a kind of harmony in this nationalized game of pursuing the sublime, and he soon arrives when Leonard, "who had for some time been preparing a sentence" (26), enters their conversation, albeit only to complain that Helen, who left right after Beethoven, took his umbrella.

Yet Leonard had already been noticed by Aunt Juley before the second movement of the symphony began: "Who is that young man Margaret is talking to?" she asks, but Helen does not know. It is only later, when Henry starts courting Margaret at the beginning of the novel's second movement,¹⁹ that Leonard's fate becomes such an important question for Helen. Immediately after Aunt Juley's question, however, the second movement of the symphony starts, and having gone through the main melody once, Helen's mind starts to wander. She looks around the building, stopping for a while on the "attenuated Cupids" in their "sallow pantaloons" and thinking, "How awful to marry a man like those cupids" (24). The only person in that

row who is not described is Leonard, the one who assumes the role of Cupid in Helen's life, and who carefully wraps his great-coat over his own—probably shabby—trousers when talking to Margaret a little later, after Helen has left. In terms of social ranking, Leonard is the odd-one-out in their row. Among the many sorts of people visiting Queen's Hall, the "dreariest music hall in London" (23), he is the sort to whom the ticket is *not* "cheap at two schillings" (23). Queen's Hall provides a carnivalesque environment²⁰ where there is a possibility for different classes to mingle, as Leonard and the Schlegels would probably never get to speak to one another in a different setting. And indeed, as Gemma Moss observes, a central conflict that the musical intermediality in the novel enacts is "between the idea of music as something democratic and transcendent, and something quite the opposite" (497).

It is not only the setting but also Beethoven's Fifth that opens up the characters, especially Helen and Leonard, to their joint experiences to come. The second movement fills Helen with "panic and emptiness" (25), a phrase she already used when describing her feelings on the morning after having kissed Paul Wilcox at Howards End. Andrea K. Weatherhead considers "panic and emptiness," which returns at strategic points in the novel, to be a musical phrase that, through repetition and variations, provides a musical structure to the novel, becoming the "diddity-dum" of *Howards End* (Weatherhead 251). The connection between Helen's first passionate encounter and the conflict in the first part of the symphony's "wonderful movement" is established by this phrase, as it is with Leonard, who would seem "awful to marry" (Forster, *Howards* 24) for Helen, like those Cupids on the ceiling, yet who will eventually beget her child. The Cupids are small, ugly, and uncanny creatures, like the goblins Helen daydreams about in the first part of the third movement. Music, passion, and the uncanny become entwined once again.

For Helen, the movement begins "with a goblin walking quietly over the universe, from end to end" (25). Other goblins follow, and what makes them especially terrible is that they are "not aggressive creatures"—they "merely observe that there is no such thing as splendor or heroism in the world." Yet with the famous transitional drum passage, Beethoven takes control, "as if things were going too far," and appearing in person to the young upper-middle class girl, scatters the goblins with "gusts of splendor" and a "magnificent victory, magnificent death" (*ibid.*). The goblins return, again, causing "panic and emptiness," but Beethoven "make[s] it all right at the end." All the while we know that "the goblins were there. They could return" (*ibid.*). Which is precisely what occurs in the third part of the novel, when Leonard arrives at Howards End—a move that almost turns the novel into domestic comedy, a genre Forster clearly plays with throughout the narrative. Killing Leonard at Howards End, however, helps the novel avoid a sentimental ending. He is one of the goblins. With him eliminated, there is a chance of keeping to one's ideals. "The music summed up to her all that

had happened or could happen in her career” (26), thus providing the program for the novel.

Maybe it is Leonard who should have known better and who is suspicious about these people, as someone who “had been ‘had’ in the past,” but “perhaps on account of music—he perceived that one must slack off occasionally, or what is the good of being alive? Wickham Place, W., though a risk, was as safe as most things, and he would risk it” (28). And so he goes with them to collect his umbrella.

Aunt Juley is also suspicious of the young man, but Margaret dispels her fears: “You remember ‘rent.’ It was one of father’s words—rent to the ideal, to his own faith in human nature. . . . he would say: ‘It’s better to be fooled than to be suspicious’” (32). While it may be better, it is Leonard who pays with his life for being too trusting.

Margaret—who is the central figure of the novel in the sense that she is the one who accomplishes the novel’s epigraph, “Only connect!” by bringing the two driving forces of her life, Henry and Helen, to some kind of a harmony—is highly skeptical of the Beethovenian program of the novel. She asks Leonard during their walk to Wickham Place, “Do you think music is so different to pictures?” Leonard, of course, cannot answer. Margaret continues:

Now, my sister declares they’re just the same. . . . Now, doesn’t it seem absurd to you? What *is* the good of arts if they are interchangeable? What *is* the good of the ear if it tells you the same as the eye? Helen’s one aim is to translate the tunes into the language of painting, and pictures into the language of music. It’s very ingenious, and she says several pretty things in the process, but what is gained, I’d like to know? . . . Now this very symphony that we’ve just been having—She won’t let it alone. She labels it with meanings from start to finish; turns it into literature. I wonder if the day will ever return when music will be treated as music.

(29–30, italics in original)

The only one whose attitude is even more irritating to Margaret is her brother’s, who “treats music as music, and oh, my goodness! He makes me angrier than anyone, simply furious. With him I daren’t even argue” (30). Trying to find her way out of this flux, she concludes by blaming the last contributor to the aesthetic history outlined earlier in this chapter: “But, of course, the real villain is Wagner” (*ibid.*). It is worth quoting her tirade on Wagner in its entirety, as it reveals an important aspect of the acoustic self in the novel:

He has done more than any man in the nineteenth century towards the muddling of arts. I do feel that music is in a very serious state just now, though extraordinarily interesting. Every now and then in history there

do come these terrible geniuses, like Wagner, who stir up all the wells of thought at once. For a moment it's splendid. Such a splash as never was. But afterwards—such a lot of mud; and the wells—as it were, they communicate with each other too easily now, and no one of them will run quite clear. That's what Wagner's done.

(ibid.)

The Edwardian world is a post-Wagner world in a state of conflict: the wells are stirred up, but society does not seem ready for such mixing of either the arts or social classes. Music opens up the possibilities to 'connect,' but also maintains hierarchies. While Helen sees "heroes and shipwrecks in the music's flood," Margaret "can only see music" (23) while listening to Beethoven. As for Leonard, "there had always been something to worry him, ... always something that distracted him in the pursuit of beauty" (30). We face two kinds of issues here regarding the listening experience. While it is the inner experience of listening that triggers different types of semioses within the two girls, Leonard does not even reach the possibility of meaning-making. The question remains whether Beethoven's music is to "blame" for his death or the post-Romantic, post-Wagnerian way of listening to him.

I will further complicate the Wagner question in the next chapter, but there are two more pressing questions here: Is there hope for the Leonard Bast of this world? and Does Leonard's failure gain any significance? These two questions are interrelated, as the acoustic self appears in the paradoxical situation of trying to ascribe meaning to one's life. yet, as we saw in *A Room with a View*, a scapegoat may bear the brunt of a character's real death, as the symbolic death of an aspect of the self that (re)cognizes itself. Does Leonard stand a chance of ever becoming a hero? Is his struggle, his "pursuit of beauty," a meaningful one? I would suggest that he is not meaningful in himself. As the narrator describes him, "Leonard seemed not a man, but a cause" (246). He is a cause for Helen, and for Forster as well, who also addresses serious social issues in this novel. So, is there hope for the Leonard Bast of this world? For the next generation—with the narrative child being born—maybe. Forster may be a humanist, but he is no idealist. As in the case of Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, there is plenty of money at the disposal of the main characters at the end, so there is at least a financial possibility of happiness, albeit away from society, away from London. Most of their friends from the discussion club will probably not call on the Schlegel sisters in the future. As with the much criticized ending of Beethoven's Fifth, the readers' emotions are too exhausted by the end to have a successful denouement. The ambiguous "happy end" of the novel is reached by breaking down all the men involved to achieve the isolated reunion of the two sisters.

There are ideals and there is reality—even within the fictional universe. There is the mysterious wych elm in the yard of Howards End that makes it a mythical place, as was Florence in *A Room with a View*. There is also the

ability to “connect,” which the three characters achieve at the end. Yet Forster is also trying to work out the relationship between men and women in these novels. As Mr. Emerson puts it, “not until we are comrades shall we enter the garden” (Forster, *A Room* 203). But does this necessitate the killing, jailing, breaking of men? Isn’t there another way to improve their character? Furthermore, what does Beethoven really have to do with all this?

An important, albeit somewhat hidden, link between *A Room with a View* and *Howards End* may be of help here. The link is between Opus 111 and the Fifth Symphony, and is also related to the listening tradition of Beethoven’s works. Both works are in C minor, the key of the sublime, of heroic struggle.²¹ As we saw in Chapter 1, the interpretative history of musical keys has a long tradition, and the semantic role of a key may vary over time, while it also depends on personal taste—if one hears the difference at all. Forster playfully addresses the key in his essay on Beethoven, “The C-minor of that Life,” where he argues with Beethoven’s own comments on the different keys, judging the composer’s views “rather odd” or “obviously wrong,” while pointing to the subjective quality of the issue. What Forster finds remarkable, though, is that, with reference to “the key he has made his own [C minor], Beethoven says nothing” (133). It is as if the key that “reveals Beethoven as a Hero” (Rosen 134) could or should not be linguistically contaminated (or profaned, to use a more Wagnerian term) by the composer. Beethoven’s C minor, which, according to Forster, “fused the sinister and the triumphant,” escapes description, as it explodes the very measure of things: “Fate knocks at our door; but before the final tap can sound, the flimsy door flies into pieces, and we never learn the sublime rhythm of destruction” (“The C Minor” 133). The most mundane musical matter turns into sublime experience via this key, continues Forster, providing a description of Beethoven’s work that may very well be used as a guideline for reading his own novels:

This knack of turning dullish stuff into great stuff is characteristic of Beethoven, and incidentally one of the reasons why one ought never to skip the repeats when hearing him—for only at the repeats does one hear what the dullish stuff means.

(134)

One of the dilemmas both novels grapple with is whether we can ever get to hear the great stuff by and through ourselves, or if the listening experience is preempted by our semiotic embeddedness. Leonard Bast tries to listen and is killed by the experiment.

As we saw in the previous chapter, combining fugal technique and the aesthetic tradition of listening to Beethoven, Woolf and Huxley explore the possibility of a self. Forster attempts to create harmony between and within human beings by forcing them to be honest or true to each other and themselves. Truth and music are connected in all four novels, but while in Huxley it is unattainable and in Woolf it reaches a peak of negativity, it

seems that in Forster it is already beyond real (the Forster novels predate the other two). In a sense it is the only thing that is real, yet it cannot be reached in the world as it is. Maybe that is why music serves as truth, while also being closely connected to myth in Forster's work. This move saves him from being utopian. Rather than suggesting that the world itself will change for the better, Forster proposes that the way we look at the world might change us and how we perceive ourselves. This is the Beethovenian lesson, which Leonard Bast fails to learn: "Death destroys a man; the idea of death saves him" (Forster, Howards 188).

Notes

- 1 See: Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*.
- 2 For a more detailed description, see: Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, 88.
- 3 Literary historians assume that he originally planned to write a second and a third part to "Laocoön," which would have addressed the topic of music. See: Richter, "Intimate Relations" 156.
- 4 For an example, see: Schlegel, "Theory of Art" 212.
- 5 This summary of Novalis' theories relies on James Hodgkinson's "The Cosmic-Symphonic: Novalis, Music, and Universal Discourse" 13–26.
- 6 The often quoted dictum "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music" by Walter Pater is arguably an answer to Lessing's "Laocoon," but it clearly also resonates with Novalis' argument on the non-reflexive 'freedom' of music.
- 7 For more on this issue, see: Coeuroy, "The Musical Theory of the German Romantic Writers" 108.
- 8 The composer's "conversion" from Feuerbach to Schopenhauer took place in 1854. While the "Beethoven" essay of 1870 can be considered to be Wagner's aesthetic creed from the mid-fifties on, he had already developed a theoretical framework for his art in "The Artwork of the Future" in 1849, followed by *Opera and Drama* in 1852. As this chapter deals with Beethoven, and the notion of absolute music, I will address the key ideas of the "Beethoven" essay and its essentially Schopenhauerian disposition here. The subsequent chapter on Wagner will provide an analysis of "The Artwork of the Future," Feuerbach's philosophy, as well as Nietzsche's critique of Wagner in order to investigate the Wagnerian opera in modernist musical fiction.
- 9 Schopenhauer, Vol. II, 448, italics in original. The passage also suggests that Wagner blurs the differences between Platonic 'Idea' and Schopenhauerian 'will' more than Schopenhauer's text would allow.
- 10 Another type of dream will also gain importance in Wagner's theory: the allegoric dream, which precedes awakening and through which the first type of "dream of deepest sleep" gets mediated to "waking consciousness." See: Wagner, "Beethoven," 74.
- 11 This duality clearly reappears in Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysiac in *The Birth of Tragedy*.
- 12 The word 'other' in this *other discourse* is written with a lowercase 'o' as it refers to the specular other, the image in relation to which the subject constitutes itself—as opposed to the symbolic Other.
- 13 For a critical discussion between (vulgar) tourist and (true) traveller, see James Buzard's influential study on European tourism, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800–1918*.

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- 14 The word itself derived from the elements *ge* 'earth' and *ergon* 'work.' See: Adrian Room (ed.), *Cassel Dictionary of Proper Names*.
- 15 See: Markey, "E. M. Forster's Reconfigured Gaze and the Creation of a Homoerotic Subjectivity" and Haralson, "'Thinking about Homosex' in Forster and James" On Forster's ambivalent attitude toward Platonic love see, e.g., Orrels, *Classical Culture and Modern Masculinity*.
- 16 Forster's *expansion* thus seems to call into question interpretations that argue for a full structural application of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, such as those in Anne Foata, "The Knocking at the Door: A Fantasy on Fate, Forster and Beethoven's Fifth" and Andrea K. Weatherhead, "*Howards End*: Beethoven's *Fifth*."
- 17 I apprehended the *ekphrastic* quality of this scene during the class discussions of Prof. Ferenc Zselyi's E.M. Forster seminar at the University of Szeged, Hungary.
- 18 It has been pointed out by several critics that the source of George Emerson's character is not necessarily Ralph Waldo Emerson. Samuel Butler and Edward Carpenter are just as likely to be the inspirations. See: Rahman, "Edward Carpenter and E. M. Forster" 42–45.
- 19 Andrea K. Weatherhead interprets the novel as a fictional adaptation of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and identifies the corresponding parts. (See: Weatherhead 255.)
- 20 In the Bakhtinian sense of the word. See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*.
- 21 See: Spitzer, *Music and Philosophy*, 33.

4 Wagner, Je T'aime ... Moi Non Plus

In *medias res*: “Will it really profit us so much if we save our souls and lose the whole world?” asks the narrator of *The Longest Journey* about three-quarters of the way into the novel. This hesitant, yet suggestive question is at the heart of the narrative. At this point in the plot, Rickie, the main character, has just been carried out of the dining room of Dunwood House (in Sawtson School, where he teaches), having fainted after the realization that his illegitimate half-brother, Stephen, was his mother’s son, not his hated father’s. The plot has reached its climax, the road opens up for Rickie to be redeemed by his half-brother, that is to save his own soul. But what does that mean in a secular, Edwardian world? The twist on the original question, translated in the King James Bible in economic terms—“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36)—emphasizes the incompatibility of the New Testament and the world of Edwardian, middle class snobbery. Forster throws profit and soul, i.e., the issues of capitalism, social class, ethics, and desire, into his narrative cauldron and waits to see what emerges. It is against this backdrop that Rickie’s soul goes bankrupt. The *Bildungsroman* fails. The twist on the biblical question carries the principal dilemma of *The Longest Journey*. Not only is the question twisted, however, but so is the novel as a whole; this is Forster’s “least known, most difficult, most personal novel” (Heine vii), which he nevertheless claimed to be “most glad to have written” (Forster, *The Longest* lxiv). The redeemer is saved by the redeemed-to-be, who is killed while saving his savior. So it goes in Forster’s *Parsifal*.

Wagner: Let’s talk about sex

The two previous chapters have already touched upon the relationship between music and the gendered, desiring subject, and this chapter will further explore this aspect of the acoustic self, in the light of the Wagnerian total artwork, or *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Wagner is an apt focus, as his work (both musical and theoretical) simultaneously addresses the hierarchy of the arts, desire and the subject, desire and the social field. Also, his operas have proven rich semiotic fields for otherness and sexuality; presenting multiple

levels for exploring—or hiding—desire. The Forster corpus itself also had such a hidden phantom: the unpublished *Maurice*. It was the novel that was there yet did not speak—at least in Forster's lifetime. However, it is not *Maurice* that I will mainly focus on in this chapter. As I am concerned with the use of Wagner in the sexo-musicalization of fiction, it is Forster's most Wagnerian novel, *The Longest Journey*, that takes up most of the following pages.

One has to proceed with caution, as the interrelatedness of the issues, as well as Wagner's often self-contradictory complexity, necessitates the addressing of certain topics in separate sections before conjoining them in a reading of *The Longest Journey*, a parody of Wagner's *Parsifal*. The first part of this chapter deals with gender and musicology and is followed by a theoretical discussion of Wagner's gendered notions of music. Only then will I turn to *The Longest Journey* and show why Forster's version of *Parsifal* would make the Meister blush. The novel not only queers *Parsifal*, but also provides it with a “prophane stage” that the opera was never to be “desecrated by contact with” as per Wagner's original intentions (Lucas 102–3).

Not Defining Gender

The multifarious, and often conflicting, understandings of the concept of gender require a detailed clarification of my use of this highly problematic term. As a strategic move, I will not define gender, as doing so would solidify the notion, universalizing it into a ready-made concept that can be applied invariably to different socio-cultural settings. In fact, gender manifests itself simultaneously through, and together with, those settings themselves. The thorough exploration of the notion of gender below is made necessary, on the one hand, by Wagner's ceaseless attempts to fathom the topic, and, on the other, by the intricate relationship between sexuality and music, which is a recurring trope in all the novels discussed in the present book. Gender as a critical term has a lot to tell about the interconnectedness of the two central notions of my investigations, music and subjectivity.

Playing a pivotal role in the development of subjective identity, gender reveals several processes at work during an individual's enculturation. Power relations that are often institutionalized (and hierarchized) control these processes, and while the parameters for these interactions are not based on inherent features, those aiming to keep the *status quo* tendentially provide essentialist arguments about supposed intrinsic values as the basis for available socio-cultural meanings. However, both gender and music are instances of intersubjective interaction; both are processes that gain meaning through the framework they operate in. Like gender, musical meaning does not pre-exist its performance.

Gender thus becomes a process, interaction or relations acted out within specific contexts in different times and places. Such an approach brings about the immediate recognition of gender's embeddedness in a network of

power relations and highlights other forms of oppression, including those based on race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, it also helps one avoid making false generalizations and attempts at universalization (two underlying tendencies within gender theory initially critiqued by postmodern feminism, women of color, and lesbian feminists).

One common trait within the different understandings of gender is the attempt to denaturalize the notion, that is, to disrupt the view which considers the male/female binary opposition as natural and which presumes the existence of two fixed genders, marked by external genitalia as their biological foundation. Every attempt to undermine this view (which is often reiterated in the subversive attempts themselves) includes problematizing gender in its historicity and context-specificity.

Joan Scott's insight into the possible uses of gender as an analytic tool incorporates many of the above-described ideas. Scott understands gender as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes" (Scott 1067). As a constitutive element, gender incorporates four components: (1) cultural symbols; (2) the "normative statements" that aim to control the possible meanings of cultural symbols via the techniques of containment and limitation; (3) "social institutions and organizations" (e.g. kinship systems, education, economy, politics); and (4) "subjective identity" (the gendered enculturation of individuals). These four factors are interrelated and create a subtle network that serves as "a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated" (*ibid.*). This field, as stated above, is closely linked with other forms and systems of oppression. Gender analyses have to keep in mind the multiplicity of experiences within each setting as well as the diversity of modes and networks of oppression in different socio-cultural environments. In our case, these include Wagner's and Forster's different situatedness and social fields (in the Bourdieusian sense of the word).

Two more issues need to be addressed here before turning to music. One is the role of the subject within gender as a process and the other is the sex/gender distinction. As for the latter, I draw no such distinction because it resonates with a body/mind dichotomy and also suggests a dualistic relation, both of which I avoid reiterating.

Moira Gatens' work has shown us that falling back on this distinction can be circumvented precisely through a recognition of the active role of both the mind and the body within the process of (en)gender(ing). She emphasizes that focusing on the subject instead of consciousness, when analyzing gender, draws our attention to "the active processes involved in becoming a signifying subject" (Gatens 9). Gatens uses the notion of the imaginary body to frame an analytical matrix for this endeavor. The imaginary body, or body-phantom, is the physical image of our body, as we conceive it. This image is essential "in order for us to have motility in the world, without which we could not be intentional subjects" (12). The imaginary body is gradually acquired in its relation to the image of other

subjects. It is characterized by its specific setting, as well as the physical and psychological history of the individual. A gendered reading of *Parsifal*, such as the Forsterian reappropriation of the opera, is in this sense a reinterpretation of the imaginary bodies of Wagner's opera in a different setting. An analysis of the imaginary body shows it to be the site of the historical and cultural specificity of such notions as masculinity and femininity. It is to the imaginary body that we must look to find the key or code to deciphering the social and personal significance of male and female biologies as lived in culture—that is, masculinities, femininities and other gender practices (*ibid.*).

Besides showing the active role of the mind and the body within gendered enculturation, Gatens provides new directions for unraveling the complex network of different layers in which gender operates. Reading the imaginary body will turn it into a map through which the social, the historical, the cultural, and the economic spheres can be explored with regard to their gender implications. This approach also helps us gain a subtler understanding of the relationship between the biological and the cultural.¹

Gender and Music

It was Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings*, originally published in 1991, that opened up the field of musicology toward questions of gender and sexuality. What is by now generally accepted as a legitimate approach in musicology came with a (more or less) two decades' delay compared to literary and film studies. "With musicology, art history and philosophy (traditionally conservative fields) lagging behind" (ix), postmodernism came, saw, and conquered, without formal musicology noticing it, wrote McClary in her introduction to the second edition of *Feminine Endings* in 2002. Musicology showed unyielding rigidity not because practitioners of the discipline were more anti-feminist than those of other fields; the phenomenon can be explained instead by the previously discussed purist attitudes toward music and meaning.² If music has only internal significance, it is 'beyond' the issues of gender and sexuality—ran the argument—without any need for "dragging into music the filth of bodies, sexualities, and gender" (McClary, "Why Gender" 50). It is no coincidence that the field of exploring gender and sexuality in music gained ground simultaneously with the emergence of musical semiotics in the 1990s, as outlined in Chapter 1.

While it is probably in opera that the "musical utterances of characters are inflected on the basis of gender" most visibly, McClary argues that notions of "masculinity" and "femininity" run deep in the very texture of western music and musical thought (*Feminine* 7), for instance, the sonata form or tonality itself. The main issue at stake for her is showing how the "codes marking gender difference" in music not only reflect the current socio-cultural value judgments of their time, but also how the "musical semiotics of gender," which "composers worked painstakingly to develop" (especially from the seventeenth century onwards, when opera emerged),

create the gendered socio-cultural fabric itself. To put it in Iserian terms, musical gendering is an act of performative “world-mapping”, as the map—rather than denoting borders—“enables the contours of a territory to emerge, which will coincide with the map because it has no existence outside this designation” (Iser 156). Gender in music is such a territory. McClary quotes Stephen Heath’s dictum to bring her argument home: “There is no such thing as sexuality” (Heath 3, qtd. in McClary 8).

It is in opera where gender and sexuality in/of music is most clearly manifested, yet gender and desire appear in the instrumental musical narrative as well: “tonality itself—with its process of instilling expectations and subsequently withholding promised fulfillment until climax—is the principal musical means during the period from 1600 to 1900 for arousing and channeling desire.” The tonal compositions “from Bach organ fugues to Brahms symphonies whip up torrents of libidinal energy that are variously thwarted or permitted to gush” (McClary 12–13). With an astute move, McClary connects music and gender with narrativity here.

Invoking Teresa de Lauretis’s narrative model, she shows that—the tonic having been associated with masculinity in traditional music theory, and the dominant with femininity—the tonal musical composition (not only operatic, but also instrumental music) reiterates the western narrative paradigm, in which the subject position is taken by the male hero who meets a morphologically female obstacle. The latter, as McClary sums up, “the masculine protagonist makes contact with but must eventually subjugate (domesticate or purge) the designated [feminine] Other in order for identity to be consolidated, for the sake of satisfactory narrative closure” (14). McClary notes that the sonata form—the definitive, large-scale structure in classical music from the mid-1800s to the beginning of the twentieth century—showcases this narrative paradigm in itself:

In sonata, the principal key/theme clearly occupies the narrative position of masculine protagonist; and while the less dynamic second key/theme is *necessary* to the sonata or tonal plot (without this foil or obstacle, there is no story), it serves the narrative function of the feminine Other. Moreover, satisfactory resolution—the ending always generically guaranteed in advance by tonality and sonata procedure—demands the containment of whatever is semiotically or structurally marked as “feminine,” whether a second theme or simply a non-tonic key area.

(15, italics in original)

Wagner was ‘encultured’ into this narrative musical paradigm but he was grappling with the issue himself throughout his life, both in his theoretical writings and in his operas (and within the operas, both in the librettos and the music). The question for him was closely related to the relationship of the sister arts, and it also appears in his treatment of the elements of music. In the “Beethoven” essay, discussed in the previous chapter, we met Wagner

after his conversion to Schopenhauer; nevertheless, the Meister tried to come to grips with the issue long before his turn to the philosopher. His earlier ideas are often incompatible with later ones, and through these inconsistencies one may trace the development of Wagner's position on the topics of gender and sexuality, which occupied his mind throughout his career.

Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*: From Feuerbach to *Parsifal*

The significance of Feuerbach's philosophy is usually measured by his impact on the development of Marx's thought. Feuerbach's writings were most influential in the 1840s and were certainly among the first to articulate an antithesis of western metaphysical thought. Yet, Feuerbach also had a pivotal influence on music through Wagner, a card-carrying follower of the philosopher up to his already-discussed Schopenhauerian turn. Wagner's "The Artwork of the Future" not only echoes Feuerbach's notion of the philosophy of the future, but also appropriates key ideas and metaphors from his anti-metaphysical treatises. Wagner's early theories of music drama clearly grow out of the Feuerbachian absolute philosophy.

Perhaps the most effective way to briefly introduce Feuerbach's philosophy is to position it in its stance toward Hegelianism. Feuerbach was a student of Hegel and also among the first to attempt to overturn his system. In very general terms, Hegel's philosophy centers around the notion of the Absolute, which manifests itself through reason. While the Absolute is always the same, reason is set in the particular historical moment. For Hegel, the task of philosophy lies in the "theoretical activity of reason in terms of which the Absolute realizes its self-identity in the multiplicity of its phenomenal manifestations" (Hanfi 12). Philosophy, thus, tries to overcome the gap between the Ideal and the particular. Feuerbach's main critique of Hegel is that his philosophy does not allow for the coexistence of the Ideal and the particular. Feuerbach attempts to emancipate "nature," that is, the phenomenal. In his "Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy" he sets out to develop a sensualist *anthropotheism* that disrupts the dichotomy of what he terms as the *head* and the *heart*: "Anthropotheism is the heart raised to intellect; it speaks through the head in terms of the intellect only what the heart speaks in its own way" (166). As opposed to *theology* (reiterated in Hegel's philosophy), where the "Divine Being" is "immanent only as a transcendent being" (*ibid.*), thus separating subject and object, Feuerbach proposes that his *new philosophy* (anthropotheism) "is a religion conscious of itself; it is religion that *understands itself*" (*ibid.*, italics in original).

He elaborates this further in his "Principles of the Philosophy of the Future:"

The new philosophy looks upon *being*—being as given to us not only as thinking, but also as really existing being—as *the object of being*, as *its own* object—Being as the object of being—And *this* alone is truly, and deserves the name of, being—is sensuous being; that is the being

involved in sense perception, feeling and love. . . . Only in feeling and love has the demonstrative *this*—this person, this thing, that is, the particular—Absolute value; only then is the *finite infinite*: In this and this alone does the infinite depth, divinity, and truth of love consist.

(Feuerbach, *Principles* 225, italics in original)

Love is a central concept in Feuerbach's work and Feuerbachian love is one of the initial driving forces of the plot of Wagner's *Ring* cycle. For Feuerbach, love is absolute, as it is "not only objectively, but subjectively the criterion of being," but particularly: "the criterion of truth and reality," i.e., the basis of his epistemology. "*Where there is no love, there is also no truth.* And the only one who *loves* something is also something—to be nothing and to love nothing is one and the same thing," he states (227, italics in original). Absolute philosophy, for Feuerbach, is the totality of living one's life through an epistemological *eros*—which recalls the *Symposium* once again and Diotima's all-inclusive *eros*, which starts out from the sensual and encompasses the intellectual by the time the circle of the epistemological quest closes.

Wagner dedicates "The Artwork of the Future" to Feuerbach, with the title already echoing the 'philosophy of the future.' Wagner even borrows Feuerbach's "head and the heart" metaphor when describing the function of tone, assigning specifically gendered roles to the elements of music:

She [tone] is the *heart* of man; the blood, which takes this heart for starting-point, gives to the outward-facing flesh its warm and lively tint,—while it feeds the inward-coursing brain-nerves with its welling pulse. Without the heart's activity, the action of the brain would be no more than of a mere automaton; the action of the body's outer members, a mechanical and senseless motion. Through the heart the understanding feels itself allied with the whole body, and the man of mere 'five-senses' mounts upwards to the energy of Reason.

("The Artwork" 111, italics in original)

Love in the philosophy of the future becomes tone in the artwork of the future. It is precisely in the connecting power of tone that Wagner finds Beethoven's Ninth Symphony a breakthrough. As L.J. Rather succinctly puts it, "where tonal expression reaches its limit, speech makes its appearance" (143). The appearance of speech is the appearance of "joy," the first word in the symphony being *Freude*.

This was the word which Beethoven set as crown upon the forehead of his tone-creation; and this word was:— "*Freude!*" ("Rejoice!") With this word he cries to men: "*Breast to breast; ye mortal millions! This one kiss to all the world!* And *this Word* will be the language of the *Art-work of the Future.*

(Wagner, "The Artwork" 128, italics in original)

There is a significant shift between this interpretation of the symphony and the one that appeared 20 years later in the “Beethoven” essay. As discussed in the previous chapter, Wagner takes up his Schopenhauerian stance in the interim and the word no longer has redemptive power. As Rather points out, Wagner learned from Schopenhauer that “the surface world is Maya, the mere show of things” and as a result “the mood of union becomes one of renunciation rather than jubilation” (144). As opposed to the 1850 interpretation, in 1870, Wagner explains how the first part of the symphony

certainly shows us the Idea of the world in its most terrible of lights. Elsewhere, however, this very work affords us unmistakable evidence of the purposely ordaining will of its creator; we are brought face to face with it when he stops the frenzy of despair that overwhelms each fresh appeasement, and, with the anguished cry of one awaking from a nightmare, he speaks that actual Word whose ideal sense is none other than: “Man, despite all, *is good!*”

(Wagner, “Beethoven” 102)

The trajectory of the Wagnerian oeuvre thus moves from the redemptive eternal feminine to a redemptive annihilation of desire, and ultimately of difference (i.e., the feminine itself). The philosophical change causes a shift within the hierarchy of the sister arts and also affects Wagner’s gendered interpretation of the very elements of music. There is also a third aspect influenced by Wagner’s turn, that of the dramatic plot. As Nattiez points out in his *Wagner Androgyne*, the composer’s “theory of the relationship between poetry and music is reflected, in his music dramas, in the relationship between man and woman” (xv). Thus, we have three planes on which the sexual metaphor plays out: (1) word and music; (2) tone and melody; and (3) male and female characters. *Gesamkunstwerk* is thus replete with sexual and *erotic* tensions.

But, as Nattiez points out, the sexual metaphor becomes further complicated by the time Wagner composes *Parsifal*. The question is a convoluted one, especially since Wagner’s theories changed so much over the years. Nattiez’s book follows through how sexual metaphors, especially Wagner’s ever-evolving understanding of the notion of androgyny, are closely bound up with the composer’s conception of the links between music and poetry. Nattiez shows how Wagner’s urge to be understood made him work simultaneously on his theories and operas, and how getting new ideas during the creative process would add to his theory, ultimately resulting in a somewhat monstrous corpus of prose work. Although Nattiez’s main focus is the *Ring* cycle, he also addresses the notion of androgyny as it manifests in *Parsifal*, drawing a parallel with the theoretical treatises written while the Meister was working on his swan song. Nattiez reads these essays as “theoretical counterpart to his [Wagner’s] final music drama” (161).

While in “The Artwork of the Future” (and also in *Opera and Drama* of 1851) poetry is the paramount ingredient of music drama, as we saw in the previous chapter, music ranks highest in the hierarchy of the arts after Wagner’s 1854 conversion to Schopenhauer. This is discernible in the operas as well as the composer’s writings. Nattiez recalls Jack Madison Stein’s analysis to demonstrate how music gains supremacy in *Parsifal*, the opera with the shortest libretto and the longest performance time in Wagner’s oeuvre. Further,

melodic melismatas on a single vowel are particularly frequent here, and all the motifs, save one, originate in the orchestra rather than in the vocal line. Is there an analogy between Parsifal and Kundry on the one hand and poetry and music on the other?

(166)

Nattiez proposes that “Wagner will have recourse one last time to the topos of androgyny, albeit to other ends” (ibid.).

While the last two essays Wagner was working on before his death (“On the Masculine and the Feminine in Culture and Art” and “On the Feminine and the Human”) reflect “Wagner’s continuing interest in his sexual metaphor” (167), his androgyny gains a clearly anti-Semitic context here, with the former title being an addendum to “Religion and Art,” in which the composer elaborates on “a racist theory of regeneration” (ibid.). Along with “Know Yourself” and “Heroism and Christianity,” two additions to “Religion and Art,” these writings explore the dangers menacing Aryan civilization, with Jewish blood being the main threat, and provide a straightforward interpretation of *Parsifal* as an overtly anti-Semitic work—as Wagner’s “contemporaries realized from the outset” (ibid.).

Nattiez’s exegesis not only explains Parsifal’s repugnance toward Kundry, but also elucidates the role of the Flower-maidens, as well as Klinsor and his “Arabian style” castle. Especially, “[i]n the character of Kundry, Wagner succeeds in combining anti-semitism with misogyny with peculiar force,” and “only by refusing the Semite’s kiss can Parsifal serve the pure blood of Christ” (168). Thus, by the end of his life, Wagner does more than merely re-rank the arts based on his gendered metaphor. The pre-Schopenhauerian, male-dominated hierarchy based on “feeling and understanding” (*Opera* 236) is replaced by a total rejection of desire and the elimination of difference: “Announcing a future religion, an asexual Parsifal preaches the gospel of the renunciation of desire through the intermediary work of art in which, at the very end, every form of sexual and racial distinction is abolished” (Nattiez, *Wagner* 172).

It is not likely that Forster was aware of the theoretical writings of Wagner, but he surely knew about his anti-Semitism—and must have sensed his misogyny, which some argue he may have actually shared to some degree (T. Brown 40). Nevertheless, the following reading of *The Longest Journey* shows Forster to be a far cry from the perfect Wagnerite and the novel to subvert *Parsifal*’s Aryan asceticism.

The Longest Journey

After the discussion of the novels in the previous chapter, in *The Longest Journey* one is not surprised by the presence of a writer figure who is struggling to infuse the power of music into his stories, exhibiting a serious case of music envy. Having come down from Cambridge, Rickie decides to pursue a writing career, which never really takes off in his lifetime. After he has been rejected by two publishers, Agnes, by then Rickie's fiancée, is trying to persuade him to write "an out-and-out love-story," or at least express his ideas "more clearly" (Forster, *The Longest* 141). Rickie's answer conveys the challenges of writers of musical fiction, while also invoking Wagner: "I can't soar; I can only indicate. That's where the musicians have the pull, for music has wings, and when she says 'Tristan' and he says 'Isolde', you are in the heights at once." Then he adds the question, "What do people mean when they call love music artificial?" (ibid.). When pressed to express his ideas more clearly, he makes an attempt to answer, but cannot go further than saying, "You see—," (ibid.).

Like Lucy's incomplete sentence about her musical experience in *A Room with a View*, when she can only say: "Music—," Rickie's sentence is also broken off, its syntax disrupted—silence says more about music than words can. Rickie's unfinished sentence also refers to his own inability to bring anything to fruition. He fails to become a scholar in Cambridge and in many other aspects of his life: in his marriage, in becoming a father, in becoming a brother, and more than that, in being himself. He has "certain ideas" (ibid.) but is unable to make sense of them either to himself or to others. Somewhere deep inside he "knows," if one can know *musically*, but this knowledge never rises to the surface. When it finally does—as we are now used to in our musical narratives—he dies, while acting out his acoustic self.

Cambridge plays an important part in the narrative, while also adding to its autobiographical flavor. The first scene takes place in Rickie's room in Cambridge, where a group of undergraduates are involved in philosophizing over the real existence of things. In a typically Forsterian—seemingly banal but weighty—discussion the students attempt to decide whether something exists only if someone is there to see it, or if it exists even without an onlooker's acknowledgment of it. The example used in the discussion is a cow, and this bovine philosophy is to play a significant role in the story, as Rickie (who, in fact, cannot follow the argument) is shown going off-track in this very first scene, even before Wagner and Agnes enter the plot.

The group of students "were crouched in odd shapes on the sofa and table and chairs," when one of them "crawled to the piano and was timidly trying the 'Prelude to Rheingold' with his knee upon the soft pedal" (5). The description of the group and the piano player becomes important in two ways: first, the dark, smoky room filled with a group whose members resemble the era's decadent image of Wagnerites, and, second, the "crawling" and "timidity"

pre-echoes Rickie's death, as he "wearily" (282) saves Stephen toward the end of the novel—as observed by Michelle Fillion.³ I will return to these decadent Wagnerites later in my analysis, but there is something more that happens in this scene.

The first scenes in Forster's novels tend to reveal all the main themes of the plot, which of course only becomes clear on a re-reading of the texts. In this scene, to a soundtrack by Wagner, Agnes enters and disrupts not only the philosophical discussion, but also Rickie's life. "Ladies!" whispered everyone in great agitation," when "a tall young woman stood framed in the light that fell from the passage" (6). This is the only description of Agnes for the first six chapters despite being one of the main characters and later Rickie's wife. What we see is a silhouette—and indeed, she will be an outline within a halo for Rickie throughout most of his relationship with her. He desperately tries to project certain qualities onto Agnes. Later, he does the same with Stephen, and these two characters ultimately become the reason for Rickie's fall, his double 'bankruptcy.'

The all-male company quickly disperses. Only Ansell, Rickie's best friend, remains, but to Rickie's shock, he does not acknowledge Agnes's presence. Eventually, he leaves too, but first he casually asks Rickie if he is going to supper with him as if Agnes was not even in the room. Getting a negative answer, he departs without saying goodbye. Later, the two friends discuss the scene, but Ansell refuses to accept that Agnes was there, and calls her a "subjective product of a diseased imagination" (17). When Rickie recalls the scene of Agnes's entry, Ansell still does not give in:

"Do you know—oh, of course, you despise music—but Anderson was playing Wagner, and he'd just got to the part where they sing '*Rheingold! Rheingold!*' and the sun strikes into the waters, and the music, which up to then has so often been E flat—"

"Goes into D sharp. I have not understood a single word, partly because you talk as if your mouth was full of plums, partly because I don't know whom you're talking about."

(16–17)

Rickie tries to continue his mundane reasoning, however there are at least two things he should be aware of: if Agnes were a Rhinemaiden, she would probably be Flosshilde, who erotically teases the disfigured Alberich most cruelly out of the three. Rickie himself would, of course, have to take the role of Alberich, owing to his hereditary lameness, which should be a reminder to refrain from any attempts at marital bliss in the first place, as he is warned by Ansell. But Rickie, misreading his imaginary body, simply has to learn the hard way. The other thing he should have noticed is that Ansell's answer is actually very well versed in music. Fillion points out that while the music actually shifts to C major, "[a]s the enharmonic equivalent of E flat, Ansell's substitute tonic would create no audible change of

harmony; as a modulation it is as unreal as the Rhine-Maidens' offer of love, or as Agnes herself" (*Difficult* 44).

Disease, however, does not only show itself on the level of the imagination. Agnes's relationship with Rickie originates in repulsion. Once alone in his room, she sees his shoes and blurts out, "Ugh! Poor boy! It is too bad" (Forster, *The Longest* 9). But then she recalls the perfect body of her athletic fiancé, Gerald, and is comforted by that image. Gerald (who is to die not long after this), Agnes, and Rickie make an awkward love triangle for several reasons. First, as it turns out, the two boys went to the same boarding school, where Gerald cruelly bullied Rickie. Second, Agnes develops a bizarre attraction to Rickie after Gerald's death, where Rickie serves as an antithesis—and reminder—of what she used to have. Agnes, on the other hand, is mainly a mother substitute for Rickie, whose primal scene, the musical core of the novel, reveals an even more complex Gordian knot of the vectors of desire. I will turn to this scene before further discussion of the themes of the text.

Whereas in *A Room with a View* the ekphrastic moment comes at the kiss scene in the field, evoking Botticelli's painting, in *The Longest Journey* it takes place in a garden, in the form of musical ekphrasis. This musical core opens up in several directions within the novel, establishing connections with other points in the narrative. Rickie witnesses an embrace between Agnes and Gerald, and falls in love with their passionate, physical love. Gerald, his former bully, holds Rickie's future wife in a merciless grip, just as he did Rickie when they were kids. Although the details of what Gerald did to Rickie are never revealed, we learn that "the elder boy had done things to him—absurd things" (38). The scene is thus loaded for Rickie in many ways, and becomes an eternal moment through which he sees the past and the future:

Gerald and Agnes were locked in each other's arms.

He [Rickie] only looked for a moment, but the sight burnt into his brain. The man's grip was the stronger. He had drawn the woman onto his knee, was pressing her, with all his strength, against him. Already, her hands slipped off him, and she whispered, "Don't—you hurt—" Her face had no expression. It stared at the intruder and never saw him. Then her lover kissed it, and immediately it shone with mysterious beauty, like some star.

(39)

Rickie walks away and is accompanied to his room by his host, Ernest Pembroke, Agnes's brother, only to experience a "riot of fair images" (40) swarming in his head:

Music flowed past him like a river. He stood at the springs of creation and heard primeval monotony. Then an obscure instrument gave out a

little phrase. The river continued unheeding. The phrase was repeated, and a listener might know it was a fragment of the Tune of tunes. Other instruments accepted it, the clarinet protected, the brass encouraged, and it rose to the surface to the whisper of violins. In full unison was Love born, flame to flame, flushing the dark river beneath him and the virgin snows above. His wings were infinite, his youth eternal; the sun was a jewel on his finger as he passed it in benediction over the world. Creation, no longer monotonous, acclaimed him, in widening melody, in brighter radiances. Was Love a column of fire? Was he a torrent of song? Was he greater than either—the touch of a man on a woman?

It was the merest accident that Rickie had not been disgusted. But this he could not know.

(40)

Elizabeth Heine claims in her introduction to the novel that we read “the description of the full orchestration” of the *Rheingold* Prelude in this paragraph (Heine xiii), and Fillion also confirms that the ekphrasis accurately follows its “pattern of instrumental entries” (*Difficult* 47). The Wagnerian intertext makes Rickie’s primal scene in a sense even more primal: it puts him in a world where gods, heroes, and mortals interact, and may even transform into one another. This world is manifest also in his writing, through his abundant use of mythical elements and figures (similarly to Forster’s own early short fiction),⁴ yet Rickie cannot differentiate between his ‘ideas’ and his life, and does not see people as themselves, but rather as heroes, goddesses, or classical parallels. That is how his imagination is “diseased,” as Ansell pointed out (Forster, *The Longest* 17). One can get away with it in the safe haven of Cambridge, but not in the “great world” (62).

Wagner enters and explodes Forster’s text—Agnes enters and blows up Rickie’s life: the repressed (m)other (re)enters Rickie’s life. His journey is from Cambridge to death, or rather to being unborn. It is a regression from *alma mater* to his long-lost mother, the very first word of the novel being ‘Cambridge’⁵ and the very last one, ‘mother’. If Rickie’s plot fails as a *Bildungsroman*, it certainly succeeds as a *nostos*—taking the trope to its most extreme.

But is it *Rheingold* or *Parsifal* that we are after? Neither and both, as usual. The perplexingly manifold Wagnerian (and non-Wagnerian) references in the novel show that Forster was toying with multiple ways of weaving the plot together. Stephen, the redeeming figure, for instance, was called Siegfried in the first manuscript (later Harold, evoking Byron’s narrative poem), before his name was finalized (Kermode 46). The characters are palimpsests of several intertextual figures, resulting in a profusion of meaning. As we will see, Rickie himself is sometimes Parsifal, but mostly Amphotas.

But back to Rickie's vision. Fillion rightly argues that the paragraph, generally neglected by critics, evokes the "emotionalism of decadent Wagnerism" (*Difficult* 47), which is one of the keys to understanding how Forster queers *Parsifal*. As Emma Sutton, in her study on Beardsley and Wagnerism explains,

British Wagnerism took many forms, from attendance at the operas and music dramas, to political, mystical, and charitable movements inspired by Wagner's work, to literary allusions to and reworkings of Wagner's subjects; it had become a self-propelling cultural movement, at times only loosely related to the expressed theories and intentions of Wagner himself. (Aubrey 3)

That is, not all Wagnerites were "perfect."⁶ As a matter of fact, the image of the Wagnerite would probably not have pleased the composer himself. Sutton shows how Beardsley's connection with Oscar Wilde, and his "representations of Wagner's protagonist as decadents and degenerates" added to the image of the "decadent Wagnerite" by the mid-1890s (*ibid.* 39). After Wilde's trials in 1895, this decadence became even more closely associated with homosexuality than before. Sutton claims that the connection had been established previously, and as, for example, "the Wagnerian allusions in Wilde's work suggests, by the 1890s Wagnerism was associated, in some discourses, with homosexuality, and certain forms of Wagnerism perceived to denote homosexual or homoerotic tastes" (*ibid.* 48).

Wagner's relationship to King Ludwig II, and the promotion of his works by homosexual and lesbian artists (including Verlaine and Vernon Lee), all contributed to this picture. Furthermore, "[f]ollowing Wilde's trials, a number of critical and scientific texts were published in which Wagnerism and homosexuality were explicitly associated" (*ibid.* 53). An example is Hanns Fuch's infamous essay from 1903, "Parsifal and Eroticism in Wagner's Music," in which he argues that Wagner was a "spiritual homosexual" (Fuchs 341). Forster, who was 16 at the time of Wilde's trials, grew up in this cultural ethos, and must have been aware of that "interest in Wagner in the turn of the century was not just the evidence of an avant-garde aesthetic, it was also, for homosexuals, a lightly coded affirmation of sexual preference" (Scherer Herz 141).

Forster had just traveled to Germany before writing *The Longest Journey*, experiencing the *Ring* cycle for the first time in his life, in Dresden (Kermode 32). He also had the chance to see concert versions of *Parsifal* in London, and probably owned the piano score of the opera (T. Brown 31). Another input related to the Parsifal legend was that his friend—and "most helpful critic" (Furbank 112)—Trevelyan, published a play called *The Birth of Parsifal*, also in 1905. Trevelyan's treatment of the legend (based on both Wolfram von Eschenbach's and Wagner's versions) focuses on the hero's origin, presenting Herzeloida and Frimutel's tragic love story, which has parallels in the telling of the love affair between Rickie and Stephen's mother.

Parsifal

It is one thing to detect Wagner's influence on Forster's work, it is quite another to make sense of the novels in relation to Wagner's operas. Among those critics who have drawn connections between Forster's novels and *Parsifal*, there are as many who relate the opera to his other novels as those who link it to *The Longest Journey*. For Digaetani, *A Passage to India* is Forster's *Parsifal*, while Lucas' reading positions the opera as the main intertext of *A Room with a View*, to mention only two. Comparisons are not much easier the other way around either: *The Longest Journey*, this "dazzling web of cross-reference" (T. Brown 50), has so many Wagnerian allusions that it is unclear whether reading it against *Parsifal* would be more fruitful than choosing *Siegfried*, for instance. We see versions of characters, split characters, and shifting of characters—with references to several Wagner operas.

One of the difficulties is that, as Lucas points out in relation to *A Room with a View*, "there is no point by point correspondence—Forster is not writing a prose version of *Parsifal*" (114). In my reading, akin to, for instance, the perspective assumed by Tony Brown and Judith Scherer Herz, *Parsifal* is the most relevant Wagnerian intertext of the novel as a whole, because of the web of "structural and thematic likeness" between the two (Scherer Herz 141). I agree with Brown regarding the importance of the mother's role both in the opera and the novel, but I would not necessarily subscribe to his conclusions about Forster himself. With respect to my project, Scherer Herz's analysis has two alluring aspects. In the larger framework, it is in alliance with my project's mapping the musical in the textual: "*The Longest Journey* is explicitly about the failure of such quests, the gap between the words and music" (Scherer Herz 139) and on a smaller scale, it is more specifically connected to what I aim to show in this chapter: "the music *is* the queer story" (149, emphasis mine) and ultimately just as *Parsifal* queers *The Longest Journey*, the novel queers opera. The musical intermediality in the novel displays Klein's bidirectional musical intertextuality, which also transforms the original text in an historical reversal.

"Unless you start with the fact that he was homosexual, nothing's any good at all," Christopher Isherwood told John Lehmann when the two decided to publish Forster's *Maurice* after their friend's death (Moffat 20). Isherwood had received a package from Forster's attorney including the typescript of *Maurice*, and he asked Lehmann over to read the novel and help him decide whether or not to publish it. *Maurice* as an intertext is just as important for *The Longest Journey* as *Parsifal*. The characters and their desires in *Maurice* provide a context for their counterparts in *The Longest Journey* and help open up what is repressed in the novel. Bryan Magee's often quoted statement that "Wagner's music expresses, as no other art, repressed and highly charged contents of the psyche, and . . . this is the reason for its uniquely disturbing effect," (39) gains more specific relevance

when unfolding the characters' desires in *The Longest Journey* with these two intertexts.

Rickie lives the life of a Cambridge undergraduate among his peers, "more like brothers than anything else" (Forster, *The Longest* 10). The homosocial idyll of Cambridge gets disrupted, however, when Agnes enters the scene. Ansell behaves like a jealous lover from that moment on, even before any traces of intimacy appear between Rickie and the girl. Agnes is engaged to get married at that point, and it is not until Gerald's death that she gets close to Rickie. The change occurs when Rickie confronts Agnes after Gerald dies to make sure she "minds," and remembers "that the greatest thing is over" for her (54). Rickie is propelled by his vision of Agnes and Gerald; the closest he ever gets to happiness in the "great world" (66) is in witnessing their embrace in the garden. While this surely makes for an androgynous moment, two things have to be remembered about androgyny: the male-female spherical creatures are only third in rank behind the male-male and the female-female beings in Aristophanes' story, and also, more importantly, they are only Plato's clever joke on Aristophanes' account in the first place. Too bad Aristophanes' pseudo myth *feels* so true: Rickie falls in love "through the imagination," not via his desires (61).

Rickie falls in love with the idea of love, not with a human being. Agnes, for him, remains the silhouette that appeared in the door in the first pages of the novel.⁷ Agnes and Rickie's relationship is peculiar in that it is based on abjection on both sides. On Agnes's part, it is based on repulsion from the very beginning, when she stumbles upon Rickie's shoes in the scene that I have already mentioned:

She had known Rickie for many years, but it seemed so dreadful and so different now that he was a man. It was her first great contact with the abnormal, and unknown fibres of her being rose in revolt against it. She frowned when she heard his uneven tread upon the stairs.

(12)

Right after their first kiss, the feeling returns: "She was frightened. Again she had the sense of something abnormal" (74). Also, when Rickie faints after learning that Stephen is his half-brother, Agnes feels "menaced by the abnormal" yet again (132). This reaction is repeated in her feelings toward Stephen, the extramarital child of Rickie's mother: "She could not feel that Stephen had full human rights. He was illicit, abnormal, worse than a man diseased" (139). It is this last sentence, which is later repeated word for word, right after Agnes's most uncanny scene in the novel: ten days after Rickie learns that Stephen is his mother's son, Stephen returns drunk, and causes a great commotion in Dunwood House. The following day, in her agitated state, Agnes mistakes Stephen for her late lover, and approaches him with the same words she had addressed to Rickie, saying, "For my sake" and "calling Stephen Gerald" (256). She immediately tries to

apologize, but the truth has come: it was Gerald all along that she loved, not the “abnormal” Rickie.

The poise of his shoulders that morning—it was no more—had recalled Gerald. . . . She had turned to him as to her lover; with a look, which a man of his type understood, she had asked for his pity; for one terrible moment she had desired to be held in his arms.

(260)

In life’s cruel game, the one man even more “abnormal” than her husband was the one to have “drawn out the truth” (261).

As for Rickie’s disgust, on the physical plane, the reason might be very simple. When they become lovers, Rickie says, “I prayed you might not be a woman,” (73) yet he answered her call and followed her into the ‘dell.’ Rickie had found this circular dell in his second term, and it became a mythical place for him. “a kind of church—a church where indeed you could do anything you liked, but where anything you did would be transfigured. . . . he could even laugh at his holy place and leave it no less holy” (18). It is here that he opens up to his friends, Ansell and Widdrington. He tells them about his parents, the life-long cruelty of his father—who was lame and always laughed at him and who called him Rickie for being “rickety” (23)—toward his mother. After his death, mother and son set out to live a happier life, but the mother unexpectedly died while Rickie had gone out one afternoon, just after having offended her. This last part Rickie withholds from his friends. Rickie’s error is to remain silent about this event. The mother remains a phantom for him; he buries her without reconciliation.

The dell becomes Klingsor’s garden when Rickie/Parsifal/Amphortas shows it to Agnes. She enters first and calls his name several times before he follows her. “A bird called out of the dell: ‘Rickie!’ A bird flew into the dell” (73). Kundry calls Parsifal in his mother’s voice to tempt him into a kiss, and Agnes also becomes a mother substitute while simultaneously becoming Kundry at the same time. Kundry tells Parsifal about his childhood with his mother before kissing him, and Rickie is in a fetal position with his head on Agnes’s lap when she bends down to kiss him for the first time. Kundry’s kiss fills Parsifal’s heart with Amphortas’ pain and enlightens him. Rickie has a different kind of flashback: he is back in the garden, witnessing Agnes and Gerald’s happiness. “He started, and cried passionately, ‘Never forget that your greatest thing is over. . . . What he [Gerald] gave you then is greater than anything you will get from me’” (74). In the opera, this is the moment when Klingsor tries to kill Parsifal with the spear, but it stops above his head, he seizes it, and drawing the sign of the cross in the air, he makes the Klingsor’s castle disappear. The scene itself is a version of what had happened to Amphortas previously. On that occasion though, Klingsor wounded the knight with his own spear—in Wagner’s version in

the side, in the original Eschenbach version in “his private parts,” making him sterile (Von Eschenbach 126).

T. Brown claims that “Rickie’s lameness could in a sense be seen as a form of sterility” (38), but I agree with Heine, who relates his hereditary illness to his latent homosexuality. Despite his Parsifalesque features, especially his self-accusation for his mother’s death (Parsifal learns from Kundry that his mother died of grief after he had left her), Rickie emerges from the dell as Amfortas, and remains so throughout the novel. His nosebleeds, his weakness, breakdowns, and, of course, his lameness all connect him to the wounded leader of the Grail knights. And he struggles to heal, for “[n]o man works for nothing, and Rickie trusted that to him also benefits might accrue; that his wound might heal as he labored, and his eyes recapture the Holy Grail” (153). However, he dies without achieving this, and the only, albeit cynical, consolation that the narrator provides is that “death is merciful when it weeds out a failure” (287).

There are other Wagnerian warning signs along Rickie’s journey that he ignores. Chapter 9 presents a symposium of letters, the first four being the correspondence between Ansell and Rickie. While Ansell is trying to prevent Rickie’s marriage, Rickie brings up a Wagnerian analogy to describe Agnes, and Ansell retorts with another, less pleasing one. Ansell foresees the catastrophe all along, which Rickie himself acknowledges toward the end of the novel. When Ansell reminds Rickie that he is “unfitted” for marriage in both body and soul, Rickie evokes “Brünnhilde in the first scene of *Götterdämmerung*” (82), which indicates a complete miscomprehension of his relationship with Agnes, and ironically foreshadows the exact opposite of what their marriage will be like.

Brünnhilde’s lines in the opera run as follows:

How would I love you, if I did not let you go forth to new deeds, dear hero? One anxiety makes me hesitate—that I was too meager a reward for you. What the gods taught me, I have given you, a rich hoard of holy runes.

(*Götterdämmerung* Act 1, Scene1)⁸

A couple of lines later, Brunhilde says, “do not despise the poor creature” although it is actually Agnes who called Rickie a “[p]oor boy!” (Forster, *The Longest* 9) in the first chapter, defining her relationship with him as based on abhorrence and pity. In his answer, Ansell calls Rickie’s attention to “Elsa in the question scene of *Lohengrin*” (82). The scene is Elsa and Lohengrin’s wedding night, when Lohengrin tries to calm Elsa, whose mind is troubled by Ortrud, giving more and more away about his holy origin. Breaking her promise not to ask Lohengrin where he came from and what his name was, she asks her famous questions, “Whence did you come?” and “What is your origin?” thus destroying their happiness.⁹

As we learn, Rickie's life is much less heroic than either of these stories. A parody of his story comes earlier, in Chapter 8, from Mrs. Lewin, an "always present, always hungry, and always tired" chaperone (44), who accompanies Agnes on her second visit to Cambridge. When Rickie's surprise announcement of his engagement to Agnes clearly evokes some tension in Ansell, to ease the atmosphere Mrs. Lewin tells the story of her dove, Parsival, who was mistakenly painted green when her "knife-boy painted the dove's cage with the dove inside" (77). The bright green Parsival was then put in a cage with the bantams until his cage dried, but the bantams, probably taking him "for a parrot or a hawk" picked out all his feathers. Mrs Lewin then says to the knife-boy, "This is the end of Parsival," at which point he bursts into tears (*ibid.*). Even though Rickie eventually leaves Agnes and returns to his 'brothers,' his engagement marks a shift in his trajectory and (like Amphortas) he cannot regain his heroic role.

'Brothers'¹⁰

Ansell and Rickie's relationship is very like that of Clive and Maurice in the posthumously published *Maurice*. There, it is Clive who opens Maurice's eyes to his own sexuality as a Cambridge undergraduate. He later marries Anne (another false redeemer), however, who "saves" him from his homosexuality, as he cannot bear the idea of the social stigma. Nonetheless, his marriage is a dead end, and, due to his ignorance about heterosexual conduct, he and Anne never have children. As the usually overlooked line reveals, the couple "ignored the reproductive and the digestive functions" (Forster, *Maurice* 84). Ansell, half Gurnemanz-half Kundry, is the guard of the Monsalvat-like homosocial Cambridge fellowship. Ansell warns Rickie about the dangers of his engagement in the letters cited above, and tries to dissuade him. He warns Rickie of being "unfitted" both in body and soul (Forster, *The Longest* 81). The bodily deficiency is that his hereditary lameness can be passed on to an offspring in an even worse form. As for the soul, Ansell describes it in Platonic terms:

You want and you need to like many people, and a man of that sort ought not to marry. "You never were attracted to that great sect" who can like one person only, and if you try to enter it, you will find destruction. . . .
Man wants to love mankind, woman wants to love one man.

(81)

This is his Gurnemanzian argument, but this Ansell-Kundry is jealous of Agnes-Kundry, whom he calls "not serious" and "not truthful" (82). Tilliard is perplexed by Ansell's agitation when Rickie announces his engagement. He observes, "[R]eally, you talk as if you were mixed up in the affair" (79). He is, indeed, and Rickie's involvement becomes clear from this paragraph in the previous chapter:

He [Rickie] was thinking of the irony of friendship—so strong it is, and so fragile. We fly together, like straws in an eddy, to part in the open stream. Nature has no use for us: she has cut her stuff differently. Dutiful sons, loving husbands, responsible fathers—these are what she wants, and if we are friends it must be in our spare time. Abram and Sarai were sorrowful, yet their seed became as sand of the sea, and distracts the politics of Europe at this moment. But a few verses of poetry is all that survives of David and Jonathan.

(64)

Rickie and Ansel are lying in the meadow in this scene, wearing garlands of buttercups and cow-parsley. When Rickie gets up to leave in order not to miss his lunch with Agnes, Ansell grabs his leg. “Rickie laughed, and suddenly overbalanced into the grass. Ansell, with unusual playfulness, held him prisoner. They lay there for a few minutes, talking and ragging aimlessly” (65). Rickie then pulls himself away and takes off, leaving his friend “a little vexed, for he was a young man with a great capacity of pleasure, and it pleased him that morning to be with his friend” (ibid.). The idyllic scene is reminiscent of Rickie’s primal scene, witnessing Agnes and Gerald’s embrace, and he does not realize that he has just missed his opportunity to experience for himself what he saw and appreciated so much on an abstract level. Yet he leaves, and Ansell declares war: “I fight this woman not only because she fights me, but because I foresee the most appalling catastrophe” (80).

Ansell’s premonitions come true, and he cannot stop the unfolding events. Rickie gets married, and is held captive in Klingsor’s castle, Dunwood House, a place of unreality, where he loses everything that he had valued in life. Herbert, the housemaster of Dunwood House, also a real Klingsor figure, sets out to “work” Rickie “in”: “Rickie’s program involved a change in values as well as a change of occupation” (154). Ernest and Agnes are so successful in controlling him that Rickie soon finds solace “neither in work for which he was unfitted nor in a woman who had ceased to respect him, and whom he had ceased to love” (183). The quest for ‘real existence’ becomes a struggle for spiritual survival: “He did not aspire to beauty or wisdom, but he prayed to be delivered from the shadow of unreality that had begun to darken the world” (152). Yet, the real blow comes when Agnes gives birth to a deformed child who only survives only for a week. Rickie’s last hope is gone, and he realizes that “the lesson he had learnt so glibly at Cambridge should be heeded now; no child should ever be born to him again” (184). Although he still performs his duties obediently at Dunwood House, his spiritual decline is inevitable.

There is another significant event that takes place during this process: Rickie learns that Stephen Wonham is his half-brother, but he rejects him, following Agnes’s instructions. The way this unfolds is key to understanding Rickie’s fate. Rickie and Agnes are engaged and they visit Rickie’s only

living relative, Mrs. Failing. She lives in Cadover, “the perilous house” (110) where “all the family breezes” start. Stephen informs them upon their arrival that their train had run over and killed a child at the local Roman crossing. The death of the child foreshadows both that of Agnes and Rickie’s daughter, and Rickie’s own death, which takes place at exactly the same place, in a similar fashion. The irritated Stephen, upset with his benefactor, Mrs. Failing, for not already having had a bridge built there, confronts Rickie with the facts. “Two children were kicking and screaming at the Roman crossing. Your train, being late, came down on them. One of them was pulled off the line, but the other was caught. How will *you* get out of that?” (95, emphasis mine).

Cadover is “neither a pretty place nor fertile” (98), with Cadbury Rings in its vicinity, which the young couple visit with their hostess and Stephen. The Rings (another Wagnerian allusion) are “curious rather than impressive,” (125) and are actually an ancient burial ground for soldiers. “A bank of grass enclosed a ring of turnips, which enclosed a second bank of grass, which enclosed more turnips, and in the middle of the pattern grew one small tree” (97). It is here that, slightly annoyed by her nephew, Mrs. Failing, in her desire to upset him, tells Rickie that Stephen is his brother in a cruel, teasing way.

But he heard her no longer. He was gazing at the past, which he had praised so recently, which gaped ever wider, like an unhallowed grave. Turn where he would, it encircled him. It took visible form: it was this double entrenchment of the Rings. His mouth went cold, and he knew that he was going to faint among the dead. He started running, missed the exit, stumbled on the inner barrier, fell into darkness—.

(130)

Stephen, who knows nothing about his origin at this point, comes to help. When Rickie comes to, he wakes with a cry, calling to mind Kundry’s awakening in *Parsifal*, but whereas for her the cry (Act III) indicates breaking free of Klingsor’s curse, Rickie’s cry is “not of horror, but of acceptance” (130). He calls his brother’s name, but he immediately hears his own name called, twice, as he did in the dell—another circular sphere—by Agnes, who in the same motherly manner “caught him to her breast” (*ibid.*). When Mrs. Failing realizes that a scandal might make things uncomfortable for her, she decides to send Stephen away for a couple of days. The unsuspecting boy comes to say goodbye, as he feels sorry for the frail guest, and calls his name. Whereas Agnes always calls him by his first name, Stephen, as Rickie’s social inferior, he addresses him by his last name. This evokes the spirit of the Cambridge ‘brothers,’ as they all call each other by their family names. After the first call, Rickie hesitantly starts toward the window, only to end up in Agnes’s arms.

He thought he had never seen her so beautiful. She was stopping his advance quite frankly, with widespread arms. "Elliot!" He moved forward—into what? He pretended to himself he would rather see his brother before he answered; that it was easier to acknowledge him thus. But at the back of his soul he knew that the woman had conquered, and that he was moving forward to acknowledge her. "If he calls me again—" he thought. "Elliot!" "Well, if he calls me once again, I will answer him, vile as he is." He did not call again.

(137–38)

Thus, Rickie's trip to the dead does not provide him with knowledge. He rejects his brother's call, which is also his mother's call, as Stephen's voice is later characterized as uncannily reminiscent of their mother's. When eventually Rickie follows Stephen and leaves Dunwood House, it is the return of their mother's voice that brings Rickie round:

The words were kind; yet it was not for their sake that Rickie plunged into the impalpable cloud. In the voice he had found a surer guarantee. Habits and sex may change with the new generation, features may alter with the play of a private passion, but a voice is apart from these. It lies nearer to the racial essence and perhaps to the divine; it can, at all events, overleap one grave.

(257–58)

The voice as the return of the repressed is a trope we addressed in earlier chapters. Of course, this can happen when *logos* is gone. For Rickie, as the Schopenhauer-informed Wagner would put it, the world of 'phenomenal appearance' has nothing more to offer, so he succumbs to the music of Stephen's voice. Stephen, a Dionysian figure on account of his numerous Pan references¹¹ and his "sacred passion for alcohol" (267), offers a Schopenhauerian-Nietzschean solution here. Being saved by Stephen, Rickie gives up the world of representation in order to free himself in the primal flow of life. In this interpretation, his death is just a technicality: his writing lives on, as he is published posthumously. However, Nietzsche is no longer a Wagnerite by the time of *Parsifal*, and perhaps Forster has another purpose here too.

With Stephen, the mother's story comes out, her 17 days of happiness. While being married to Rickie's father, she fell in love with a young farmer, and the two eloped to Stockholm. He drowned in the sea when the two were out swimming, however, and she returned to England to her husband and the young Rickie, whom she had also left behind. Like Parsifal's mother, a rebel in Trevelyan's version, Rickie's mother transgresses the social norms and sacrifices everything for her true desire. Although she failed, she had those magical 17 days. The fate of Ansell, who is certainly not a winner in this plot either, is described as follows: "Failure would

await him, but not disillusionment" (177). It is the latter that corrupts Rickie's soul, so that he becomes "heroic no longer" (255). Even though Rickie "wearily" redeems the redeemer (Stephen) by pulling the drunk man off the railroad tracks, Rickie himself is unredeemable. He fails in the same way his short stories do in their inability to "get inside life" (144). Ultimately, he at least learns what his mistake was: before he dies, he proclaims, "(m)y character is to blame for our catastrophe" (277). Thus by the end, Rickie, so well acquainted with the classics, lives up to the aphorism *gnothi sauton* on the entrance of Apollo's Temple, but he never gets inside it to read maxim eight on the wall: *sauton isthi*, "Be thyself," which is the message the reader walks away with.

Stephen achieves both Delphic commandments intuitively. From the epilogue-like last chapter the reader construes that Ansell lives in Stephen's house not far from Cadover, Agnes has remarried and is now the mother of a child, and Rickie's writing, posthumously published, achieved relative success. Stephen has a daughter named after his (and Rickie's) mother, so both the mother's transgression and Rickie's imagination live on for posterity. The Jewish homosexual (Ansell) and the "accident" (Stephen) form a new brotherhood in the English countryside, thereby refusing to erase the Other, as would be Wagner's recipe. Another aspect in which Forster goes against Wagner is the 'renunciation of desire,' which is at the very root of Rickie's fall. Although we can see various failed attempts at such a renunciation in Wagner—such as Alberich's curse of love or Klingsor's self-castration—in Rickie's case it takes the form of abandoning his Cambridge 'brothers' in order to answer society's interpellation. With the allusion to David and Jonathan, the sexual identification of the Cambridge brotherhood, and, of course, that of the Grail knights of Monsalvat, turns both of these groups into gay communities where the members' desires (may it be spiritual or physical) become sanctified. *Parsifal* had been read in a similar vein almost immediately after it appeared on stage, but Forster's self-evident use of the opera as a gay palimpsest adopts it as one of the foundational texts of queer mythology.

I proposed two ways in which myth and music may interact in Chapter 2, but *The Longest Journey* reveals a third type of relationship. Forster's re-appropriation of the Parsifal legend capsizes its Wagnerian use in the opera, queering the pitch of *Parsifal*, to borrow Wayne Koestenbaum's term. Wagner employs the legend to erase any kind of *otherness* as its *dénouement*, celebrating the total elimination of sexual and racial difference. While Wagner is trying to save Aryan culture this way, the renunciation of desire symbolically kills music as well. Due to the *erotic* characteristics of music established in "The Artwork of the Future," the anti-*erotic* ending of the opera is also necessarily anti-musical. Ironically, music gains supremacy in the very piece of Wagner's *oeuvre* in which it also gets annihilated. Forster sets out to snatch back this pillar of Wagnerian religion and use *Parsifal* in an alternative, queer mythology.

Forster's strategy is similar to Adriana Cavarero's attempt in her influential *In Spite of Plato* to unfold the patriarchal symbolic order and start weaving an alternative representational system by re-appropriating its mythic figures. She claims that mythic characters are especially powerful because they "express in a concentrated way the symbolic order that shapes" them, as their role is to activate "a sense of self-recognition" (Cavarero 1) and to conform to the development of the symbolic order in which they appear. Thus, they serve as forceful cultural symbols, yet may also be used to trigger a self-*un*recognition if activated within a different framework. Snatching these characters from the context of their exclusive, ideological use opens space for the emergence of different perspectives, where mythic figures still serve as beacons, but illuminate a radically different landscape. Like Cavarero's "enterprise of theft" (9), Forster's *Parsifal* is turned against its 'original' symbolic network. The Wagnerian 'original' is of course an appropriation itself, and *The Longest Journey* undermines not only its ideological employment of the archetypal character, but also the inner logic of the opera's plotting, thus incorporating both Parsifal and *Parsifal* into queer mythology. Does this then make for a postmodern Forster? Rather, *The Longest Journey* is a clear example of bi-directional intertextuality, in which the earlier *Parsifal* gets transformed by the later text.

Notes

- 1 Based on Gatens' conceptualization of the terms, I use the notions of masculinity and femininity "as forms of sex-appropriate behaviours," which are "manifestations of a historically based culturally shared phantasy about male and female biologies," while the terms 'male' and 'female' generally designate biological difference (13). In accordance with this, the terms 'man' and 'woman' refer to animate male and female subjectivities—in their sexed bodies and above-described complexities. On the grounds of these considerations, I understand gender as the body in its situatedness, or "biology-as-lived in a social and historical context" (14).
- 2 See the examples of Hanslick and Stravinsky in Chapter 1.
- 3 Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm*, 51.
- 4 Rickie's short stories are very much like the young Forster's, see, for instance, "The Story of a Panic."
- 5 "Cambridge" is the title of Part I. The similarity between the tripartite structure of the novel and Wagner's operas has been pointed out by several critics.
- 6 Although Forster probably agreed with some of Shaw's socialist views.
- 7 Similarly, when Rickie is desperately looking for 'life,' he is not able to find it.
- 8 Translated by Andrew Porter.
- 9 Translated by Chris Wood.
- 10 Forster dedicated the novel to his Cambridge 'Brothers,' the Apostles. The society granted him membership in 1901. See: Bradshaw, xi.
- 11 These include his singing of bawdy songs and expertly blowing melodies in a grass leaf, his makeshift syrinx.

5 The Dispersion of the Acoustic Self

The remainder of this book marks as many openings as closures. The novels in the previous three chapters were scrutinized in the light of three specific musical topics, and—with the focus limited to English modernism—the texts themselves represented a particular period in a cultural orbit. These limitations served to sharpen the focus of the argument and to highlight certain specificities in the modernist efforts at musicalization. In contrast, the following analyses of novels will broaden the scope to ‘jazz’ and ‘rave’ fiction so that they function as a foil to the previous readings and to discover if and to what extent the acoustic self is applicable to narratives beyond modernism. The novels to be discussed in this chapter were written toward the end of the twentieth century, one from each side of the Atlantic. Rafi Zabor’s *The Bear Comes Home* (1998) builds on the American jazz tradition, while Trevor Miller’s *Trip City* (1989) is deeply rooted in the UK club scene of the 1980s.

As endings often return to the beginning, let us recall Nancy’s question posed at the beginning of this book, “Is listening something of which philosophy is capable?” (*Listening* 1). Contrasting the two French verbs, *entendre* (to hear, to understand) and *écouter* (to listen), he differentiates between two types of listening: one that aims at making sense and one that senses resonance. Dehierarchizing the intelligible and the sensible, or *logos* and *aesthesis*, Nancy proposes that through listening, the subject makes sense of itself not as an objectified *presence* to be understood, something that “is always already given,” (21) but as tension, a resonance, a possibility.

The production and reception of music throughout the twentieth century reconfigure the very relationship between music and the body, and in doing so foreground the senses and the bodily aspects of listening (along with music-making). This is a sufficiently complex area to be the topic of a separate discussion, so I will limit my scope to questions about subjectivity, temporality, and embodiment in jazz and electronic music, in order to trace significant changes in music-making and perception brought about by the postmodern era. As explained in Chapters 1 and 2, the embodiment of music is probably one of the reasons behind the imagining of a consciousness, a voice, in instrumental music. Also, the bodily involvement in music is clearly

a reason for its affinity with sensuality and sexuality, which remains in place even with the technological disembodiment of music in the twentieth century. My main focus is on the bodily embeddedness of music as event, for which jazz and electronic music offer good grounds with their heightened focus on negating and crossing boundaries.

While it would be futile to attempt to define jazz within the limits of these pages (or at all for that matter), one of its main characteristics since the 1960s has been to defy formal, artistic, and technical limitations. This opening up to boundless expression also meant that the boundaries were set by the limitations of the body. The human body was the source and the measure of music until the technological developments of the twentieth century. As pianist and composer Vijay Iyer observes: “Music and humanity have arisen in tandem, the former out of the bodily activity of the latter, and so music necessarily bears rhythmic traces of our embodiment: pulse, phrase, gesture, ornament” (287). Pushing the musical limits to the bounds of the possibilities afforded by the human body is what jazz explores in some of its forms, such as free jazz.

Because of its non-human source, electronic music goes beyond human possibilities—and it is this *beyond* that interests me in the rave novel and its involvement with electronic dance music (EDM). In contrast to jazz, we have a clear-cut definition of EDM, thanks to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, aimed to ban rave parties prohibiting the public performance of music that is “wholly or predominantly characterized by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats.”¹ While the music is machine generated, its sensual features remain—if not intensify. To return to Iyer:

Pulse-heavy electronic dance music often makes sonic references to the stomping of feet and to sexually suggestive slapping of skin. It is indeed rather telling that today, the most widespread uses of electronic music are in contexts meant for dance; the least humanly embodied music is ironically that which is *most* dependent on our physical engagement with it.
(287, italics in original)

While electronic music goes beyond human possibilities, jazz presents an in-between phase, where the limits are reached, and the embodiment of music culminates in the self-reflection of the performer: a self-sensing, a listening. The following readings of *The Bear Comes Home* and *Trip City* further complicate the notion of the acoustic self by sounding out the topics of musical embodiment, disembodiment, and hyperembodiment from an intermedial perspective. A question that guides the investigations is whether the novels rooted in these new traditions are *capable of listening* in the Nancean sense.

The Bear Comes Home

Zabor’s novel is about a budding alto-saxophonist, his struggles to make it in the music world, and develop his own style (inspired by Coltrane and

Coleman). Fictional and real places, made-up figures, and real musicians merge in this work, adding to its atmosphere of immersion in the jazz universe. As a former jazz drummer and critic, Zabor not only provides an inside look into the New York jazz scene and the underworld of rural music club life, but also gives a knowledgeable account of the development of jazz—juxtaposed with the development of a personal musical style that the Bear works on throughout the story. One thing that is important to mention is the protagonist is a bear, a talking bear, to be more precise. And he meets and plays with real life musicians like Lester Bowie, Steve McCall, Arthur Blythe, Roscoe Mitchell, and Ornette Coleman, among others.

The Bear is witty, sensitive, original, and empathic, yet somewhat eccentric, which is quite understandable considering his circumstances. He decides to give up his life as a street entertainer with his friend/owner, Jones, and enter the jazz arena. An impromptu appearance at the Tin Palace brings him recognition among some jazz musicians, but also draws the attention of the authorities, who take the Bear away during his second appearance (and first real concert) at the jazz joint. The concert, however, is recorded, and an album is released while the Bear is locked up in prison. The success of the record enables him to sign up with a major label and earns him a contract for a studio album and a promotional tour. Once out of jail, the Bear falls in love with Iris, a medical researcher, and the reader is provided with more technical details of ursine-human sex than they probably ever thought possible. Neither the music nor the sex scenes prove off-key though, and neither are gratuitous.

Music and sexuality are equally important to the Bear's beariness in the novel. In his existential quest, the Bear sees both of them as paths to explore his spirituality, and he has immense capacities in both. While the bear factor cannot be fully nailed down (a common feature shared by a branch of animal characters in fiction, whether they are giant insects or humpback whales), three aspects seem relevant to its significance: Although the Bear is an existential (anti)hero and he makes explicit allusions to his Gregor Samsa-esque circumstances (which result not from him being a bear, but from being an individual embedded in this world), the fact that he is a bear is actually quite anti-Samsa-esque: despite the overabundance of references to Kafka's *Metamorphosis* in the story, the Bear was born a bear. He has always been a talking bear.

The second aspect is that this individual is an artist, and his beariness illustrates the outsider position of the artist in society. In particular, being a jazz musician guarantees his monstrosity as an inhabitant of a nightlife-underworld governed by the seemingly ruleless rules of spontaneity, improvisation, and syncopation. This ursine saxophone player carries the traditional connotation of the jazz/blues musician's *dealing with the devil*.² The bear does not deal with either devil or god, only with Beauty. He is strictly a Platonist: "an ideal society would be ruled by saxophone-playing bear kings," he claims. His metaphysical, musical quest gets clearly expressed in

an interview: “Right down to it we’re in love with beauty,” (Zabor 180). Plato’s *Symposium* and the path to absolute beauty provides the program for the Bear’s musical endeavors, yet the Platonic quest for beauty will turn out to be more complicated than it first appears.

The third aspect of beariness is also related to metaphysics. Depicting the male and the female as different species takes their supposed polarity to the extreme. This polarization is related to the Platonic disposition that provides the ground for Zabor’s dialectics, with both sex and music tested as possible bridges between the sensuous and the spiritual throughout the novel. This is where music initially seems to overcome sex: while both are sensuous, music is also perceived as spiritual. The Bear manages to break through the metaphysical ceiling toward the end of the novel in a tour-de-force Coltranian solo — suggestively played at the opening of the Bridge, a jazz joint inside the body of the Brooklyn Bridge. However, what happens at the Bridge is not the reconciliation of the physical and the transcendent, but the recognition that the quest for beauty itself presupposes a static, pre-existing self. I will return to this scene in detail after retracing the Bear’s steps in getting there.³

Early on in his life, the Bear realizes: “if you do anything the least bit unusual or interesting in this world, people will figure out a way to catch and kill you for it” (110). The “portrait of the artist as a hunted animal” (68), however, turns out to be more of a self-hunt, because of the Bear’s disgust at to his own monstrosity. Peculiarly though, this monstrosity lies not as much in being a talking bear, but in his musicality:

this powerful equipage that he had always prized above all his other contents: that fine instrumentality that played itself into intelligible shapes of sound and knew what lay ahead uncharted into the sea of time, and could fashion forms that lived their way into the obscurities of that future and thereby lit them: it seemed hideous to him now.

(114)

In the light of this realization, the Bear begins to turn inward with self-disgust, “dropping like a stone down a well of himself in the dark: not a sound: hadn’t reached water yet ... all his previous solitudes had been masks that this deeper one had worn” (ibid.) Thus, his real imprisonment originates from himself, or the lack of finding himself, not from the authorities—and it is his music that catalyzes this crisis:

His beautiful talent was an ugly thing at heart, and if it came across authentic beauty in its march, it soiled whatever trace was resident there with its own smudge, trod the music into the mud and marched on hungry and destructive as before.

(115)

As a sensitive artist, he feels that he is not ready. He feels he has given all of himself in his very first concert already and cannot but keep repeating himself, to “imitate himself” (116), as he realizes that musically he is not where he wants to be; he knows what he should sound like, but there is no essence in his playing, no authenticity. He feels he is faking it.

Billy Hart, a more experienced musician, tells him: “The *music’s* like that, B. Whatever level you get to, there’s always something further to reach for, something you haven’t seen and didn’t know was there. Once you stop feeling that, you’re finished, basically” (50, italics in original). And the Bear sets out to further improve his musical skills, trying to establish an originality, creating his musical self. As Hart later adds, “It was only by this kind of inner substance that you could endure decades of unbelievable bullshit and still have something left to play” (355). For the Bear, the battle is that of form versus content. He needs more practice and experience to reconcile the two, and practically turns into a practiceoholic. Also, and perhaps more importantly, he goes on a tour with a band, learning to listen to others first, to be able to hear himself.

Are we stuck then with the old question of an inherent essence or self? Not exactly. The Bear sets out to create a self *through* his music. What he wants is to establish a voice that makes him feel authentic. He wants to get away from the splitting experience of *self-expression*, through which he relates to himself as re-presentation, and find *self-sameness* in music instead. His problem as he expresses it is

not the intensity, but self-division. If I can’t play like a whole spirit again, I’ll give up. I didn’t come to music in order to find some new way of being all fucked up. I don’t think you should have to cripple yourself into beauty.

(194)

The last sentence shows that the Bear’s Platonist credo, *Right down to it we’re in love with beauty*, has become highly complicated by this point, and yet it may still serve as a guide, as it distills the Bear’s struggles to its key elements: we (I), love, and beauty. Having to cripple oneself into beauty presupposes that both self and beauty are fixed, rigid forms. The Bear needs to move away from this static interpretation, and love—that is, the *eros* of Plato’s *Symposium* (more specifically the *eros* of Diotima’s teaching)—is probably the best companion to achieve this. Diotima’s *eros* starts with the physical and aims toward a wider sense of love. Progress of any kind is rooted in *eros* and leads through it. As Luce Irigaray points out, *eros* is “both the guide and the way, above all a mediator” (182). *Eros* leads one to knowledge both in the practical and the metaphysical sense. But it does even more: this already existing bridge, or the intermediary, that comes between the two concepts keeps them in a state of constant renewal. Irigaray further explains, “[t]he mediator is never abolished in an infallible knowledge.

Everything is always in movement, in becoming. And the mediator of everything is, among other things, or exemplarily, love. Never completed, always evolving" (ibid.). It is his *erotic* desire that drives the Bear forward in his musicality.

And eventually he does find the right voice—giving himself up in music creates a new sense of wholeness. He begins to feel that

he and not the saxophone was the instrument, and that all the work he put in was no more than making sure the keys worked smoothly, the pads didn't stick and the reed wasn't thick with slobber. ... when the right moment came, it was time to step aside and be played upon.

(Zabor 358)

The Bear is becoming the *forma formans*—that is the forming form—in the music the moment he becomes a vehicle for that music. To recall Naomi Cumming's terminology, his *sonic self* is reached, he has become a real soloist, who brings music to "life" (*The Sonic* 27). The way in which Bear finds his voice is described in very practical terms, listing the keys, the pads, and the reed, while also calling attention to the fact that musical sounds are generated by the performer's bodily activity. The beauty the Bear is after is dependent on the embodiment of music and his *sonic self* is *per-formed* through the action of playing the musical tones.

The Bear's issues with monstrosity, authenticity, and self-division point in a direction where, through his extensive practice, he may not only acquire mastery of his instrument, but also unlearn his (static) self—or rather his conception of the self as static. He needs not a bridge to reconcile contrasting aspects of his subjectivity, but a radical move from *logos* to *aesthesis*. To return to Nancy, the Bear needs to listen, to become a listening subject, which is "always yet to come, spaced, traversed, and called by itself, sounded by itself." (*Listening* 21) As the sonorous event is *contemporaneous* with listening, the listener "enter[s] that spatiality" which "opens up in me as well as around me, and from me as well as toward me: it opens me inside me as well as outside." These multiple openings allow for the *self* to occur, which senses itself "at the same time outside and inside" (14). As the musician is both the initiator and the listener of the sonorous event, outside and inside carry extra layers of complexity. As the sonic self emerges through the musical event, the musician-as-listener simultaneously realizes and senses itself during the performance.

The Bear's characterization in the novel through his musical journey creates a correspondence between the developments in his artistic and personal life. His musical dilemmas and choices affect those around him and the risks and losses described by Cumming become especially tangible for those who are closest to him: Iris and Jones. The Bear has to sort his life out through music; however, his musical steps spark transformations in these two other characters, which are then realized to different degrees. Both characters

embark on a quest for their self, which is triggered by their relationship with the Bear: "I want a self," says Iris, and not long after her statement, Jones also claims to "need more of a self" (269, 303), as if echoing the characters of *The Waves*.

The Bear's relationship with Jones, his best and oldest friend, fades in the wake of his musical career. Taking care of the Bear does not serve as an escape route for him any longer: with the Bear's professional success, Jones realizes that, instead of solving someone else's problems, eventually he has to think about and act for himself. Their friendship, seemingly lost at first, transforms and after an initial break reshapes itself on more equal terms. Similarly, the Bear is losing Iris, who quit her job and gave up her New York apartment to move in with him in upstate. After taking back her daughters from her ex-husband, she becomes overly protective of them and excludes the Bear from their life. Of course, it does not help that the daughters, less accepting than the couple's jazz musician friends, have misgivings about a bear sleeping with their mother. It seems clear though that it is the Bear himself who makes those around him aware of their situations; he acts as an agent to induce their change. Their lives are already a mess before they meet him, but through their contact with the Bear they realize that they want a change and they also begin to see what that change entails.

As the relationship between Iris and the Bear evolves, at one point, he feels that their sexual encounters carry an almost divine element. His attempts, however, to share the experience of the metaphysical with his lover fails. In spite of their expectations, their increasingly intense sexual encounters do not actually deepen their connection and bring them closer. "[H]ow could they be so intimate and he still feel that she was drifting away from him," (262) wonders the Bear. Then, a little later, he thinks about it in more musical terms: "the moves were better, the sequences more finely worked, the transitions smoother, the view more gratifying ... and yet ... what bothered him?" (267). When their relationship gets overtly strained, Iris also desperately tries to communicate with him through their bodily contact, but to no avail. At certain points of their relationship they each think that carnal communication would take them further than their verbal interactions. Yet it is music that eventually opens the way to a new possibility of drawing them together, not because it carries a superior knowledge, but because it enables the Bear to move away from a teleological *eros* toward an *eros* that resonates, that is, an *eros* that listens.

The recognition for the Bear arrives in a solo that lasts more than 30 minutes, and which Zabor describes in as many as 15 pages. To bring all the *erotic* threads together, the solo is, of course, "the B-flat-minor-blues that formed the third part of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*" (445). Zabor reconfirms his musical proficiency in this *ekphrastic* marathon, while the musical terms give more and more space to the Bear's visions, as he becomes the instrument he wanted to be: music starts flowing *through* him. The origin of his musical transubstantiation is his actual love, Iris, or rather her

lack (the definition of *eros*), and the ladder toward beauty is music. Finally, the painstaking toils of the saxophone-playing bear king come to fruition: the Bear dissolves in the Dionysiac:

not just outside time and space but blown clean out of individuation too. . . . Notes were nothing. Each note was itself infinite. It made perfect sense.

Had the Bear still existed he would have laughed beyond being drunk on beauty and drowned in light. Had the Bear ever existed he would have plunged into these seas and tried out his stroke in them. Were he not himself these seas, and these seas him. It was so simple it was inconceivable not to have seen it all those blinkered bearshaped years.
(454–55)

Even the ruleless rules are broken; something that only jazz allows for. That is how the Bear knows he has come home. At the climax of his spiritual path, *time and space* collapse for the Bear as he steps out of the realm of *individuation*. Up to that moment, he has never been where he wanted to be either in his music or in his own body. His self-realization occurs through losing himself and becoming an instrument—instead of a self. The moment comes when he dissolves as an *individuum* and creates his *sonic self*. And we could stop here, but then, stepping back from the microphone the bear starts listening to his band:

It took him longer than the audience to recognize what he was doing, took a long minute for him to realize, as one of Hatwell's choruses rose to a hint of climax in its middle but then fell back into its own smooth stride, that he was doing something he would have sworn he would never do in front of an audience again on this side of the sky or any other: a shuttle of hips, a dip of shoulder, the feel of boards beneath his feet, the happiness of the wood. It was hard to believe it but he liked the way it went down. He was compelled to admit how pleasant and inevitable and unconflicted it seemed. There were an odd few hundred reasons for him to object, but he submitted his essential substance to none of them. The rules were blown.

The Bear did what he felt like doing.
You know what he did. He danced.

(456)

And here something really interesting happens: the Bear not only performs the twofold meaning-making of his subjectivity through his masterful solo, he also reaches a bodily self-awareness, self-sameness, or self-presence through music. Music entering his body creates a sensuous experience, he is

able to feel, sense, and touch himself: the musician-as-listener performs his acoustic self through this return.

The problem with the Platonic ascent to absolute beauty remains—whether one ascribes the teaching to the philosopher or to Diotima—what is left behind: the body. Nancy’s essay “On the Soul” offers a possible way to address this issue and to read this scene. While talking of the soul, Nancy is concerned with the body and recasts the soul as “the experience of the body” (*Corpus* 134). He points out how the body only exists as self-sensing, self-touching: “[t]he soul is the presence of the body,” and the body in turn is “the inside, which senses it is outside” (128, 131). The body’s existence, *ex-* as ‘out’ + *sistence* as ‘a stance,’ happens as the “body accedes to itself as outside” (128).

The *self-present* and the *contingent* aspects of human subjectivity, to recall Kramer’s terms, need to be rethought through the body. Following Nancy, we cannot talk about the self without talking about the body. This has repercussions on the *subject* and also on *music* if we turn the analogy around. Both come into being through an opening to the outside, and through the body sensing itself *at the same time outside and inside*. We cannot talk about music without talking about the body.

The Bear’s recognition of his involuntary dance returns him into his body, his *extension* and *exposition*, and therefore his self. “The rules are being blown” on several levels: the rules of music as played by the band in their free jazz performance, the bear’s own rule about not dancing in public, and the rules of the Platonic ascent to absolute beauty, as the bodily is *not* left behind. On the contrary, the full scope of beauty is reached when *the body accedes to itself as outside*. Nancy reminds us that music, and the musicalization of fiction, cannot leave the body behind. It starts and ends with the body *in relation to itself*. As in the moment of the Bear’s self-realization, “the music moved him. That is to say, he moved” (456).

It is important to state again that it is a return. The Bear’s rule not to dance in public is a result of his previous role as a street performer, a dancing bear. Returning into his body through self-sensing, self-touching marks the Bear’s recognition of the body as the very *access to self*, also highlighting the corporeal dimensions of his acoustic self. This heightened emphasis on the flesh gains even more traction in *Trip City*.

Sample, Loop, and the Mix

Trevor Miller’s *Trip City* was one of the first novels to provide an inter-medial literary account of the rave scene. Published in 1989, the book was sold along with a five-track cassette soundtrack with house music by A Guy Called Gerald; it was probably the first such multimedia book project. Rather than focusing on its literary qualities, I chose this novel for being a forerunner to other, better known, dancefloor-based literature⁴ and a cultural snapshot of a musical subculture that changed popular music to a large

degree. The text is a hard read, mainly due to its staccato style, which Miller explains in an interview: “Originally I wanted to write the whole thing with a 4/4 rhythm to mimic House beats, but that became a bit too much” (Barron 48). Traces of the failed attempt remained in the published version, as will be clearly visible in the textual examples. The protagonist of the novel is Valentine, a club promoter, who is to revive an underground act with two of his former DJs, Fly and Jack. The plot circles around the mysterious hallucinogenic drug, FX, and Valentine’s entanglement with the just as mysterious Virginia. Thus, music is once again thrown into the pot with *ecstatic* (cf. *ekstasis*) agents, such as hallucinogens and intense sexuality. Music, however, also serves as the means to regain one’s *stasis*, as the examples will show. As proposed above, subjectivity, temporality, and embodiment will be the focal points to open up the topic and reveal further intricacies about the listening subject.

“The way hip-hop collapsed art, commerce and interactive technology into one mutant animal from its inception seems to have almost predicated the forms culture would have to take to prosper in the digital age,” writes Greg Tate in “Nigs R Us” (7). Besides art, commerce, and technology, hip-hop, along with contemporary experimental music, also reshaped the relations between music and fiction, breaking up traditional genres and media. An iconic example is Bill Laswell’s mix of a sample of William S. Burroughs’ reading from *The Western Lands* with industrial sounds and drum loops (juxtaposing fiction, music, and sound). I will first turn to Paul D. Miller’s hip-hop manifesto, *Rhythm Science*, to enter this rich field of inquiry. Sound artist and DJ Paul D. Miller (aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid) takes the last part of his moniker from a character by Burroughs, whose cut up method is a kind of literary equivalent of sampling and hip-hop aesthetics. Miller consciously creates his musical personas for different art projects. The haphazard theories, interests, and inspirations presented in *Rhythm Science* stretch the boundaries of scholarship, yet this is exactly what makes the book a prime example of recent trends in the artistic conceptualization of post-modern identity, “at once completely superficial and deeply evocative of the postmodern fragmentation of unitary narrative” (Murray 134).

Sampling and the loop emerged as early as the mid-60s—with Steve Reich’s “It’s Gonna Rain” and “Come Out” among the earliest examples—but only gained real popularity and prominence from the 1980s on “with the Ensoniq Mirage (the first affordable digital sampler, 1985) and the Akai S1000 (1989) present in most recording studios” (Fulford-Jones), becoming the kernel of both popular and experimental dance, electronic, and hip-hop music. The emphasis on the equipment is crucial, as technology and sampling culture have always been closely connected, and it was in the digital age that hip-hop gained its overwhelming popularity. Perhaps, it is as a result of this connection that technology is not treated critically or with modernist skepticism, but with welcoming embrace, reconnecting music and the subject in a new sphere. As Miller writes,

Barring catastrophe, technology is not only here to stay, it now exists on an evolutionary scale. Combine everything from DNA sequencing to telepresent robotics to nano-engineering to space flight, and realize that we are embarking on the first steps toward transforming the species. Future generations won't have a "dependence" on technology. They will have technology as a core aspect of their existence.

(P. Miller 16)

With the digital revolution, and the Internet, continues Miller, the web became

the dominant metaphor for the way we think. It is a living network made up of the 'threads' of all the information moving through the world at any given moment. . . . Information and beats and rhythms never stay in one place. It's all about algorithyms: code is beats is rhythm is algorithym is digital.

(24)

The Cold War's fear of technology gave way to a "delirium of saturation" (29), which may prove problematic in several respects, as the perceived democratization of knowledge and information carries the possibility of unprecedented levels of control. It is not my purpose here to provide a critique of the phenomenon, however. Instead, my objective is to show how sampling culture works with the logic of internalizing outside data, employing "an endless recontextualizing as a core compositional strategy" (21). The saturation in information provides a new model for art that resonates with postmodern existence, and a new type of subjectivity: "If I internalize the environment around me, who is going to control how the information eventually resurfaces? It's an uncanny situation; the creative act becomes a dispersion of the self" (29). While identity becomes a fluid process for Miller, he shows an urge for old-fashioned narrative, a sense of continuity in the flow: "Back in the day, it was called alchemy, but in the hyperfluid environment of information culture, we simply call it the mix. Sampling seen in this light? I like to call it cybernetic jazz" (29). Despite its postmodern logic, sampling culture needs a (hi)story: the self as dispersion, as diaspora. Miller highlights the importance of social and cultural-historical self-awareness, weaving an alternative mythology of the self's trajectory, which I will quote at length to convey the torrential style of the text:

One hundred years ago, in his searing work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois contributed the concept of "double consciousness" to the American dialogue. . . . Jazz great Charles Mingus moved beyond Du Bois's dualities at the beginning of his autobiography, *Beneath the Underdog*, to a form of triple consciousness: 'In other words, I am three. One man stands forever in the middle, unconcerned, unmoved,

watching, waiting to be allowed to express what he sees to the other two.' Mingus shows us a third path and, in a sense, continues the dialogue around how much people need 'franchise identity' to modulate their perceptions of themselves. Where Du Bois saw duality and Mingus imagined a trinity, I would say that the twenty-first-century self is so fully immersed in and defined by the data that surrounds it, we are entering an era of multiplex consciousness.

(61)⁵

Miller's lines and his style of writing in general display characteristics of the mix culture, sampling ideas from a wide array of sources, with his argument often based on associations and juxtapositions not unlike Burroughs' cut up method. This is true about *Rhythm Science* as a whole; it is a book of ambiguities which clearly shows more breadth than depth, and which probably does not present a single new idea itself (as has been pointed out by its reviewers). Nonetheless, it was ranked among the 2004 Books of the Year by *Guardian Observer* (Harley 96). This is exactly what the remix is about: "Sampling is a new way of doing something that's been with us for a long time: creating with found objects" (P. Miller 25).

The anxiety of influence is replaced by "The Ecstasy of Influence," as novelist Jonathan Lethem points out in his eponymous essay published in *Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture*. Lethem argues that sampling is not only present in music, but in literary texts as well, and, what's more, it is the structuring principle of the human consciousness. "Any text is woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages, which cut across it through and through in vast stereophony" (43). These citations cannot be traced, are anonymous, and used unacknowledged, writes Lethem. The self thus finds a new essence in this new aesthetics. "The kernel, the souls—let's go further and say the substance, the bulk, the actual and valuable material of all human utterances—is plagiarism" (*ibid.*).

Sampling and the idea of the remix is not new. It is enough to think about Beethoven's 33 remixes of a waltz by Anton Diabelli or his own C Minor Piano Trio which he rearranged into a string quintet, Opus 104, and which also "owes a debt to Mozart."⁶ As a matter of fact, it is much more complicated to use samples these days than it was in Beethoven's era, as record companies have not risen to the task of dealing with sampling despite its prominence for more than several decades.⁷ Sampling has brought about more than copyright issues, however, and there is a significant difference between Beethoven's use of Diabelli's original waltz and looping a sample. The question moves from the original to the origin of music, as one of the interesting issues raised by electronic music concerns its radical reformulation of the connection between music and the human body.

As Iyer reminds us, music, being an "embodied, situated activity," is essentially contingent on the structure of the human body in its production, physical properties, and reception, including "the environment and culture

in which our musical awareness emerges” (273). He maintains that rhythm, “a complex, whole body experience,” in particular, hinges on the participant’s physical involvement in the musical experience (with its different cultural and individual manifestations). It also emphasizes the active role of the body in listening as a cognitive process. To highlight the physical embodiment of cognition, Iyer uses Smithers’ differentiation between processes that happen ‘in time’ or ‘over time’. The latter is a “product oriented activity,” such as solving a mathematical problem or painting a room, things that take time, yet “the fact that they take time is of no fundamental consequence to the result” (Iyer 275). In contrast, the temporal qualities of an ‘in time’ activity have a direct effect on “the overall structure of the process.” The speed of human speech, for instance, “exploits the natural timescales of lingual and mandibular motion as well as respiration. Accordingly, we learn (and indeed we are hardwired) to process speech at precisely such a rate” (ibid.). Thus, the mind simultaneously makes use of

the constraints and the allowances of the natural timescales of the body and the brain as a total physical system. In other words, ... *cognition chiefly involves in-time processes*. Furthermore, this claim is not limited simply to cognitive processes that require interpersonal interaction; it pertains to all thought, perception and action.

(276, italics in original)

Iyer goes on to explain how the participants of ‘in time’ “intersubjective activities, such as speech or music-making,” have an awareness of a “mutual embodiment” (276). The result of this awareness is a sense of ‘shared time’ between them. This becomes an important element in the temporal aspect of musical embodiedness during the listening process. Listening becomes a temporally simultaneous ‘co-performance’ with the musical performance. This is significantly different from ‘over time’ intersubjective activities, like reading, where the co-performance takes place on a completely separate temporal plane from the writing of the book. Musical fiction cannot recreate this aspect of the musical experience, although it would be interesting to look at such attempts. (While the Bear’s 30-minute-long final solo at the end of *The Bear Comes Home* may take about that much time to read, it will remain an approximation at best.) Iyer cites the most common example of participating ‘in time’ to music: dance.

As shown in the Bear’s example, his simultaneous ‘in time’ and ‘shared time’ experience with his band gave rise to his sense of self-presence. Further complications arise, however, with programmable equipment replacing human musicians, changing the bodily presence and the parameters of music-making. The formal characteristics of popular dance music have not changed much, but the physical possibilities and limitations of the musicians, which used to be the defining factors for those characteristics, no longer bear any defining significance. On top of this, hip-hop and DJ-ing

present an even more complex issue, as these types of music consciously play with the combination of physical and electronic presences and with ‘in time’ and ‘on time’ processes in creating music. The listener hears the manipulated samples, which may first carry the audial characteristics of human embodiment, yet which in the following moment might sound inhuman possibilities or human impossibilities, unsettling the listeners’ image of a human source in the music. Funnily enough, these manipulations (effects) are generally referred to as FX, which is also the name of the curious designer drug in *Trip City*. Such manipulations “alternately engage and confound our sense of embodied empathy” (Iyer 288) and also readjust the listeners’ focus on the only real-time physical bodily input in the music. The DJs themselves perform this embodiment, using their turntables as an “improvisational percussion meta-instrument” (ibid.). Pointing out the root of the word ‘manipulation’ (*manus*, hand), Iyer emphasizes the listeners’ focus on the act of the DJ-manipulator’s ironic “counter-embodiment” and their metamusical activity that turns the musical experience into “*recognition of the act of breaking music with the hands*” (ibid., italics in original).

Trip City

Trip City shows how a drastic—albeit involuntary—manipulation in the music can result in disrupting the ‘in time’ experience of the dancing crowd. At their opening night, Fly gets on stage to replace Jack behind the decks. Jack’s last house track is still playing on the left turntable, and Fly puts his first record on the right deck.

His hand shook slightly. The needle sat in the groove. . . . He punched start/stop on the deck. No sound in his cans. He was confused. The house track still cracked its way into the crowd. No sign of his white label. The disc was spinning. He did not understand.

(Miller, *Trip City* 174)

In his desperation, Fly makes the wrong move as he switches the cross-fader to his deck: “The V.U. lights stopped kicking. There was absolutely no sound. The crowd stood still. Faces turned toward the stage. People were booing. Fly heard a wail” (ibid.). The flow of the rhythm is broken, and the mistake of the DJ’s *manus* focuses all the attention on his bodily presence. This presence gets recognized only as it robs the dancing crowd of the basis of its ‘in-time’ co-performance. Even if music is often connected with *ekstasis*, it is actually the lack of it that pulls the dancers out of their dynamic status (*stasis*). Jack comes to his former friends’ rescue: “[He] dropped the needle back in place. . . . There was a loud oscillation. A space age sequence popped rhythmically. . . . The crowd was moving again” (ibid.). With the outer rhythm internalized, the dancing bodies regain their *ex-sistence* as described by Nancy.

Music provides equilibrium in another scene as well, when it helps Valentine to return from an intense flashback caused by FX. He visits Fly to get him enrolled as a DJ in the Tower, but suddenly finds himself lying on the floor. When he comes to, reality and hallucination intertwine:

Then it was Fly's face. Fly was standing over him, puzzled. He could see Valentine's fear. He went to touch Valentine's shoulder. The hand grew red fingernails. Valentine felt his cheek bleeding. The nails tore deeply. He reached for his face. There was a large plaster stuck on it.

. . . "Are you alright?" Fly was by the tape deck. There was a long hissing noise. The room reverberated. Fly could see he was slipping away. He understood that feeling, the notion of madness in a sane body. Perhaps the music would stabilize reality. Sometimes it worked. The power of the bass could root you to the floor. It was the only safe stimulant he possessed.

(95-96)

Music pulls the loose threads of Valentine's 'dispersed self' together. The *succession of repetitive beats*, synthetically produced to replicate the rhythm of the human body, serves to stabilize that body through its involuntary participation in a musical co-performance. This embodied engagement with disembodied music instigates self-recognition and self-presence. If rhythm works through the listener's bodily involvement in the cognitive process of listening, as Iyer points out, responding to it through the body may jump-start the body's cognitive processes. The effect, however, may be the opposite if bodily performance does not respond to or correspond with the music. Self-recognition and *unrecognition* happen simultaneously in a scene with Valentine and Virginia on the dancefloor:

The woman danced wildly. A gap was emerging around her. Young soul rebels edged further away. The spiraling arms were unavoidable. She was not a dancer. Her steps were permanently out of sync. Each handclap broke the beat. Jack curled his lip.

Valentine concentrated on the movement. Her street knowledge was a veil. Virginia's skirt rode up. Her dance steps were arcane. Taut muscles rippled on her thighs.

He could not face the ungainliness. It must be in his imagination. His beautiful vixen was nothing short of a fraud. The cracks gaped.

Hours spent in Northern soul all-nighters had paid off. He started with his feet. Kicking back and forth. His right leg feigning a slide. The arm movement was easy. Rolling backward into a snap. The adrenalin pounded. He felt free as a bird. The sweat poured. Valentine enjoyed the sense of power. He swayed faster.

She could not keep in time. The well-toned body was wasted below the shoulder. He did not want her anymore. Virginia had no soul, the only thing that separated her from the rest.

(188)

While probably this is the only moment in the entire novel that the protagonist Valentine enjoys himself, his pleasure comes concurrently with a bitter recognition. Miller uses the word ‘soul’ here, and Virginia’s dancing body reveals exactly that her beautiful body is *not* a body in the Nancean sense. If *the soul is the presence of the body*, her *ex-sistence* is broken by not being able to keep ‘in time’ with her self, lacking what Nancy calls a “unity of the coming to self as a ‘self-sensing’” (“On the Soul” 133). Virginia’s monstrosity is relatable to the Bear’s, but while the Bear catches himself *faking it* and eventually overcomes his lack of authenticity through self-sensing, she never becomes aware of her own absence and lack of sense (aesthesia). Instead of resonance and possibility, her dance moves reveal a conscious attempt to make sense of herself as an objectified presence. Valentine identifies Virginia as a *fraud* on the dance floor during this failing co-performance, as she cannot *keep in time* and her body does not participate in the listening. Since she has no soul, she does not have a body either. Indeed, the novel suggests that she does not really exist, but is the product of the synthetic drug FX that spreads in the novel like a virus.

As shown earlier, Kramer’s analogy between human subjectivity and music is based on their being positioned between a *self-presence* and a *contingent social constructedness*. While he associates this self-presence with a *sense of immediacy* and an *intimacy with one’s own embodiment*, disembodied, electronic music may expose the very *constructedness* of this immediacy insofar as the intimacy with one’s own embodiment comes from the ‘co-performance’ based on an illusion. This, however, does not mean that the role of the body is diminished. On the contrary, as Kodwo Eshun observes, “Sonically speaking, the posthuman era is not one of disembodiment but the exact reverse: it’s a hyperembodiment, via the Technics SL 1200” (452), which is the most commonly used turntable at music clubs. The changes in the production of music have certain ramifications in music as used in narrative fiction. As looking at jazz and rave illustrates, reaching the limits of the body in music and moving beyond them does not leave the body behind, but, rather, refocuses the attention on the body and reverberates music as a cultural trope for the self.

Notes

- 1 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, c.33.
- 2 The virtuoso’s Faustian pact with the devil has been the topic of several legends including those of nineteenth century violinist Niccolò Paganini and Delta blues guitarist and singer Robert Johnson. While the violin was traditionally associated

with the devil for centuries, the saxophone also maintained a diabolic reputation throughout the twentieth century. See: Michael Segell's *The Devil's Horn: The Story of the Saxophone, from Noisy Novelty to King of Cool*.

- 3 The protagonist's 'bearness' also allows Zabor to avoid directly addressing racial boundaries within the music scene.
- 4 For a thorough exploration of the genre, see: Morrison, *Dancefloor-Driven Literature: The Rave Scene in Fiction*.
- 5 Paul Miller traces hip-hop and DJ culture back to the cultural traditions of the African diaspora and besides drawing historical connections, he tracks the very logic of these cultural expressions in African musical traditions, including improvisation and the griots. Miller, then, relates the notion of multiplex consciousness more broadly to "the explosion in youth culture's engagement with electronic media through hip hop" (*Rhythm Science* 64).
- 6 Liner Notes. The Nash Ensemble: *Beethoven: Piano Quartet & String Quintet*. Hyperion, 2009.
- 7 The Sugarhill Gang's single *Rapper's Delight* (1979) was based on a "reconstituted loop ... it simultaneously introduced both rap and sampling to a worldwide audience" (Fulford-Jones); Dj Shadow's Endroduction, the "first completely sample-based album, was assembled from thousands of short musical segments using an AKAI MPC60 sampler" (Levine); German artist Johannes Kreidler used 70,200 samples in 33 seconds in his 2008 work "product placements" (Razocha 77).

Epilogue

Nattiez describes noise as “whatever is recognized as disturbing, unpleasant, or both” (*Music* 48) and suggests that music is probably best defined in contrast to it. The opposition between the two, however, may be specious. The analyses of novels in this book aimed to demonstrate that music in fiction is indeed a type of noise, as it either creates a disturbance in the narrative or highlights uncanny moments that are charged with disturbances that already exist. These moments are then activated or amplified by the musical experience.

Perhaps the most thoroughly explored example in this book is how Beethoven’s music and name evoke a set of meanings that are deployed in the musicalization of the novels written by Huxley, Woolf, and Forster; turning the metaphorical Beethoven (such as a silver framed picture of him in *The Waves*) into a noise in the system, which alters its functioning. A vortex is created, an in-betweenness of the metaphorical and the literal, through which music opens the text and its subjects simultaneously inward and outward, as an analogue to the workings of musical semiosis itself. And this is how Beethoven kills: the emerging acoustic self dissolves the self as a fixed, static entity. Perhaps the most vivid instance uniting all three elements (i.e., music, noise, and death) is Spandrell’s suicide in *Point Counter Point*, which brings about the simultaneous death of both music and the self. Only noise remains, as the needle of the gramophone keeps on scratching the disc, providing a machine-based temporality that defines both music and human subjectivity in the modern world, where silence has become a rare commodity.

Beethoven—a noise in the narrative—becomes voice through the subject. The characters, the writer, and the reader are all engaged in a process of taking up roles as listening and performing subjects, creating what one may call Beethoven’s voice in the novel. As I argued, Beethoven’s voice is based as much on the listening tradition as on the subjective experience of the characters, the writer, or the reader. Each reading revealed the historicity of cultural and social relations through which possible meanings become available and are also controlled. Whether a novel explores ways of listening to Beethoven’s Fifth or a Bach fugue, to performing *A Love Supreme* or dancing to EDM, the characters keep constantly balancing between introversive and

extroversive meaning-making, simultaneously constructing their own voice from the inside (as a personal experience) and the outside (as an ideology). The novels discussed in the book problematize this balancing act of the subject and question the possibility of forming a bridge between the inside and the outside.

Highlighting the modernist concern with this *in-betweenness* aligns my inquiries with the trend in modernist studies focuses its attention on modernism's simultaneous focus on the communal and the private, individual spheres. Calling into question commonplace accounts that define modernism "in terms of a turn to subjectivity," Peter Nicholls underscores the movement's "attachment to *public values*" (251, italics in original). My focus on the (*acoustic*) *self* while scrutinizing this duality accounts for the semiotic approach of this book. Silverman employs the 'subject' to unmask "human reality as a construction, as the product of signifying activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious" (130). The subject is both the product and the source of this 'reality.' Not even desire is exempt from being "culturally instigated" (*ibid.*). The central role of desire in the instances of musicalization investigated in this study posits *eros* (both as hermeneutic and carnal desire) as the engine of the *self as per-formance* in its in-between, intermediary situation.

The trajectory of the self from its Romantic conceptualizations to its post-modern dispersion runs parallel with the aesthetics of western music. The analogy between music and human subjectivity, which I traced back to Romanticism in these analyses, takes new turns in modernism and ultimately culminates in disembodied hyperembodiment in the postmodern era. The prolific musicalization of fiction in English modernism provides a specific middle-ground in this process, where self, authenticity, culture, and nation all get questioned simultaneously. Pursuing the acoustic self beyond modernism incites further discussion and theorization of musical intermediality as well as recent sonic practices.

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