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# **Liberating Sounds**

## **Philosophical Perspectives On the Music and Writings of Helmut Lachenmann**

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**MA in Musicology  
University of Durham  
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**2003**



04 NOV 2005

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# **Declaration**

I declare that none of the material included in this thesis has been submitted for any other degree either at the University of Durham or at any other University.

I am the sole author of this thesis.

Abigail Harriet Sarah Heathcote

Durham, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2003

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Abigail Harriet Sarah Heathcote

Durham, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2003

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# Abstract

This study is engaged with the examination of an apparent ambiguity in the musical aesthetics of German avant-garde composer Helmut Lachenmann. Lachenmann's thinking moves between the staunchly dialectical, Adornian stance with which he is generally associated as a composer of *musica negativa* and a less familiar, affirmative concept of 'liberated perception'. The latter concept seems on the face of it to be closely related to the so-called 'libidinal philosophy' of Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze. The above discrepancy is located around the central philosophical notions of subjectivity, history and musical material.

The question is examined through an analysis of two key Lachenmann essays, 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik' (1966) and 'Bedingungen des Materials' (1978); an extended discussion of his concept of 'instrumental *musique concrete*'; the study of the orchestral works *Accanto* (1976) and *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* (1980); and by drawing on the work of Theodor Adorno, Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze.

# Introduction

Given that Helmut Lachenmann has stood at the forefront of the German avant-garde music scene since the late 1960s, the tardiness of his reception onto the British new music scene is somewhat surprising. Performances are rare, and, to date, there have been only a handful of articles in English devoted to the composer. These include 'Helmut Lachenmann's Concept of Rejection' (1995) by Elke Hockings which deals with the development of Lachenmann's aesthetic, and 'Positive or Negative?' (1998), an important, two-part article by Ian Pace surveying Lachenmann's music. Several interviews with the composer - by David Ryan in particular but also by Philip Clark - have been published, and, to my knowledge, only three of Lachenmann's many theoretical essays have been translated into English. These are supplemented by numerous smaller pieces in CD booklets. A substantial collection comprising over fifty of Lachenmann's writings and interviews - *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung* ('*Music as an Existential Experience*') - was published in 1996, but has yet to be fully translated into English.

Hockings' article introduces some philosophical concepts but contains very little discussion of the music itself. Pace's two-part article, on the other hand, presents an overview of Lachenmann's musical *oeuvre* with little reference to his writings. My intention here is to bring the philosophical and the musical together. Adornian aesthetics and Critical Theory are brought to bear on Lachenmann's music and writings in Parts One and Two, whilst Parts Three to Five offer a series of additional philosophical perspectives drawn principally from poststructuralist and postmodernist positions.



Lachenmann's development of a new paradigm of structuring musical material through the acoustic properties of sounds is explored. An examination of two central aesthetic manifestos, 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik' (1966) and 'Bedingungen des Materials' (1978) charts the development of Lachenmann's concept of musical material. After a brief consideration of Adorno's immanent critique of Western reason, Part One explores the claims of 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik' in the context of the Adornian notion of 'musique informelle'.

Adorno's concept of 'mimesis' is also examined as a means of understanding Lachenmann's espousal of the timbral properties of sounds. By locating affinities between sound objects that fall outside the boundaries of discursive rationality, Lachenmann's timbral compositions aim to create immanent structures that nevertheless give voice to internal differences. The concept of 'instrumental *musique concrète*' is understood as a challenge to develop techniques of sound production through a 'defamiliarization' of instrumental technique, so that traditional instruments are experienced afresh, in a new, unfamiliar light.

Part Two examines Lachenmann's confrontation with the 'aesthetic apparatus' of musical material. His essay, 'Bedingungen des Materials' is explored, alongside his concept of beauty as the rejection of habit. The strong socio-critical flavour of Lachenmann's aesthetic is explored in relation to what he sees as the dilemma facing the composer today: on the one hand, the 'false fluency' manifested in public life and culture, and on the other, the 'speechlessness' in the recognition of the real fears and threats facing the individual in late capitalist society. All these issues are grounded in an analysis of the concerto for clarinet and orchestra, *Accanto* (1976).

In Part Three, Lachenmann's repudiation of organic unity is addressed in relation to his work for orchestra and amplified string quartet, *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* (1980). Concerns expressed in the writings of French



philosopher Jacques Derrida, regarding the unsustainability of notions of work and frame, inside and outside, are examined in relation to the composer's use of 'past' musical models in the *Tanzsuite*. Finally, the work's allusions to and quotations of German popular tunes are examined in terms of the notion of allegory.

The light that the music of John Cage and the American experimental tradition casts on Lachenmann's thinking, particularly his distinction between *Hören* and *Zuhören*, is considered in Parts Four and Five. By drawing in addition on the non-dialectical thought from the 1970s of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard, a discrepancy is examined in Lachenmann's writings surrounding the central philosophical issues of subjectivity and history, and, as a consequence, of the idea of musical material.

Part Four examines the shared aims of poststructuralist thought and Adorno's negative dialectics, and distinguishes between their approaches to the concepts of subjectivity, history and material. Part Five concludes, after a comparison of Lachenmann's music to Cage, La Monte Young and Gavin Bryars, that Lachenmann's 'liberated perception' is after all, despite the rhetoric of his theoretical writings, a dialectical conception.

The study concludes by arguing for a more considered understanding of Lachenmann's confrontational approach than the label of *musica negativa* given to him by Hans Werner Henze would imply. The 'rejectionist' stance for which Lachenmann is generally associated is on closer inspection tempered by an almost utopian optimism; an untiring desire to enrich and expand the listener's perceptions and awareness in a context which is generally resistant to such change. As Lachenmann has asserted repeatedly: 'Music only has a sense

“insofar as its structures point beyond themselves to structures – i.e. realities and possibilities – around us and in ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Part One: 1966-1968**

### **Lachenmann’s Sound Structures and Adorno’s *musique informelle***

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<sup>1</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 102.

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# 1. Adorno: A Logic of disintegration

## Adorno's Critical Theory

The project of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and Adorno's own version of it, negative dialectics, was concerned above all with the survival of the autonomous individual, the self-reflecting Subject, in the face of false forms of consciousness, as ideology. The aim of Critical Theory was emancipation from false consciousness, the abolition of alienation, and the recovery of wholeness.<sup>1</sup>

Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (1993)

One of the central targets of Adorno's negative dialectics is transcendental idealism, the great classical German tradition of philosophy associated with figures such as Kant and Hegel. Crudely put, identity thinking, as idealism is also known, insists that the world in its totality can be cognized by the subject, that its concepts are identical to the objectivity which it attempts to grasp. Underpinning this belief is the idea that it is possible for mind to 'transcend' the world, to gaze upon it from a detached position of exteriority. The constitutive illusion of metaphysical thought for Adorno is the belief that the object, that 'something' that is cognized or experienced, can be harnessed through concepts. He argues that

Philosophy has made a virtue out of the difficulty that, as soon as it wishes to give validity to experience, in general it always only ever has a concept of experience, and not experience itself, and has deduced from this that experience, since it can only ever be expressed in a concept of experience, is itself only a concept, an essence.<sup>2</sup>

For Adorno, this is a false assumption, the ideological content of which must be uncovered. The privileging of mind over matter, he claims, has *amnesia* as its

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<sup>1</sup> Paddison 1993: 12.

<sup>2</sup> Adorno cited in Dews 1987: 38.

condition of possibility. When the subject claims independence from its object, it 'reduces it to its own measure; the subject swallows the object, forgetting how much it is an object itself'.<sup>3</sup>

Fundamental to Adorno's philosophical endeavour is a rethinking of the way in which the central philosophical categories of subject and object relate. The relation is, according to Adorno, 'neither an ultimate duality nor a screen hiding an ultimate unity.'<sup>4</sup> Adorno's critique of this problem entails the inversion of the traditional mind/matter hierarchy and the privileging of objectivity over subjectivity. Nevertheless, he insists that the universal is not to be thought in simple opposition to the particular. Rather, the two are mutually constitutive and thus inseparable. The concept of *mediation* is essential to this reformulation of the subject-object relation:

The antithesis of universal and particular ... is both necessary and deceptive. Neither one exists without the other - the particular only as defined and thus universal; the universal only as the definition of something particular, and thus itself particular. Both of them are and are not. This is one of the strongest motives on nonidealist dialectics.<sup>5</sup>

The philosophical attempt to know the world in its totality is, Adorno argues, the result of a primitive fear. Fear of the unknown and the resultant desire to control it, to objectify nature, as the aggressor, was, argues Adorno, the impetus behind the project of the Enlightenment. Thus Adorno and Horkheimer locate the roots of enlightenment reason way beyond the eighteenth-century in primitive man, 'in the pre-mental, the animal life of the species'.<sup>6</sup>

Man imagines himself free from fear when there is no longer anything unknown. This determined the course of demythologization, of enlightenment. ... Enlightenment is mythic fear turned radical. The pure immanence of positivism, its ultimate product, is no more than a so to speak universal

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<sup>3</sup> Adorno 2000: 140.

<sup>4</sup> Adorno 1973b: 174.

<sup>5</sup> Adorno 2000:149.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 70.

taboo. Nothing at all may remain outside, because the mere idea of outsidership is the source of fear.<sup>7</sup>

Further, in *Negative Dialectics* Adorno writes

The system in which the sovereign mind imagined itself transfigured, has its primal history in the pre-mental, the animal life of the species. ... The animal to be devoured must be evil. The sublimation of this anthropological schema extends all the way to epistemology. Idealism ... gives unconscious sway to the ideology that the not-I, *l'autrui*, and finally all that reminds us of nature is inferior, so the unity of the self-preserving thought may devour it without misgivings. This justifies the principle of the thought as much as it increases the appetite. The system is the belly turned mind, and rage is the mark of each and every idealism.<sup>8</sup>

The freedom which the elimination of the unknown as non-identical supposedly entails, is, claims Adorno, highly contradictory. It is this paradox around which the argument of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* turns. The study is a critique of the notion of history as progress. The process of enlightenment has, paradoxically, brought about progress and liberation on the one hand, and regression on the other. Adorno's philosophy of history is a conflict theory, allowing no ultimate reconciliation in the Hegelian sense. As Paddison has written,

... the emphasis in what Adorno takes from Hegel's logic is not on the *reconciliation* of contradictions, but is rather as the fact that they are *antagonistic*. Indeed, the point of Adorno calling his dialectical method 'negative' is precisely that it admits no 'reconciliation'.<sup>9</sup>

The increasing rationalization of the world, with its goal of the eradication of barbarism, the growth of knowledge and the abolition of domination has, in the 'administered world' of capitalism, mutated into its very opposite, as Adorno and Horkheimer argue. Western reason and myth are not true opposites, but, rather, are two sides of the same coin, dialectically related. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

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<sup>7</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer 1972: 16.

<sup>8</sup> Adorno 1973b: 22-23.

<sup>9</sup> Paddison 1993: 120.

paints a sinister picture: 'With the extension of the bourgeois commodity economy, the dark horizon of myth is illumined by the sun of calculating reason, beneath whose cold rays the seed of the new barbarism grows to fruition.'<sup>10</sup>

The primacy of the object is testified within Adorno's thought by means of the concept of *non-identity*. Since there is always 'something' - a particular, which thought attempts, in its abstraction, to grasp, and which resists that abstraction - so the object resists being reduced to the subject. 'As truly non-identical', writes Adorno, 'the object moves the farther from the subject the more the subject "constitutes" the object'.<sup>11</sup> At the core of Adorno's philosophical project is the notion that thought must bear witness to that which it excludes, to the non-identical. He argues, however, that this cannot be achieved by dispensing with the traditional systems of thought altogether. Rather, philosophy should proceed via a process of self-reflection, or 'immanent critique' of the old concepts and categories, a critique which casts them in a new light. Traditional concepts such as unity, universality and subjectivity must be simultaneously construed and denied. '[T]o determine their meanings takes reflection on the very thing which definition cuts off for the sake of conceptual flexibility'.<sup>12</sup> As Dews has put it, attempts by philosophy to refute this paradox 'continually result in self-undermining dialectical reversals'.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, in his inaugural lecture at the University of Frankfurt Adorno claimed that

... only an essentially undialectical philosophy, one which aims at ahistorical truth, could maintain that the old problems could simply be removed by forgetting them and starting afresh from the beginning. Only in the strictest dialectical communication with the most recent ... philosophy ... can a real change of philosophical consciousness prevail.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer 1972: 32..

<sup>11</sup> Adorno 2000: 147.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*: 139.

<sup>13</sup> Dews 1987: 39.

<sup>14</sup> Adorno cited in Held 1980: 200.

## The Paradox of Subjectivity

The instrument by means of which the bourgeoisie came to power, the liberation of forces, universal freedom, self-determination, in short – the Enlightenment, itself turned against the bourgeoisie once, as a system of domination, it had recourse to suppression.<sup>15</sup>

The contradiction of identity and non-identity extends to the principle of individuation, to the formation of the subject. Adorno retains the concept of the subject, yet he recognizes its problematical nature. The 'dialectic of enlightenment', as a simultaneous process of liberation and repression, not only entails the domination of external nature but also of inner nature, as the principle of subjective autonomy. Reason turns against itself: 'In an antagonistic society each individual is non-identical with himself, both social and psychological in character at once, and, because of the split, maimed from the outset.'<sup>16</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer encapsulate this process in the Odysseus chapter of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

In the Sirens episode of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus, in order to preserve himself from 'losing [himself] in the past',<sup>17</sup> from succumbing to the lure of pure impulse, prior to the formation of the ego, must repress his own inner nature. 'Self-preservation succeeds only to the extent that, as a result of self-imposed regression, self-development fails.'<sup>18</sup> This is the double-edged nature of constitutive subjectivity: the cost of such self-preservation is the loss of spontaneity. 'The absolute subject cannot get out of its entanglements', writes Adorno in *Negative Dialectics*. '[T]he bonds it would have to tear, the bonds of dominion, are as one with the principle of absolute subjectivity.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer 1972: 93.

<sup>16</sup> Adorno 1968: 85.

<sup>17</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer 1972: 32.

<sup>18</sup> Adorno 1968: 86.

<sup>19</sup> Adorno 1973b: 50.



In the essay 'Sociology and Psychology', he writes,

Although itself psychic in origin [the ego] is supposed to arrest the play of inner forces and check it against reality: this is one of the chief criteria for determining its "health". The concept of the ego is dialectical, both psychic and extrapsychic, a quantum of libido and the representative of outside reality.<sup>20</sup>

The subject, then, is not for Adorno an absolute entity, but is split at its very core, imprisoned within its apparatus of survival. Odysseus, faced with the dangerous, intoxicating allure of the sirens' song knows of just two ways by which to ensure the survival of himself and his crew. He orders each member of the crew to block his ears with wax, and demands that he should be tied to the mast of the ship so that, whilst he will be able to hear the song and its irresistible attraction, he will be unable to act upon his desire.

Measures such as those taken on Odysseus' ship in regard to the Sirens form presentient allegory of the dialectic of enlightenment. Just as the capacity to represent is the measure of domination, and domination is the most powerful thing that can be represented in most performances, so the capacity of representation is the vehicle of progress and regression at one and the same time.<sup>21</sup>

As Peter Dews points out, Jochen Hörisch argues that Adorno's conception of subjectivity – as internally incoherent– can be traced back to the thought of the early German Romantics. Hörisch, writes Dews, 'has shown that the original antecedents for Adorno's acute awareness of the loss of spontaneity imposed by the formation of the modern autonomous individual, his sense that the identity of the self must be coercively maintained against the centrifugal tendencies of

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<sup>20</sup> Adorno 1968: 86.

<sup>21</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer 1972: 34-35.

impulse, can be traced back beyond Nietzsche to the critical engagement with Fichte's philosophy of Schlegel and Novalis'.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, for Adorno, as for the early German Romantics, *suffering* is an inevitable aspect of individual experience. And it is art, claims Adorno, which is the language of this suffering. In *Aesthetic Theory*, he writes 'Expression cannot be conceived except as expression of suffering'.<sup>23</sup>

### **Constellation, an 'Alternative Logical Structure'**

As a materialist philosopher, Adorno sets himself against philosophical idealism, as embodied in the work of figures such as Kant. Whilst, broadly speaking, idealism holds that our forms of thinking determine the way we experience, materialism upholds the belief that the structures of society are constitutive of experience. The influence of Marx on Adorno's thinking, then, is very much in evidence. Yet Adorno does not subscribe to a form of scientific positivism or vulgar Marxism, which disregards the mediation of subjectivity in our knowledge of the world. He is concerned, rather, with bringing the object to speech, through the immanent critique of subjective categories. As Susan Buck-Morss observes,

Mimetic transformation can be seen as a reversal of Kantian subjectivity. The creativity of the latter consisted in the subject's projecting onto experience its own, *a priori* forms and categories, absorbing the object into itself. But Adorno's subject let the object take the lead; it formed the object only in the sense of *transforming* it into a new modality. The language of philosophical expression was thus neither subjective intention or an object to be manipulated, but 'a third thing;' it expressed truth through configurations 'as a dialectically entwined and explicatively undecipherable unity of concept and matter.' Truth as mimetic, linguistic representation meant calling things by their right names.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Dews 1995: 27. For an in-depth discussion of the philosophy of Novalis, see Bowie 2003: 88-102.

<sup>23</sup> Adorno 1984: 161.

<sup>24</sup> Buck-Morss 1977: 88.

For Adorno, 'it was the preformed, historically developed structure of society which made things what they were, including Kant's reified categories of consciousness'.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, rather than rendering reality static by viewing it as separate from mind, the subject, argues Adorno, must immerse itself within the object's particularity. The aim of this is not to collapse subject into object, duplicating the object in thought and thus removing the tension between the two, but to unveil the 'forgotten subjectivity'<sup>26</sup> within the object; its socio-historical constructedness. Through representation in language, the subject, argues Adorno, can 'bring to speech' the mute, social particularity of the phenomenon. This 'translation' of the object into the linguistic medium of the subject is mimetic.

In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno argues that it is not conceptuality *per se* that must be abandoned, but what he calls 'concept fetishism',<sup>27</sup> the concept considered as a 'thing in itself', unchanging through the course of time and abstracted from its socio-historical origin. Awareness of the inadequacy of language does not indicate that the medium should be abandoned altogether in the name of pure 'experience'; any attempt to access the non-identical in this way leads only to the resurrection of a new 'first philosophy', as we shall see later on. Rather, Adorno argues, the tension between identity and non-identity, concept and facticity, must be kept in play.

Definitions are not the be-all and end-all of cognition, as popular scientivism holds; but neither are they to be banished. A thinking whose course made us incapable of definition, unable even for moments to have a succinct language represent the thing, would be as sterile, probably, as a thinking gorged with verbal definitions<sup>28</sup>

Rather than attempting to invent a new philosophical language, 'cleansed' of traditional idealism and the logical errors associated with it, Adorno (after

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<sup>25</sup> Buck-Morss 1977: 85.

<sup>26</sup> Paddison 1993: 35.

<sup>27</sup> Adorno 1973b: 12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*: 165.

Benjamin), sought the 'redemption' of the history of philosophy, 'in the dialectical sense, as "sublation" (*Aufhebung*), Hegel's notoriously untranslatable term which means simultaneously "preservation" and "negation".'<sup>29</sup> Adorno sought to challenge the 'givens' of traditional philosophy and to move beyond them *from within* its previously ascertained boundaries.

Adorno's method of articulating the non-identical through concepts was to arrange them in ever-changing clusters, which he called, after Benjamin in his study *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 'constellations'. Paradoxically, according to Adorno's schema, 'Concepts alone can achieve what the concept prevents. ... The determinable flaw in every concept makes it necessary to cite others; this is the font of the only constellations which inherited some hope of the name'.<sup>30</sup> The decentred constellation bears witness to the dimension of difference repressed by identity thinking, in a dialectic of 'inside' and 'outside'. The term 'signif[ies] a juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle', to cite Martin Jay.<sup>31</sup> In Adorno's words, 'The constellation illuminates the specific side of the object, the side which to a classifying procedure is either a matter of indifference or a burden'.<sup>32</sup>

In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin draws a distinction between the terms *Erkenntnis* and *Erfahrung*. The former denotes a form of experience as 'knowledge'; the subject comes to 'know' reality by means of conceptual abstraction. *Erfahrung*, on the other hand, designates the experience of truth and entails the constitution of objective 'Ideas' by the subject. *Erfahrung* is, for Benjamin, the form of experience particular to philosophy, as opposed to *Erkenntnis*, which he considers belongs to the realm of science. As Buck-Morss

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<sup>29</sup> Buck-Morss 1977:94.

<sup>30</sup> Adorno 1973b: 53.

<sup>31</sup> Jay 1984: 14-15.

<sup>32</sup> Adorno 1973b: 162.

explains, *Erkenntnis* 'was achieved by means of abstraction: the particular entered into the concept and disappeared. But in truth's representation, the particulars, although conceptually mediated reemerged in the idea; or more accurately, they *became* the idea in the conceptual arrangement of their elements'.<sup>33</sup> Benjamin writes, '[P]henomena are not incorporated in ideas. They are not contained in them. Ideas are, rather, their objective, virtual arrangement, their objective interpretation.' For Benjamin, then, the constellation involves a two-fold manoeuvre. His project is a reworking of Hegelian sublation (*Aufhebung*), via which phenomena are simultaneously destroyed and saved:<sup>34</sup> '[i]t is the function of concepts to group phenomena together, and the division which is brought about within them thanks to the distinguishing power of the intellect is all the more significant in that it brings about two things at a simple stroke: the salvation of phenomena and the representation of ideas'.<sup>35</sup>

Crucially, language and therefore the constellation is, for Adorno, always historically mediated. To apprehend the constellation of an object is to perceive the history embedded within it. Through the employment of the technique of constellation, Adorno's aim 'was to discover the truth of the social totality ... as it quite literally *appeared* within the object in a particular configuration'.<sup>36</sup> Herein lies a key difference between Adorno's use of the term and that of Benjamin. For Adorno, 'The constellation ... represents an encoded text on the historical essence of reality'.<sup>37</sup> For Benjamin, on the other hand, ideas are 'timeless

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<sup>33</sup> Buck-Morss 1977: 92.

<sup>34</sup> Nägele: 1982-3: 60.

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin 1977: 34-35.

<sup>36</sup> Buck-Morss 1977: 96.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Adorno 1984: 399, where he writes: 'Art is no more a replica of an object than it is an object of cognition. Otherwise it would debase itself by becoming a mere duplicate of something. ... Actually, what happens is that art makes a gesture-like grab for reality, only to draw back violently as it touches that reality. Its letters are hieroglyphs of this kind of dual motion. The constellation they form in an art work represents an encoded text on the historical essence of reality, not some replica of it. This orientation is related to mimetic behaviour.'

constellations'. Adorno reinterpreted Benjamin's mystic-influenced theory within a dialectical, materialist framework.<sup>38</sup>

An important difference between *Erkenntnis* and *Erfahrung* is that the latter is mimetic: 'The images [as constellations] illuminated contradictions rather than negating or sublating them; the procedure was one of mimetic representation rather than synthesis'.<sup>39</sup> Instead of seeking to represent the concepts in an abstract or metaphorical way, the constellation seeks to open itself up to the physical world, forging a tangible, *mimetic* image of the world, abounding with contradictions. Thus Buck-Morss writes, 'constellations were not unlike hieroglyphs, uniting the perceptual and conceptual; the phenomena became rebuses, riddles whose qualitative elements, juxtaposed, were the concepts translated into picture form.'<sup>40</sup>

The paradigm for Adorno's constellations is linguistic. Meaning in language is not self-present or given, argues Adorno, it is an effect of relationships:

The model for [the constellation] is the conduct of language. Language offers no mere system of signs for cognitive functions. Where it appears essentially as a language, where it becomes a form of representation, it will not define its concepts. It lends objectivity to them by the relation into which it puts the concepts, centred around a thing [object].<sup>41</sup>

Seen in this way, the linguistic chain is *concentric* and *paratactical* as opposed to a deductive logic in which universal and particular exist in a hierarchical relation: it is a non-hierarchical cluster of juxtaposed elements. Theoretical thought as

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<sup>38</sup> 'Adorno secularizes Benjamin's messianic project, without however giving up the pathos of salvation which is the moving force of the radical negativity of his aesthetics as well as his *Negative Dialectic*' (Nägele 1982-3: 60).

<sup>39</sup> Buck-Morss 1977: 102.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Adorno 1973b: 162.

constellation thus seeks to bear witness to the particular which identity thinking masks and subordinates under general concepts or abstractions.<sup>42</sup>

The image of the constellation evokes the dissolution of boundaries of inside and outside characteristic of allegory.<sup>43</sup> Like Derrida's notion of *differance*, the object refers endlessly to what is outside itself: it carries the non-identical, the 'external', within itself<sup>44</sup>. As Adorno puts it,

What is, is more than it is. This 'more' is not imposed upon it but remains immanent to it, as that which has been pushed out of it. In that sense, the non-identical would be the thing's own identity against its identifications. The innermost core of the object proves to be simultaneously extraneous to it ... This is where insistent thinking leads us in regard to the individual: to his essence rather than to the universal he is said to represent.<sup>45</sup>

The disseminative aspect of language is referred to by Adorno as a moment of play. It is an unavoidable feature of thought and yet this does not, for Adorno, liberate it from its obligation to truth. This insistence on maintaining a *tension* between the disseminative effects of language and language's claim to truth forms a major difference between Adorno's thought and that of French philosophers such as Jean-François Lyotard. The thinker, claims Adorno, 'must not deny his clownish traits, least of all since they alone can give him hope for what is denied him.'<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Another way of looking at this would be to state that the particular is now viewed as part of a 'constellation' which it forms with other particulars. This constellation is historical and its position within the constellation, not any concrete definition, is what defines its identity. Adorno writes, 'The inside of nonidentity is its relation to that which it is not, and which managed, frozen self-identity withholds from it (Adorno 1973b: 163). Further, 'The constellation illuminates the specific side of the object, the side which to a classifying procedure is either a matter of indifference or a burden' (Adorno 1973b: 162). 'Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object. As a constellation, theoretical thought circles the concept it would like to unseal, hoping that it may fly open like the lock of a well-guarded safe-deposit box: in response, not to a single key or a single number, but to a combination of numbers' (Adorno 1973b: 163).

<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of allegory in relation to Lachenmann's *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* see Part Three, Section 6.

<sup>44</sup> For an extended discussion of the concepts of allegory and *differance* see Part Three Sections 3-6 below.

<sup>45</sup> Adorno 1973b: 161-162.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*: 14.

For Adorno, the epitome of this non-coercive image of totality is the work of art. 'Great works', he writes, '... have life because they speak in ways nature and man cannot'.<sup>47</sup> In the words of Alastair Williams

... [Art] depends on philosophy to judge its truth content, but can follow the inner life of particular impulses in a way prohibited to discursive logic in its present form. Artistic form shares with conceptual thought the capacity to synthesize particulars, but can also countenance resistance to this subsumptive process. Art articulates social tensions and indicates that they might be transformed; philosophy is able to reflect upon the significance of this illumination – though not to translate it – and consequently to turn its own discursive logic towards the pull of the particular as demonstrated by art.<sup>48</sup>

According to Adorno, the 'authentic' art work is faced with the paradoxical task of bearing witness to a disintegrating material within a work which nevertheless aims at an outward appearance of unity, albeit fragile. Adorno claims that

In art, the criterion of success is twofold: first, works of art must be able to integrate materials and details into their immanent law of form; and, second, they must not try to erase the fractures left by the process of integration, preserving instead in the aesthetic whole the traces of those elements which resisted integration.<sup>49</sup>

... the formal problem for composers today: is disintegration possible through integration? The position reached by compositional consciousness is such that it is only through the critical dissolution [*Auflösung*] of the meaning-giving aspects of the composition, of that context which allows meaning any positive existence, that the synthesizing, meaning-giving elements of composition hold their own. Integration and disintegration are entwined.<sup>50</sup>

For Adorno, the art work must embody a 'force field' (*Kraftfeld*); a dynamic unity created through the non-hierarchical relationships between juxtaposed elements. Fragment and aesthetic whole must exist in a dynamic tension.

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<sup>47</sup> Adorno 1984: 6.

<sup>48</sup> Williams 1997: 12.

<sup>49</sup> Cited in Paddison 2001.

<sup>50</sup> Adorno, 'Form in der neuen Musik' cited in Paddison 1993: 158.



'Art', Adorno writes, 'is ... what metaphysics always wanted to be'.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Adorno 1984: 471.

## 2. Lachenmann's manifesto: 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik' (1966)

### A Sound Typology

In an article entitled 'Helmut Lachenmann's Pathways', Jürg Stenzl highlights the centrality of Lachenmann's article 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik' ('Timbral Categories in Contemporary Music'), written in 1966, to the composer's subsequent compositional and theoretical output. As Stenzl has put it, the article 'amounted to a radically new understanding of composition.'<sup>52</sup> 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik' marks a clear departure by Lachenmann from the musical climate in which he found himself – that of post-1950s serialism and the timbral thinking as exemplified by the work of composers such as Ligeti and Nono in the early 1960s.<sup>53</sup> The manifesto, as Stenzl puts it, 'laid the cornerstone for a new form of composing and thinking about music that took up the latest developments of the avant-garde and connected them in a wholly new way into an independent synthesis'.<sup>54</sup>

The fundamental idea behind Lachenmann's aesthetic manifesto is the raising of the experiential aspect of music to the same level as structure, without renouncing the tension between the two. Lachenmann expresses this dialectical tension by means of the concept of *Strukturklang*, or 'sound structure'. As Stenzl puts it,

Lachenmann's concept of a structural sonority explicitly carried on the serialist notion of creating extremely tight and deliberate connections between a work's nethermost detail and its overall

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<sup>52</sup> Stenzl 2002.

<sup>53</sup> Alastair Williams states that '*Apparitions* and *Atmosphères* use some controls similar to those associated with serialism (there is a quasi serial scheme for durations in *Apparitions*), but they transform the character of the technique, moving away from complex permutations to a basic, gestural feel of space' (Williams 1997: 82).

<sup>54</sup> Stenzl 2002.

formal design. At the same time, however, it also embraced the essential elements of the new 'timbral music' that celebrated its breakthrough in the early 1960s, a breakthrough that partially superseded serialism and was welcomed as a liberation ...<sup>55</sup>

Sounds are viewed as part of a process, or dynamic system of interrelationships. Lachenmann expresses the dual nature of sounds as follows:

[Sounds] develop an immediately perceptible wealth of similarities and gradated contrasts to each other, and they emerge and project themselves from this context in an entirely new way. It is the consciously manipulated interaction of such timbral relations that produces the unique and unmistakable total character of a structural sonority.<sup>56</sup>

The concept of a 'sound structure' is the last of five categories set out in 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik'. Each category seeks to define a distinct timbral or acoustic type to be found within a work. These 'Klangtypen' range from a single sound to more complex forms of sound structure. The focus is upon the *perceptual* character of these sound types. As Lachenmann has described elsewhere,

In the early 1960s I had developed a sort of typology of sounds which took as its point of departure the purely physically determined (however unrealistic this may be) acoustic perception of individual sounds – and culminated in 'structural sound' or, conversely, 'sound structure'. Structure as a dialectical object of perception, inasmuch as the musical meaning and aural experience of individual sounds or their elements were not determined just by themselves – i.e. by their own direct physical characteristics – but by their relationship to their immediate and wider environment, their affinities, the various roles they played in a context or hierarchy – whatever form it might take – created by the composer and for which he assumed responsibility.<sup>57</sup>

It will be necessary for the ensuing discussion of Lachenmann's music to explore in greater detail the sound typology set out in 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik'. As I

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<sup>55</sup> Stenzl 2002.

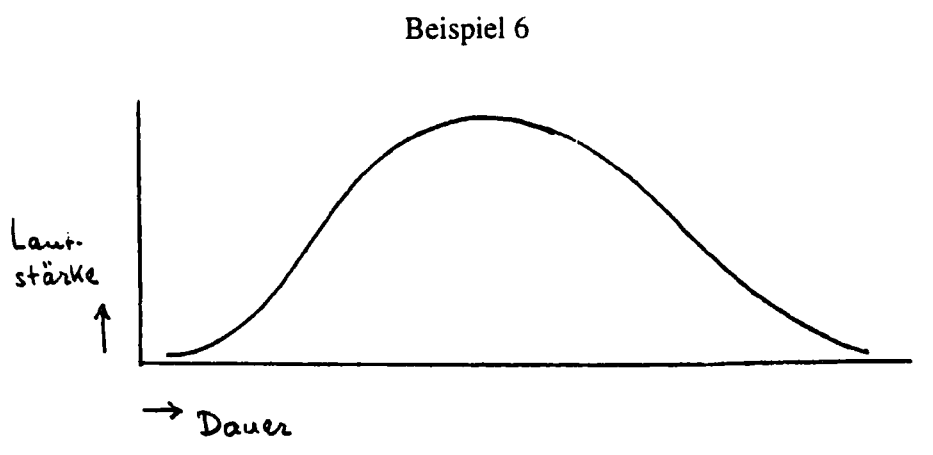
<sup>56</sup> Lachenmann, in Stenzl, *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 97.

will argue, this notion of a musical structure based upon timbral rather than pitch relationships is an important feature of Lachenmann's musical thought and a constant underlying thread in his work.

The first sound category listed by Lachenmann is termed the 'sound cadence' (*Kadenzklang*). This category is concerned with the emergence and decay of a single sound, as the following diagram shows:

**Ex. 1**



Lachenmann's example of a *Kadenzklang*<sup>58</sup>

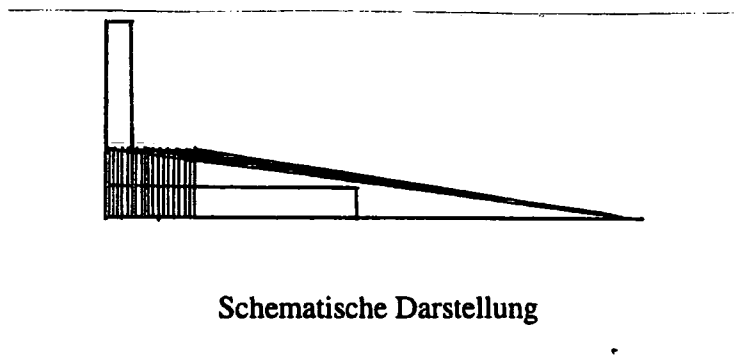
<sup>58</sup> Beispiel 6 from Lachenmann 1996: 3.

It is important to realize that these categories do not necessarily correspond to distinct instrumental lines. Lachenmann's attention is placed on the abstract acoustic characteristics of different sounds which go beyond the boundaries of individual instruments. The envelope of a *Kadenzklang* may therefore be created by an orchestral group, such as in the following example from Stockhausen's *Gruppen für drei Orchester*, which Lachenmann describes as having an 'artificial added resonance' (in this case through the way the celesta colours the horn note):

**Ex. 2**

Beispiel 8

Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Gruppen für drei Orchester*,  
zwei Takte vor Ziffer 9

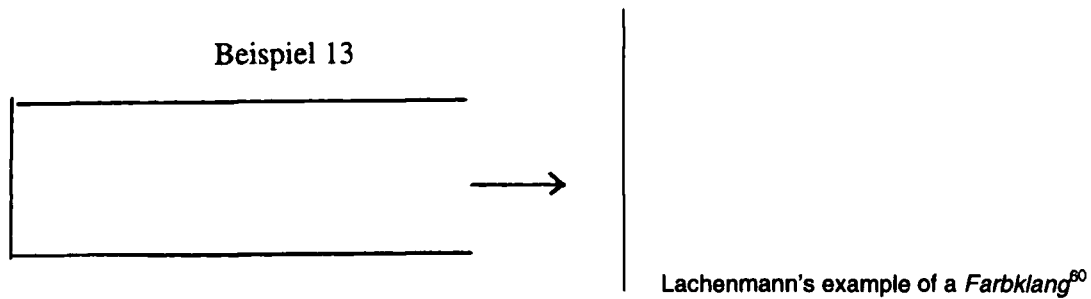


Stockhausen, *Gruppen*<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Beispiel 8 from Lachenmann 1996: 4.

The second sound type Lachenmann labels *Farbklang*, or 'sound colour'. In Lachenmann's schema, *Farbklang* designates a stable, sustained sound, here represented by a rectangle:

**Ex. 3**



Whilst in type one the salient idea is a decay envelope (with its intrinsic temporal dimension), here the emphasis is on a single *colour*, the sonic equivalent perhaps of the unchanging glow of a stained glass window. There is a significant connection between this and the notion of *Klangfarbenmelodie*, derived from the third of Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces*, although the latter introduces very gradual changes of timbral colour in the unfolding of its 'melody'. The influence of Ligeti is also apparent here. Indeed one example used by Lachenmann to illustrate this category is a section from Ligeti's *Atmosphères*. The clusters in this piece invoke a seemingly static wall of sound, pure 'presence':

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<sup>60</sup> Beispiel 13 from Lachenmann 1996: 8.

Ex. 4

Beispiel 15: György Ligeti, *Atmosphères*, Anfang

*molto sostenuto* (♩ = 40)

4 Flöten  
4 Klarinetten  
6 Hörner  
3 Trompeten  
Kontrabaß

Violin  
Viola  
Violoncelli  
Kontrabaß

*pp*

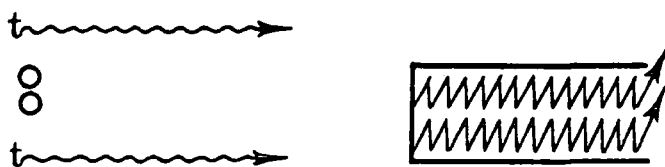
Ligeti, *Atmosphères*<sup>61</sup>

Category three is essentially an extension or variation of *Farbklang*, and Lachenmann labels this *Fluktuationsschall* or 'fluctuation sound'. The central difference between this type and type three is the presence of internal movement, a regular, periodic pattern which is characteristic of a sound that is essentially static. Paradigms of this could be a trill or vibrato, or more highly wrought passages of unchanging texture such as in the case of repetitive music by Steve Reich.

<sup>61</sup> Beispiel 15 from Lachenmann 1996: 9.

Ex. 5

Beispiel 16



Lachenmann's example of a *Fluktuationsklang*<sup>62</sup>

Once more Lachenmann illustrates this with an example from *Atmosphères*.

Ex. 6 (see overleaf)

The fourth sound type is termed *Texturklang* and describes a complex, sound perceived primarily as texture. Unlike *Fluktuationsklang*, with this category there is no clear pattern of oscillation. Instead, many different instruments sustain a complex 'cloud' of sound characterized by an internal irregularity of rhythm. The effect is akin to being in a room in which many people are speaking at once.

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<sup>62</sup> Beispiel 16 from Lachenmann 1996: 10.





Ex. 6

Beispiel 22

György Ligeti, *Atmosphères*, Partitur Seite 21, Ausschnitt

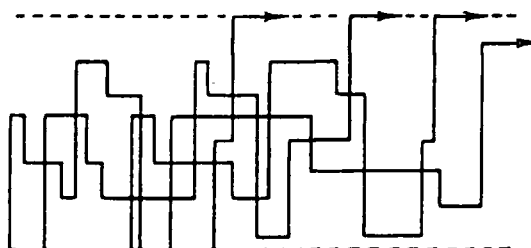
Ligeti, *Atmosphères*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Beispiel 22, *ibid.*: 12.

The relationship between the instrumental lines is initially unclear and unpredictable. After a while, however, the overall design of the sound emerges. Yet the overall shaping is erratic, and the 'texture' does not resolve into a complex form of *Farbklang* or *Fluktuationsklang*. The individual lines of Ligeti's *Apparitions*, given in 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik' as an example of *Texturklang*, are conceived in terms of pitch as a canon.

Ex. 7

György Ligeti, *Apparitions*, Partitur Seite 19, Ausschnitt



Schematische Darstellung

Ligeti, *Apparitions*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Beispiel 27, *ibid.*: 15.

Yet the listener finds it difficult to hear the ordering principle behind them. This is due to the mensurally free way Ligeti has chosen to express the canon, the large leaps in register which give the impression of more than one voice per part, and the fact the overall shape of the sound mass changes with time like a *Kadenzklang*. Consider, for instance, the fourth and fifth bars of this example where rhythmic activity seems to slow down like a ball rolling up the crest of a hill, only to speed up which it reaches the other side (in this case the sixth bar.)

These factors account for the relatively long length of time required for the listener to perceive it as a single sound 'type' as opposed to a group of heterogeneous voices. This period of time is described by Lachenmann as the sound's *Eigenzeit*, the time required for the listener to cognize the pattern of its behaviour:

It would be possible to come to the conclusion that this sound category's 'Eigenzeit' lasted forever, were it not finally for a distinct moment when one's attention on detail that is constantly changing shifts into a static experience of a statistically defined overall quality. As a result, this sound category is also overtaken by the same fate as its predecessors, the *Farbklang* and the *Fluktuationsklang*: after a specific, indeterminate (because this differs for every individual) 'Eigenzeit' it is no longer experienced as an unfolding process but as a steady state that can be extended as long as you like. <sup>2</sup>

The fourth sound category, *Texturklang*, throws interesting light on the opening of Ligeti's *Melodien*. As Alastair Williams writes, in *Melodien*

... the composer ask[s] for every part to be played with an 'inner vitality and a dynamic agogic shape of its own' (score 1971). This instruction affirms the identity of each line, which must, nevertheless, coexist with other similarly independent lines, all moving out of phase with one

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<sup>2</sup> 'So könnte man die Eigenzeit dieses Typs für unendlich ansehen, wenn nicht schließlich doch irgendwann die Aufmerksamkeit auf das permanent neue Detail wieder umschlagen würde in ein statisches Erlebnis statischer Gesamteigenschaften. So ereilt auch diesen Klangtyp dasselbe Schicksal wie seine Vorläufer, den Farbklang und den Fluktuationsklang: Er wird – nach einer gewissen, unbestimmbaren, weil individuell verschiedenen, Eigenzeit nicht mehr als Prozess, sondern als beliebig verlängerbaren Zustand erlebt' (Lachenmann 1996: 14-15).

another. ... The whole opening statement is a play of sameness and difference:<sup>3</sup> the flourishes are almost chromatic but include tones and minor 3rds, they closely resemble one another but are distinguished by small deviations, and the overall identity is blurred by polyrhythmic layering.<sup>4</sup>

However the fascination of *Melodien* is precisely this avoidance of stability, the constant 'play of sameness and difference' as Williams suggests. The piece therefore never completely fulfills the category of *Texturklang*.

Categories one to four in Lachenmann's typology are related insofar as with each of them there is a certain point in the course of the process when the sound is perceived as an entity. *Texturklang* requires the longest period of time (its 'Eigenzeit') for this to occur and, correspondingly, has the greatest 'wealth of similarities and gradated contrasts'.<sup>5</sup> One could argue that its structure or form does not become apparent until these affinities and differences have been recognized by the listener.

### **Sound Structure as a 'Polyphony of Ordered Juxtapositions'**

The structure of the final sound category, *Strukturklang* ('sound structure'), does not however become apparent until the sound process has run its course. Only when the whole has been heard is its identity discernible: experiential and cognitive time are exactly equal. There is no structuring principle with a *Strukturklang* that prevents the moment-to-moment form of the process from changing in unpredictable ways.<sup>6</sup> Lachenmann accompanies his description of a *Strukturklang* with a schematic representation of the category:

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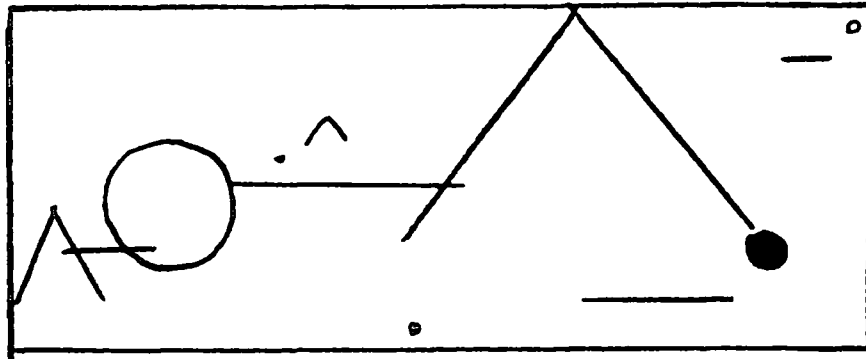
<sup>3</sup> cf. Lachenmann's 'similarities and gradated contrasts', 1996: 15.

<sup>4</sup> Williams 1997: 84-85.

<sup>5</sup> Lachenmann cited in Stenzl 2002.

<sup>6</sup> In an interview with David Ryan, Lachenmann states that models or paradigms for this concept of structure 'were probably Stockhausen's *Gruppen*, Alban Berg's *ThreeŒ Orchestral Pieces*, and quite definitely the development sections in Beethoven's sonata forms' (Lachenmann in Ryan 1999: 23).

Ex. 8



Eigenzeit = Gesamtdauer

Lachenmann's example of a *Strukturklang*<sup>7</sup>

Lachenmann argues that the perception of the entire form of this category from beginning to end, as represented here, is necessary for the full appreciation of the sound structure, and indeed that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. I would argue that the image can be understood like a graphic score, and read from left to right. It comprises three shapes or elements - lines, triangles and points - each of which represents a different sound or perhaps an action. (Each is like a *Kadenzklang* or sound gesture with an emergence and decay.)

These elements occur with varying frequency: there are three triangles, four lines and five points or circles. They are repeated in varied, but recognizable, form across the image, in a play of 'sameness and difference', of identity and non-

<sup>7</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 18.

identity. The interplay of the different elements, however, does not appear to result from the workings of any particular formula or schema. Indeed, Lachenmann defines this structure as a 'polyphony of ordered juxtapositions'.<sup>8</sup> This would seem to suggest that the development of each element is traceable by the listener (or viewer in the case of the image) like the Schoenbergian 'Idea'. However, the key difference between Schoenberg's organic conception and Lachenmann's 'polyphony of ordered juxtapositions' is that there is no single idea, but a linking together of several: three in the case of the diagram under consideration. Such a structure, as a sort of montage of different structures, actively dispels any sense of hierarchy or priority – each, to evoke a poststructuralist notion, is merely one 'language game' amongst others. The 'order' within each is down to the possibility of actively tracing the development of the component element in the process of listening.

This visual representation of the sound structure as dialectical object recalls Buck-Morss's description of the constellation: 'constellations were not unlike hieroglyphs, uniting the perceptual and conceptual; the phenomena became rebuses, riddles whose qualitative elements, juxtaposed, were the concepts translated into picture form.'<sup>9</sup>

In conjunction with this visual representation, Lachenmann discusses the opening bars of Stockhausen's *Gruppen*, referring to the latter's article 'How Time Passes'. It is interesting that Adorno too refers to this article in 'Vers une Musique informelle' as 'easily the most important one' on the topic of a *musique informelle*.<sup>10</sup> The notion of *une musique informelle* will be discussed later, but it is worth noting the connection to Lachenmann's 'sound structure' at this stage. From bars 2-16 in Stockhausen's piece the listener is presented with a number of coexisting details, each of which is the beginning of its own structural process.

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<sup>8</sup> 'Struktur' läßt sich so definieren als Polyphonie von Anordnungen' (*ibid.*).

<sup>9</sup> Buck-Morss 1977: 102.

<sup>10</sup> Adorno 1992b: 271.

Each detail takes its own direction as *Gruppen* unfolds – each is an ‘ordered juxtaposition’. The image illustrates Lachenmann’s argument that

...the link between two sudden sounds cannot lie in that plane of experience which is measurable in micro- or macro-time. An acoustic straight line in music is not always the shortest distance between two sounds. Frequently the common denominator, the bridge, is on a different plane and is often not recognized as such, or is not articulated, but is *felt* all the more clearly.<sup>11</sup>

In the essay ‘On Structuralism’, Lachenmann employs the term ‘family’ to describe a structure such as the one represented above. The family, he argues,

... allows apparently incompatible sounds and objects to be brought under one roof and made into a musical sense-unit – i.e. category of experience – which is thus defined for the first time. It allows incommensurable elements to be projected on to a common temporal plane’.<sup>12</sup>

It is clear from a survey of Lachenmann’s music and theoretical writings that the sound typology presented in ‘Klangtypen der Neuen Musik’ acts as a paradigm for the composer’s own subsequent consideration of musical structures. He conceives new music in general, including his own, primarily in terms of timbral rather than pitch-relationships. The first published version of Lachenmann’s own analysis of his work, *Accanto* (1975-1976), from 1982, contains a timbral analysis of the first 19 bars of the piece and illustrates this structural paradigm. Performance actions (such as scraping, breathing, rubbing, and so on) are confined to specific families of instruments, but constitute instrumental ‘family members’ in their own right.

**(See Ex. 9, overleaf)**

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<sup>11</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 99 (my italics).

<sup>12</sup> Lachenmann 1998: 98.



Ex. 9

ACCANTO

Geometriet  
geschlagen  
Klingen  
Trommeln  
Luft  
Klang  
gestimmte  
gestimmte  
gestimmte  
Musik

Solo

11  
10  
9  
8  
7  
6  
5  
4  
3  
2  
1

11  
10  
9  
8  
7  
6  
5  
4  
3  
2  
1

Lachenmann, *Accanto*, reduction of bars 1-19<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lachenmann 1988: 64



The concept of structural sound represents a challenge to the division of form and content characteristic of traditional aesthetics. It expresses the idea that neither structure as form, nor sound as expressive content, can be separated except in abstract conceptual terms, just as Adorno insists in his *Aesthetic Theory* on the dialectical interrelation of mimesis and ratio. Lachenmann writes:

Structure as a dialectical object of perception [*sic.*], inasmuch as the musical meaning and aural experience of individual sounds or their elements were not determined just by themselves – i.e. by their own direct physical characteristics – but by their relationship to their immediate and wider environment, their affinities, the various roles they played in a context or hierarchy – whatever form it might take – created by the composer and for which he assumed responsibility. The result was that in the concept of ‘structural sound’ the old dualism of sound and form disappeared because the idea of sound ultimately resulted from the tentative concept of form, and conversely the idea of form inevitably resulted from the concept of sound.<sup>1</sup>

The sound actions of Ex. 9 each correspond to a separate acoustic structure (as with the triangles, lines and circles of the diagram). Unlike the individual elements or parameters of integral serialism – or indeed keys in a work – these ‘family members’ are ‘incommensurable’. They cannot be ‘transposed’ or mapped onto each other. They are not brought together under the banner of an overarching identity: rather, the composer attempts to bear witness to internal differences, which defy integration.

It is important to emphasize that form in this conception does not dissolve into heterogeneity or indifference: the idea of sounds being both self-contained and pointing beyond themselves recalls Adorno’s description of constellation:

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<sup>1</sup>Lachenmann 1995: 97.

By themselves, constellations represent from without what the concept has cut away within: the 'more' which the concept is equally desirous and incapable of being. By gathering around the object of cognition, the concepts potentially determine the object's interior. They attain, in thinking, what was necessarily excised from thinking<sup>2</sup>

There is also a clear affinity between Lachenmann's sound structures and Rihm's technique of 'wrapping'. Alastair Williams describes this technique as follows:

... wrapping registers a form of affinity between potentially very different objects: they take the shape of each other without surrendering their internal differences, in a version of what Adorno identifies as pseudomorphic transformation in Mahler. More than that, the procedure is an attempt to work consciously with something that Adorno regards as an inherent capacity of art: the ability to preserve or to find affinities between sensibilities that are not apparent to discursive rationality. The future of art may well lie in its ability to discover such similarities and associations.<sup>3</sup>

Both Lachenmann and Rihm work with an experiential logic which, as Williams and Lachenmann suggest above, defies a rational logic seeking to quantify and bring its objects under an all-encompassing identity. This logic can indeed be seen in Adornian terms as a direct critique of the instrumental rationality which, particularly in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is seen to predominate in modernity.

As we have seen, the idea of creating a unity out of the incommensurable reflects Adorno's ideal of a *musique informelle* and recalls Adorno's constellation, as a unity of diverse particulars. The relation between *musique informelle* and the music of Lachenmann will be examined in further detail below.

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<sup>2</sup> Adorno 1973b: 162.

<sup>3</sup> Williams 1997: 144.

### 3. *une musique informelle*

*Musique informelle* resists definition in the botanical terms of the positivists. If there is a tendency, an actual trend, which the word serves to bring into focus, it is one which mocks all efforts at definition...

Adorno, 'Vers une musique informelle' (1961, English tr. 1992)<sup>4</sup>

#### **Adorno's essay**

In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno writes, 'One must not philosophize *about* the concrete, but out of it'.<sup>5</sup> This image of thought forges an opening which defies transcendental closure. The notion of *une musique informelle*, expounded by Adorno in the essay from 1961 entitled 'Vers une musique informelle', is a materialist attempt to relate the fragmentation of thought structures in modernity to modern music. The paradigm, which is more of an ideal than a description of any specific works, nevertheless takes its inspiration from Schoenberg's atonal period, when works such as *Erwartung*, *Die glückliche Hand*, and *Herzgewächse* were written. Order in these pieces, claims Adorno, is derived from the inner truth of the musical material, not from any superimposed, predetermined formal norms. The 'surplus of objectivity,'<sup>6</sup> of the material itself over and above subjective categories recalls Lachenmann's 'blinkedly material-oriented compositional process'.<sup>7</sup> It relates to Adorno's insistence, in *Negative Dialectics* and in the essay 'Subject and Object', upon the preponderance of the object in thought, represented through the concept of non-identity. In aesthetic terms, this surplus refers back to Beckett's statement, 'Dire cela, sans savoir quoi', cited at the head of 'Vers une musique informelle'.<sup>8</sup> Adorno writes,

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<sup>4</sup> Adorno 1992b: 272.

<sup>5</sup> Adorno 1973b: 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 272.

<sup>7</sup> Lachenmann 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Adorno 1992b: 272.

The avant-garde calls for a music which takes the composer by surprise, much as a chemist can be surprised by the new substance in his test-tube. In future, experimental music should not just confine itself to refusing to deal in the current coin; it should also be music whose end cannot be foreseen in the course of production. In genuine experiments there has always been something of a surplus of that objectivity over the production process.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of *une musique informelle* arises from the contradictory situation in which the self-reflecting composing subject is confronted with the disintegration of an internally consistent musical material. The art work in modernity must achieve a balancing act – it must maintain a level of formal unity and autonomy (forging a critical distance between itself and the *status quo*) whilst remaining true to the disintegration of musical material: ‘the “form” of the integrated work, to be authentic (that is, true to the demands of its material), must now incorporate its apparent opposite – disintegration, fragmentation, chaos ...’.<sup>10</sup> Paradoxically, disintegration and integration must entwine.

Despite his declared aversion to fixed definitions, Adorno does nevertheless endeavour to characterize the concept of *une musique informelle* in general terms:

... I should like at least to attempt to stake out the parameters of the concept. What is meant is a type of music which has discarded all forms which are external or abstract or which confront it in an inflexible way. At the same time, although such music should be completely free of anything irreducibly alien to itself or superimposed on it, it should nevertheless constitute itself in an objectively compelling way, in the musical substance itself, and not in terms of external laws. ... such an emancipation should also strive to do away with the system of musical co-ordinates which have crystallized out in the innermost recesses of the musical substance itself.<sup>11</sup>

Paddison suggests that, although Adorno’s conception of *une musique informelle* is derived from Schoenberg’s freely atonal music, it is the literary work of Samuel

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*: 302-303.

<sup>10</sup> Paddison 1993: 275.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*: 272.

Beckett which provides perhaps the most convincing example of the concept, at least outside of music (as is indeed suggested by the positioning of Beckett's statement at the head of Adorno's essay). Paddison argues that in referring to his novel, *How It Is*, 'Beckett probably comes closer than anyone to articulating the problem of form in relation to a disintegrating material and, in the process, to illuminating Adorno's concept of *une musique informelle* ...' He cites the following passage from a discussion between Beckett and Deirdre Bair, which is worth quoting in full:

What I am saying does not mean that there will henceforth be no form in art. It only means that there will be new form, and that this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find the form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now.<sup>12</sup>

One could say that Lachenmann's concept of a 'sound structure' is one such attempt to 'accommodate the mess' or the particularity of the material, without resorting to formlessness.

The concept of *musique informelle* can also be thought in temporal terms. According to Adorno's description, the relation between part and whole should be clearly audible in the process of listening. A *musique informelle* must 'unfold' from the parts to the whole, in other words, there should be a 'parallel between the temporal succession of musical events and the pure flow of time itself.'<sup>13</sup> Like Lachenmann, Adorno champions an aesthetic which foregrounds perception. He contrasts his ideal with Stockhausen's *Zeitmaße*, describing it as 'a static music which arises from a universal dynamics'<sup>14</sup> rather than a fluid music which develops over time.

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<sup>12</sup> Beckett cited in Paddison 1993: 276.

<sup>13</sup> Adorno 1992b: 271.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

## Lachenmann's Action Scores

The potential for a composer to map sound shape (Lachenmann's first sound category, *Kadenzklang*) to sound structure (Lachenmann's fifth, *Strukturklang*) recalls this ideal in its absence of any externally-derived formal norms. Indeed, Hockings has commented that Lachenmann 'avoids clearly articulated form "from above" (Adorno)'.<sup>15</sup>

Lachenmann's 'almost blinkeredly material-oriented compositional process', as the composer himself has described it,<sup>16</sup> results in a high degree of unpredictability and ambiguity characteristic of *musique informelle*. Unpredictability is a crucial aspect of Lachenmann's action-based approach to composition, in evidence across his work, but epitomized by works such as *Pression* (1969), for 'cello. Here, the score is notated as a series of actions without determining their precise pitch content or even their precise sounding result.

This represents a further important shift of paradigm from serialism, in which score and sounding result are mapped precisely onto each other. The result of this shift is the inherent unpredictability of sounds in performance. The composer's action scores result in a discrepancy between the expected sound of the traditional instrument and the sound that is actually created; a 'tension' between the 'imagined' and the entirely new (that which 'cannot be foreseen').

### Ex. 10 (see overleaf)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hockings 1995: 13. In 'Vers une musique informelle Adorno writes argues for a form which is constructed 'from top to bottom rather than from bottom to top' (Adorno 1992b: 271).

<sup>16</sup> Lachenmann 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Böttinger 1988: 93-94.



**Ex. 10**

**(Stag)**  
 f, fpp  
 plötzlich mit wieder nur Fingerkuppen Fingerkuppen aufsetzen!  
 a) nachhalten, nicht die Hand wegnehmen!

nächstige Begleitung unauffällig vorbereiten

stop + Dämmen  
 Dämmen zwischen Hand und Stange  
 während im 1.er Sprung  
 während mit Fingerkuppen auf der Begleitstange

Abstrich  
 f, p  
 fest halten mit Druck  
 Dämmung durch Begleitheber  
 Dämmen ganz einhalten

Bogen ohne stop  
 f, p  
 f, fpp  
 feste Begleitstange  
 Dämmen durch  
 feste Fingerspitzen am Begleitheber (linker Hand)  
 Stanglänge  
 Stange  
 Stange

a) Dämmen und Haltpunkte bei der Hand sollen durch Zusammenkommen der jeweils vorgeschriebenen Strecke im Begleitheber ab und ab von diesem Teil der Stanglänge unter Druck auf dem Saiten besaf bzw. vom Stang herkommen

Lachenmann, *Pression*,

page 3<sup>18</sup>

Ian Pace has said the following about *Pression*:

[The] cellist is called upon to play the instrument in almost every conceivable manner except the standard one; the bow is applied both below and on the bridge, on the frog, and to parts of the shell, the fingers of the left hand are rubbed against the strings, the strings are overbowed, and so on.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Pace 1998a: 12

<sup>19</sup> Pace 1998a: 12.

*Pression* demands of the player a heightened physicality with respect to the instrument. It is important to realize that for a player some of the actions in themselves constitute a form of transgression of the instrument's essential 'nature'. Because the sounds generated are often 'noises' that could come from other sources, this sense of violation can best be sensed either by the player himself or by an audience *watching* a performance of a Lachenmann piece where the player's physical engagement with the instrument (and the way it departs from standard instrumental technique!) is immediately apparent. *Guero* (1970, rev. 1988), for solo piano, is founded on similar ideas, yet, as Pace suggests, is even more concerned than *Pression* with the physicality of performance:

The piece does not contain a single note played on the keys: instead, Lachenmann has the pianist scrape along the keys with the fingernails, and pluck in the gaps. Whereas the interactions and progressions in *Pression* and *Dal Niente* were between sound types, *Guero* is thoroughly physical and theatrical ... The closest the piece approaches to pitched notes is at the end, where a couple of strings are plucked, but in front of the dampers in such a manner as to produce a part-muted, part-*ponticello* effect.<sup>20</sup>

The following examples, which feature the playing actions alongside extracts from Lachenmann's manuscripts are taken from the CD booklet to Lachenmann's *Gran Torso*, a work completed in 1971:<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Lachenmann 1991.

Ex. 11 a)

Gran Torso, bars 2-3

('Knirschen auf Rückwand')

Grinding the Bow along the Back of the Instrument

Knirschen auf Rückwand

hinterste Abzente (7)2

ffp ffp ffpp

legno

legno

fff meno f

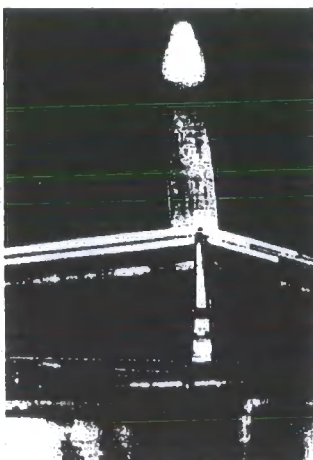
Takt 2/3  
Knirschen auf Rückwand



Ex. 11 b)

Gran Torso, bar 18a  
('Tonlos auf Steg')

Bowing tonelessly on the bridge



Takt 18a  
tonlos auf Steg

Compositional score for Violin and Cello/Double Bass, showing measures 18a-18b. The score includes handwritten annotations and dynamic markings.

Violin part annotations: *über Saiten (bühliche Töne)*, *am Steg*, *tonlos auf Steg*, *ppp*, *fff*, *V*, *stg.*, *fff*, *(Voll expressive)*.

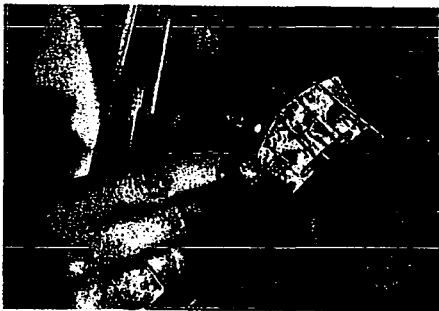
Cello/Double Bass part annotations: *arco*, *tonlos!*, *ppp*, *auf Steg*, *sf p*, *übergeben?*, *p*.

**Ex. 11 c)** *Gran Torso*, bar 29  
 ('Pizzicato an rechter Stegkante')

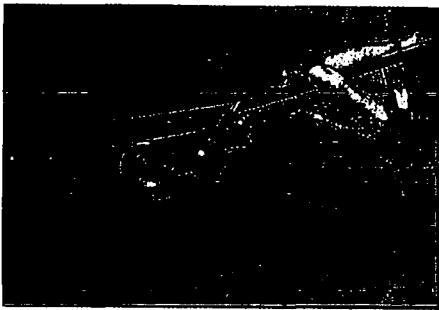
Pizzicato on the right edge of the bridge

**Ex. 11 d)** *Gran Torso*, bar 29  
 ('Arco auf Schnecke')

Arco on the tailpiece



Takt 29  
*Pizzicato an rechter Stegkante*



Takt 29  
*Arco auf Schnecke*

arco hell Spitze → S-Mitte  
 auf Schnecke.  
 f ppp.  
 pizzicato  
 5  
 [Schnecke]  
 (Arco auf Schnecke)

Ex. 11 e)

*Gran Torso*, bar 46

(Pizzicato fluido, 'Spanschraube auf Saite')

*Pizzicato fluido*

Tension screw of the bow played on the string

Ex. 11 f)

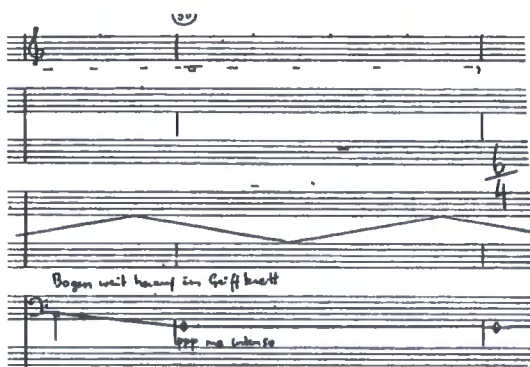
*Gran Torso*, bar 50

('Bogen weit herauf ins Griffbrett')

Bowing very far up the fingerboard



Takt 46  
*Pizzicato fluido*  
Spanschraube auf Saite



Bogen weit herauf ins Griffbrett



Ex. 11 g)

Gran Torso, bar 57

('Arco gepreßt, "quasi Säge")

Arco pressed down firmly, "quasi Saw"



Takt 57  
Arco gepreßt, "quasi Säge"

Ex. 11 h)

Gran Torso, bar 90-91

('Flautato hinterm Steg, immer näher zum Saitenhalter')

Flautato behind the bridge

Approaching closer to string holder



Takt 90/91  
Flautato hinterm Steg,  
immer näher zum Saitenhalter

Musical score for violin, measures 90 and 91. The score is written on a five-line staff. Above the staff, the time signature is  $\frac{8}{4}$ . The notation includes various bowing marks: 'v' for down-bow, 'v' for up-bow, and '□' for non-salt. A handwritten note above the staff reads: "(h. Steg) □ v □ v □ (non salt) v zum Saitenhalter □ v □". Below the staff, there are two lines of handwritten German text: "bei Abstieg durch Punkt des Bogens so dicht springen lassen, daß es beim folgenden Aufsteigen immer noch springt." and "auf Saitenhalter arco, unmerklich beginnen".



Ex. 11 i)

Gran Torso, bar 97  
(‘Arco auf Saitenhalter’)

Arco on string holder

97

Tempo rubatissimo (♩ 40-208) alternando sempre

auf Saitenhalter (nicht pressen, aber intensiv strichen) PPP

Arco auf Saitenhalter

Takt 96  
Arco auf Saitenhalter

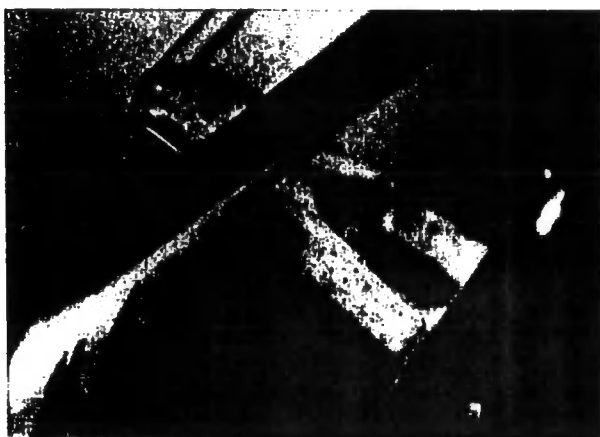


Ex. 11 j)

Gran Torso, bar 129

('Arco auf linker Stegkante, unter der Saiten')

Arco on the left edge of the bridge, under the strings



Takt 129  
Arco auf linker Stegkante  
(unter den Saiten)

c. b. F  
p  
legno  
all. rit. -> meno  
Bogenansatz -> Bogenansatz nach unten am Spitze  
auf Stegkante  
I. legno  
Call. auf linker Stegkante oberhalb Brücke

Ex. 11 k)

Gran Torso, bars 216-217

('Bogen am Frosch Richtung Griffbrettmitte)

Bowing at the heel in the direction of the middle of the fingerboard

Ex. 11 l)

Gran Torso, bars 216-217

('Bogen gepreßt, mit abgeteilten Haarbreiten)

Bow pressed down firmly, using a segment of hair width



Takt 216/217  
Bogen am Frosch Richtung Griffbrettmitte

Bogen gepreßt, mit abgeteilten Haarbreiten



pizz. -> *Bogen am Frosch (Richtung Griffbrettmitte)*  
pizz. *Bogen gepreßt, mit abgeteilten Haarbreiten*  
I. *Bogen am Frosch (Richtung Griffbrettmitte)* *press* *Bogen gepreßt, mit abgeteilten Haarbreiten*  
II. *aus dem Hals* *I.* *II.* *III.*  
Hautbuckel (100... ..) (Stim) (100... ..)

The notion of defining a sound's place in a work through the manner by which it is produced rather than its actual sounds also defies traditional concepts of structure. Form becomes a polyphony of juxtaposed sounding materials, where the sound source is made subject to its own 'arpeggiation' – an internal outgrowth from the concrete particular – throughout the piece. Like the attempt to create fluid form in Boulez's *Third Piano Sonata*, Lachenmann endeavours to construct forms that are not static or closed, but open and dynamically mobile.

In an analysis of Boulez's *Third Piano Sonata*,<sup>22</sup> Alastair Williams writes that, in true Adornian fashion, Boulez 'wishes to protect autonomy from collapsing into heteronomy' (and thus to avoid what he sees as the error of Cage's indeterminate compositions). However, he 'rejects the notion of art as a fixed and immutable object and hopes to align the disintegration of illusion with an attribute of another culture.'<sup>23</sup>

Williams argues, however, that Boulez ultimately fails in his attempt to create a mobile form, a form permeable to the mimetic or non-identical. This is because he endeavours to incorporate mobility as the tension between identity and non-identity into the musical material itself, thus removing any real aleatoric element. As Williams argues, 'Boulez, like Heidegger, attempts to stand outside the antitheses of identity and nonidentity: material is understood, almost transcendently, as something capable of containing its own tension.'<sup>24</sup> He attempts, paradoxically, to control non-identity in the way that Heidegger attempts to conceptualize pure facticity through the invention of concepts such as 'Being'. In the process, both Heidegger and Boulez collapse the tension between subject and object, form and content.

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<sup>22</sup> See the analysis of the Boulez in Williams 1997: 50-64.

<sup>23</sup> Williams 1997: 50.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*: 51.

Lachenmann's action scores are, I would argue, closer to the Adornian ideal. There is a component of chance in such scores and yet, as we shall see in the case of *Accanto*,<sup>25</sup> unlike Cage, Lachenmann is careful to avoid dissolving form into an indeterminate collection of unrelated elements. Unpredictability of sounding result in Lachenmann's action scores injects a chance element into the work, the outcome of which is not fully written into the score, as it is in Boulez's *Third Piano Sonata*.

### **Instrumental *musique concrète***

[Pierre Schaeffer] noted: the precondition to concrete music is that the samples be isolated not only from dramatic or anecdotal context, but from their original musical context too. Paradoxically, the works that followed were undeniably dramatic.<sup>26</sup>

Carlos Palombini, *Pierre Schaeffer's Typo-Morphology of Sonic Objects* (1993)

Varèse makes the orchestra say something different from what people have usually made it say. He extracts 'wild sounds' from old-fashioned instruments.<sup>27</sup>

Pierre Schaeffer (1969)

In *Pression* and *Guero*, sounds are, to adopt Lachenmann's term, 'defamiliarized' and rendered ambiguous. Adorno, in all probability, would consider this process of obfuscation as a gesture of opposition to a rationalized world which prizes clarity and transparency of understanding.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, he might see it as a stance against the 'addiction' to the familiar upon which the 'culture industry' thrives. As Elke Hockings writes

Lachenmann's struggle for credibility in a commercially-oriented music industry expresses itself as an avoidance of unequivocalty, even if his theoretical writings apparently disguise precisely this degree of imprecision. The resulting 'speechless gesticulation' (Konrad Boehmer) of his

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<sup>25</sup> See Part One Section 4 below

<sup>26</sup> Palombini 1993: 7.

<sup>27</sup> Schaeffer cited in Palombini 1993: 180.

<sup>28</sup> cf. Adorno and Horkheimer's 'Dialectic of Enlightenment' project as discussed by Wellmer 1991: 80, for example.

music cannot rely on an established system of communicational signs but operates on other cognitive levels of game and perceptual ambiguity/mobility. One of Lachenmann's achievements rests in the subtle shadings that can be made out in this zone between the definitely familiar and referential chaos.<sup>29</sup>

Lachenmann employs the concept of 'instrumental *musique concrète*' to describe the ambiguous characteristic of his music with respect to traditional musical performance.

The defining concept, *musique concrète*, is associated in particular with the work of composer Pierre Schaeffer and the school of French electroacoustic composition which emerged in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>30</sup> The creation of *musique concrète* entailed the disassociation or dislocation of concrete sounds from their original real-world source through the manipulation of recorded samples. The process sought to strip sounds of their reference to reality: any referential elements would fragment the unity of form and content.

*Musique concrète* is distinguished from *musique abstraite*, which in the realm of electronic composition refers to music formed not from recordings, but using synthetic processes. Schaeffer insisted that the sound object should be experienced acoustically<sup>31</sup> – abstracted from its original context or, as Andrew Hamilton has put it, 'detached from any association with its source or cause in

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<sup>29</sup> Hockings 1995: 13.

<sup>30</sup> In 1950 Schaeffer published the article 'Introduction à la musique concrète'.

<sup>31</sup> Palombini as written the following on Schaeffer and acousmatic listening: 'Schaeffer unearthed this "ancient neologism" in order to elaborate on an experience which is characteristic of our times, and whose full consequences he proposes to extract: listening (on the radio, record, the telephone or tape) to sounds whose cause is invisible' (Palombini 1993: 30). He adds, 'The repeated audition of sounds whose instrumental sources are masked leads one to neglect source identification, and to get interested in sounds themselves. Another kind of listening emerges: the listening to sonic shapes, which aims at hearing them better, and at describing them by means of an analysis of perceptions. ... It is ... a question of new and precise (conscious or unconscious) orientations of listening, which reveal new aspects of sound. ... The notion of acousmatic listening clearly points to reduced listening, the listening to a sound in itself, without any reference to its source and significance in a code' (*Ibid.*: 31). The link between this description and the type of listening aspired to with Lachenmann's instrumental *musique concrète* is evident.

the world – and thus non-mimetic'.<sup>32</sup> Schaeffer asserted that 'From the moment you accumulate sounds and noises, deprived of their dramatic (i.e. mimetic, anecdotal) connotations, you cannot help but make music'.<sup>33</sup>

Carlos Palombini discusses how, as early as the *Étude aux chemins de fer* ('*Imposée*') (a work broadcast in 1948 and derived from recordings of six locomotives at the station of Batignolles) Schaeffer 'discovered how to obliterate the referent':

...sound recordings were raised to the status of compositional raw material, and Schaeffer focused on their transformation (variation of playback speed, backwards playing, cutting, looping of a single groove). These manipulations tended to make the original source of the sounds unidentifiable ...<sup>34</sup>

...manipulations created shapes which were radically different from those of traditional sounds.<sup>35</sup>

More than that simple use of sampled sounds as musical material, concrete music represented an inversion in relation to the traditional musical démarche. According to Schaeffer, the traditional (or 'abstract') composer followed a path which led him from abstraction to concretion: the traditional piece was mentally conceived, symbolically notated, and finally performed. In concrete music, the effects created by different manners of exciting sound-producing bodies, and by electro-acoustic manipulations of recordings of these sounds, could not be conceived *à priori* ...<sup>36</sup>

Schaeffer's *Étude aux tourniquets* ('*Déconcertante*') involved the manipulation not of everyday noises as in the *Étude aux chemins de fer*, but of a pre-recorded composition by Gaston Litaize. Schaeffer describes the result of the montage technique, in which fragments underwent transformation before being reassembled, as follows:

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<sup>32</sup> Hamilton 2001-2: 3. Note that the term 'mimetic' is used here in the sense of imitation, rather than in the more complex Adornian sense.

<sup>33</sup> Schaeffer cited in Hamilton, *ibid.*: 4.

<sup>34</sup> Palombini 1993: 4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*: 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*: 6-7.

The musical ideas of the original score almost entirely disappeared, for the cuts engendered new structures which had no relation with the former compositional intention. If initial elements could be recognized in these new structures, it was rather like fossils, whose chemical composition alone interests us.<sup>37</sup>

In 1965 Lachenmann composed his only tape piece, *Scenario*, shortly before he conceived the idea of 'action scores' for the first time. He thus acquired first-hand experience of *musique concrète* at a crucial stage of his composing career. Subsequently, Lachenmann made the radical move to introduce this notion of 'defamiliarization' into the world of acoustic composition. The idea of instrumental *musique concrète* suggests precisely this rupture or deconstruction of the 'natural' or transparent link between sound and source (signified and signifier, in semiotic terms) through attention to that which it excludes. As Lachenmann has commented

The term [instrumental *musique concrète*] refers to that of Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète*. Instead of instrumentally using mechanical everyday actions as musical elements I go about it by understanding the instrumental sound as information about its production, therefore rather the other way round – by illuminating instrumental sounds as mechanical processes.<sup>38</sup>

It could be argued that composers as diverse as Mahler, Varèse, Antheil and Schaeffer had already set about injecting the everyday and ordinary into the hallowed sphere of art in various ways. Yet Lachenmann, like Adorno, proceeds immanently, seeking out and drawing attention to the ordinary and the incidental which is already submerged within that supposedly pure realm itself. Rather than injecting the everyday into the aesthetic, Lachenmann could be said to be locating the everyday within the musical elements themselves.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*: 5. This quotation offers a useful description of Lachenmann's technique of instrumental *musique concrète*. It is particularly pertinent for an understanding of the revisiting of tonal materials in *Ausklang* (1984-5), *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* (1980) and *Accanto* (1975-6). Furthermore, the latter work, in a similar way to Schaeffer's '*Déconcertante*', exposes a recording of a pre-existing musical work to transformation (though without employing the electroacoustic devices used by the French composer). *Accanto* and the *Tanzsuite* will be discussed in Parts Two and Three respectively.

<sup>38</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 211-212.



Writing twenty years later in a sleeve note to *Schwankungen am Rand* (1998) Lachenmann defines instrumental *musique concrète* as 'the idea of a music that discovers its own physicality'.<sup>39</sup> Elsewhere, he has stated that

The idea of instrumental *musique concrète* – i.e. sound as a message conveyed from its own mechanical origin,<sup>40</sup> and so sound as experience of energy, marked the compositional material of my pieces between 1968 (*TemA*) and 1976 (*Accanto*). It remains part of my thinking as a composer to this day. It signifies an extensive defamiliarization of instrumental technique: the musical sound may be bowed, pressed, beaten, torn, maybe choked, rubbed, perforated and so on. At the same time the new sound must satisfy the requirements of the old familiar concert-hall sound which, in this context, loses any familiarity and becomes (once again) freshly illuminated, even 'unknown'. Such a perspective demands changes in compositional technique, so that the classical case-parameters, such as pitch, duration, timbre, volume, and their derivatives retain their significance only as subordinate aspects of the compositional category which deals with the manifestation of energy.<sup>41</sup>

It is interesting that Lachenmann does indeed perceive this aspect of his music as being already present in works from the classical tradition, yet usually present only in a subordinate role:

The energetic aspect is not at all new, but in classical music it has a more or less articulative function. Even so we can hear the harp in Mahler as a distorted drum, the brass of Bruckner as imaginary supernatural lungs, and it was Richard Strauss who compared the high pizzicato G on the violin in the King Lear Overture by Berlioz, to one of the burst veins in the head of the king.<sup>42</sup>

Lachenmann describes the introduction of this new 'parameter' into musical composition as follows. With the technique of instrumental *musique concrète*,

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<sup>39</sup> Lachenmann 1994.

<sup>40</sup> i.e. the sound in its raw state *is* the message.

<sup>41</sup> Lachenmann cited in Ryan 1999: 20-21.

<sup>42</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 211.

Sound was no longer modified from the perceptive angle of interval, harmony, rhythm, colour, etc. but as a result of the application of mechanical power under physical conditions, which were defined and modified in the course of composition. A violin note, observed and regulated as the result of a characteristic scrubbing (rubbing – *Reiben*) between two characteristic objects and understood as an exception amongst other scrubbing (rubbing) variants, that is to say actions that meanwhile have nothing to do with the practice of philharmonic playing, attach themselves in this way to a characteristic continuum of integrated sounds of more or less distorted or reshaped sounds.<sup>43</sup>

Just as Adorno insists on accessing the non-identical from within identity, Lachenmann uses traditional instruments in radical ways in order to access unknown areas of experience.<sup>44</sup> Citing Antoine Goléa, Palombini has written, 'The common trait of the exemplary pieces of concrete music is: "to express a complete world through a means of expression itself complete."<sup>45</sup>

Lachenmann seeks, like Schaeffer, to expose sounds 'for what they are', to allow them to speak for themselves without being subordinated to representational schemes. I will address Lachenmann's highly ambivalent relationship to tradition in my discussions of Lachenmann's *temA* and *Accanto* below (see Part One, Section 5 and Part Two, Section 4 respectively). First of all, however, I would like to explore the notion of historical consciousness with respect to 'natural' material and how this could relate to seeking out the 'everyday' within the aesthetic realm.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*: 211, cf. the notion of 'virtual dynamics' in the string quartet *Gran Torso* as discussed in Pace 1998a: 13.

<sup>44</sup> Here I am choosing to interpret this idea with recourse to writings of Adorno. However, Lachenmann's insistence on the physicality of sounds – their materiality – could equally be compared to the concepts of 'intensity' in Lyotard and in Deleuze and Guattari. For an extended discussion of this idea, see Parts 4 and 5 below.

<sup>45</sup> Palombini 1993: 11.

## 4. History, Nature and Mimesis in Adorno and early Lachenmann

### Instrumental *Musique Concrète* and the 'sound of nature'

Schaeffer was perfectly able to exploit contradictions between material and structure and to create musical structures appropriate to the dramatic character of the material.<sup>46</sup>

Carlos Palombini, *Pierre Schaeffer's Typo-Morphology of Sonic Objects* (1993)

Lachenmann's comments on the relation between his music and Mahler's symphonic works shed further light on the former composer's technique of instrumental *musique concrète* and on the role of 'nature' in his work. In discussing the 'sound of nature' in Mahler's music ('... birdcalls, bells, signals, songs, the major-minor sensibility, the march figures: a world of the familiar, exalted in the homogeneous medium of his symphonic language'<sup>47</sup>) Lachenmann refers to a 'drive towards "artless" treatment' and the 'conscious lack of art for the sake of art'.<sup>48</sup> It is to these passages in Mahler, characterized by the popular or the everyday to which Adorno referred when he commented on Mahler's 'alliance with the trivial'.<sup>49</sup>

In Mahler, the 'sounds of nature' are phenomena which are not usually perceived as possessing aesthetic qualities (compare the idealized *re*-presentations of nature in Dvorák to the *presentations* of Mahler). Yet, by including these sounds within his works, Mahler invites us to hear them as such (as does Cage, although in a less mediated way), re-styling and redefining, as does Lachenmann, the

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<sup>46</sup> Palombini 1993: 178.

<sup>47</sup> '... der Vogelruf, die Glocken, die Signale, die Lieder, die Dur-Moll-Empfindsamkeit, die Marschfiguren: eine Welt des Vertrauten, im homogenen Medium seiner symphonischen Sprache überhöht' (Lachenmann 1996: 268-269).

<sup>48</sup> A translation of 'Mahler – Eine Herausforderung: Antwort auf fünf Fragen' (Lachenmann 1996: 268-9).

<sup>49</sup> Adorno 1992a: 8-9 ff.

boundaries of the category of the Beautiful.<sup>50</sup> Art up-to-now, implies Mahler, has been predicated upon various types of illusion, and he offers a 'truer' picture.

Such an aestheticization of the 'artless' finds, I would argue, a direct correspondence in Lachenmann's instrumental *musique concrète*. Lachenmann has said

In my music the withdrawal of the emphatic gesture, its incorporation as a mechanical process, the making aware of the energetic requirements and the exposing of the expression bound up with it: the wooden pieces which split on the stroke of the big hammer, the string which breaks on the "emerging" (*zufahrenden*) upbeat in the third row of strings, the involuntary vibrato of the tuba player, who at the end of [Mahler's] *Sixth* flutters his lips from the exertion: they interest and shatter me, and precisely in connection with the process from which they originate. They are the reverse side of a socially enacted pattern: to make one aware means exposing pressure, a process which may remain laughable and childish just as the Mahlerian broken emphasis may remain laughable and childish: if it does not impinge like this in conflict with the taboos of society's communicated self-image. In both cases it is aesthetically walking the tightrope ...<sup>51</sup>

Instrumental *musique concrète*, I would suggest, is a curious inversion of this demystifying process. As he suggests, the presence of the gestural and the physical (such as the fluttering lips of the tuba player) – incidental to the performance of Mahler's music – are now the 'everyday' elements rescued by Lachenmann. His incorporation of gesture as a mechanical process, a celebration of those marginalized aspects of the physical production of music, represents a stripping away of illusion, a focusing on the directness of performance technique, dispensing with conceptual, idealistic schemes. Such a

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<sup>50</sup> See my discussion of Lachenmann's concept of Beauty in Part Two, Section 2.

<sup>51</sup> 'In meiner Musik die Zurücknahme des emphatischen Gestus, seine Eingliederung als mechanischer Prozeß, die Bewußtmachung der energetischen Bedingungen und die Freilegung des darin gebundenen Ausdrucks: das Holzstückchen, das beim Schlag des großen Hammers wegsplittert, die Saite, die beim "zufahrenden" Auftakt in der dritten Streicherreihe reißt, das unfreiwillige Vibrato des Tubaspielers, dem am Ende der *Sechsten* vor Anstrengung die Lippen flattern: Sie interessieren und erschüttern mich, und zwar gerade in Beziehung zu dem Prozeß, dem sie entstammen. Sie sind die Kehrseite eines gesellschaftlich und kindisch bleibe, so wie die Mahlersche Emphase als gebrochene lächerlich und kindisch bleibe, wenn er nicht wie diese im Widerspruch zum kommunikativen Selbstverständnis der Gesellschaft deren Tabus anrührte. In beiden Fällen eine ästhetische Gratwanderung ...' (Lachenmann 1996: 269).

presentation, as opposed to a representation, of those aspects which are natural and very much a part of musical performance but which up to now have been seen as incidental, can thus be understood in the light of Adorno's attempt to turn identity thinking towards the non-identical.<sup>52</sup> Yet the presence of these same elements – unnoticed – in the performance of a work by Mahler suggests engagement not just with artless 'nature', but also a knowing 'defamiliarization' of the 'handed down'.

### **Adorno's Dialectic of History and Nature**

As Paddison shows, Adorno's theory of the dialectical interaction of history and nature is indebted to Lukács and Walter Benjamin.<sup>53</sup> This theory is expressed most comprehensively in the paper 'The Idea of Natural History', which was given in Frankfurt in July 1932 (as 'Die Idee der Naturgeschichte').<sup>54</sup> Starting as a critique of Heideggerian ontology, Adorno argues in the paper that the 'natural', as that which appears to transcend history, is in fact synonymous with *myth*:

The concept of nature that is to be dissolved is one that, if I translated it into standard philosophical terminology, would come closest to the concept of myth. This concept is also vague and its exact sense can not be given in preliminary definitions but only in the course of analysis. By it is meant what has always been, what as fatefully arranged predetermined being underlies history and appears in history; it is substance in history. What is delimited by these expressions is what I mean here by 'nature'.<sup>55</sup>

The concept 'nature' is thus, according to Adorno, a historical construct or idea, and consequently visions of what constitutes the 'natural' alter throughout history. Nature is not static and timeless, but in fact mobile and dynamic: in other words, paradoxically, nature cannot be separated from its apparent opposite, history.

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<sup>52</sup> Its possible relationship to the work of Deleuze (particularly Deleuze's insistence that one should ask of art not what it represents, but how it *works*) will be addressed in Part Four of this thesis.

<sup>53</sup> See Paddison 1993: 31-37 for a discussion of the precise nature of this influence.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*: 30. An English translation of the paper appeared in *Telos* 60, June 1984.

<sup>55</sup> Adorno cited in Paddison *ibid.*

History for Adorno, as Paddison puts it, is the 'interaction of "consciousness" [as subject] and "nature" [as object], as "culture" (in the sociological and anthropological senses of the term)'.<sup>56</sup>

All appeals to 'nature' are seen by Adorno as ideological and highly suspect. As Paddison asserts:

The appeal to nature' – usually under the guise of the ontological notion of 'pure being' (*Sein*) in Heidegger, or 'immediacy' in Husserl, and manifested by composers like Stravinsky as the folkloric, archaic or hieratic and in Hindemith as 'natural material'<sup>57</sup> and 'community' – is regarded by Adorno as the attempt to evade history, and has ideological implications in terms of a reactionary impulse to preserve the status quo and to conceal the real relations of power within modern society (implications which were to be taken up in later writings like *Philosophie der neuen Musik*).<sup>58</sup>

Thus Adorno's dialectical theory focuses upon the *interaction* of history and nature, the process whereby that which is historical comes to be falsely interpreted as natural, and nature in turn comes to be viewed as historical. This has significant implications for an understanding of music.

### **Mimesis and instrumental *musique concrète***

Adorno's concept of 'mimesis', as the counterpart in his aesthetics to the philosophical concept of non-identity, provides a useful additional concept with which to contemplate Lachenmann's sound structures and their expressive effect. Williams broadly defines Adorno's usage of mimesis as 'the non-conceptual, particular and sensuous qualities of the object, those aspects suppressed by the coercive force of instrumental reason.'<sup>59</sup> Adorno himself

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> As *Stoff*. This concept will be explored later in connection with American experimental music and for the light it throws on Lachenmann's music.

<sup>58</sup> Paddison 1993: 30.

<sup>59</sup> Williams 1997: 13.

defines it as the 'non-conceptual affinity of a subjective creation with its objective and unposited other.'<sup>60</sup>

There is a further meaning of the term 'mimesis' as Adorno uses it, and this is the non-coercive reconciliation of rationality with nature. Nature, as Paddison puts it, 'is understood as non-identity, that which is left out, discarded, repressed or occluded by the dominant mode of rationality, and which escapes being "functionalized" by it. ... It is that region to which are consigned those things rejected or repressed by society in its dominant form'.<sup>61</sup> Nature for Adorno refers both to the material environment and also, importantly, to pre-rational, subjective, inner nature or impulses.

Adorno however stresses that mimesis can only be understood *dialectically*, through its interaction with the constructive pole of the artwork (as the dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity). For him, authentic art consists in the 'bringing to speech' of nature. Indeed art, he considers, is one of its last places of refuge:

Facing the constant threat of its own reification, the subject limits that reification through the mimetic vestige, the plenipotentiary of an integral life amid a damaged life where the subject is being reduced to an ideology.<sup>62</sup>

Lachenmann's method of 'defamiliarization' can be seen as an attempt to bear witness to a repressed nature. His focus on timbre denotes precisely the foregrounding of the expressive, sensuous aspects and associations of sounds over and above functional pitch relations. Even the subversion of traditional instrumental techniques can be seen as having a mimetic aspect.

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<sup>60</sup> Adorno 1984: 80.

<sup>61</sup> Paddison 1993: 157.

<sup>62</sup> Adorno 1984: 171 (original translation modified).

## 5. Lachenmann's *temA* (1968)

### 'Auftakt der instrumentalen musique concrète'

*TemA* (1968), scored for mezzo soprano, flute and 'cello, has been analyzed by Karl Rainer Nonnenmann in conjunction with the notion of instrumental *musique concrète*.<sup>63</sup> I would like to propose here that Nonnenmann's analysis of the work can also be understood with reference to Adorno's concept of 'mimesis'. *TemA* is comprised of sounds which, whilst 'defamiliarized' in terms of their technique of sound production, nevertheless refer to 'natural' sounds such as hissing and breathing. Furthermore, the piece anticipates what is subsequently to become a central feature of Lachenmann's work – the notion of a reference point *outside* the sounding structure of the work.

In *temA*, mimetic sounds and the presence of text in the vocal part append a referential dimension which is absent from Lachenmann's sound categories theory. These do not refer to musical forms, but to sounds from the 'outside world'.<sup>64</sup>

*TemA* can be understood as an essay in the art of 'speechless gesticulation' described by Konrad Boehmer.<sup>65</sup> It 'cannot rely on an established system of communicational signs but operates on other cognitive levels of game and perceptual ambiguity/ mobility' (to adopt the words of Hockings). The music inhabits 'the subtle shadings that can be made out in this zone between the definitely familiar and referential chaos.'<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See Nonnenmann 1997.

<sup>64</sup> What could be seen as an incidental feature of this piece becomes in works such as *Accanto* (1975-1976) a fully-fledged second formal level. In *Accanto*, as we shall see later, this formal-referential level pays homage to Adorno's concept of handed-down material.

<sup>65</sup> See Boehmer cited in Hockings 1995: 13.

<sup>66</sup> Hockings 1995: 13.



Ex. 12 (a)

**temA**  
für Flöte, Stimme (Mezzosopran) und Violoncello/for Flute, Voice (Mezzo-Soprano) and Violoncello

Helmut Lachenmann (1968)

ca. 60. aber immer flexibel

Flöte  
Flute

Stimme  
Voice

Violoncello

Staccatura

PPP

f

SCH

stacc. f poco  
ohne Bogen

ca. 60. aber immer flexibel

Flöte  
Flute

Stimme  
Voice

Violoncello

Staccatura

PPP

f

SCH

stacc. f poco  
ohne Bogen

genau mit Flöte enden!

sehr langsam

Legno direkt hinterem Steg

Linke Hand mit Fingernagel über Seitenarmstütze

Lachenmann, *temA*, page 1<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Cited in Pace 1988a: 11

Ex. 12 (b)

The musical score consists of two systems, each with three staves. The first system includes the following annotations:

- Staff 1: *fff*, *pp*, *tremolo*, *non tremolo*
- Staff 2: *gerufen*, *Mein!*, *gliss*, *I:MN:I*, *A*
- Staff 3: *fff*, *otto*, *pass*, *p*, *fff*

The second system includes the following annotations:

- Staff 1: *tremolo*, *(in starrer Haltung verharrten)*, *fff*
- Staff 2: *stecken und Luft anhalten*, *immer, wenigstens zum Schluss, das Atem gerührt anhalten*, *RR*, *M...*, *A...*, *L*
- Staff 3: *knirschend quäsend*, *(evtl. Bogen mit beiden Händen fassen)*, *Zwischen Stg und Saitenhalter*, *fff*, *meno f*

Lachenmann, *temA*, page 21<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Pace 1988a: 11

This obfuscation of the referential pole is reminiscent of deconstructionist philosophy's concern with the nature of inside and outside, with the way in which conceptual distinctions slide into one another.

Lachenmann insists upon the use of traditional instruments in the creation or location of new sounds. This is in spite of all that the development of electronic devices for composition seemed to promise in this area. Electroacoustic devices may provide a wealth of possibilities for 'progressive' music, but, Lachenmann argues, they fail to engage directly with tradition and convention, with the historicity of musical material and its expressive associations:

... to experience the familiar afresh in a new light was only possible by means of traditional instruments. Electronics are of little use here, since their free abundance of sound possibilities remains imprisoned by the limits of loudspeakers or perhaps their vibrating membranes. For all of its vast wealth, electronic sound is too 'safe' – it quickly oxidizes to become an exotic, surreal, expressionistic idyll.<sup>69</sup>

'*Composing means: to build an instrument*',<sup>70</sup> Lachenmann has stated. In *temA*, a series of 'meta instruments' or sound production categories are formed which span across the boundaries set by traditional instruments. These exist as internally consistent 'sound objects' with limitations as well as possibilities, yet in Lachenmann's case they also involve the creation of the new by means of the old.<sup>71</sup>

Lachenmann's technique of defamiliarization extends both to the instrumental and the vocal: the singing voice is employed as an instrument, mimicking instrumental sound qualities, and the instruments are in turn used to mimic

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<sup>69</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 211.

<sup>70</sup> 'Komponieren heißt: ein Instrument bauen' (Lachenmann cited in Nonnenmann 1997: 106 - my italics).

<sup>71</sup> It is worth noting the correlation between Lachenmann's statement and Schaeffer's creation of 'pseudo-instruments': 'Some sounds have, for instance, an attack that may be characterized by portamento, forcefulness, or opening out (that is, by moving swiftly from piano to forte). If these characteristics remain throughout the modulations the sounds undergo, such sound sources may play the role of orchestral instruments (Schaeffer cited in Palombini 1993: 8).

phonetic sounds. Like the later *Ausklang* for piano and orchestra, *temA* is constructed around *resonances*, the affinities to be discovered between sound objects. In line with the idea of timbral categories set out in 'Klangtypen', Lachenmann proceeds by means of creating new 'families' through the creation of timbral connections and affinities.

Nonnenmann writes that *temA* 'aims to create a structure of meaningful connections through the choice of noise-dominated material, through the creation of affinities, similarities, and contrasts and through gradual transformations and sudden changes of material.'<sup>72</sup> He adds that

Instrumental and vocal techniques of sound production are brought into connection with each other not only through breath but through analogies between their mechanical-energetic production; so for instance the beating down of the tongue on the gums is analogous to the clattering of the keys on the flute, when the keys on the flute are pressed down. From bar 118 onwards, three different characteristic playing techniques are brought into connection with each other through their mechanical sound production. The tremolo of the string instrument corresponds not only to the flutter tongue and double tongue techniques of the wind instrument, but also to the 'flutter-lips' of the vocalist.<sup>73</sup>

There is a further level of perceptual ambiguity in *temA*, and this is in connection with the aforementioned presence of text. Although text is uttered or sung by the vocalist, it is articulated with extreme and rapid changes of articulation and dynamic, blocking any clear communication of meaning to the listener.

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<sup>72</sup> 'Die Vielfalt des von Lachenmann exploitierten Artikulations- und Atemmaterials ist eine wesentliche Bedingung für ein Komponieren, das mit derartig geräuschhaftem Material, mit der Herstellung von Ähnlichkeits-, Gleichheits- und Kontrastbeziehungen, durch prozessuale Wandlungen und plötzliche Veränderungen des Materials auf die Bildung von strukturell sinnvollen Zusammenhängen zielt' (Nonnenmann *ibid.*: 106).

<sup>73</sup> 'Instrumental- und Vokalpraktiken werden in "temA" nicht nur durch den Atem selbst, sondern auch durch Analogien ihrer mechanisch-energetischen Hervorbringung in Beziehung gebracht; so entspricht beispielsweise das Herabschlagen der Zunge vom Gaumen den zuschlagenden Klappen der Flöte. In einer mit "Agitato" bezeichneten Passage (ab Takt 118) werden drei charakteristische Spielweisen durch die Art ihrer mechanischen Hervorbringung von Klang miteinander in Beziehung gebracht. Dem Tremolo des Streichinstruments korrespondiert sowohl die Flatter- als auch die Doppelzungentechnik des Blasinstruments, die wiederum mit der Flatterlippe der Vokalstimme in Analogie gesetzt wird' (Nonnenmann *ibid.*: 107).

Consequently, sounds are 'energized', heard in and for themselves. Furthermore, the ends of sentences are frequently withheld. Meaning is hinted at, and yet it is never fully present, only ever in a fragmentary state. This is an example of the 'game' aspect referred to by Hockings. Nonnenmann describes an example of this 'play' of textual meaning in *temA*:

In bar 102 the singer takes over the "S"-hissing [*Zischen*] of the cello, which is instructed to play it on an E flat (!)<sup>74</sup> This "S" increases from *ppp* to *pp* only to open out into a sentence that is dominated by sharp "S" sounds – 'wissen Sie, diese Texte ließen siCH-' ('you know, these texts allow themselves-'). ... The listener can take the address 'you know' to be directly referring to himself, and the sentence 'these texts allow themselves-' to be the start of an explanation that the listener has long been expecting for this meaningless stuttering, an explanation that is then absent and cut off abruptly through the word "PST!" [in the flute].<sup>75</sup>

**(See Ex. 12c, overleaf)**

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<sup>74</sup> The word 'Es' is German for E flat.

<sup>75</sup> 'In Takt 102 wird von der Vokalistin das "Es"-Zischen des Cellisten – der obendrein ein es (!) zu spielen hat – übernommen ... aus dem *ppp* ins *pp* gesteigert, um dann in den von scharfen "S"-Lauten dominierten Satz "wissen Sie, diese Texte ließen siCH-" zu munden. ... Der Zuhörer kann die Anrede "wissen Sie" direct auf sich beziehen und den Satz "diese Texte ließen sich" als Ankündigung einer von ihm längst schon erwarteten Aufklärung über dieses vermeintlich sinnlose Gestammel auffassen, einer Erklärung, die dann freilich ausbleibt und der durch das "PST" geradezu das Wort abgeschnitten wird. Die Generalpause verschweigt die Erklärung und mit ihr bricht der gesamte Dialog zwischen Flöte und Vokalistin ab' (Nonnenman *ibid.*: 109-110).

Ex. 12 (c)

x) die genaue Wahl der Tonhöhe hängt davon ab, bei welchem Griff diese Saite im *fff* ratternd gegen das Griffbrett schlägt! (Siehe Takt 105)

Lachenmann, *temA*, bars 102-103<sup>76</sup>

In this section, there is a hint of a meta-explanation that is stopped abruptly in its tracks by the flute. Yet the flute is acoustically connected to the text by the “S” sound which it continues. Breathing sounds ‘ha’ and ‘ah’ also connect voice, cello and flute in a similar way: together the instruments form a ‘breathing object’, a ‘pseudo-instrument’ (to adopt Schaeffer’s term).

<sup>76</sup> Cited in Nonnenmann 1997: 109.

*TemA* can indeed be construed as a meta-comment on the condition of language, both musical and verbal. In a manner reminiscent of Adorno, Lachenmann allows the non-identical (as both 'defamiliarized' sound and textual ambiguity) to penetrate the very core of the piece, a force which constantly unravels the possibility of comprehension. *TemA* perpetually carves a sense of otherness, of semiosis in which no single meaning can be harnessed.

The title itself embodies a play of meaning: with an 'h' after the 't' the word would read *themA*, or theme, and the capital A at the end of the word suggests that the term is an anagram of *Atem* (German for 'breath'). The title defies any attempt to read off a transparent meaning, mimicking the deferral of meaning which characterizes a text according to deconstruction, and indicating at the outset the work's underlying dynamic.

The play of meaning in *temA* can be understood in relation to Adorno's concept of clowning. For Adorno, the 'aesthetic moment' as he calls it, is an inevitable aspect of philosophy due to the impossibility of grasping the object in full through the concept. '[C]ogency and play are the two poles of philosophy',<sup>77</sup> he writes. The two should always be maintained in tension:

As a corrective to the total rule of method, philosophy contains a playful element which the traditional view of it as a science would like to exorcise.... The un-naïve thinker knows how far he remains from the object of his thinking, and yet he must always talk as if he had it entirely. This brings him to the point of clowning. He must not deny his clownish traits, least of all since they alone can give him hope for what is denied him.... To represent the mimesis it supplanted, the concept has no other way than to adopt something mimetic in its own conduct, without abandoning itself.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Adorno 1973b: 15.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*: 14. In some of the more extreme examples of poststructuralist literature, this disseminative aspect of language is raised to a new absolute.

Musically, the above description is largely in keeping with the notion of 'sound structure'. Yet the hint of referential meaning in the text conjures up expectations; it can be understood as a formal element, despite its fragmented 'presence'. However, the formal element of language remains forever 'outside' the piece itself, a reflection of the wholeness that, Adorno argues, has been lost in the modern era.

There is an additional, highly subtle referential aspect to the piece. This, as suggested by one meaning of the title, is in relation to the theme of breathing. Lachenmann writes that '*temA* – apart from Ligeti's *Aventures* – is one of the first ever compositions in which the theme of breathing is presented as an acoustic, energetic process'.<sup>79</sup> In and out breaths form a structural principle or constant of the work, a 'formal' element which creates expectations. The suggestion is of a person sleeping throughout the course of the piece: Lachenmann indeed asks us to imagine this. Referring to bar 22 in the score he writes, 'All in-breath processes from here to bar 41 create a connecting series whose form should be determined by imagining a sleeping person.'<sup>80</sup> This theme is to repeat itself in Lachenmann's later works, as we shall see.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> '*temA*' dürfte – trotz Ligeti's *Aventures* – eine der ersten Kompositionen sein, in denen das Atmen als akustisch vermittelter energetischer Vorgang thematisiert wurde' Lachenmann in Nonnenman *ibid.*: 106.

<sup>80</sup> '... Einatem-Prozesse von hier bis Takt 41 bilden eine zusammenhängende Serie, deren Gestaltung von der Vorstellung eines Schlafenden bestimmt sein soll' (Lachenmann in Nonnenmann *ibid.*: 111).

<sup>81</sup> As a suggestive manifestation of Lachenmann's concept of *Sprachlosigkeit* ('speechlessness') (addressed in Part Two), this image is re-kindled in some of the cadential episodes in *Accanto*, and in the use of the lullaby 'Schlaf, Kindlein, Schlaf' in *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*. As I suggest in Part Three, this image, particularly in the *Tanzsuite*, is perhaps intended to symbolize the sleeping political consciousness in Germany after World War II.



## **Instrumental *musique concrète*, The grain of the voice and 'geno-song'**

Roland Barthes' famous essay 'The Grain of the Voice' ('Le grain de la voix', 1972), as Klaus-Michael Hinz has suggested, provides a further illuminating perspective from which to consider *temA*, a perspective that anticipates some of the issues taken up in Parts Four and Five of this thesis.

The 'grain' of the voice as Barthes puts it (the essay is devoted to the voice, although it can be applied also to instruments, when the mechanics of technique are brought to the fore) is the 'materiality' of the sounding body, 'the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages',<sup>82</sup> 'the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs'.<sup>83</sup> It represents is all that is excluded from the values attached to the conventions of performance.

Transposing Kristeva's distinction between 'pheno-' and 'geno-text', Barthes clarifies the distinction between his proposed musical aesthetic and the conventional, differentiating between what he terms 'pheno-song' and 'geno-song'. It is worth citing his description of this important distinction in full given its relevance to Lachenmann's work:

The *pheno-song* (if the transposition be allowed) covers all the phenomena, all the features which belong to the structure of the language being sung, the rules of the genre, the coded form of the melisma, the composer's idiolect, the style of the interpretation: in short, everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression, everything which it is customary to talk about, which forms the tissue of cultural values (the matter of acknowledged tastes, of fashions, of critical commentaries), which takes its bearing directly on the ideological alibis of a period ('subjectivity', 'expressivity', 'dramaticism', 'personality' of the artist). The *geno-song* is the volume of the singing and speaking voice, the space where significations germinate 'from within language and in its very materiality'; it forms a signifying play

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<sup>82</sup> Barthes 1977: 181-2.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*: 188. This is reminiscent of the disconnected zones of the body in Deleuze and Guattari's 'body without organs' (see Part Four).

having nothing to do with communication, representation (of feelings), expression; it is that apex (or that depth) of production where the melody really works at the language – not at what it says, but the voluptuousness of its sounds-signifiers, of its letters –where melody explores how the language works and identifies with that work. It is, in a very simple word which must be taken seriously, the *diction* of the language.<sup>84</sup>

Culture is seen as a repression of expressive possibilities, as a reductive force (like identity logic), a limiting of infinite reality. Barthes rebels against the 'tyranny of meaning': 'isn't the entire space of the voice an infinite one?' he asks, echoing Saussure.<sup>85</sup>

Crucially, the reception of the 'grain' of the voice necessitates a (momentary?) renunciation of structural or semantic listening. Barthes reflects upon what one might call 'bodily acoustic perception':

If I perceive the 'grain' in a piece of music and accord this 'grain' a theoretical value (the emergence of the text in the work), I inevitably set up a new scheme of evaluation which will certainly be individual – I am determined to listen to my relation with the body of the man or woman singing or playing and that relation is erotic – but in no way 'subjective' (it is not the psychological 'subject' in me who is listening; the climactic pleasure hoped for is not going to reinforce – to express – that subject but, on the contrary, to lose it).<sup>86</sup>

The link between Barthes' concept of 'grain' and Lachenmann's instrumental *musique concrète*, crucial to *temA*, is clear. Referring to the pheno-song/ geno-song distinction, Hinz reports that, 'Helmut Lachenmann says he believes "only in the latter form of expression."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*: 182-3.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*: 184. The 'geno-song' resonates with Lachenmann's *Sprachlosigkeit*.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*: 188.

<sup>87</sup> Hinz 1994.

## The Myth of Breath

The theme of breath, as we have seen, is central to *temA*. In Barthesian terms, the piece is bound not to the soul but to *diction*. Lachenmann deconstructs what Hinz refers to as the 'myth of breath': instead of soul or inner emotions, the body itself as instrument encompasses the message (not reproduction, but production). The vocalist is prescribed not conventional singing techniques but techniques intended to 'defamiliarize' it, to alienate it from convention and subvert expectations. These techniques are similar to those Lachenmann prescribes to instruments, and inject the category of 'noise' into the realm of accepted sounds.

Hinz argues that the fragments of text which appear in the piece 'do not need to be understood by the listener'. Citing Lachenmann, he writes, "they only serve for characteristic modifications of exhalation of breath".<sup>88</sup> This, I would argue, is only partially true. On the one hand, text in the piece is indeed employed almost as a 'sound object', for its material qualities rather than semantic meaning. However, this is not simply a 'word salad' in the surrealist sense. Orderly sentences *are* present, although they are rarely finished. By following what he or she can of the discursive meaning, the listener picks up on what I have described as a level of meta-commentary in the piece, addressing the ultimate instability of meaning.

By undermining the pheno-song in *temA*, Lachenmann opens up a space, to cite Barthes, 'of pleasure, of thrill, a site where language works *for nothing*, that is, a perversion'.<sup>89</sup> Provocative, purposeless, anti-capitalist? This space deconstructs the invariant appearance of the pheno-song, its claim to universality, another space which subtends it, one suppressed by the dominant paradigm.

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Barthes 1977: 187.

Crucially, Hinz makes mention a number of times of *temA* as an 'artistic natural event'. The parallels between Lachenmann's instrumental *musique concrète* and the work of John Cage, which this statement evokes, will be explored in Parts Four and Five.

## Part Two: 1976-1978

### Confronting Tradition: Lachenmann's 'Bedingungen des Materials' and *Accanto*

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# 1. The 'Aesthetic Apparatus' and *Sprachlosigkeit*

## Adorno's theory of the Objective Historical Tendency of Material

[Material] is nothing less than the objectified and critically reflected state of the technical productive forces of an age with which any given composer is initially confronted. The physical and historical dimensions mutually interact.<sup>1</sup>

Adorno, 'Vers une musique informelle' (1961)

The notion of an historical tendency inherent in musical material is essential to the line of reasoning adopted in Adorno's controversial work, *Philosophy of New Music*. This conception can be understood as a transposition of Hegel's somewhat mystical notion of 'objective spirit' (*objectiver Geist*) into the sphere of music. As Adorno writes in *Philosophy of New Music*, his own, radical theory

... contradicts the traditional conception of the material of music. This material is traditionally defined – in terms of physics, or possibly in terms of the psychology of sound – as the sum of all sounds at the disposal of the composer. The actual compositional material, however, is as different from this sum as is language from its total supply of sounds. It is not simply a matter of the increase and decrease of this supply in the course of history. All its specific characteristics are indications of the historical process. ... Music recognizes no natural law; therefore, all psychology of music is questionable. Such psychology – in its efforts to establish an invariant 'understanding' of the music of all times – assumes a constancy of musical subject. Such an assumption is more closely related to the constancy of the material of nature than psychological differentiation might indicate. What this psychology inadequately and noncommittally describes is to be sought in the perception of the kinetic laws of matter. According to these laws, not all things are possible at all times. ... The demands made upon the subject by the material are conditioned much more by the fact that the 'material' is itself a crystallization of the creative impulse, an element socially predetermined through the consciousness of man. As a previous subjectivity – now forgetful of itself – such an objectified impulse of the material has its own kinetic laws. That which seems to be the mere self-locomotion of the material is of the same origin as is the social process, by whose traces it is continually permeated. This energy pursues its course in the same sense as does actual society, even when energy and society have become totally unaware of each other

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<sup>1</sup> Adorno 1992b: 281.

and have come into conflict with each other. Therefore, the altercation of the composer with his material is the same as an altercation with society, precisely to the extent that it finds expression in his work, and does not simply face his product as consumer or opponent – a mere external and heteronomous factor.<sup>2</sup>

A precursor to Adorno's conception of musical material can be located in the thought of Schoenberg, in particular his *Harmonielehre*. One of the central features of this conception of musical material is the notion of *historical necessity*, of the idea that the *material* of music (as distinct from the techniques that shape it) possesses *immanent demands* which are historical in nature. These are related both to the technical means available for musical production at any given point in history and to the expressive needs of the composer, needs which also change over time.<sup>3</sup> This idea, as Adorno argues above, departs radically from the notion that material is universal and somehow timeless, unaltered by the forces of history and culture.<sup>4</sup>

Crucially, according to Adorno, the compositional choices available to the artist or composer at any given time are not equal to the sum of all styles and techniques developed through history. Instead, they are restricted by the stage reached by the material at any given historical moment. Material, for Adorno, is inextricably linked to the structures and relationships which pervade society during any given period. It is within the *material* of music that music and society are mediated. The mediation of self and forms in the artwork is one manifestation of the dialectic of

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<sup>2</sup> Adorno 1973a: 32-34.

<sup>3</sup> According to Adorno the composer 'loses that freedom on a grand scale which idealistic aesthetics is accustomed to grant to the artist. He is no longer a creator. It is not that the times and society impose external restrictions upon him; it is rather the rigid demand for compositional accuracy made upon him by his structure which limits him. The state of technique appears as a problem in every measure which he dares to conceive: with every measure technique as a whole demands of him that he do it justice and that he give the single correct answer permitted by technique at any given moment. ... His efforts find fulfillment in the execution of that which his music objectively demands of him. But such obedience demands of the composer all possible disobedience, independence, and spontaneity. This is the dialectical nature revealed in the unfolding of the musical material' (Adorno *ibid.*: 36-37).

<sup>4</sup> This is an approach to material favoured by Hindemith. See Adorno 1973a: 33.



subject and object.<sup>5</sup> For Adorno, art is 'a kind of unconscious historiography'.<sup>6</sup> In a letter to Ernst Krenek from 1929, Adorno argues that tonality can no longer be construed as a valid system of musical composition in the modern era:

When I maintain that atonality is the only possible manner of composing today, it is not because I consider it ahistorically to be 'better', a handier referential system than tonality. It is rather that I think that tonality has *collapsed*, that every tonal chord has a meaning that we can no longer grasp; that, once we have outgrown the 'natural givens' of the tonal material, we can no more go back into that material than we can return to a form of economic production based on use-value, or (something which I would argue against Karl Krauss) than we are able to speak an objectively given, ontological language, the words for which long ago fell into disuse. (*italics in original*)<sup>7</sup>

Adorno employs an essentially Lukácsian concept of 'second nature' to describe the idea that what appears to be 'natural' and given in art and music is in fact socially and culturally pre-determined and mediated.<sup>8</sup> Lukács claimed that

Nature is a societal category. That is to say, whatever is held to be natural at any given stage of social development, however this nature is related to man and whatever form his involvement with it takes, i.e. nature's form, its content, its range and its objectivity are all socially conditioned.<sup>9</sup>

Adorno takes up this notion from Lukács and understands the interaction of history and nature as part of a 'reflection on nature'. This, as Paddison has put it, is 'a process which in effect is a response to the demands of the material, and

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<sup>5</sup> As Max Paddison points out, the term mediation has essentially two meanings in Adorno's aesthetics: '(i) as the manner in which the outer world is mediated within the inner, hermetic world of the musical work through the historically sedimented material; and (ii) as the mediation of the material, particularly as gestures, within the structure of the work itself' (Paddison [forthcoming]).

<sup>6</sup> Adorno 1984: 274.

<sup>7</sup> Adorno cited in Paddison 1993: 83.

<sup>8</sup> Paddison makes this point: 'Lukács can be interpreted [in *Theorie des Romans*, 1916] in the following terms: ... as the forms of art "lose their obvious roots in supra-personal ideal necessities" they become merely existent and "form the world of convention". As such they become recognizable but incomprehensible, and form what he calls a "second nature" of meaningless necessities which have forgotten their origin. This "world of convention", in not being recognized as the exteriorization of previous interiority, as the objectification of previous subjectivity, is called by Lukács "a charnel-house of long-dead interiorities"' (Paddison 1993: 32-33).

<sup>9</sup> Lukács cited in Paddison 1993: 33.

which reveals material to be a "cultural product", rather than "nature".<sup>10</sup> The implication of this idea of self-reflection, then, is the idea that the purpose of music is primarily cognitive, concerned with the revelation of social truths through the deciphering of 'second nature'.

The view, expressed in Adorno's letter to Krenek and in the *Philosophy of New Music*, that there is only a single legitimate means of composing during a particular historical age could be seen as excessively narrow. However, Adorno's monograph on Mahler - *Mahler: a Musical Physiognomy* (1971, English translation 1992) - shows that, subsequent to the *Philosophy of New Music*, the philosopher developed a more inclusive vision of musical material. As Alastair Williams remarks,

In describing Mahler's ability to turn a reified language against itself and to find new possibilities within the worn-out material, Adorno's conception of musical material and form becomes broader than it had been in earlier writings such as *Philosophy of New Music*.<sup>11</sup>

It is in relation to the notion of a 'mass musical language' that Adorno interprets the music of Mahler. This embraces 'the second hand, the found objects and "ready mades" from the cultural scrap heap'.<sup>12</sup> As long as there is an element of knowing or critical distance on the part of the composer in relation to past musical materials, Adorno comes to accept their validity as a legitimate alternative to a high modernist logic.<sup>13</sup> Without this element of self-reflexivity,

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<sup>10</sup> Paddison 1993: 72.

<sup>11</sup> Williams 1997: 28.

<sup>12</sup> Paddison 1993: 274. See Paddison, Chapter 7, for a discussion of Adorno's concept.

<sup>13</sup> Alastair Williams (recalling Jürgen Habermas' distinction between 'system' and 'lifeworld') writes, 'It is clear that for music advanced material is not the only way of embodying the subject's engagement with intersubjective and objective conditions. It is, however, one way of doing so: a system that does not override surface contingency can be encoded within the unfolding of the material, as the interplay of objects in *Répons* evinces. Another way of tackling the same issue is to evoke variant spaces within the lifeworld, by referring to different musics: in an echo of Mahler's practice, the sound objects, effectively, would be second-hand parts invested with a new latency by means of their configurations with one another. There does, however, need to be some syntagmatic continuity between the constituent elements, and it is essential that they refer to something other than themselves' (Williams 1997: 147).

however, music becomes, he insists, an empty reflection of the system of capitalist exchange.

The discovery of new possibilities within the fragments of a worn out language will be central to the ensuing discussion of Lachenmann's later music. His concept of 'rubble' (*Trümmer*) is similar to Adorno's 'mass musical language'. Whilst the technique of instrumental *musique concrète* revitalizes aspects of conventional performance practice and traditional modes of structuring sounds, from *Accanto* onwards Lachenmann attempts to deal with specific musical works of the past in such a way that causes *them* to be heard in a new way, imbued with a new life-force.

### The 'Aesthetic Apparatus'

Musical structures derive their strength solely from conscious or unconscious resistance, the friction between them and prevailing structures of existence and consciousness. Any concept of complexity which ignores this is meaningless.<sup>14</sup>

Lachenmann, 'On Structuralism' (1990, English version 1995)

The increasing importance of tradition in Lachenmann's later work indicates a conception of musical material which parallels that of Adorno. The concept of 'aesthetic apparatus' expounded in Lachenmann's essay, 'The "Beautiful" in Music Today' ('Zum Problem des musikalisch Schönen heute', 1976)<sup>15</sup> is highly reminiscent of Adorno:

In practice, the composer who is concerned to express himself is obliged to take account of the 'aesthetic apparatus' – that is, the sum total of categories of musical perception as they have evolved throughout history to the present day; of the 'instrumentarium' which comes with them; of the techniques of playing and of notation; and last but not least, of the relevant institutions and

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<sup>14</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 100 (translation modified).

<sup>15</sup> This essay (translated by Cornelius Cardew in 1980) was the first of Lachenmann's writings to be published in English translation. Note that the essay was originally written around the time of *Accanto*. The connections between these two pieces of work will become clear..

markets in our society. From the window display of a music shop to the complimentary tickets given to the town council's charlady for the concert of the visiting fisherman's choir, from the Hohner mouth-organ to the pensionable officialdom of the radio symphony orchestra with its many fiddles tuned to the same open fifths and its solitary bass clarinet, this 'aesthetic apparatus' embodies the ruling aesthetic needs and norms.<sup>16</sup>

The aesthetic apparatus is viewed by Lachenmann as something to be confronted critically, just as Adorno considers the interaction of history and nature to embody, in musical terms, a reflection on the part of the composer upon his material. This process is essential if the material is to be rendered newly expressive:

A composer seriously concerned with 'expressing himself' is at once fascinated by, and highly suspicious of, this aesthetic apparatus. In no circumstances will he simply make use of it; rather, he must master it, technically and spiritually. Whether he recognizes it or not, he cannot wrestle with the rules of the games implicit in the aesthetic apparatus without being dragged into the conflict that determines the consciousness of our society. This conflict – fear of freedom and simultaneous longing for it – is his own as well, and consequently he cannot evade the crucial decision. Either he must face up to the conflict and bring it to a head, or he must close his eyes and trust in his 'naïve artistry'. If he chooses the latter course he must try to salve his conscience by pretending that the current rules of the aesthetic apparatus are harmless 'laws of nature', which can be ingeniously exploited, once one has adapted oneself to them. But he should recognize that the material he uses, however arcane or however familiar, is always and from the outset in direct connexion with the aesthetic apparatus, and under its sway. ... Only in coming to grips with the aesthetic apparatus and the categories that determine it, can self-knowledge and musical expression come

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<sup>16</sup> Lachenmann 1980: 22.

about. Only then can the experience of freedom be artistically communicated as reality (with its distinguishing contradictions) and become conscious.<sup>17</sup>

One might substitute the word 'freedom' for the 'new' or the 'unknown', that which escapes the existing structures of society.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: 23.

## ***Sprachfertigkeit and Sprachlosigkeit***

It is only by engaging directly with tradition, Lachenmann argues, that the composer is able fully to express the situation that he terms 'speechlessness' (*Sprachlosigkeit*). This has come about as the result of the disintegration of shared norms and beliefs in modernity.<sup>18</sup> 'Speechlessness', according to Lachenmann, forms one pole of the 'dual problem' of modern culture today. 'False fluency' (*Sprachfertigkeit*), is manifest in public life and culture, 'in the desert of the media and of the cultural media' – the culture industry.<sup>19</sup>

We are, Lachenmann insists, in 'an age when culture has become a drug, a sedative, a method of suppressing reality rather than illuminating it.'<sup>20</sup> It is the role of the 'responsible' composer, he considers, to reveal the illusory quality of false fluency. 'As an artist I have not the least influence on political events; but I have the possibility – and the duty – to fight ... anti-intellectuality', Lachenmann has asserted.<sup>21</sup> New music must proceed by confronting the 'rubble',<sup>22</sup> the reified fragments of culture which have lost any sense of historical necessity. Art must address the human need for a coherent language in the face of its real fragmentation.

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<sup>18</sup> Societal disintegration manifests itself in the sphere of art as the dissolution of forms. As Adorno remarks, 'The aesthetic categories have lost their a priori validity. Now the same can be said of artistic materials themselves. The disintegration of materials is the triumph of their being-for-other' (Adorno cited in Paddison 1993: 263).

<sup>19</sup> Lachenmann in 'Accanto' (Lachenmann 1996: 168-169).

<sup>20</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 101.

<sup>21</sup> Lachenmann cited in Ryan 1999: 20. Paddison has alluded to the problem of 'speechlessness' facing the avant-garde – a problem which also concerned Adorno - in the following terms: '... the paradox – what one might call the *imperative impossibility* – of advanced art under the changed conditions of postmodernity (at least, as a critical, self-reflective art praxis which does not become totally assimilated to the interests of a commodity culture)'. He argues that, 'The "impossibility" in question is somewhat along the lines of Beckett's "I can't go on. I'll go on."' The conditions are greatly unfavourable to a radical avant-garde, and yet it continues against the odds. It then becomes a matter of strategies. This is something articulated at length by Adorno in his philosophy of music' (Paddison 2001)

<sup>22</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 169.

As Lachenmann puts it,

Composing that tries to come to terms with this yearning for an intact language can only overcome its own speechlessness by making this false fluency explicit. So composing for me means not avoiding the old musical language, but to deal with it in a 'speechless' way. You separate the material from its usual linguistic context, and through a new 'ordering' of the elements, create connections and contexts which will then throw light and create a new expressivity'<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 168-169.

## 2. Beauty and Art 'Fodder'

### Lachenmann's Dialectic of the 'Beautiful'

By shutting his eyes to all the relations between men that constitute society, and are its real stuff and substance, man has enslaved himself to forces whose control is now beyond him, because he does not acknowledge their existence. He is at the mercy of the market, the movement of capital, and the slump and boom. He is deluded by himself. This is shown by the remorseless test of events.<sup>24</sup>

Christopher Caudwell, *Studies in a Dying Culture* (1938)

The experience of the Beautiful is indissolubly connected with making perceptible the social contradictions in our reality: because to make them perceptible is to make them surmountable.<sup>25</sup>

Lachenmann, 'The Beautiful in Music Today' (1980)

'The "Beautiful" in Music Today' echoes the dual problem expressed in the distinction between speechlessness and false fluency, asserting the pressing need to redefine the conditions of the beautiful, to re-evaluate it in line with the events of history. Lachenmann draws a distinction between what he terms 'humanity's legitimate and profoundly rooted demand for art as the experience of Beauty' and 'its false satisfaction and alienation in the form of art "fodder" manufactured by the bourgeoisie and preserved in a society of repressed contradictions'.<sup>26</sup> This human need, he considers (much along the lines of Adorno in his 1955 essay 'The Aging of the New Music') has been denied by the avant-garde since the Second World War<sup>27</sup> and, at the opposite pole - that of the

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<sup>24</sup> Caudwell 1938: xxi-xxii.

<sup>25</sup> Lachenmann 1980: 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*: 20.

<sup>27</sup> In the essay, 'Hören ist wehrlos – ohne Hören' Lachenmann writes, 'My definition of beauty as "denial of habit" may act on an even more provocative level when thoughts of beauty are not abolished morally, calvinistically or masochistically, but on the contrary makes a claim for the notion of beauty with all its qualities of purity, clarity, intensity, richness, humanity, and even makes use of what so many self-proclaimed defenders of Western culture think needs to be changed simply because the whole thing is too irritating for them.' In other words, Lachenmann argues that he does not deny beauty for moral Calvinistic or masochistic reasons. Rather, he attacks a post-Adorno culture which asserts, for example, that after



'culture industry' - nurtured uncritically by a society which seeks false reassurance in an outmoded tonal language. Integral serialism, or 'structural mannerism' as Lachenmann has termed it,<sup>28</sup> represents an attempt to cleanse sounds of a discredited expressive content and to achieve instead an objectivity which is scientific and positivistic in nature.

A new world of sonic and temporal experience had been sighted from the standpoint of Webern's serial technique – a world centred on the organization of sound material. Amid the bustle of striking camp and heading for the new Promised Land, the question of Beauty was not merely out of place; it was downright suspect. For it involved those criteria and taboos, value judgements and ideals, on whose ruins everyone was then standing.<sup>29</sup>

Structural mannerism, Lachenmann claims, is undialectical – it possesses 'an empty and unresisting concept of complexity,'<sup>30</sup> which fails to acknowledge the mediation of musical material by society. It fails in its attempt to 'cleanse' musical material of its associative meaning. This is the 'stagnation in which new music finds itself',<sup>31</sup> founded, as Adorno considers, on 'a superstitious belief in intrinsically meaningful primitive elements, which in truth owe their existence to history, and whose meaning is itself historical.'<sup>32</sup> Adorno contends that in late serialism the objectivity of material is fetishized as a thing in its own right – an approach which suppresses the subjective, expressive pole of music, its origins in humankind. The relationship between this argument and Adorno's critique of identity thinking is clear. Through its denial of society and reality, this music paradoxically affirms the status quo.

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Auschwitz it is impossible to write beautiful music any more. ('Meine Definition von Schönheit als "Verweigerung von Gewohnheit" mag gewiß umso provozierender wirken, als sie eben den Schönheitsgedanken nicht moralisch, calvinistisch, masochistisch abschafft, sondern ihn im Gegenteil mit all seinen Tugenden von Reinheit, Klarheit, Intensität, Reichtum, Menschlichkeit in Anspruch nimmt, aber eben dort in Anspruch nimmt, wo so mancher selbsternannte Hüter abendländischer Kultur meint sich alterieren zu müssen, einfach, weil ihm das Ganze hier zu lästig ist' (Lachenmann 1996: 135).

<sup>28</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 96.

<sup>29</sup> Lachenmann 1980: 20.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*: 93.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Adorno 2002: 189.

The musical experiments centred around the Darmstadt School in the 1950s (and which still underpinned the compositional technique of many younger composers once this period had ended), aspired towards the ideal of progress. Yet, as Adorno and Lachenmann have argued, by effectively reducing art to a science, the expressive pole essential for musical meaning was subordinated to the desire for total control and detachment, liquidating the necessary tension between the two. It thus embodied not progress, but a form of regression. As Adorno maintains in 'The Aging of the New Music',

The aim of the introduction of these technical elements is not the real domination of nature but the integral and transparent production of a nexus of meaning [*Sinnzusammenhang*]. When such transparency lets nothing glimmer through, when it is not a medium of artistic content [*Gehalt*] but an end in itself, it loses its *raison d'être*.<sup>33</sup>

In the same article Adorno proposes that the music of Boulez exemplifies this tendency. Boulez, he writes, is

... a highly cultured and exceptionally gifted musician, with the highest sense of form and with a power that is communicated even where he disavows subjectivity altogether. He and his disciples aspire to dispose of every 'compositional freedom' as pure caprice, along with every vestige of traditional musical idiom: in fact, every subjective impulse is in music at the same time an impulse of musical language. These composers have above all attempted to bring rhythm under the strict domination of twelve-tone procedure, and ultimately to replace composition altogether with an objective-calculatory ordering of intervals, pitches, long and short durations, degrees of loudness; an integral rationalization such as has never before been envisaged in music.<sup>34</sup>

Although it extends and develops the purely technical achievements of the early, or 'classical', serialists, structural mannerism can be seen to dispense altogether with their radical agenda. For Lachenmann,

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<sup>33</sup> Adorno 2002: 193.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*: 187.

... this sort of structural mannerism ignores and betrays those aspects which made 'classical' structuralism and its precursors in the Viennese School so explosive. In today's different historical situation they should belong – whatever changed form they may take – to the rigor of composition. I am referring to the element of specific negation, of radical departure, or a radical syntactical design which has become form, the result of reflection on what music in a specific historical social situation can still be.<sup>35</sup>

... a study of works from the 'classical' period of serialism ... reveals that the 'compelling quality' of this music is not just derived from the virtuous consistency with which the self-imposed rules are adhered to – and work – but also at least as much from the wisdom with which the music, even with the aid of such a system of rules – and in dialectical contact with it – constitutes a *reaction* to existing social structures and the existing communicative rules of the bourgeois aesthetic apparatus they have created, and offers them resistance – not just rhetorical but actual – putting their normal functioning out of action, indeed sometimes even destroying it.<sup>36</sup>

Whilst the avant-garde failed to address the human need for beauty, it is within the realm of the culture industry, on the other hand, that Lachenmann considers the human need for beauty is preserved. However, this is only in the form of art 'fodder', as a form of false consciousness maintained via the fetishization of past music:

... the concept of Beauty, dismissed as suspect by the avant-garde, was kept alive by society. Or kept society alive? Anyway, it lived on, not only as a general criterion for identification, but also in its customary and socially accepted form as reified categories. These facilitated the process of identification by offering a shield against the reality that could no longer be mastered. The shield was an apparently intact language: tonality and its expressive means.<sup>37</sup>

As Europe recovered during the post-war period, people's consciousness in all areas started to revert to the old bourgeois value systems and taboos, and is still clinging to these, particularly in

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<sup>35</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 96.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*: 97.

<sup>37</sup> Lachenmann 1980: 21.

the area of aesthetic experience, well aware of the real threat to our time and our civilization. This gives us the same illusion of security as an ostrich creates by sticking its head into the sand.<sup>38</sup>

For Lachenmann, the image of reconciliation and harmony projected by the culture industry through its predominantly tonal language is false and irrational. This is a point expressed repeatedly by Adorno.<sup>39</sup> In the essay 'Über Tradition' ('On Tradition') (1978) Lachenmann asserts,

Our cultural industry is an essential part of [the] defense mechanism [of our age]. In this instance it has monopolized tradition: it maintains the illusion of a long lost common basis of agreement by conserving and fetishizing historical aesthetic categories and the image of values associated with them: in music by persisting with categories of a dialectic and at the same time infinitely outworn tonality corresponding to reality at the turn of the [last] century, where the awareness of a still intact society was rendered less troubled by belief in progress with premonitions of threat but indeed found them delightfully inspiring. In the framework and perspective of a tonal pluralism preserved in this way right up to the present day – which thanks to the inbuilt dialectic of that tonality is infinitely outworn – old as well as New Music are allotted ideologically unthreatening roles as equally exotic and idyllic opportunities for escape.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1960s, Lachenmann argues, the bourgeois cult of beauty began surreptitiously to infiltrate the avant-garde itself. Indeed, in 'The Aging' Adorno

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> See for example the chapter entitled 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in Adorno and Horkheimer 1972: 120-167.

<sup>40</sup> 'Unser Kulturbetrieb ist ein wesentlicher Teil diese Verdrängungssystems. In diesem Sinn hat er die Tradition in Beschlag genommen: Die Illusion einer in Wirklichkeit längst verlorenen gemeinsamen Verständigungsbasis bewahrt er durch die Konservierung und Fetischisierung historischer ästhetischer Kategorien und daran gebundener Wertvorstellungen; in der Musik durchs Beharren auf den Kategorien einer dialektisch gleichsam ins Unendliche strapazierten Tonalität, wie sie um die Jahrhundertwende einer Wirklichkeit entsprach, in welcher Fortschrittsglaube und Ahnungen der Bedrohung ein noch intaktes Gesellschaftsbewußts weniger verunsicherten als eher reizvoll beflügelten. Im Rahmen und aus der Perspektive eines solchermaßen in diese Gegenwart herübergeretteten tonalen Pluralismus – der sich dank jener der Tonalität innewohnenden Dialektik bis ins Unendliche strapazieren läßt – lassen sich der alten wie der Neuen Musik ideologisch ungefährliche Rollen als gleichermaßen exotische wie idyllische Zufluchtsmöglichkeiten zuweisen' (Lachenmann 1996: 339).

writes, 'Nobody really takes a chance any more; all are looking for shelter' – even those who were once proponents of the new.<sup>41</sup> In Lachenmann's words,

The old temptation was irresistible: expectations of the Beautiful – as something theoretically neglected and unconquered yet socially as intact and ineffective as ever, provided well-worn tonal habits are tricked out with elements that are more exotically attractive – began to influence avant-garde musical thinking, which had once been so strict.<sup>42</sup>

The 'new-found freedom' exemplified in the 1960s by composers such as Ligeti, Penderecki and Kagel who showed a new tolerance for tonal elements, was in fact as regressive as the culture industry: 'The freedom to be tonal turned out to be the freedom to live in leaky places.'<sup>43</sup>

Today, according to Lachenmann, the general state of affairs for new music is bleak. Except for his teacher Luigi Nono, he writes,

... leading composers of yesterday have exhausted their resources. Failing to sense the truth about their material-fixated thought, they now decorate the cultural scene as petrified monuments to their old achievements.... Today the avant-garde is brought low by that selfsame bourgeois domesticated concept of beauty that it so arrogantly assumed it could ignore on the grounds that it preferred 'to turn back to the MS paper'.<sup>44</sup>

Lachenmann insists that there is an urgent need to address the abused concept of Beauty, to re-evaluate it in line with the contradictions of contemporary society. This, he argues, must take the shape of a 'rejection of habit'<sup>45</sup> and the denial of the conventionally beautiful.

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<sup>41</sup> Adorno 2002: 199.

<sup>42</sup> Lachenmann 1980: 21.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* Here Lachenmann refers to a comment made by Boulez in 1948: 'I have a horror of dealing in words with what is so prettily called the aesthetic problem. Besides, I don't want to make this article any longer; I prefer to turn back to my MS paper' (Boulez cited in Lachenmann 1980: 20).

<sup>45</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 97.

Only by engaging dialectically with the 'bourgeois value system', Lachenmann insists, will it become possible to

... move out from under its shield, to deal cognitively and pragmatically with reality, and let us combat the dominance of such inner ties, wherever their initial truth has become the fatal untruth of comfortable illusion, headstrongly and fearfully invoked arcadias, and reactionary short-sightedness.<sup>46</sup>

Beauty can only become socially relevant and free from delusion when the entire 'aesthetic apparatus' is taken fully into account:

Only in coming to grips with the aesthetic apparatus and the categories that determine it, can self-knowledge and musical expression come about. Only then can the experience of freedom be artistically communicated as *reality* (with its distinguishing contradictions) and *become conscious*. The experience of the Beautiful is indissolubly connected with making perceptible the social contradictions in our reality; because to make them perceptible is to make them surmountable.<sup>47</sup>

The great music of the past, Lachenmann contends, must also be viewed in its historical context, in connection with the aesthetic apparatus of its time and against which it set its own expressive needs. The best of traditional art, for Lachenmann, achieved its power through a dialectical confrontation with the contradictions of the society of which it was a part:

There is a need today for investigations into the music of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, aimed at showing that the degree of individuation, of intensity and of truthfulness, achieved was inseparable from the process of grappling with the aesthetic apparatus at each stage in its historical and social development. From the harmonic consistency of Bach's chorale settings, which so offended his contemporaries, through Mozart's subversive use of the elements of *Empfindsamkeit*, which had once been so gracious, and Beethoven's liberated concept of form as the display of thematic work, to Schubert, Schumann, Wagner, and Mahler, the elements of

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<sup>46</sup> Lachenmann cited in Toop 1994: 16.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

compositional individuation are directly apprehensible as rejections of the usual; as latent or open cause of scandal, as expressive redefinition of the means of composition.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Lachenmann *ibid.*

### 3. Towards A New Theory

#### Lachenmann's theory of 'Dialectical Structuralism'

Lachenmann's approach to the past and to the existing aesthetic apparatus is thus inherently dialectical. In the essay, 'On Structuralism' he expounds his concept of 'dialectical structuralism', as a means of conceiving his engagement with pre-extant structures. The concept also carries the suggestion expressed in Lachenmann's concept of *Strukturklang*, whereby a sound can never be conceived as existing purely in and for itself. Whereas in 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik' sounds were construed in terms of their purely immanent connections with other sounds, Lachenmann subsequently extends this notion to embrace the whole aesthetic apparatus of which the sound also forms a part. This notion of structure as a relational entity finds a correlate in the claims of structural linguistics.

Structural linguistics views meaning as an external attribute of things, rather than as an intrinsic part of their very essence.<sup>49</sup> The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), who spawned the later movement of French structuralism,<sup>50</sup> saw words as arbitrary, 'unmotivated signs' – there being no inherent relation between a word and that which it denotes. He claimed that the meaning of words depends upon their *relationship* with other words – hence Saussure's notorious remark that '[I]n the linguistic system, there are only differences, without positive terms'.<sup>51</sup> Peter Barry has summarized Saussure's well-known distinction between *langue* and *parole* as follows:

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<sup>49</sup> This latter conception of meaning as 'inner essence' is exemplified by the doctrine of organicism. See Part Three, Section 6 for a discussion of this doctrine.

<sup>50</sup> This later movement began in the 1950s and is embodied by the work of figures such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes.

<sup>51</sup> Saussure cited in Derrida 1973: 98.



[Saussure] used the terms 'langue' and 'parole' to signify, respectively, language as a system or structure on the one hand, and any given utterance in that language on the other. A particular remark in French (a sample of *parole*) only makes sense to you if you are already in possession of the whole body of rules and conventions governing verbal behaviour which we call "French" (that is, the *langue*). The individual remark, then, is a discrete item which only makes sense when seen in relation to a wider containing structure, in the classic structuralist manner.<sup>52</sup>

That Lachenmann conceived of musical structures in this way in the early 1960s is testified to by the following statement:

Structure as a dialectical object of perception, in as much as the musical meaning and aural experience of individual sounds or their elements were not determined just by themselves – i.e. by their own direct physical characteristics – but by their relation to their immediate and wider environment, their affinities, the various role they played in a context or hierarchy ... created by the composer and for which he assumed responsibility.<sup>53</sup>

By the time of Lachenmann's second major aesthetic manifesto, 'Bedingungen des Materials' (1978), these affinities and relationships are extended to those present in the material before the composer even begins his work. In 1978, Lachenmann attempts 'to register and group around the "pure" structure of a work those other aspects which experience tells us shape every single sound and compositional element in advance "before the composer ever gets near to it".'<sup>54</sup>

### **Taxonomy of Expressive Qualities**

The Expressive Typology formulated by Lachenmann in 1978 to complement the sound typology deals with the relational aspects of sounds *outside* the purely immanent structure of the work. These constitute the 'aesthetic apparatus'

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<sup>52</sup> Barry 1995: 44.

<sup>53</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 97.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*: 98.

embedded in the material of music, the experience of which, Lachenmann claims, contradicts the 'tabula rasa' approach of the 'structural mannerists'.<sup>55</sup> In a manner strongly reminiscent of Adorno, Lachenmann argues that musical material is always already imbued with its past uses and past associations, even if these are different from the functions it performs today: 'What is at any rate certain is that whatever sound material we use, we are at the same time establishing – consciously or unconsciously – the structures from which this sound or material comes'.<sup>56</sup> So, in the atonal work *Wozzeck*, by Alban Berg, Lachenmann writes that the C major triad

...is, in the context of Berg's work, an atonal construct, and yet at the same time it contains its tonal origins as a degraded, broken, ultimately rejected element. We do not just hear what this sound is now – i.e. its quality as a musical interval within the framework it occurs in – but also what it was and is no longer. Because of its lost, but well-remembered – here broken – tonal characteristics it can no longer be merely mechanically integrated into the atonal context.<sup>57</sup>

One is reminded here of Adorno's famous statement from *Philosophy of New Music* that in an atonal context, 'It is precisely the triads which ... are cacophonous and not the dissonances! As a substitute for dissonances, these triads might even be justified.'<sup>58</sup>

Lachenmann wrote 'Bedingungen des Materials' twelve years after publishing the article 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik',. In this essay he ventures beyond an immanent conception of structure, formulating a new sound typology, this time of the 'expressive qualities' of musical material. This marks a turning point in Lachenmann's thinking about music towards a consideration of musical tradition, and of the need to confront it dialectically.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*: 93.

<sup>56</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 99.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*: 100.

<sup>58</sup> Adorno 1973a: 34.

The first expressive category listed by Lachenmann in 'Bedingungen des Materials' is 'tonality' (*der 'tonale' Aspekt*).<sup>59</sup> This encompasses the historical and ideological aspects of pitch, and also the dialectical mechanism of tension and release which enables the perception of distance or space in music. Tonal thinking, argues Lachenmann, is implicit in all manifestations of atonality, to which it is dialectically related. He insists that 'the concept goes beyond the inner requirements of tonality and becomes a synonym for tradition and the aesthetic apparatus which embodies it'.<sup>60</sup>

The second of Lachenmann's expressive categories is sensuality, or, as he puts it, the 'acoustic-physical experience'<sup>61</sup> (*der 'sinnliche' Aspekt*).<sup>62</sup> Through this Lachenmann alludes to the first four timbral categories listed in 'Klangtypen der Neuen Musik' (*Kadenzklang, Farbklang, Fluktuationklang, and Texturklang*), to 'that area which was discussed earlier in connection with sound typology because it is here that the immanent compositional speculations of structural composing occur'.<sup>63</sup>

'Structure' (*der 'strukturelle' Aspekt*) forms the third expressive category.<sup>64</sup> In line with his dialectical ideal, Lachenmann defines this as 'not just as an experience of order, organization, but also as an experience of disorganization – an ambivalent product of construction and destruction (just as a piece of wooden furniture can be related to the tree which was destroyed in order to make it).'<sup>65</sup> This paradoxical notion of structure, as both organization and disorganization, recalls Adorno's theory of modernist art. Art, Adorno argues, must bear witness to the disintegration of material whilst nevertheless containing it within a dynamic unity. In 'Form in der neuen Musik' (1966) Adorno writes,

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<sup>59</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 35.

<sup>60</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 98.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 35.

<sup>63</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 98.

<sup>64</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 35.

<sup>65</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 98.

... the formal problem for composers today: is disintegration possible through integration? The position reached by compositional consciousness is such that it is only through the critical dissolution [*Auflösung*] of the meaning-giving aspects of the composition, of that context which allows meaning any positive existence, that the synthesizing, meaning-giving elements of composition hold their own. Integration and disintegration are entwined.<sup>66</sup>

The full implications of *der 'strukturelle' Aspect* will be explored in more detail in the ensuing analysis of *Accanto*.

The fourth and final of Lachenmann's expressive categories he terms 'Aura' or the 'existential category' (*der 'existentielle' Aspekt*).<sup>67</sup> This is defined as 'the realm of association, memories, archetypal magical predeterminations'.<sup>68</sup> Lachenmann's attention to the aura of musical material represents a specific departure from the sound structure.

I think, the decisive specification of compositional thinking can be extracted from the particular way of reducing the term of structure in favour of inclusion of the 'aura', because through this procedure the social reality and the existential experience of the individual appear not only as a component to hide from or reject but as an essential component of musical information, however mirrored.<sup>69</sup>

Walter Benjamin's work on the concept of aura in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' is useful for an understanding of Lachenmann's fourth category. In this essay, Benjamin describes aura as 'presence in time and space, ... unique existence at the place where it happens to be.'<sup>70</sup> Thus 'uniqueness', and embeddedness in tradition are crucial aspects of the experience of aura in an artwork. Benjamin contrasts this with technically reproduced art, in which this

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<sup>66</sup> Adorno cited in Paddison 1993: 158.

<sup>67</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 35.

<sup>68</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 98

<sup>69</sup> Lachenmann cited in Hockings 1995: 12-13 – Hockings' own translation (original in Lachenmann 1996: 97).

<sup>70</sup> Benjamin 1992: 513.

sense of distance is greatly attenuated, enabling 'the original to meet the beholder halfway'.<sup>71</sup>

A further, related condition of aura is the autonomy of the artwork. As Adorno has written,

Benjamin's concept of the 'aural' work of art corresponds by and large with that of the hermetic work. The aura present therein is the uninterrupted sympathy of the parts with the whole, which constitutes the hermetic work of art. ... The hermetic work of art belongs to the bourgeois, the mechanical work belongs to fascism, and the fragmentary work, in its state of complete negativity, belongs to utopia.<sup>72</sup>

The concept of aura throws another perspective on Lachenmann's critique of later serialism. For Lachenmann there is an inevitable dialectic in musical works between the historicity of musical material, its auratic associations, and the paradoxical attempt to create a new, self-contained musical work. To adopt a term from Jürgen Habermas, integral serialism neglects the 'life-world' in favour of the rational structures which pervade society.<sup>73</sup> Yet it fails, argues Lachenmann, because musical material cannot be cleansed of its auratic associations. As we shall see, it is precisely these aspects of the auratic work that are challenged by Lachenmann in *Accanto*.

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Adorno 1973a: 125-126n.

<sup>73</sup> For a discussion of the concepts of structure and lifeworld see for example Habermas's essay 'Questions and Counterquestions' (Habermas: 1985).

## 4. Negating Mozart's Aura: *Accanto*

### Tonality and Auratic Quality

Lachenmann has seldom specified his objectives more specifically. In the introduction to the clarinet concerto *Accanto* (1982), he lists the destruction of the melody, harmony and the beautiful tone. Beyond a provocative rejection, he consciously works against 'a pulsing meter as basis for every familiar tonal determination'. During the whole clarinet concerto, for example, Mozart's concerto runs silently on a tape. Only once does it break into the region of acoustic perception. Already on an exposed level, Lachenmann deconstructs Mozart's masterwork, the tonal language, the genre of a concerto, the expectations on a virtuoso soloist and the capacity of a clarinet.<sup>74</sup>

Elke Hockings, 'Helmut Lachenmann's Concept of Rejection' (1995)

*Accanto* (1975-1976) is a transitional work. It looks back to the technique of 'defamiliarization' characteristic of the instrumental *musique concrète* series (Lachenmann refers to this piece as the final work of this period). Yet it also anticipates aspects of the later works such as *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* from 1979-1980, which refer to specific traditional works. Instrumental *musique concrète*, as we have seen, is an attempt to structure music through timbral affinities, forging immanent acoustic connections between sounding elements. It can also be argued, as we have seen, that there is however a dialectic in this earlier strand of Lachenmann's music between structure and isolated mimetic moments, and this is captured by the term 'sound structure'.

Within the mimetic realm, I have argued, there are two levels: the sensuous aspects of sound which hark back to a dormant nature and the 'extra-musical' level of expectations connected with the instruments used, expectations which are defied by Lachenmann's idiosyncratic sound production techniques. Viewed

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<sup>74</sup> Hockings 1995: 13.

in relation to the expressive taxonomy discussed above, instrumental *musique concrète* becomes the interaction of category two (*der 'sinnliche' Aspekt*) which deals with the physical aspect of sound, and category three (*der strukturelle Aspekt* or *Strukturklang*).

Completed two years prior to 'Bedingungen des Materials', however, *Accanto* anticipates his essay's two other 'aspects'. In this work, the composer indicates in the score that a tape recording of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto should run silently throughout the duration of the piece: 'During the piece, a tape with the clarinet concerto of Mozart "secretly" unfolds, intervening periodically at determined rhythms',<sup>75</sup> Lachenmann writes (hence the title *Accanto*, meaning 'beside' in Italian). The addition of a new rhetorical level to the instrumental *musique concrète* structure can be understood as an incorporation of categories one and four of Lachenmann's expressive taxonomy.

The Mozart brings tonality into play (category one), an expressive quality which is set against and negated by Lachenmann's own 'composed' music. Prior to what Lachenmann refers to as the central 'window' of the piece, in which a sustained quotation of the Mozart concerto is sounded, this is only hinted at through the evocation of characteristic rhythmic configurations – conventional formulae such as the cadenza-like flurries in the clarinet at bar 52, heavily distorted (defamiliarized) by the forces of the 'liberated' sound world into which they have been violently inserted. After this central juncture, specific references to A major enter into the 'force-field' (Adorno), yet these are slowly broken down.

The Mozart also brings with it an auratic quality (category four), a paradoxical sensation of 'veneration and anguished love'<sup>76</sup> for that which is brutally mutilated and effaced. As Toop writes, 'in works from the mid-seventies ... Lachenmann

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<sup>75</sup> Lachenmann 1992: 7.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*



began to re-engage with specific instances of, in particular, the Austro-German classical legacy. The relationship is complex, and at times almost masochistic, since it rests in part on denying oneself what one innately loves, without seeking to deny the love itself.<sup>77</sup> As Lachenmann puts it,

The dialectic of beauty, considered as a habit refused, is not new in my music. It is the concrete relationship, almost paradigmatic, with regard to a particular work, that is to say a particular genre, which is new. A destructive relationship with the thing one loves, in order to preserve its truth. ... The clarinet concerto of Mozart represents for me the incarnation of beauty, humanity, purity, but equally – and at the same time – the example of a means of flight before it has become a fetish: an ‘art’ apparently in line with humanity, which has nevertheless really become a consumer good in a certain society. It has thus become, with all the reflections of compositional technique and derivations of resources referring to it the secret point of reference which my music outlines with veneration and anguished love.<sup>78</sup>

Mozart’s aura is present in *Accanto* only in the form of its negation, a signal that a once intact language is no longer a legitimate one. The ‘unique distance’ of the classical work is destroyed alongside the appearance of ‘uninterrupted sympathy of the parts with the whole’ (Adorno). By effectively consigning it to history, however, Lachenmann seeks paradoxically to *recover* the piece from its reification at the hands of society, and thus to keep it (and its aura) alive.

The destructive, yet simultaneously creative, relationship to ‘the object’ is encapsulated by Benjamin’s concept of allegory, which will be explored in more detail in Part Three, Section 6 of this thesis.

In siphoning off the life and conventionally beautiful qualities from Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto, Lachenmann highlights, or even mimetically re-enacts, its

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<sup>77</sup> Toop 1994: 14.

<sup>78</sup> Lachenmann 1992: 7.



abuse by society – ‘the way society now treats historical works betrays their original essence.’<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 168.

## Analysis of *Accanto*

In his discussion of *Accanto*, Lachenmann writes that 'the speechless structure consciously recalls its origins as the result of ruined, decayed tonal language'.<sup>80</sup> In addition to the recorded Mozart, which is subject to rhythmic fragmentation by its fading in and out, there are essentially two types of material. These are Lachenmann's own composed sounds, which he describes as 'pointillistic decaying elements', and, secondly, 'splintered fragments of the old language',<sup>81</sup> which force their way into the disjointed, decaying texture. For Lachenmann these are archetypes of classical tonality. He writes

In the course of the piece, these commonplace linguistic clichés refer increasingly to a specific work, the clarinet concerto of Mozart to be precise, as the paradigm for that historical art which each of us so loves. And at the same time it [the clarinet concerto] seems so alien in its 'unwilling' role for the person who, through art, wants to flee from himself and his own genuine uncertainties.<sup>82</sup>

The ensuing discussion will serve to highlight examples of Lachenmann's attitude of 'creative destruction' (to adopt Walter Benjamin's term)<sup>83</sup> in relation to the classical model and to the tonal apparatus *in toto*.

Six of the following examples are based on Lachenmann's own essay on *Accanto*. Further examples, referring specifically to the suppressed presence of A major, are my own.

Examples 1 and 2 are transformations of conventional tonal gestures into timbrally-conceived gestures, an instantiation of the technique of instrumental *musique concrète*. The effect of this transformation, claims Lachenmann, is to

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<sup>80</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 169.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Benjamin 1977: 183-184.

freshly orientate our perception, to draw attention to the physical or sensational aspects of the traditional gestures. The gestures lose any previous functional signification and, decontextualized and defamiliarized, their materiality is foregrounded. The first example (Ex. 13) shows a series of scales in the solo clarinet at bars 60-63 of the piece. Despite their lack of precise rhythmic specification, avoidance of conventional tone (breathiness) and sheer speed in performance, the scales do nevertheless hark back if only distantly to the Mozart, exhibiting a diatonic character, even if there is as yet no specific reference to a tonal centre. Lachenmann's instructions in the score for this section read, 'on the boundary of tonelessness' (*'an der Grenze zum Tonlosen'*).

**Ex. 13<sup>84</sup> (see overleaf)**

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<sup>84</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 171 (Beispiel 2).

**Ex. 13**

Beispiel 2

Handwritten musical score for Example 2, measures 60-63. The score includes parts for Bläser (Band), Pflz (Pflanz), Git, Xbo, Pfl/Skl, Solo, V, B, C, and Kb. It features various musical notations such as dynamics (*ff*, *mp*, *p*, *pp*), articulation (*acc*, *marcato*), and performance instructions like *colla parte* and *aus dem Saal*. The Solo part shows a complex melodic line with slurs and accents.

Skalenbewegung des Solisten: *Accanto*, Takte 60-63

Hockings goes so far as to suggest that 'Lachenmann's attack against tonality has been mainly an attack on the perception of musical motion.' Indeed, the continuity of these passages is markedly different from the fragmented, pointillistic texture in which they occur; hence they are brought into relief.<sup>85</sup> Many of the performance techniques used by the solo clarinet in *Accanto* are anticipated by Lachenmann's solo clarinet work *Dal niente (Intérieur III)* from 1970. The following description of this earlier piece given by Pace demonstrates this:

*Dal niente* uses as a parameter a spectrum from pitched to unpitched notes running in tandem (though engaging in a dialectical relationship) with the pitch spectrum itself. The clarinetist graduates between different degrees of 'breathiness', from clear pitches to unpitched breaths. A melodic line performed without discernable pitches still however possesses contour characteristics, so it becomes a ghostly shadow of a musical line, or an oblique perspective thereof. Sometimes a continuous line of notes is presented, of which only fragments are pitched so as to produce a filtering effect.<sup>86</sup>

The second example (Ex. 14) shows a broken chord heard first in the clarinet at bar 36 and later, with pitches removed and only rhythm remaining, across the ensemble.

**See Ex. 14<sup>87</sup> (overleaf)**

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<sup>85</sup> Hockings 1995: 8.

<sup>86</sup> Pace 1998a: 12.

<sup>87</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 172 (Beispiel 3).

Ex. 14

Beispiel 3

36

Bass

2 Fe.

3 Kr.

2 Tr.

Po./Tbo

Pf/c

Git.

Xbo

Pk.

Sch.

Solo

1. u.

5. u.

9. u.

11. u.

13. u.

15. u.

17. u.

19. u.

21. u.

23. u.

25. u.

27. u.

29. u.

31. u.

33. u.

35. u.

37. u.

39. u.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for measures 36-39. The score is written on multiple staves, including woodwinds (Flutes, Clarinets, Trumpets, Trombones, Saxophones), strings (Violins, Violas, Cellos, Double Basses), piano, guitar, and solo instruments (Mandolin, Banjo). The notation includes notes, rests, dynamics (p, ff, ppp), and various performance markings such as 'arco' and 'pizz'. There are also handwritten annotations in German, such as '1-3. Klav.', 'auf dem rechten Rand', 'auf dem linken Rand', 'auf beiden', 'nimmt sich gel (heut) mit elektr. Sied', 'Pfeil-Taste', 'auswärtig ist ein Kaval', 'nach unten verlagert (steigt unten am Wellen)', 'auswärtig ist ein Kaval', 'nach unten verlagert (steigt unten am Wellen)', 'auswärtig ist ein Kaval', 'nach unten verlagert (steigt unten am Wellen)'. The score is divided into sections labeled 'B.' and 'C.', and includes a box labeled 'Dpf auf' and another labeled 'Celli... mit der Spann...'.

Der Gestus des gebrochenen Dreiklangs: Accanto, Takte 36-39

'In both cases', writes Lachenmann,

... you can follow how the sound breaks out of its original 'fluent' linguistic categories of melody and harmony, but also out of its original, conventional instrumental context. Sound here is no longer experienced as a natural result of the normal instrumental playing, but rather, through the result of a particular approach to the instrument which makes explicit the concrete, physical quality of it – its hardness, softness, and above all the energetic conditions by which the sound is created. They produce a situation in which the usual 'beautiful' sound of the instruments is no longer what you assume will happen, but is actually the exception to the rule.<sup>88</sup>

Example 3 is more complex. 'Chopped up' fragments of the recorded Mozart introduce this section at bar 80 and then fall silent. The 'suppressed' Mozart is now reflected in the metric rhythmic behaviour of the instruments at the foreground level. In this section what the composer terms a 'formal block', is created (the section begins at bar 80 and starts breaking apart at bar 139).

#### Ex. 15<sup>89</sup> (see overleaf)

This block can be seen in terms of *Farbklang*, Lachenmann's second sound category. It is a perverse appropriation of a surface detail of the Mozart, an almost gleeful satirical reduction and vulgarization of the classical piece (perhaps a reflection of Lachenmann's perception of the way most people now hear Mozart). Lachenmann takes a standard accompanimental figure - a repeated note gesture – and parodies it. This figure is passed boorishly around the various instruments of the orchestra, stripped of context, pitch and conventionally 'beautiful' qualities, brutally reduced to a crude, heavily accented thudding noise.

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<sup>88</sup> 'In beiden Fällen übrigens kann man erleben, wie der Klang nicht nur aus seinen alten sprachfertigen Kategorien – Melodie, Harmonie etc. – herausgebrochen ist, sondern auch aus seinem üblichen gewohnten instrumentalen Kodex. Klang nämlich wird hier nicht mehr erfahren als selbstverständliches Resultat des üblichen Instrumentalspiels, sondern als Resultat eines spezifischen Umgangs mit diesem Instrument, der die konkrete Körperlichkeit, die Härte, die Weichheit, die energetischen Bedingungen beim Hervorbringen des Klangs oder Geräuschs bewußt macht und in geordneten, musikalisch erlebbaren Zusammenhang bringt, so daß der gewohnte »schöne« Klang hier keine Selbstverständlichkeit, sondern im Gegenteil ein Sonderfall wird' (Lachenmann 1996: 65).

<sup>89</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 173 (Beispiel 4).



Ex. 15

Beispiel 4

$\text{♩} = 80$  *alle staccatissimo*

(Band)

2 Fr.

3 Ve. (B)

2 Vi.

2 Pos.

Tbn.

Pfkl.

Git.

Xba.

Pr.

Scll.

Solo

V.

B.

C.

Kb.

Bei diesen Chiffren, ausgefüllt durch eine Hand auf der betreffenden Seite, soll die übliche Haltung der beidseitigen Klaviertastatur der rechten Hand, die beidseitige Fingerung soll dann schräg-Mechanismus der linken Hand entsprechend übernommen werden.

Common besteht, alle 4 Seitenköpfe, 7. 12. 14. 17. 20. 22. 24. 26. 28. 30. 32. 34. 36. 38. 40. 42. 44. 46. 48. 50. 52. 54. 56. 58. 60. 62. 64. 66. 68. 70. 72. 74. 76. 78. 80. 82. 84. 86. 88. 90. 92. 94. 96. 98. 100.

Streicherpizzicato + a cing. Str. in 1. Kb. Ansatzstelle zwischen Griffbrett u. Steg, dausend verlagern, 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

o normal am Steg, Tonhöhe ist erkennbar

Accanto, Takte 80-83

Lachenmann 'causes the life to flow out of it and it remains behind dead' (Benjamin). It can be seen that, through effecting this transformation, Lachenmann mirrors the reified, socially abused status of the classical work.

Nevertheless, despite the destructive qualities of this passage, the 'formal block' can in fact be considered as a utopian moment in the piece, a reaching of the present beyond itself. The forced integration and extreme limitation of possibilities occasioned in fact encourages the listener to hone in upon the inner richness of the sounds themselves. The irony of this section is that although the metric grid represses the music's rhythmic vitality, it has the contingent result of releasing materiality, of bringing into focus the wealth of timbral variety in the orchestra and opening up the mimetic realm. The music can be construed in Adornian terms, as a dialectic of liberation and repression, a creative confrontation of outer appearance (the martial, pulsing rhythm) and inner reality (timbral colour). As Lachenmann explains, 'The pulsating meter, the basis for that familiar tonal measure of time, is used here as the grid for sound articulation on the inside, and on the outside, at the same time, a quasi chopped up time.'<sup>90</sup> A passage from Daniel W. Smith's essay on the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's theory of sensation offers a revealing perspective:

Modern art and modern philosophy converged on a similar problem: both renounced the domain of representation and instead took the *conditions* of representation as their object. Paul Klee's famous phrase echoes through Deleuze's writings on the arts like a kind of motif: *not to render the visible, but to render visible*. Twentieth-century painting aimed not at the reproduction of visible forms but the presentation of the non-visible forces that act behind or beneath these forms. It attempted to extract from these intensive forces 'a block of sensations', to produce a material capable of 'capturing' these forces in a sensation.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> 'Das pulsierende Metrum, Grundlage für jede gewohnte tonale Zeitbestimmung, wird zum Gitter einer Klang-Artikulation nach innen, und nach außen zugleich quasi zerhackte Zeit' (*ibid.*:70).

<sup>91</sup> Smith 1996: 40.

Lachenmann's 'formal block' can indeed also be seen on a deeper level, as a 'block of sensations', bringing to speech the forces habitually silenced by the conventions of representation – the 'visible forms'.

To summarize, there are two, conflicting ways to hear this passage: as a destructive act, which treads roughshod over the flow of time, dissecting each pulse from the next – as 'chopped up time', as Lachenmann puts it<sup>92</sup> - or as a liberation of the timbral realm, achieved through the focusing the listener's attention on minute differences between each attack. Through the latter effect, the structure 'reaches beyond itself' in a utopian gesture.<sup>93</sup>

The fourth example marks the first point in the piece at which the tape recording of the Mozart concerto forces its way *unambiguously* into the musical fabric and sounds for an extended period of time (beginning at bar 192).

**Ex. 16<sup>94</sup> (see overleaf)**

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<sup>92</sup> 'quasi zerhackte Zeit' (Lachenmann 1996: 175).

<sup>93</sup> This effect is an example of what Lachenmann calls 'structural hallucination', a phenomenon I examine in Part Three Section 5 and Part Five Section 3 below.

<sup>94</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 174 (Beispiel 5).

Ex. 16

Beispiel 5

192 a tempo

Band

2 Fe tempo nimmt den Puls des hier

3 Kl.(B) eingebundenen Zitate auf

2 Trp

2 Pos.

Tuba

Pfkl

Git

Xbr

PK

Schl

Solo

Ve

12

B. 24

5.1

2.8

12

C 3.1

5.6

Kb oben zwischen Sägegriffbrett unter Saalen bringen

Accanto, Takte 192-194

This 'breakthrough' (*Durchbruch*) moment<sup>95</sup> is an unmediated confrontation, a clashing of two discrete worlds. Benjamin's description of 'shock effect', a dramatic rupturing of organic form, is pertinent here. Drawing a link between early film and Dadaism, Benjamin writes,

From an alluring appearance or persuasive structure of sound the work of art of the Dadaists became an instrument of ballistics. It hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. It promoted a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator.<sup>96</sup>

Lachenmann remarks that 'The tape, which has almost secretly accompanied the whole piece is here faded in over a passage of seconds. The music at this moment expresses its trauma'.<sup>97</sup> The effect is indeed shocking.

The solo clarinet reacts with a 'honking' sonority, and the piano begins to hammer out the repeated rhythm of Example 3 in time with the recording. Again the Mozart acts as a restrictive force, apparently commanding that the sounds fall into line. By bar 197 the recording has been removed from the texture, leaving only a skeletal stuttering in the piano, a deathly echo of the Mozart concerto and the clearest signal yet that its language should not be taken at face value. *Sprachfertigkeit* becomes *Sprachlosigkeit*. Throughout this passage, the pulsing meter, which began at bar 80, has been continually present. Lachenmann comments on this momentous section of the work:

The music has repeatedly appeared much earlier *quasi incognito* in the structural unfolding, in the form of rhythmically 'minced up' fade-ins. Here the so-called 'instrument'<sup>98</sup> is so unaltered –

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<sup>95</sup> Adorno employs this term in his Mahler monograph – see for example his discussion of the First Symphony in Adorno 1992a, page 5 onwards.

<sup>96</sup> Benjamin 1992: 517.

<sup>97</sup> 'Das Tonband, das während des ganzen Stücks quasi heimlich mitlief, wird hier sekundenlang aufgeblendet. Die Musik gibt hier ihr Trauma zu erkennen' (*ibid.*:70).

distinctly deployed - that the 'sound', which is no more than simply the musical language of Mozart, draws attention to itself as a separate music, as a separate world. This is the disconcerting moment in which my music is confronted with that which it both loves and avoids – avoids *because* it loves it and hates its ideological commercial abuse. And naturally, that spirit of societal harmony, as we seek to experience it in Mozart's works, is never so far away, so radically called into question, as here, at the point where this music rings out.<sup>99</sup>

The fifth example shows a quotation of a Mozartian melody in the solo clarinet part at bars 206-208. Marked *Sprechstimme*, the passage is highly distorted, 'defamiliarized' to the point where it loses its pitch identity. Lachenmann himself does not explicitly mention this, but the passage, in conjunction with an A major chord at bar 209, marks a splitting of the figurative and the harmonic. Bar 209 presents the tonic key of the Mozart concerto independently of its figurative context. The splitting of the Mozart's 'fluent' language into two parts – rhythmic figuration and harmonic sonority – seems to be the means by which the 'shock' of the central Mozart quotation is absorbed and assimilated into Lachenmann's sound structure.

**Ex. 17<sup>100</sup> (see overleaf)**

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<sup>98</sup> Note that the Mozart tape itself is referred to as an 'instrument', as if it too undergoes the 'defamiliarization' that actual instruments of the orchestra undergo when they are incorporated into instrumental *musique concrète*.

<sup>99</sup> 'Dabei hat in Form von rhythmisch zerhackten Einblendungen die Musik schon früher immer wieder, quasi incognito, am Strukturgeschehen teilgenommen. Hier allerdings wird diese sogenannte »Instrument« so unverstellt und deutlich eingesetzt, daß der »Klang«, der nichts anderes ist als eben die musikalische Sprache Mozarts, so auf sich selbst als eigene Musik, als eigene Welt aufmerksam macht. Es ist der befremdende Moment, wo meine Musik mit dem konfrontiert wird, was sie zugleich liebt und meidet, meidet, weil sie liebt und ihren ideologischen, kommerziellen Mißbrauch haßt. Und natürlich ist jener Geist der gesellschaftlichen Harmonie, wie wir ihn in Mozarts Werken erleben suchen, nirgends so weit weg, so radikal in Frage gestellt wie hier, wo diese Musik tatsächlich erklingt' (Lachenmann 1996: 70).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*: 174 (Beispiel 6).

Ex. 17

Beispiel 6

Handwritten musical score for 'Beispiel 6'. The score is written on ten staves. The instruments listed on the left are: Band, Fz/Kr., 2 Tr., 2 Pos., Tuba, Pfl/Gitar/Bas, Ph/Sax., S.o., and Streicher. The score includes lyrics: 'ab hier werden den Takt schlagen' and 'a tempo'. There are circled measure numbers 206, 207, and 208. A box labeled 'Korrekturen' is present in the Fz/Kr. staff. Other annotations include 'Schlag', 'Bl. Normal', and 'mit Spannung'. The score is in 4/4 time and features various dynamics and articulations.

Accanto, Takte 206-208

Lachenmann, Accanto, bars 206-208

Before discussing a sixth example put forward by Lachenmann, I will propose some additional instances where an A major sonority is dissolved into the 'emancipated' texture.

The descending scale in the strings at bar 216 is one such instance (Ex. 18). This is heavily distorted by the winds, but the scale is clearly in A major. The scale is preceded by a cadenza-type passage in the clarinet (bar 214) which, heavily distorted, is a parody of a classical cadenza.

At bar 222 there is a further allusion to A major (an A major dominant seventh), a sudden *tutti* eruption marked *fff*, heavily distorted once again (Ex. 19). At bar 248 a motive is announced, one note at a time, a resonant C sharp-B-A-G sharp-F sharp - a decayed echo of the increasingly distant classical piece (Ex. 20). This is suggestive of an interrupted cadence in A major, or even a tonicization of the relative minor key. These are all sounding gestures which are in fact distorted reminiscences of the Mozart or its tonal centre. Lachenmann describes his sixth example (Ex. 21), drawn from the closing bars of the piece, in the following way:

A rocking accompanimental figure similar to the accompaniment at the beginning of the slow movement of the Mozart concerto, is transformed into a kind of toneless breathing. At the very latest moment the music has found its way back to that speechless, probing character that represents its own self-understanding of speechless expression...<sup>101</sup>

**See Exs. 18,<sup>102</sup> 19,<sup>103</sup> 20<sup>104</sup> and 21<sup>105</sup> (see overleaf)**

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<sup>101</sup> 'Aus einer schaukerlartigen Begleitfigur, ähnlich der Begleitung zu Beginn des langsamen Satzes des Mozartkonzerts, wird eine Art tonloses Atemn. Spätesens hier hat die Musik zu jenem sprachlosen Abtastcharakter zurückgefunden, der ihrem eigenen Selbstverständnis von sprachlosem Ausdruck entspricht ...' (*ibid.*: 72).

<sup>102</sup> Page 53 of Lachenmann *Accanto* full score, bars 215-219.

<sup>103</sup> Page 54 of Lachenmann *Accanto* full score, bars 220-223.

<sup>104</sup> Page 61 of Lachenmann *Accanto* full score, bars 248-250.

<sup>105</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 175 (*Beispiel 6*).





Ex. 19

(220)

Band

2 Fr. (Fl.) (picc)

3 Kr. (Cb)

2 Tr. o.D.

2 P. u. Tuba

Rfl.

Git.

Xlo.

Tr.

Scl.

Scl.

V.

R.

C.

Kb.

Einatmen

Opf auf

etc. morando

mit Bünde od. Besen gestrichelt

GUGEN ff

Tempo Anst. + Struma

pre. h. Steg

post. h. Steg

Ex. 20

248  
Band

2 Fr.

3 Kl. (B)

Klarinet

2 Tr.

2 Pos.

Tuba

Pfkl.

Git.

Xba.

Prk.

Sch.

S. 6

V.

B. 1-2

4.5

(Viol.)

C.

Kb.

5/4

fast tonlos → willig tonlos

fast tonlos

ganzen Schwaun oder

distinkte pass. Effekt in Handfläche

tonlos = dunkel = hell

Legno-Tupfen 13-20. distinkte pass. S. I

TACCO

Rem vib.

arco

arco

arco

(Griff beibehalten)

Bogen zum Steg verlagern, auf Steg tonlos

(Griff beibehalten)

Ex. 21

Beispiel 7

291

Band

2 Fe

3 Vcl. (B)

Klar.

2 Tr.

2 Pos.

Tuba

Pfkl.

2 übrige Kopf Saiten

4 übrige Kopf Saiten

Git.

Xlo

Pk.

Schl.

Scl.

V.

B.

C.

Kb.

ca 10 mal

ca 10 mal

Sheets sempre legatissimo abtönen

Accanto, Takte 291-295

The 'toneless breathing' that Lachenmann describes is barely audible. Yet its sinister implications are transparent. Devoid of its original life force, its false fluency, the Mozart concerto is ultimately reduced to a comatose shadow of its former self. All that is left in its place is speechlessness.

To summarize, *Accanto* can be understood as falling into two sections: a rise into focus of the Mozart culminating in the central 'window' at bar 192 followed by a gradual decay of the classical linguistic residues. In the first half, the Mozart is manifest primarily in the form of crude rhythmic figurations which have a dual function of rhythmic restriction and timbral liberation. In the second half, windows of A major are absorbed into Lachenmann's 'emancipated' sound world and thereby neutralized. It is as if the sustained presence of the Mozart recording from bar 192 onwards has now injected an A major sonority into the piece, which is gradually 'worked out' by the remaining music. The motive at bar 248 can be construed as a wilful reinterpretation of A major as a scale, an example of the manner in which tonal harmonies are rendered less transparent as the piece progresses. By Lachenmann's sixth example (bars 206-208), any suggestions of A major have been dissipated entirely: supplanted by a sound which is far removed from any suggestion of the concerto. All fragments of the Mozart have been eliminated.

### **Mimesis as a Form of Self-Preservation**

Adorno's concept of mimesis has up to now been understood as the 'non-conceptual affinity of a subjective creation with its objective and unposited other',<sup>106</sup> in other words, as that which escapes conceptualization. I have argued that the concept mimesis contributes to an understanding of Lachenmann's instrumental *musique concrète* as an attempt to foreground the sensuous particularity of sounds. This aspect of mimesis is present in the 'language-less'

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<sup>106</sup> Adorno 1984: 80.

aspect of *Accanto*. Yet there is a further aspect of the concept which, I would argue, sheds light on the tendency of later works such as *Accanto* to engage directly with tradition. This is the suggestion in Adorno's philosophy of mimesis as a process of adaptation to the outside world through mimicry, a means of self-preservation in the face of threatening external forces. Paddison proposes that

... mimesis could be understood as a form of copying, or identifying with, the outside world in order to protect oneself from a threatening environment, as a means of survival. This is the continuation of primitive magic in art, 'an identification with the aggressor' whereby 'becoming one with the enemy immunizes you'. In following 'the logic of the object' through mimicking it, art, according to Adorno, at the same time reflects it, criticizes it, and frees itself from it.<sup>107</sup>

For Adorno, it is specifically within the artwork that this process of self-preservation occurs. As he puts it in *Aesthetic Theory*,

Art works oppose domination by mimetically adapting to it. If they are to produce something that is different in kind from the world of repression, they must assimilate themselves to repressive behaviour. Even those works of art which take a polemical stance against the *status quo* operate according to the principle they oppose. This principle deprives all being of its specific qualities. In sum, aesthetic rationality wants to make amends for the damage done by instrumental rationality outside art.<sup>108</sup>

Lachenmann's essays are scattered with references to the commodification of art and the damaging effect that it has on art's critical potential. Adorno shares this view; indeed one of the central dichotomies in his work on aesthetics is that of an uncritical, commodified art and an avant-garde art characterized by the active rejection of commodification. Lachenmann's assimilation of 'reified' works such as Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in *Accanto* can be understood as a form of mimetic identification with the aggressor as the 'culture industry', as Adorno calls it.

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<sup>107</sup> Paddison 1997: 141.

<sup>108</sup> Adorno 1984: 403-404.

## The Disintegration of Forms

The critical re-engagement with music of the past can also be understood within the framework of Adorno's theory of the mediation of nature and history (See Part One, Section 4). Lachenmann's relentless demystification of the familiar and the unquestioned in works such as *Accanto* is largely a critique of the unreflective thinking which enables, in Lachenmann's view, their continued currency in the fragmented context of modern life. Music that has come to assume a 'natural', invariant character, is shown to be false, and revealed as 'second nature'. '[T]he disintegration of forms' as Paddison writes, 'serves to reveal their historicity, and the breakdown of a "referential system" like tonality serves to reveal its apparently "natural" foundations as, in fact, historical – that is, as a "second nature" tied to particular cultural determinants.'<sup>109</sup>

In Adorno's theory of aesthetic modernism, the dialectic of nature and history assumes the shape of a 'rupture between self and forms'. It is in terms of this notion that Lachenmann's critique of musical tradition can be understood in its historical context. Through this notion, the 'rupture between self and forms', Adorno describes the fragmentation of formal referents in the modern era, their inadequacy in conforming to the expressive needs of the artist. As has been argued, the disintegration of a shared artistic language in modernity reflects a larger societal crisis; the breakdown of cohesiveness and continuity in social relations, and the subjective alienation that results. The fragmentation of artistic forms in modern art does however have a progressive function which could be understood in terms of enlightenment. It is the supposedly 'natural' foundations of classical works such as Mozart's Clarinet Concerto that Lachenmann seeks to call into question, in the process aiming to reveal the ideology which supports

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<sup>109</sup> Paddison 1993: 31.

and nourishes it. 'Demythologization', the emancipation from myth, is one of the core objectives of the Enlightenment Project.

### The Traditional Dual Concept of Form Subverted

In the essay 'On the Problem of Musical Analysis' (1969), Adorno explicates his conception of musical form. As a dual concept, it denotes both artworks constructed from 'above to below', and also from 'below to above'.<sup>110</sup> The first type refers specifically to genre and convention, and relates to the 'background' level of expectations in a musical work, the 'terms of reference which the composer and his recipients have in common before the composition starts: as the knowledge of a musical language and its forms' (to adopt the words of Hans Keller - whose approach to analysis, like Adorno's, has its roots in Schoenberg).<sup>111</sup> Paddison summarizes Adorno's dual concept of form as follows:

The first kind of form can be understood in relation to the handed-down, pre-given genres and formal types, imposed on the material 'from above'. These represent a level of universality (what Adorno calls *schlechte Allgemeinheit*) and are normative, the form being organized from totality to detail.<sup>112</sup>

In Adorno's words, the particular *structure*, or 'immanent form' of the individual work, asserts itself against background form, in a 'complex relation of *deviation* to *schema*'<sup>113</sup>. 'By structure', he writes, 'I do not mean ... the mere grouping of musical parts according to traditional formal schemata, however; I understand it rather as having to do with what is going on, musically, *underneath* these formal schemata.'<sup>114</sup> To cite Keller once again,

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*: 181.

<sup>111</sup> Keller 1994: 124.

<sup>112</sup> Paddison 1993: 181.

<sup>113</sup> Adorno 2002: 162-180.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*: 164.



The background of a composition is both the sum total of the expectations a composer raises in the course of a piece without fulfilling them, and the sum total of those unborn fulfillments. The foreground is, simply, what he does instead – what is actually the score. ... The foreground is that which suppresses the background.<sup>115</sup>

The background boils down to *form*, which many pieces have in common, and which can be found in the textbooks; the foreground is the individual *structure*, which happens instead of the form, unless the music is a bore and fulfills all expectations. ...<sup>116</sup>

It is this second type of form (which for clarity I shall call *structure* and likewise reserve the term *form* to denote conventional norms and schema) the implications of which Adorno claims modernism takes up and expands upon.

Seen in these terms, *Accanto* parodies the traditional relation of form to structure. The formal arrangement of solo clarinet and orchestra, and the additional presence of the recorded Mozart would suggest that the structure of the new work is in some way related to or set against the formal genre of the concerto.<sup>117</sup> However, the form of the Mozart is entirely dissipated by Lachenmann's treatment of the piece. What we have instead are a series of dislocated, fragmented clichés which seem to operate on a purely surface level. In addition to tonal references and formulae, Lachenmann includes references to the clarinet concerto genre. The solo passage in the clarinet which starts at bar 52, for example, is suggestive of a classical cadenza, yet here it is entirely isolated, its original formal context is absent. The same applies with the accompanimental figure at bar 80 onwards. There is no melody in the traditional sense counterpointed against this figure, only the 'liberated' timbres of the orchestra. The recording itself can be taken to symbolize the concerto genre as form. The subversion of the traditional form/ structure relationship reaches arguably its most dramatic point at bar 192. Here, the decontextualized immediacy of the

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<sup>115</sup> Keller 1994: 123.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*: 124-5 (my italics).

<sup>117</sup> Pace in fact suggests that 'the large-scale structure of the work bears a certain resemblance to a classical concerto, but turned inside out' (Pace 1998a: 17).

recorded Mozart is a startling emphasis of its alienated distance from Lachenmann's own music. Following this central window, there is a progressive distancing of the Mozart, its presence increasingly inaudible, until all that is left is a 'toneless breathing'. Keller writes that 'As the tension in a piece of music relaxes, the foreground moves nearer to the background, until it lands right in it at the end'.<sup>118</sup> In *Accanto*, the satisfaction of a final reconciliation is emphatically denied.

The central tension in *Accanto* is between Lachenmann's instrumental *musique concrète* and the sounding presence of the Mozart. The Mozart tape could be seen as a kind of 'background' form unheard and running simultaneously with the 'foreground' structure of Lachenmann's music. Lachenmann draws upon the Mozart as a quarry for sounding figurations, but does not make use of this formal archetype (except perhaps negatively). In this 'liberated' soundscape, pitch as a structural principle is actively deconstructed. The foregrounding of timbre means that, as distinguished from the traditional relation of form and structure, there can be no *structural* relation between the two realms, at least not in the traditional, tonal sense.

It is helpful to consider the relation of the Mozart to Lachenmann's 'liberated' soundscape in terms of Beckett's 'stream of consciousness' prose. Paddison observes that Adorno

... talks of Beckett transforming thought into a kind of 'second-order matter', arguing that he uses thoughts as the fragmented materials of the interior monologue 'to which spirit [*Geist*] itself has been reduced by the reified remains of culture [*dinghafter Rückstand von Bildung*]'<sup>119</sup>

If, in *Accanto*, Mozart's Clarinet Concerto represents the 'reified remains of culture', its interjection into Lachenmann's own 'interior monologue', a possible

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Paddison 1993: 276.

analogy with Beckett would be the rupturing of the Beckettian monologue by quotations from Shakespeare, the grammar of which is largely conventional, but which is also recognized as highly poetic. The expressive effect would be similar; the mimetic interjections of Shakespeare would be as incongruous as those of the highly familiar Mozart. It is by indulging in this tension of highly opposed worlds that, in an Adornian sense, *Accanto* 'both mediates society and liberates itself from it, in the sense of showing a different set of potential relations to those which dominate existing society'.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

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## **Part Three: 1980**

### ***Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied:* Allegory and Textuality**

## 1. Structure as an Arpeggio of Hollowed-out Forms

### The Sources of *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*

That which is unchanging in nature can look after itself. It is up to us to change it. But a nature which clings on to itself murkily and oppressively, and fears the light of an illuminating and warming consciousness, is rightly to be distrusted. There will no longer be room for such a view of nature in the art of a real humanism.<sup>1</sup>

Adorno, 'Reaktion und Fortschritt' (1930)

Lachenmann's struggle for credibility in a commercially-oriented music industry expresses itself as avoidance of unequivocalty ... His hinting at the common is so elusive that it demands intense deciphering. At its best, the aura is conjured up but not real.<sup>2</sup>

Elke Hockings, 'Helmut Lachenmann's Concept of Rejection' (1995)

*Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* (*Dance Suite with German National Anthem*) was completed in 1980, four years after *Accanto*. Composed for orchestra and amplified string quartet, it too incorporates specific traditional tonal materials. Whereas the musical source in *Accanto* is a single classical work, however, in *Tanzsuite* Lachenmann draws on a range of well-known pre-extant pieces. Many of them are popular or folk in origin. These *objets trouvés* are, in Lachenmann's words,

...familiar things: ... dance-based gestures and musical formulae, but also Lieder and in two cases fragments of Bach's music – playfully assembled ... impressions which ... embody the collective security under whose shield bourgeois thinking and feeling, magically protected, flourish and foster one another.<sup>3</sup>

The traditional classical sources of *Tanzsuite* include the German national anthem itself - the melody of which was later to be the basis for the slow

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<sup>1</sup> Adorno cited in Paddison 1993: 92.

<sup>2</sup> Hockings 1995: 13.

<sup>3</sup> Lachenmann cited in Toop 1994: 16.

movement of Haydn's 'Emperor' Quartet Opus 76 No. 3 - and the Pastoral Symphony from Bach's Christmas Oratorio. In addition, Lachenmann draws upon popular dance forms such as the polka, waltz, march, siciliano and tarantella (mediated through our knowledge of past classical music), the traditional folk song *O du lieber Augustin* and the popular German lullabies *Schlaf, Kindlein, Schlaf* and *Ihr Kinderlein Kommet*.

Since it dares to engage directly with Germany's nationalistic past and the appalling memories of Nazism associated with it, *Tanzsuite* could be considered an even more provocative work than *Accanto*. Any evocation of the *Deutschlandlied* is, of course, highly controversial. As Toop remarks, it is 'about as untouchable as the *Horst Wesselied*.' Indeed, Toop points out, thirteen years prior to the conception of *Tanzsuite* Stockhausen 'attracted stringent criticism' for alluding to both pieces in *Hymnen*.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the invoking of such anachronistic and 'untouchable' musical materials, Lachenmann's references to tradition are emphatically *not* to be taken at face value. His use of the sources is laden with irony: composing subject and handed-down material exist in a state of irreconcilable tension. Pace has observed that

Stockhausen had taken a rather naïve view of this anthem as, like any other, merely emblematic of a people, but Lachenmann was much more acutely aware of its connotations. Consequently his use of it is in no sense affirmative: whilst it subtly informs parts of the work ... its only recognizable appearance is near the end, in a distorted grotesque form.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst, as I will argue, the *Deutschlandlied* is also recognizable in the opening bars of the *Tanzsuite*, Pace's point is extremely important. The banality and simplicity of the children's songs, for example, is perhaps intended to symbolize an innocence to which, it is implied, in the light of historical events humanity can

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<sup>4</sup> Toop 1994: 16.

<sup>5</sup> Pace 1998b: 5.

never return. This is only heightened by their juxtaposition with the national anthem, itself heavy with the associations of a lost innocence as we shall see.

### Source Models as Metric Structures

The time structure (*das Zeitnetz*) ... is regulated here by rhythmic shapes, which we can continue to recognize like the skeletal vestige of a well-loved and familiar experience.<sup>6</sup>

Lachenmann, 'Hören ist wehrlos – ohne Hören' (1985)

The overall form of *Tanzsuite* falls into five separate sections, each of which is subdivided still further. These sections provide a formal 'backdrop' to the work, onto which is suspended a montage of discrete musical elements.

**Ex. 22 (see overleaf)**

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<sup>6</sup> 'Das Zeitnetz, von dem ich im vorigen Beispiel als Rhythmus (Struktur-Arpeggio) sprach, wird hier reguliert von rhythmischen Gebilden, die wir als Skelette wohlvertrauter heimatlicher Erfahrung wiedererkennen können' (Lachenmann 1996: 129).



**Ex. 22**

*Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*

Table of Movements

Section I	0.	Preamble	bars 01-041
	1.	Introduction	bars 1-5
	2.	Waltz	bars 6-21
	3.	March	bars 22-44
	4.	Transition	bars 45-69
Section II	5.	Siciliano	bars 70-132
	6.	Capriccio	bars 133-192
	7.	Valse Lente	bars 193-247
Section III	8.	Transition	bars 248-278
	9.	Gigue	bars 279-423
	10.	Tarantella	bars 424-472
	11.	Transition	bars 473-491
Section IV	12.	Aria I	bars 492-531
	13.	Polka	bars 532-568
	14.	Aria II	bars 569-609
Section V	15.	Introduction	bars 610-620
	16.	Galop	bars 621-752
	17.	Coda (Aria III)	bars 753-819

As has been suggested, the metric structures are frequently not as recognizable as Lachenmann implies above. Indeed, any listener hoping to readily identify the various movements as one would in a traditional dance suite - or indeed any of the sources - will encounter only confusion and ambiguity. A central irony of the piece is precisely the subversion of the expectations created by such a frank and unambiguous title.

The source models are presented as 'hollowed-out' forms, empty shells, stripped of most of their original characteristics. In depriving his materials of their conventionally 'beautiful' qualities, Lachenmann makes it impossible for the listener to perceive these traditional elements in a conventional way. It is significant that the familiar songs in *Tanzsuite* are present in the music *without* their texts: 'false fluency' is rendered 'speechless' on the most blatant possible level. These songs occupy the work, but 'negatively', like so many restless spirits of thwarted hopes and illusions.<sup>7</sup> They project not their original aura, but one which has been corroded. For the most part, only the metric structure is left intact, although even this may be augmented, or re-contextualized in such a way that this, too, is greatly attenuated.

Lachenmann adopts the term *Struktur-Arpeggio* ('structural arpeggio' or 'arpeggio-structure') to describe the structural formation of the sources across the work.<sup>8</sup> This can be understood along the lines of the terms 'family' and 'polyphony of ordered juxtapositions' expounded in Part One. However 'structural arpeggio' is perhaps more appropriate for this piece due to the recurrence of some source materials. The German national anthem, for example, is present both at the beginning and towards the end of the piece (a notional tonic, perhaps – although, fittingly, the closing statement of the anthem is less perceptible than

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<sup>7</sup> Lukács' comment about 'a charnel-house of long-dead interiorities', as the 'world of convention' having forgotten its origins in humankind is, I would argue, a fitting description of both *Accanto* and *Tanzsuite* (see Paddison 1993: 33).

<sup>8</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 129.

that at the opening). It will be recalled that a 'polyphony of ordered juxtapositions' denotes for Lachenmann a conception of structure which is non-coercive; which brings together and registers affinities between disparate objects within a specific time frame in a manner which recalls the Adornian/ Benjaminian notion of constellation - a unity of diverse particulars.<sup>9</sup>

Pitch is accorded a far less prominent structural role than rhythm in the *Tanzsuite*, although the tension engendered between the subcutaneous melodic aspects of the original sources and Lachenmann's instrumental *musique concrète* is at times essential for the expressive impact of the music. This rhythm-centredness is an instance of Lachenmann's own idiosyncratic transformation of pitch-centred, serialist principles. The metric structures in *Tanzsuite* are like serial rows in a work of Webern: they subtend and command the overall musical movement, and yet they do not have rhetoric potency as themes.

The use of pre-extant musical sources is also part of Lachenmann's concern in general with the historical *associative* qualities of musical material, as evinced in the essay 'Bedingungen des Materials' (see Part 2). Lachenmann has argued that metric structures drawn from traditional music enable a richer listening experience than does the serial row, either at a conscious or unconscious level, precisely because of their rootedness in our cultural memory. Whether or not this

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<sup>9</sup> In the essay 'On Structuralism', Lachenmann reflects on this idea of 'uniting' the incommensurable, recalling the work of Foucault: 'In the introduction to his book "The Order of Things", the French philosopher Michel Foucault makes a well-known reference to a short story by Jorge Luis Borges in which the latter describes a fictitious "Chinese Encyclopedia" in which "the animals are classified as follows: a) animals which belong to the emperor, b) embalmed animals, c) tame animals, d) milk pigs, e) sirens, f) animals in fables, g) dogs without master, h) those belonging to this group, i) those that behave as though they were mad, k) those painted with a very fine camel-hair brush, l) and so on, m) those which have broken the water-jug, n) those which look like flies from a distance". This abstruse non-scale of animals tells us little about the hierarchy of animal species but a lot about the imagination which produced such a classification. As a composer I constantly find myself in similar situations which challenge me to view the incommensurable as one unit, for reasons which can be found in the particular structure of my search, i.e. in my own structure. The form our search takes is part of ourselves - it cannot easily be regulated from the outside (why should I search for rules when I have already found their results?). The form of my search is an expression of my self' (Lachenmann 1995:99).

is always the case is in fact questionable. Nevertheless, the *expectation* of recognition is certainly an important aspect of the piece – and the title certainly provides this. Lachenmann deliberately contextualises the piece within a web of cultural meaning and associations which are often absent, or at least not deliberately invoked, in integral serialist works. In the following statement, Lachenmann puts a rather more complex slant on the idea of the recognisability of the his source models:

The question of whether it is recognizable is less important for me – who, as I said before, doesn't want to say something but *create* something<sup>10</sup> – than the fact that a structure adopts and is controlled by a time and sound network from a song that is deeply rooted in us, a structure that contains in itself no less logic than any serial methodology. The result is as complex as any other pure structure: a landscape of impulses, in which one can lose oneself in hearing it, and yet one still senses how one is further carried along by its formal law. This formal law, with all the moments when it falls apart and when it is interrupted, is the form of the *Deutschlandlied* and so there is in us – even if it is unconscious – a feeling of re-encounter [*Wiederbegegnung*].<sup>11</sup>

It is not the immediate recognition of the sources which is important, Lachenmann seems to suggest, but the fact that they are rooted within a particular cultural ideology.

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<sup>10</sup> This statement implies that Lachenmann is concerned with the idea of perception as opposed to cognition. The implications of this will be explored in Parts Four and Five.

<sup>11</sup> 'Die Frage, ob jeder hier auch das Deutschlandlied wiedererkennen kann, ist mir, der ich wie gesagt nicht etwas sagen, sondern etwas machen will, weniger wichtig als die Tatsache, daß hier eine Struktur ihr Zeit- und Klangnetz von dem tief in uns verwurzelten Lied borgt und steuern läßt, eine Struktur, die nicht weniger Logik in sich birgt als jedes serielle Prinzip. Das Resultat ist so complex wie jede andere reine Struktur: eine Landschaft der Impulsen, in die man sich beim Hören verlieren kann, und in der man doch spürt, wie man vom Formgesetz weitergetragen wird: Dieses Formgesetz, mit allen Brüchen und Brechungen, ist dasjenige des Deutschlandlieds, und so gibt es – wie unbewußt auch immer – in uns eine Wiederbegegnung' (Lachenmann 1996: 129).

## 2. The Folksongs As Textual Commentary

### ***Deutschlandlied: A Musical Preamble***

The abrasive opening bars of *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* in the amplified string quartet are a grotesquely distorted and heavily accented statement of the German national anthem. The quartet's amplification is an essential ingredient of its expressive force, given its placing within the expansive forces of a full orchestra. As Toop has pointed out, 'The amplified string quartet projects innately soft sounds into aggressive audibility.'<sup>12</sup>

The opening section (bars 01-041) functions as a kind of 'pre-coda', symbolizing in condensed form the theme of decomposition which informs the entire piece. It is thus, in effect, comparable to a Schoenbergian 'Idea' – and yet, paradoxically, was inserted after Lachenmann had completed the main body of the work. This suggests a less rigorous approach to structural composition than, say, one would find in the integral serialist pieces of Boulez which involve a high degree of pre-composition.

**(See Ex. 23, overleaf)**

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<sup>12</sup> Toop 1994: 16.

Ex. 23

Hans Zender gewidmet

# Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied

Helmut Lachenmann (1979/80)

**I 2 Vorspann**

**07**

**12**

**13**

*auf neuen Weisel*  
*auf nicht-Weisel*

*doppio tempo*

*Legno*

*su II pp*

018 *Suite 02*

Drum  
Skia

4/4  $\frac{3}{8}$

I. Viol  
II. Viol  
Br.  
Cello

023

I. Viol  
II. Viol  
Br.  
Cello

027

Viol  
Br.  
Cello

Sak  
03

031  
I. Viol.  
II. Viol.  
Br.  
Cello

035  
I. Viol.  
II. Viol.  
Br.  
Cello

038  
I. Viol.  
II. Viol.  
Br.  
Cello

Handwritten annotations: *humbler die*, *pizz*, *ff*, *legno-hupfer*, *Traverse appuie*, *sul I*, *Der Tropfen braucht nicht in jeder Flut im Saal gehet zu werden; / De können wir Pflanz / zur Dürrezeit der Blü / Sol:ten*

Measure markings:  $\frac{7}{8} = 128$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4} = 146$

Lachenmann, Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied, bars 01-041



Lachenmann has written that

...many of my pieces do not begin with the first beat, but often already before. In scores like *Accanto* and *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, for example, there is each time a so-called introduction (*Vorspann*) with bars 01 - 0X, which were composed at the end of the work. As soon as I have formalised an opening, the thought that it is now fixed is unbearable to me. It is as if I have decided to build a house at such and such a place and not to build another in the knowledge that I will never live anywhere else. I feel stifled. I am pleased to know that this is not necessarily my "first word". It also happens that in the course of composing I leave large spaces open and reserve myself the right to fill them in, or not.<sup>13</sup>

Lachenmann has described bars 01-041 of the *Tanzsuite* in terms of the construction of two virtual instruments, each a 'family' of specific performance actions. This is a clear example of what he meant by the pronouncement that 'composing is building an instrument' (*Komponieren heißt: ein Instrument bauen*).<sup>14</sup> In the initial bars, Lachenmann writes, the *Deutschlandlied* 'is realized in augmented projection onto the fingerboard of an imaginary stringed instrument' (*eines imaginären Saiteninstrumentes*). This first instrument is comprised of three specific performance actions: pizzicato, the pressed drawing of the bow across the fingerboard (*gepreßtes Streichen mit dem Bogen*), and pizzicato double stopping behind the bridge.

The pitches of the original song are present in the music, but they are obscured by the substitution of a four-note pizzicato chord for each single note of the *Deutschlandlied*. The contour of the *Deutschlandlied* melody is undeniably present here, yet the pitches and tone quality are stifled and as if straining to be

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<sup>13</sup> 'Im übrigen beginnen viele meiner Stücke nicht mit dem ersten Takt, sondern schon vorher. In Partituren wie *Accanto* und *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* zum Beispiel gibt es jeweils einen sogenannten "Vorspann" mit den Takten 01-0X, der ganz am Schluß der Arbeit komponiert wurde. Sobald ich einen Anfang formuliert habe, ist mir der Gedanke oft unerträglich, daß dies nun festgelegt sei. Es ist, als ob ich mich entschieden hätte, ein Haus an dem Punkt und an keinem anderen zu bauen, im Wissen, daß ich niemals mehr irgendwo anders leben werde: Derlei beklemmt mich. Ich habe es gern zu wissen, daß dies nicht unbedingt mein "erstes Wort" sein muß. Es kommt auch vor, daß ich im Verlauf des Komponierens große Flächen frei lasse und mir die Möglichkeit vorbehalte, sie auszufüllen, oder auch nicht' (Lachenmann 1996: 209-210).

<sup>14</sup> Lachenmann cited in Nonnenmann 1997: 106 (quotation first cited in Part One).

heard through the 'toneless' sonorities which violently suppress it. The melody has lost all sense of continuity, taking the form instead of a series of sharp, angular attacks engulfed by an edgy silence. With the melody is reduced to a mere shadow, or fossilized relic of its original identity, what we hear of the original *Deutschlandlied* is primarily its rhythmic structure. A striking example of *Sprachlosigkeit*, this soundworld is a far cry from the robust, triumphant 'false fluency' of the original anthem. Lachenmann's *Deutschlandlied* is characterized not by a showing of strength and nationalistic pride, but by alienation and suffering, the destruction of wholeness. This sense of suffering is rendered all the more poignant for the listener by the suppressed presence of the familiar tonal melody.

Progressively, this first imaginary stringed instrument self-deconstructs and is reduced to a skeletal rapping sound. As Lachenmann has commented,

While the first line [of the anthem] is spelt out on this imaginary instrument it is not only transposed twice just as if the instrument had become out of tune while being played – in which it becomes impossible to play octaves – but the instrument itself which spoils the melody, becomes reduced to a mere tapping sound on the fingerboard; so that the melody is recognizable, even if with the overlapping of the first line with its repetition, perception of the precise structure becomes so distracted that the quotation is not noticed.<sup>15</sup>

In a perverse, self-defeating gesture, the deconstruction of familiar sounds and pieces is turned inwards to obliterate Lachenmann's 'imaginary instrument' itself. This is Lachenmann at his most brutal, and it is at points such as these that the

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<sup>15</sup> Während so die erste Zeile auf diesem imaginären Instrument buchstabiert wird, wird sie nicht nur zweimal transponiert, so als ob das Instrument während des Spielens umgestimmt würde – wobei übrigens auch auf die Oktavlagen kein Verlaß ist -, sondern jenes "Instrument" selbst wird demontiert: Der zuvor dominierende Geräuschanteil, der die Melodie trübte, reduziert sich zu einem bloßen Klopferäusch auf dem Griffbrett; so, daß die Melodie erkennbar wird, es sei denn, daß durch die Überlagerung der ersten Zeile mit ihrer Wiederholung die Wahrnehmung ins Punktuell-Strukturelle so sehr abgelenkt würde, daß sie auf das Zitat nicht achtet' (Lachenmann 1996: 129).

criticism of *musica negativa*, leveled at Lachenmann by Hans Werner Henze, seems almost valid.<sup>16</sup>

It is as if tempting fate that Lachenmann sets up a second virtual instrument at bar 010. This time the attacks are spread further apart, resulting in an overall decrease of momentum compared with that of the first instrument. In bar 012 this instrument itself withers away, and the texture becomes increasingly sparse. By the middle of the bar only the high pizzicato chords in the first violin remain. Although barely audible, Lachenmann refers in his commentary to a suppressed tonal movement in this passage: 'this [second] instrument also falls apart, and the end of the first half of the song on the dominant, opens out into a soundless movement of the bow *ad infinitum*', a gesture defying closure.<sup>17</sup> The ethereal 'soundless movement', which begins at the end of bar 012, is created by the drawing of the bow across the tuning pegs of the instrument in the first and second violins. The effect is reminiscent of the heavy, 'toneless' breathing of a sleeping or comatose person (another image of *Sprachlosigkeit*). Time is as if suspended; the music 'treads water'. There is at this point a sense of immense suffering and despair, of the renunciation of all hope.<sup>18</sup>

#### Ex. 24

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<sup>16</sup> Hans Werner Henze is cited in Lachenmann 1996: 331.

<sup>17</sup> 'Aber auch dieses zweite imaginäre Instrument zerfällt, und der Schluß der ersten Liedhälfte, auf der Dominante, mündet in eine tonlose Streichbewegung *ad infinitum* ...' (Lachenmann 1996: 129).

<sup>18</sup> This is very different to the *affirmative* suspension of time in the *Siciliano*, which will be discussed in Part Three, Section 5.

gewicht

013 a<sub>2</sub>  
auf  
Winkel

b<sub>1</sub>  
♩ = 60

014

6  
doppio tempo

Viol. I/II  
HÄLT

S (Viola)

S  
Vcello

At bar 016, however, the score is marked *doppio tempo* and, with an increase of activity the 'breathing' is transformed into a shuffling sound, erupting at bar 021 into a new section, marked *feroce*. This passage gives vent to the second half of the anthem - once again expressing a sense of repressed tonal movement, yet here with greater force and a sense of heightened frustration. The music careers into a climax and pelts out, in brutal accents, the rhythm of a football chant. '[A]lmost like an explosion' Lachenmann writes, 'the second half of the *Deutschlandlied* ("from the *Maas* to the *Memel*") is spat out in the familiar rhythmical manner of a football stadium ... only to slip into the Waltz.'<sup>19</sup> In modern day life, in Germany as well as in Britain, nationalism at its most basic and elemental can be located at the scene of an international football match. Here, Lachenmann *reduces* the fervour of nationalism to the often crude, aggressive behaviour of a crowd of supporters at such a match. Grotesque and deeply sardonic, this is undeniably one of the most intensely shocking moments of the piece.<sup>20</sup>

Overleaf is Lachenmann's own analytical reduction of bars 01-025:

**(See Ex. 25, overleaf)**

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<sup>19</sup> '... bis das Ganze wieder ins Zittern gerät und fast explosionsartig den zweiten Teil ("von der Maas bis an die Memel") als vertrauten Rhythmus aus Fußball-Schlachtfeldern ausspuckt (Abb. 6, S. 131), um von dort an in den Waltzer hineinzuleiten' (Lachenmann 1996: 129).

<sup>20</sup> In bar 20 there is a direct correlation between the rhythm of the anthem and that of the chant, whereas in the remaining bars Lachenmann picks out the rhythm through overlaid accentuation.



Abbildung 6

Musical score for vocal and piano parts, measures 017-022. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "VON DER MAAS BIS AN DIE ME- MEL". The piano part features dynamic markings such as *pp*, *ppp*, *f*, *ff*, and *fff*. A box labeled "Becken-Stein" is present in the piano part. Measure numbers 017, 018, 019, 020, 021, and 022 are indicated at the beginning of their respective staves.

Musical score for orchestral instruments, measures 023-025. The instruments listed are I. Violin (I. Viol.), II. Violin (II. Viol.), Viola, Horns (Hörner), Solo Violoncello (Solo-Viello), and Cymbals (Fell). Dynamic markings include *f* and *ff*. Measure numbers 023, 024, and 025 are indicated at the beginning of their respective staves.

Helmut Lachenmann, *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, Vorspann, Takte 017-025

## ***O du lieber Augustin***

The popular folksong, *O du lieber Augustin*, will serve in the following discussion as an example of what I understand as the *negative-* or *virtual-presence* of Lachenmann's sources in *Tanzsuite*. This is not the only time Lachenmann will draw on this particular folksong: it also appears subsequently in his *Mouvement (-vor der Erstarrung)* (1983-4). Furthermore, just as the *Deutschlandlied* carries the association of classical music (specifically Haydn), *O du lieber Augustin* also recalls the Trio section from the second movement Schoenberg's Second String Quartet (1908), where it makes an appearance. Hence, the songs are not only linked with traditional German popular culture but also with the Viennese Classical String Quartet tradition, a fact which perhaps helps explain the presence of the solo string quartet in the *Tanzsuite*.

*O du lieber Augustin* forms the metric backbone to entire sections of the piece, and yet the only real sign of its presence at any point is in the score, where it is annotated at the very bottom of the pages as accented beats coupled with phonemes from the lyrics. These accents are 'spat out' by the instruments of the orchestra, although the presence of other, apparently unrelated accents in the music prevents the rhythm of *O du lieber Augustin* from being clearly audible.

Whilst the performers are aware of the presence of the folksong, its decontextualized metric form provides no real point of orientation for the listener. Each attack is subject to a different sounding effect: there is no uniformity of timbral identity which allows the listener to pick out the melody from the heterogeneous textures surrounding it. Furthermore, when the accent points do occur, they are not cleanly articulated. It is clear that the music 'breathes' according to this rhythm, yet the relationship is perhaps best expressed as a *collapsing* of the texture into these accented points.



The accents are like 'black holes', exerting a gravitational force. The melody is also subject to an extreme rhythmic augmentation, which lessens the possibility further of hearing the accents as a single melodic line.

**(See Ex. 26 overleaf)**

342

7.4. 9.44

Handwritten musical score for orchestra and voice. The score includes staves for Flute 1 & 2, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, Trombone, Percussion, Violin I & II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. It features complex rhythmic patterns, dynamic markings like 'pp', 'p', 'f', and 'ff', and various performance instructions such as 'arco' and 'pizz'. The music is written in a single system with multiple staves.

Die Abente jedesmal abend bevor stehen lassen!! 5. 5. 2. 10. 11. 2. (O du lieber Augustin)

Handwritten musical score for orchestra, numbered 350 and 356. The score includes staves for various instruments and parts, with dynamic markings and performance instructions.

**Instrument List:**

- 3 Fl. p.m.
- A. 2 Fl.
- 3 Oboes
- 3 Clarinets
- Bassoon
- 3 Trumpets
- 3 Trombones
- 4 Horns
- 3 Percussion
- 1 Harp
- II Pk.
- III
- IV
- V
- VI
- I
- II
- Br.
- Cb.
- Kb.

**Key Annotations:**

- 350 (circled)
- 356 (circled)
- Triaba *mp*  $\rightarrow$  *f*
- ff*, *f*, *p*, *mp*, *pp*, *mf*, *ff*
- rit.*, *rit.*
- tr.*
- tr. Trommel*
- per.*
- perc.*
- Ger.*

**Bottom Section:**

*p*  $\rightarrow$  *f*

*tr.*

*Ger.*

Lachenmann, Gigue from *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, bars 342-356

## *Tarantella*

The *Tarantella* divides the two parts of *O du lieber Augustin*. Given its brash tone, it seems fitting that the folk song should fall absent here. With its 'sinister cavortings',<sup>1</sup> the *Tarantella* exudes a manic energy reminiscent of David del Tredici's *Final Alice*, a surreal contrast to the stifled context of speechless suffering into which it has been inserted. Beginning at bar 424, this lengthy section is characterized by an obsessive 6/8 rhythm with strongly accented *fortissimo* off-beats that account for its menacing quality. From bar 435 onwards the atmosphere is further heightened through the addition of high, braying horns to the texture and, underlying these, sustained crescendo in the amplified string quartet.

**(See Ex. 27 overleaf)**

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<sup>1</sup> Toop 1994: 17.

Ex. 27

Einleitung

424  $\frac{2}{p}$

- 66 B -

The score is a handwritten musical manuscript for a symphony or concert band. It consists of approximately 20 staves. The instruments listed on the left are: Fl. (Flute), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Klar. (3)), Bassoon (Fagot), Trumpet (Trp.), Trombone (Tromb.), Horn (Horn), Percussion (Perc.), Snare Drum (Trommel), Bass Drum (Bassdrum), Cymbal (Cymbel), Triangle (Dreieck), and Tambourine (Tamburina). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and ornaments. Dynamic markings include *p*, *f*, *pp*, *fff*, and *mf*. Performance instructions like *arco*, *rit.*, and *rit. to  $\frac{2}{4}$*  are present. A section of the score is marked with a circled number 424 and a  $\frac{2}{p}$  time signature. Above the first few staves, there is a handwritten number - 66 B - and some rhythmic notation. The score is densely written with many notes and markings, indicating a complex and detailed composition.

432

Fl. 1  
Fl. 2  
Cl.  
Klar. B.  
Bass.  
Sax.  
Klt.  
Hr.  
Trp.  
Bor.  
Horn  
Pflc.  
F. 1  
F. 2  
III  
IV  
Solo  
I  
II  
B.  
C  
W.

432

432

Lachenmann, *Tarantella* from *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, bars 424-439

The *Tarantella* section climaxes in bar 459, and from bar 460 the sustained crescendo chords in the string quartet (previously 'underneath' the texture) are now foregrounded. The downbeats in the *tutti* orchestra have disappeared, leaving only sustained string chords and fragments of the tarantella rhythm. This texture forms the beginning of the Transition section. (The Transition starts at bar 473. Note, however, that bar 468 is effectively the resumption of the texture of 423, suggesting that the *Tarantella* was inserted at a relatively late stage in the composing of the piece).

In bar 472, *O du lieber Augustin* resumes where it left off. This time, however, the folksong is foregrounded as a series of disjointed accents in a relatively sparse texture. The mood of this passage contrasts sharply with that of the *Tarantella*; its exhilaration now appears to have been wrong-headed. From this moment onwards, the music seems to fall apart, reflecting on a larger scale the deterioration of the 'imaginary instruments' in the opening bars of the piece. There is a similarity between this process and that in *Accanto*, where, after the eruption of the recording into the music beginning at bar 192, the piece also seems gradually to disintegrate.

Bar 490 prepares the entry at 492 of Aria I for amplified string quartet. This is an aria for *gepreßte* solo string quartet sounds, an example of action notation showing the influence of early instrumental *musique concrète* works such as *Pression*. The grinding sounds form an uncomfortable parody of what one would expect from a so-called 'Aria'. This section could be understood as a final reflection of the refrain of *O du lieber Augustin* – 'Alles ist hin' (see below).

**(See Ex. 28 overleaf)**

Ex. 28

- 72 -

Handwritten musical score for Ex. 28, featuring various instruments and vocal parts. The score is divided into two systems, each starting with a circled number '489'. The first system includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Klar.), Bassoon (Fag.), Horn (Hr.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Percussion (Perc.), Tuba, Horn (Hr.), Percussion (Perc.), and strings (I, II, III, IV). The second system includes parts for Solo (Sol.), strings (I, II), and woodwinds (A. Fl., B. Fl., C.). The score includes various time signatures (4/8, 3/4, 4/8) and dynamic markings (p, pp, f, ff, sfz, sfz, sfz). Annotations include 'nach oben, den Mund näher' (move up, closer to the mouth), 'IV. Abtastung des ARIA I (Ritornello tempo)', and 'immer stärker trocken ratternd' (increasingly drier rattling). Performance instructions include 'Wasser-Dopf.' (water cap), 'Palmen' (palm leaves), 'mit aufgedrehtem Papier' (with paper rolled up), 'auf beiden Seiten' (on both sides), 'stark rütteln' (shake vigorously), and 'stark' (strong). The score is written in a clear, legible hand.



495

3/4

4/8

5  
offte  
di.

5  
offte

## Textual Commentary

'Alles ist hin' ('Everything's gone'), sings out the refrain of *O du lieber Augustin*. The presence of the folk song text is significant for an understanding of the whole piece. Previously, Schoenberg inflected the meaning of this refrain when 'alles ist hin' became an indirect reference to the composer's own estrangement with his wife. In the case of Lachenmann, the 'alles' of 'alles ist hin' could be understood as an ironic commentary on 'Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles', the first line of the German anthem.

The plight of the figure of Augustin in the context of the anthem becomes a comic emblem of a nation in tatters: 'Hut ist weg, Stock ist weg, Augustin liegt im Dreck' ('His hat's gone missing, his stick has fallen away and Augustin is lying in the dirt': bars 472-494). One might well infer from this the expression of the situation in Germany immediately after World War II: the bitterness of defeat, the dashed hopes. The poignancy is acute: the listener has just been drawn into and carried along by the energy and frantic excitement of the *Tarantella*, just as so many were during the heady early years of the National Socialist regime in 1930s Germany.

A further striking example of textual commentary can be found in the final section of the piece, where the *Deutschlandlied* is subjected to a final 'death blow'. There is a complete restatement of the anthem in the Galop and Coda (Aria III) from bars 623-815, which begins in the piano, the articulation becoming increasingly percussive, culminating in the suspended cymbals. It begins with piano clusters and chords bars 623-654. It then reappears as a knocking sound bars 658-717 – strikes from left hand on 5 different strips of skirting board [*Rahmenleisten*] that have been pressed onto the piano. Finally, it resounds on the tuning pegs of the

piano at bars 718-815, to the accompaniment of a lullaby, *Schlaf Kindlein Schlaf*, in bars 774-793.

Richard Toop has suggested that the displacement of the *Deutschlandlied* by the lullaby *Schlaf, Kindlein, Schlaf* acts by way of a meta-comment upon 'the infantile character of most "nationalist" aspirations.'<sup>2</sup> I would suggest, too, that in this context the lullaby embodies an ironic condemnation of the 'sleepy' political consciousness in Germany after the World War, in which politicians consistently neglected to confront the real issues, turning a blind eye to the consequences of their own actions during the war.

### **The Role of the Solo String Quartet in *Tanzsuite***

The 'virtual' commentary upon the musical action by the unsung ('speechless') source texts is an important dimension of meaning in *Tanzsuite*, one not readily available to any listener not equipped with the score. As we have seen, the sources selected by Lachenmann for the *Tanzsuite* have a strong cultural resonance, to German culture in particular. We have already noted the close links of the *Deutschlandlied* and *O du lieber Augustin* to the world of 'classical' music. In the *Siciliano*, as we have seen, Lachenmann himself inserts a quotation from the *Pastorale* of Bach's Christmas Oratorio and, as Pace has pointed out, this rhythm also appears in the first movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.<sup>3</sup> This, then, is a discourse of *intertextuality*, of quotations within quotations.

The theme of public versus private emerges as central to Lachenmann's *Tanzsuite*, and is one manifestation, I would argue, of the dichotomy of

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<sup>2</sup> Toop 1994: 17.

<sup>3</sup> Pace 1998b: 4.

'speechlessness' (*Sprachlosigkeit*) and 'false fluency' (*Sprachfertigkeit*), central to Lachenmann's aesthetics.

Traditionally a 'private' medium for chamber settings, the placement of a string quartet in the midst of the orchestral fabric is in itself highly unusual and, I would argue, effectively deconstructs the conventional public/ private dichotomy. The amplification of the quartet creates a new sound world: the most 'private' utterances raised into the 'public' domain. As Lachenmann has commented, the role of the quartet

...is many-sided: obligato and concertante, leading and accompanying in varying guises. As a chamber music unit lodged within an orchestral landscape, it constantly imposes its own dimensions on the orchestra, occasionally being outplayed, and nesting itself into the holes in the tutti fabric: its like a flea in a fleece, forcing one to listen from many perspectives.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to its amplification, the quartet also performs the very opening gestures of the piece, gestures that present its dramatic trajectory in condensed form. It is thus accorded a status which certainly competes with the 'public' forces of the full orchestra. Both *O du lieber Augustin* and the *Deutschlandlied* can be seen to embody 'private' conceptions, which later came to assume a public significance.

As Lachenmann must be well aware, a composer in Germany can never be entirely innocent. Even if, unlike Wagner for example, the composer does not overtly support a political cause, his music still runs the risk of being compromised, adopted for public ends which lie beyond those of the original music. As Toop has observed, today the German national anthem seems 'a muted token of appalling historical memories (and also a sobering reminder of

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<sup>4</sup> Lachenmann cited in Toop 1994: 16-17. As Toop implies, the orchestra has also suffered a reversal of sorts: 'The treatment of the orchestra is scarcely less remarkable than that of the quartet: for much of the time, it operates as a vastly expanded percussion section, full of sudden stabs and muted shufflings' (Toop 1994: 17).

what can become of even the most sophisticated and intelligent affirmative art).<sup>5</sup> Related to this theme, and central to Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, there is the constant danger that music will be adopted for commercial ends, in a way which, Adorno considers, removes much of its critical power. The perceived dichotomy of 'authentic', self-reflective art and an uncritical commodity art features throughout Adorno's writings on music. Lachenmann's brazen rejection of tradition can be understood an affront to the 'culture industry' and the media.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 16.

### 3. Working the Frame: A Parergonal Logic

#### 'Perceptive Ambiguity'

Deconstruction must neither reframe nor dream of the pure and simple absence of the frame. These two apparently contradictory gestures, systematically inseparable, are the very functions of what is being deconstructed here.<sup>6</sup>

Jacques Derrida, *La Vérité en peinture* (1978)

Kant's own difficulties with the problem of the frame delineating the aesthetic become, in Derrida's interpretation, exemplary of what he calls 'parergonal logic' - where the interiority of art and its exteriority are seen to be interconnected in fundamental, paradoxical, and undeniable ways.<sup>7</sup>

David Carroll, *Paraesthetics* (1987)

The varying degrees of perceptibility of the sources in *Tanzsuite* pose a number of interesting questions with regard to the status of the traditional materials in the piece. If the sources Lachenmann describes as all-important to the expressive effect cannot in fact be perceived by the listener, to what extent can they really be considered integral to the piece? How far is some prior knowledge of the location of the sources necessary for the experience to be meaningful? Where can one place the boundary between what is essential to the inner logic of the piece, and what is external or 'supplementary'?<sup>8</sup> Indeed, how far are the songs actually present in, or part of, the piece?

I would like to propose that the 'perceptive ambiguity'<sup>9</sup> engendered through the 'defamiliarizing' treatment of the sources reflects an engagement on Lachenmann's part with issues also taken up in the philosophical writings of

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<sup>6</sup> Derrida cited in Carroll 1987: 131. This is reminiscent of Adorno's theory of identity and non-identity in *Negative Dialectics*.

<sup>7</sup> Carroll 1987: 143.

<sup>8</sup> To use a term from deconstructionist philosophy. Owens 1992: 54, see Section 6 below.

<sup>9</sup> Hockings 1995: 13.

Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man.<sup>10</sup> By rendering fluid previously fixed or stable notions of inside and outside, work and frame, Lachenmann is engaging in a form of deconstructionist critique of musical convention which parallels Derrida's critical rewriting of philosophical tradition.

According to deconstruction, notions of presence and authenticity are untenable, since they are cannot discount their apparent opposite. Indeed, conceptual oppositions are not opposite at all but reciprocally related, and mutually dependent. 'Logocentrism' is the term employed by deconstruction to describe any attempt to establish an order of meaning 'outside', or prior to, history and language. The 'doctrine of presence' is the name given to the logocentric belief that meaning or truth can be made present, in an unmediated form, to the thinking subject. The philosophy with which Derrida is interested is guilty of this delusion when it tries to define utopian concepts such as 'nature', 'truth', 'justice', and 'happiness'. The assumption is that these fundamental notions possess a nucleus of meaning in their own right. Following on from Saussure's assertion that 'in the linguistic system there are only differences, *without positive terms*',<sup>11</sup> Derrida deduces that each element in the system

...is constituted with reference to the trace in it of the other elements of the sequence or system. This linkage, this weaving, is the *text*, which is produced only through the transformation of another text. Nothing, either in the elements or in the system, is anywhere simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.<sup>12</sup>

Paradoxically, according to Derrida, the 'origin' is non-originary. Any attempt to grasp meaning directly will be endlessly deferred.

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<sup>10</sup> Elke Hockings has suggested that 'Lachenmann's reflective language initially took its impulse from the Weiss/ Benjamin/ Lukács tradition, and later shifted to the language of post-structuralist philosophy' (*ibid.*: 10).

<sup>11</sup> Saussure cited in Derrida 1973: 98.

<sup>12</sup> Derrida cited in Culler 1983: 99.

Just as Derrida problematizes the self-present nature of concepts, so does Lachenmann confound a number of common assumptions about the nature of music, and musical forms. The romantic notion of the fully integrated, autonomous artwork is one such assumption deconstructed by Lachenmann in the *Tanzsuite*.

According to Derrida, and Adorno in *Negative Dialectics*, the concept can never be at one with its objects, but this does not mean that concepts should be renounced altogether. For Derrida, the notion of a fixed border is a sign of dogmatism. Thus the question of closure (i.e. what is inside the work, what is outside) becomes critical. Seen in musical terms, John Cage lets everything into the frame: *4'33"* epitomizes this logic. Lachenmann, on the other hand, delimits the frame, as does Adorno. Ironically, the source materials with which he engages in the *Tanzsuite* end up more or less 'outside' the frame of the work: they are barely perceptible and often only so in the score. Even so, they exert an influence on the music, transforming and being transformed by it. Moreover, they are crucial for the integrity of the piece, for its 'authenticity' in the Adornian sense. The sources have an internal structural relation to the music and yet they are 'outside' perception: at once negated and assimilated ('sublated', to adopt a term from Hegel).

### ***Ergon and Parergon***

In *La Vérité en peinture* Derrida deconstructs the opposition of work and frame, according to which the limits of the aesthetic - what can and cannot be considered art - have been debated for centuries. As with his assault on logocentrism in figures such as Saussure and Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*, in *La Vérité* Derrida demonstrates that on close inspection the opposition of work and frame evaporates: the terms are mutually constitutive. The section of Derrida's text with which I am concerned is that devoted to a re-evaluation of



Kant – specifically the *Critique of Judgement*, in which Kant deals with issues such as aesthetic judgement and the sublime. Contrary to much Kant criticism, Derrida seeks to show that Kant does not in fact delimit the frame of the aesthetic, but renders it problematic. As Carroll has pointed out, 'In placing a frame around the aesthetic, as Derrida claims all philosophies of art do, Kant, at the same time, reveals its problematical status.'<sup>13</sup> Derrida's aim is to tease out the loopholes in Kant's exposition of the concept of the frame.

Kant employs the terms *ergon* and *parergon* to depict work and frame respectively. Just as, for Derrida, presence and absence are intertwined, so, too, *ergon* and *parergon* resist being separated. The *parergon*, as Derrida argues, in fact makes up for a lack at the center of the *ergon*.

What constitutes them as *parerga* is not simply their exteriority or surplus nature, it is the internal structural relation that attaches them to the interior lack of the *ergon*. And this lack would be constitutive of the very unity of the *ergon*. Without this lack, the *ergon* would have no need to a *parergon*.<sup>14</sup>

Derrida insists (with idiosyncratic word play) that the *parergon* is 'a combination [*un mixte*] of outside and inside: it is a combination that is not a mixture [*un mélange*] or a half-measure but rather an outside that is drawn inside the inside in order to constitute it inside.'<sup>15</sup>

The relevance of this idea for Lachenmann's *Tanzsuite* is clear. By rendering ambiguous the declared source materials, and by including the texts in the score rather than in the music itself, Lachenmann calls into question the distinction between essence and supplement, central to traditional theories of art.

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<sup>13</sup> Carroll 1987: 136.

<sup>14</sup> *La Vérité*: 69 in Carroll 1987: 138.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

A similar idea to the above can be found in the work of Roland Barthes, in his famous essay, 'From Work to Text'. Setting the organicist ideal of biological growth against the concept of the 'network', Barthes asserts,

... the metaphor of the Text separates from that of the work: the latter refers to the image of an *organism* which grows by vital expansion, by 'development' ... the metaphor of the Text is that of the *network*; if the Text extends itself, it is as a result of a combinatory systematic.<sup>16</sup>

The Text, as opposed to the work, involves the dissemination of meaning, its extension into space, cutting across a number of works (as does the *Tanzsuite*). It is a 'stereographic plurality' with no real sense of closure or centre: 'The logic regulating the Text is not comprehensive (define "what the work means") but metonymic; the activity of associations, contiguities, carryings-over ...'<sup>17</sup> The Text defies the fixing of the frame.

Lachenmann's questioning of the work concept also mirrors Adorno's own dilemma regarding the double existence of the artwork. Adorno asserts that the work of art is both a hermetically sealed entity in its own right and a social document. This is why, for him, art takes on the character of cognition. 'Art is and is not being-for-itself' writes Adorno in *Aesthetic Theory*.<sup>18</sup> Adorno claims 'that 'The unresolved antagonisms of reality appear in art in the guise of immanent problems of artistic form. This ... defines art's relation to society.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Barthes 1977: 161.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: 158.

<sup>18</sup> Adorno 1984: 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*: 8. Lachenmann's *Ausklang* (1984-5) could also be fruitfully interpreted in terms of the ambiguity of the frame. There is no clear dialogue between piano and orchestra: instead, material is transferred from one sounding 'body' to the other in such a way that any hierarchy between the two is dismantled. The idea of the orchestra as a resonating body for the piano further confuses the issue: paradoxically, the orchestra is as if *inside* the piano itself.

## 4. The *Siciliano*

### Rhythmic Nets

The invocation of traditional dance suites by a composer of avant-garde music such as Lachenmann is at face value deeply anachronistic, even absurd - an apparently regressive gesture. As Toop has pointed out, 'A "dance suite" might have been expected from the newly emerging Young Conservatives in Germany, but scarcely from the erstwhile exponent of *Verweigerungsmusik*'.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, as with the German national anthem, Lachenmann's allusion to the suite genre is highly ironic - a provocative gesture in the direction of those comfortable structures of 'bourgeois thinking and feeling' that he sets out to derail.

The dance forms in the first section of the *Tanzsuite* - the waltz and march - are barely distinguishable, although in performance the image of the conductor beating a waltz provides an important visual signal of the structural presence of that dance.

In the extensive *Siciliano* part in the second section of the work, however, a dotted rhythm figure is brought to the forefront of the music, which marshals Lachenmann's defamiliarized sounds into a painfully familiar form. In this 'liberated' landscape where nothing is certain, such a clearly identifiable rhythm appears trite and simplistic, its incongruity ridiculous, even comical.

(See Ex. 29 overleaf)

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<sup>20</sup> Toop 1994: 16.



There is a distinction to be made in the *Tanzsuite* between the use of source melodies as 'metric structures', as in the *Deutschlandlied* or *O du lieber Augustin*, and what I will here term 'rhythmic nets'. The metric structures cannot always be perceived. 'Rhythmic nets', on the other hand, are blatantly clear: they reign in the speechless sounds with heavy irony. The rhythmic net embodies a block of continuity in an otherwise highly discontinuous, pointillistic landscape.

The 'rhythmic net' section of the *Siciliano* is also characterized by the preponderance of specific action categories. In his analysis of this section Lachenmann alludes to the way in which 'families', or categories of sound production, intersect to determine the experiential logic of the music. His graphic reduction of the score from bar 70 onwards (see Ex. 30) is an attempt to demonstrate this interaction. The seven sound production categories in play at this point he defines as pizzicato, 'struck' [*geschlagen*] sounds, 'pressed' [*gepreßt*] sounds, flautando, 'rubbed' [*gestrichen*] sounds, 'blown' [*geblasen*] sounds and 'toneless' [*tonlos*] sounds.

### See Ex. 30 (overleaf)

The sound production categories in themselves, Lachenmann argues, are however 'not sufficient to describe the underlying *experience* of the music. At least as important are the vertical combinations of these sound production categories with each other, above all the manner in which they are constituted together in more or less fluid rhythmic shapes', as a metric grid. Thus, running through all the different methods of sound production, 'there is for example a projection (a family) of tightly-determined' [*geschlossenen*] 'rhythms, like the dotted [*punktierte*] Siciliano rhythm'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> 'So geht zum Beispiel quer durch all die verschiedenen Hervorbringungsweisen eine Projektion (eine "Familie") aus streng geschlossenen Rhythmen, etwa der punktierte Siciliano-Rhythmus, auf einem einzelnen Becken geschabt ...' (Lachenmann 1996: 134 – my italics).

Abbildung 7

▽ pizz  
 ▲ ge-  
 Schlag  
 gepfeif  
 flaut  
 gestrich  
 zelteten  
 tonlos B-

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Lachenmann, Siciliano from Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied, bars 70-99 analysis

The final result is a complex mesh of sound production categories 'forced' into the mould of the *Siciliano* rhythm. These 'tightly determined' rhythms are clearly identifiable; often periodic. Lachenmann contrasts these rhythms in his essay with what he calls more fluid rhythms – those with a less apparent rhythmic profile, 'whose single attacks are split between different instruments in a hoquet-type style'.<sup>1</sup> In the experience of listening, each attack appears dislocated from the next.

### **Master Müller's Poultry**

At bar 101, in the second paragraph of the *Siciliano* section, the theme from Bach's Pastoral Symphony is introduced, in etiolated form. Lachenmann, in his commentary, paints a grotesque image:

... the whole work crystallizes into a kind of gestural shadow of the well-known aforementioned Pastorale: to cite Wilhelm Busch (which also applies to the National Anthem quotation in the Introduction): 'Here one can still perceive them, finely shredded up and in pieces, yet even so Master Müller's poultry consumes them.'<sup>2</sup>

### **Exs. 31 and 32 (overleaf)**

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<sup>1</sup> "Neben solchen "geschlossenen" Rhythmen haben wir es zum einen mit weniger geschlossenen zu tun: Rhythmen, deren einzelne Impulse auf verschiedene, sich hoquetusartig ablösende Instrumente verteilt sind ..." (Lachenmann 1996: 134).

<sup>2</sup> 'Im zweiten Stadium, ab Takt 101, kristallisiert sich das Ganze zum gestischen Schatten der bekannten schon erwähnten Hirtenmusik: Um mit Wilhelm Busch zu sprechen (was auch schon für das Deutschlandlied-Zitat in der Einleitung galt): "Hier kann man sie noch erblicken, feingeschrotet und in Stücken, doch sogleich verzehret sie Meister Müllers Federvieh" (Lachenmann 1996: 134).

Ex. 31

95  $\frac{3}{8}$   $\frac{6}{8}$  - 15-

13 Fl. *mp*  
3 Ob.  
3 Kl. *p*  
Bsp. *p*  
3 Fag. *p*  
Klar. *ff*  
Hrn. *pp*  
Tpt. *pp*  
Tromb. *pp*  
Hrnt. *pp*  
Pft. *pp*  
I. Har. *f*  
II. Pk. *f*  
III. *f*  
IV. *f*  
Solo *pp*  
I. *ff*  
II. *ff*  
B. *ff*  
C. *ff*  
Kb. *pp*

101 a *ossia*  
102 a  $\frac{1}{2}$   $\sharp$

*Sudag auf Rhythmus*  
*Bongo* *Kassel*  
*Tomtom*  
*Pebesnik*  
*arco* *pizz*  
*101 a* *102 a*



103a

103

103a

103

Lachenmann, Siciliano from Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied, bars 95-110a

Lachenmann's score reduction of this section provides six bars of the original *Pastorale*, and sets out his own 'shredded up' musical 'language', itself derived from the Bach, below it. The *rhythmic* shape of the original Bach is clearly discernible in the reduction, divided in hocket-style across the categories of sound-production. Yet the original pitches are barely in evidence. The quotation from the cartoonist Busch in Lachenmann's commentary highlights the deeply ironic, socio-critical nature of his treatment of tradition.

The use of the term 'poultry' would seem to be a scathing reference to an uncritical audience which routinely consumes the 'damaged fruits' of an abused and trivialized cultural tradition.<sup>3</sup> Bach's music has, Lachenmann seems to be suggesting, been reduced, as the saying goes, to 'chicken feed', and the performed-out desecration of the Bach in *Tanzsuite* is a symbolic 're-enactment' of this. In deconstructing this music, Lachenmann, in Adornian fashion, is striving to uncover a social 'truth'. The bitter irony is that even now, in its disintegrated state, this insignificant (because historically anachronistic), pre-packaged music will find willing consumers.<sup>4</sup>

### Ex. 32 (overleaf)

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<sup>3</sup> 'Tradition, so von jenen Verdrängungsbedürfnissen einer anachronistisch verharrenden (kulturellen) Öffentlichkeit in Beschlag genommen, hat damit ihren lebendigen Sinn verloren. Sie ist ein Tummelplatz geworden, vergleichbar einem umgestürzten Baum, dessen Stamm, Äste, Wurzeln, Früchte der Ausblutung freigegeben herumliegen' (Lachenmann 1996: 339).

<sup>4</sup> One is reminded here of Mahler's adoption of diverse stylistic elements in his symphonies in a way that at one time shocked contemporary audiences; and how frequently these works are now performed today.

BACH-HIRTEN-SINFONIE" etc.

100

104

105

108

110

Siciliano

ff

f

p

ah. am. Tr. 1109

Helmut Lachenmann, *Siciliano* aus *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, Diagramm

Lachenmann, *Siciliano* from *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, bars 99-119, analysis



## 5. Structure Hallucination and Derrida's concept of *différance*

### Structure Hallucination

In his writing on the *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, Lachenmann refers to a moment in the music which he terms, 'structure hallucination' (*Struktur-Halluzinationen*).<sup>1</sup> This entails the radical paring down of musical structure as a means of liberating content.<sup>2</sup> We have already analyzed a striking example of this phenomenon in the section based on the repeated note figure in bars 80-139 of *Accanto*.

In the discussion of the *Siciliano* in Section 4 of Part Three, we saw that Lachenmann's own 'composed' sounds are as if straitjacketed into the siciliano rhythm. This section I referred to as a 'rhythmic net'. What Lachenmann means by 'structure hallucination', however, can be understood as a more extreme example of the net, insofar as the music in this instance is 'reduced' not only rhythmically, but also texturally. The two stages – rhythmic nets and structure hallucination - often appear in succession.<sup>3</sup>

**See Exs. 33 and 34 (overleaf)**

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the article 'Struktur und Musikantik' (1979) in Lachenmann 1996: 155-161.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of 'structure hallucination' could be likened to the paintings of Bridget Riley. (I am indebted to Max Paddison for pointing out this connection.) With the sustained contemplation of Riley's works, abstract, two-dimensional images appear to move and rise out of the paintings, taking on a three-dimensional appearance. It should be noted, however, that Riley's patterns do not deliberately invoke tradition in the manner of the siciliano rhythm from the *Tanzsuite*.

<sup>3</sup> This comes close to the music of Lachenmann's near-contemporary, Nicolaus A. Huber, 'in its restriction of particular parameters such as pitch, so that others, such as resonance, become more apparent' (Pace 1998b: 5).

Ex. 33

117 118

Fl. 15

Pft. *esist. p* *ped* *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

Vcl. *Mar.* *ff* *pp* *ff*

Vcl. *legno* *pp* *ff*

Str. *pizz* *legno* *ppp*

118 119 120 121 122 123

Fl. 15

Pft. *ff* *p*

Vcl. *Mar.* *ff* *pp* *ff*

Vcl. *arco* *pp* *arco* *pp* *pizz* *ff* *pp*

Str. *arco* *pp* *legno quint* *legno quint*

118 119 120 121

Fl.

Pft.

Vcl. *Mar.* *attaca 7. 119*

Vcl. *legno* *pp* *legno quint*

Str.

Lachenmann, *Siciliano* from *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, bars 117-118s

Ex. 34

Abbildung 2

15 → Pflk. p

147. Ped →

118a (Xyl) sf

SCHLAF, KIND-LEIN SCHLAF

118a - 118s (18 Takte) Solo-Quartett pp

III. Stadium Legno trem (Heiser) ff

(Takte 148 g-r sind nicht abgebildet)

119 120 121 122

118b Xyl loco DIE MUTTER SCHREI

Solo-Quartett f

IV. Stadium Oboe

15 → (Pflk.) 8va 15 8va 8va

123 124 125 126 127

Xyl 124.b TEL'S BÄU- ME- LEIN

Solo-Quartett p

128 129 130 131 132

Xyl 129. FÄLLT HE- RAB CAPRICCIO

15 → Pflk. p

legno p

Solo-Quartett

Siciliano, Takte 117-132

Lachenmann, Siciliano from Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied, analysis of bars 117-132

At bar 110 of the *Siciliano*, Lachenmann effects a distillation of the timbral variety down primarily to string sounds (although these are in fact joined in the background by a 'rubbed' marimba and a 'dampened minor second' figure in the piano). At bar 117 the dampened minor second figure in the piano emerges from the background of the music into the foreground, with a sinister echo of the *Siciliano* rhythm - its hollow reduction to a metric skeleton alone. Whilst dynamics and pedaling, and the overall duration of the rhythm are clearly composed into the score by Lachenmann, the precise effect of the pedaling in this highly exposed context cannot be strictly controlled. Lachenmann takes advantage of this margin of 'chance' by instructing that the piano should be amplified in order that these subtle differences may be magnified. (Different acoustic effects will, after all, be achieved depending upon the depth of pedaling, and slight variations of attack; unavoidable given that the performer is required to repeat the material over a relatively extended period.) This passage can be understood in terms of the concept of 'liberated perception'.<sup>4</sup>

This dialectic of sameness and difference finds a visual analogue in the throbbing patches of colour in a Rothko canvas. Lachenmann's explicit aim is the 'liberation' of perception through the *rendering newly expressive of obsolete structures* ('the leap to freedom by entering into the lion's den of one's own socialized, unliberated ego [*Ich*]<sup>5</sup>, 'extending into the simultaneously known at the same time unknown'<sup>6</sup>). This is potentially a very exciting moment in the piece.<sup>7</sup> As Lachenmann remarks in the essay 'Hören ist wehrlos – ohne Hören' (1985),

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<sup>4</sup> See Parts Four and Five.

<sup>5</sup> 'Jenes Paradox: der Sprung ins Freie durch Eindringen in die Höhle des Löwen, des eigenen vergesellschafteten, unfreien Ichs' (Lachenmann 1996: 134).

<sup>6</sup> 'Ein Schlüssel zum Eindringen ins zugleich Bekannte und erneut Unbekannte' (Lachenmann 1996: 135).

<sup>7</sup> The recording made by the Arditti Quartet with the German Symphony Orchestra of Berlin and conducted by Olaf Henzold is, however, disappointing in this respect. In the score Lachenmann insists that the piano should be amplified, yet on this recording the sound is distant, and much of the inner richness of the sounds is lost.



With this total narrowing down to the high piano sound a highly differentiated world of perception opens itself out afresh due to the different accentuations of the same sound and through simultaneous muting and pedaling with different levels of resonance which one cannot simply 'compose', but one has to liberate the experience first by locking out, and muting away the things that overlay it.<sup>8</sup>

The following example is Lachenmann's second analytical study of the same passage from the *Siciliano*, published eight years later<sup>9</sup>. It places a stronger emphasis on the basic Siciliano rhythm.

**See Ex. 35 (overleaf)**

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<sup>8</sup> 'Mit dieser totalen Verengung auf den hohen Klavierklang öffnet sich erneut eine hochdifferenzierte Wahrnehmungswelt durch verschiedene Akzentuierung immerdesselben Klangs und durch seine gleichzeitige Erstickung und Pedalisierung mit abgestuften Hallnuancen, die man nicht einfach "komponieren" kann, sondern deren Erfahrung man erst durch Aussperren, Wegdämpfen des Darüberliegenden freilegen muß' (Lachenmann 1996: 134).

<sup>9</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 181-183

Ex. 35

Abbildung 1

**SICILIANO**

- = tonlos geschrien od. geblasen
- ~~~~~ = tonlos gewischt
- ▲ = geschlagen (od. angeschlagen)
- ▼ = gepupft
- rrr = gepupft, so Kräftig
- ↓ = normal geschrien od. geblasen

**Siciliano, Takte 70-110**



101. Bach, Hinkensdorf 102. 103.

97. 2 Oktaven 98. 99. 100.

tonlos Flöten  
geblasen Blech  
Klar.

Woodblock 7.7  
Tambour  
Kessel  
Becken  
Tamtam p

Violinen  
Kleine Trommel  
Pfte

ten:

II. Stadium  
Bau-Zitat

104. 105. 106. 107. 108. 109. 110. (→116)

Pfte Ped  
Becken  
Woodblock  
Violinen  
ten:

2 Oktaven höher

Calli  
Pfte  
Solo-Quartett

Pos.  
Fell 7.

Takle 111-116  
wurden ausgelassen

Lachenmann, *Siciliano* from *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, analysis of bars 70-110

## ***Salut für Caudwell***

Lachenmann's *Salut für Caudwell* (1977) for two guitars is described by the composer in his essay *Struktur und Musikantik* ('Structure and Musical Performance') from 1979 as another instance of the 'dialectic of the widening of listening by limiting the material.'<sup>10</sup> Through the reduction of the material to its lowest common denominator, and the repetition of this material, Lachenmann aims, paradoxically, to move beyond it. He seeks to break out of conventional ways of listening to it and to open perception up to its physical – rather than structural or semantic – qualities. At a specified moment in the piece, the two guitarists are required to speak aloud an extract of text by Christopher Caudwell, the dedicatee of *Salut*. As with the aforementioned moment in the *Siciliano*, time appears to tread water and the music seems to point beyond itself. The individual phonemes are so dislocated that what one perceives are not words, but the sound of each phoneme.

This text naturally demands an absolutely singular line of hearing and demotes everything else to accompaniment, no matter how complex it may be. In a kind of forward diversion I have held back all the structural complexity and given it an extremely straightforward rhythm which almost corresponds to a plain metronomic beat. It therefore acquires a simple reposeful (*gerasterte*) even tempo, in which the text almost of itself makes one aware of its phonetical structure and is drawn into the resulting musical character. The ostinato form of the even-tempoed gestures enables one to perceive for the first time the emotional life of the sound in relation to speech as an essential part of expression.<sup>11</sup>

### **Ex. 36<sup>12</sup> (see overleaf)**

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<sup>10</sup> 'der Dialektik von Hörerweiterung durch Materialverengung' (Lachenmann 1996: 134).

<sup>11</sup> Dieser Text erzwingt natürlich zunächst ein absolut einschichtiges Hören und degradiert alles andere zur Begleitung, mag es auch noch so komplexität verzichtet und es bei einem äußerst geraden Rhythmus belassen, der fast dem nackten Metrum entspricht. Dabei bildete sich eine einfach gerasterte Zeitebene, in deren musikalischen Charakter einbezieht. Die Ostinatoform des gleichmäßigen Bewegungswesentliche Komponente des Ausdrucks wahrzunehmen ...' (Lachenmann 1996: 158).

<sup>12</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 160

Ex. 36

Beispiel 2

*mp, acc*  
 1  
 an ay x da s le ban ni f dar kun s f un f di kunst ni t dan le ban in an t lay tau brin gen da ni f ay are  
 an Fach, das Leben mit der Kunst und die Kunst mit dem Leben in Einklang zu bringen, damit me

*mp*  
 2  
 (Arm) (Arm auflagen) (aufheben)

128  
 re lan s t le ben di k vir t wir fer lay en da s ir vir kü x in der roy an vel f le b t un f ay ra ze: le  
 Kunst lebendig wird, verlangen, daß Ihr wirklich in der neuen Mit lebt und me Seele

*mp*  
 3  
 Am herunter

Helmut Lachenmann, *Salut für Caudwell*, Takte 121-134

Lachenmann, *Salut für Caudwell*, bars 121-134

The separating-out of the words of the Caudwell text into their phonetic elements and their assignment to mechanical (non-human) rhythm, anathema to the less rigid, more nuanced rhythm of natural speech disrupts the semantic recognizability of the words and we are left to ponder the sounds for themselves, in their literality, their materiality. It *is* a mesmerizing experience, the human voices strictly in keeping with the repeated rhythms to which we have been subjected in the guitars for some time previously, become themselves instrument-like, defamiliarized. The paradox of structure-hallucination is that structure is thereby rendered newly expressive.

### Deferral of Identity

Just as the moving arrow in Zeno's paradox is never fully present but always 'marked with the traces of past and future', so the concept is always inscribed within chains and systems of other concepts. Presence, to be presence, must paradoxically combine with difference, its apparent opposite. Derrida writes that '[p]resence is a determination and effect within a system which is no longer that of presence but that of difference ...'<sup>13</sup>

Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* (1973)

The neologism 'différance' fuses two apparently impossible meanings: 'differing [*le différer*] as discernibility, distinction, diastem, *spacing*; and deferring [*le différer*] as detour, delay, relay, reserve, temporalizing'.<sup>14</sup> Derrida's 'silent deformation'<sup>15</sup> of the term - the addition of the anomalous 'a' - encapsulates the contention that writing is not understandable as the mere representation of speech, and its dual meaning symbolizes the impossibility of grasping meaning directly.

One outcome of the notion of *différance* is the end of authorship, as is argued for in Barthes' famous essay 'The Death of the Author' ('La mort de l'auteur', 1968).

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<sup>13</sup> Derrida 1973: 147.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*:149.

<sup>15</sup> Culler: 1983:97

Barthes argues that the 'slippage' of meaning intrinsic to every linguistic sign works to counter what the author *intends* to express. The author loses his perceived ability to determine what a word signifies, to convey meaning directly.

In an essay which brings together the music of Morton Feldman and Derrida's philosophical concept of *différance*, Herman Sabbe has written:

Feldman's music, in deconstructionist terms, is composed of no recurring, no irreversible significations; it is composed of 'modulations', differences which are *not oppositions* but shiftings; on-going displacements, de-centerings, un-fixings: a chain of differences, not a system of (reciprocally related) oppositions of fixed, constituted, essentialized meanings.<sup>16</sup>

Such a description offers a revealing perspective on Lachenmann's 'structure hallucination', and accurately describes the way in which stable identities are undercut from within. Of course, with the paring down of the musical material to a bare minimum and the restriction of means, such displacement is rendered all the more palpable.

Structure hallucination re-enacts the slippage between sign and referent which Derrida (after Saussure) proclaims. For Derrida, meaning is endlessly deferred and disseminated. It signifies in musical terms the renunciation of the total control of the composer, an opening up to the non-identical. I consider the following words on Feldman to be equally applicable to the music of Lachenmann:

Just as Derrida questions the one-to-one relationship between the (verbal) notational sign and the definite mental context it would "express" or "represent" ... Feldman's music, to my mind, refuses the ultimate identification of idealized (sound) objects.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Sabbe 1996: 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: 12.



Paradoxically ... Feldman, by demonstrating the contingent materiality of notation, denies the score any transcendental autonomy, any pretension of identifying definite mental objects, thus opposing the very idea of expressionist or representational aesthetics ...<sup>18</sup>

## 6. Deconstructing the Organicist Ideal

### The *Tanzsuite* as Palimpsest

In allegorical structure ... one text is *read through* another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship may be; the paradigm for the allegorical work is thus the palimpsest.<sup>19</sup>

Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition* (1992)

If the object becomes allegorical under the gaze of melancholy, if melancholy causes life to flow out of it and it remains behind dead, but eternally secure, then it is exposed to the allegorist, it is unconditionally in his power. That is to say it is now quite incapable of emanating any meaning or significance of its own; such significance as it has, it acquires from the allegorist. He places it within it, and stands behind it; not in a psychological but in an ontological sense.<sup>20</sup>

Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1963, English tr. 1977)

Benjamin's description of the allegorist is a suggestive account of Lachenmann's treatment of his sources in the *Tanzsuite*. His handling of them does indeed extract their life-force, their 'false fluency', leaving them petrified and 'speechless', a 'muted token' of the collapse of past ideals.

Lachenmann, however, departs from Benjamin's description insofar as his sources are not rendered 'incapable of emanating any meaning or significance of [their] own'. As Craig Owens has suggested,

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*: 12-13.

<sup>19</sup> Owens 1992: 54.

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin 1977: 183-184.

[The Allegorist] does not restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured: allegory is not hermeneutics. Rather he *adds another meaning to the image*. If he adds, he does so only to replace: the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one; it is a supplement. That is why allegory is condemned, but it is also the source of its theoretical significance.<sup>21</sup>

The sources of *Tanzsuite* are, in fact, loaded with cultural – even political associations and, as part of his engagement with the historicity of musical material, Lachenmann relies upon these associations for the expressive effect of his work. This is no sterile game of ‘musical masks’, to invoke Adorno’s critique of Stravinsky in *Philosophy of New Music*. Notwithstanding this, none of the sources in *Tanzsuite* are presented as brazenly as is the clarinet concerto in *Accanto*: they appear only as strange remnants, pulverized remains. Although for most of *Accanto* the tape ‘inserts’ are so chopped up by the notated rhythms that they become unrecognizable, the central Mozart ‘window’ shows the classical concerto closer to its original state than any of the sources in the *Tanzsuite*.

Peter Bürger provides a useful summary of Benjamin’s understanding of allegory. The allegorical artist, says Bürger, undertakes a double manoeuvre: first, he decontextualizes his object, dismantling any semblance of totality: ‘The allegorist pulls one element out of the totality of the life context, isolating it, depriving it of its function. Allegory is therefore essentially fragment and thus the opposite of the organic symbol’, observes Bürger.<sup>22</sup> The allegorist then *recontextualizes*, ‘join[ing] the isolated reality fragments and thereby creat[ing] meaning.’<sup>23</sup> He imparts to his fragments a new, intensified meaning, outside of their original context. The use of the words ‘reality fragments’ here is significant: rather than seeking to mask its artificiality and exhibit itself as a ‘natural’ object, allegory flaunts its constructedness, rupturing any sense of unity and totality.

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<sup>21</sup> Owens 1992: 54 – my italics.

<sup>22</sup> Bürger 1984: 69.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

For Bürger, allegory is the distinguishing impulse of avant-garde art: 'In the case of the avant-gardiste work, it is possible only to a limited extent to speak of the work as the perfect embodiment of the totality of possible meaning.'<sup>24</sup>

Since allegory is understood here as essentially a reaction against organicist aesthetics, it will be useful at this stage to briefly explore some of the characteristic features of the organicist doctrine. This body of ideas, prevalent in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, adopted biology as an intellectual paradigm. Lachenmann's rejection of the conventionally beautiful can be understood in part as a reaction against the idea of the artwork as 'natural' object.

### Organicism: 'The Living Work'

In modern aesthetics, allegory is regularly subordinated to the symbol, which represents the supposedly indissoluble unity of form and substance which characterizes the work of art as pure presence. Although this definition of the art work as informed matter is, we know, as old as aesthetics itself, it was revived with a sense of renewed urgency by romantic art theory, which provided the basis for the philosophical condemnation of allegory. According to Coleridge, 'The Symbolical cannot, perhaps, be better defined in distinction from the Allegorical, than that it is always itself *a part of that*, of the whole of which it is the representative.'<sup>25</sup>

Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition* (1992)

The fact that we divide a work of art into parts, a poem into scenes, episodes, similes, sentences, or a picture into single figures and objects, background, foreground, etc. ... *annihilates the work*, as dividing the organism into heart, brain, nerves, muscles and so on turns the living being into a corpse.<sup>26</sup>

Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* (1929)

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*: 72-73.

<sup>25</sup> Owens 1992: 62.

<sup>26</sup> Croce cited in Solie 1980: 150

To interpret a text allegorically is to read it as an artificial construct whose meaning unfolds in a temporal dimension, where signs point back to no ultimate source in the nature of 'organic' or phenomenal perception.<sup>27</sup>

Christopher Norris, *Utopian Deconstruction* (1989)

... in allegory, the observer is confronted with the "facies hippocratica" (the deathmask) of history as a petrified primordial landscape.<sup>28</sup>

Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1963)

In the organic work of art, form is understood to be present from the outset of the work, a *potential* within the thematic material. At any one juncture, part and whole are conceived as one: there is a strong sense of the interrelation between all things. As Stephen Pepper has written,

There are two qualitative dimensions that yield organic standards of beauty – the degree of integration and the amount of the material integrated. ... The maximum of integration is a condition where every detail of the object calls for every other. ... Or negatively, it is a condition where no detail can be removed or altered without marring or even destroying the value of the whole. Such a whole is called an organic unity.<sup>29</sup>

The tradition of idealist philosophy, from Leibniz in the seventeenth century, through Hegel and beyond, is closely related to the organicist ideal. For Hegel, as Ruth Solie observes, 'Beauty is ... defined ... as the *union* of idea and objective reality; that is, the success of this unification is the measure of the degree of beauty.'<sup>30</sup> The concept, or the theme in music, for example, possess an intrinsic meaning or 'inner essence': the very opposite of Saussure's image of a differential system. For de Man, 'in the world of the symbol, life and form are identical ... its structure is that of the synecdoche, for the symbol is always a part

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<sup>27</sup> Norris 1989: 318.

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin 1977: 166.

<sup>29</sup> Spengler cited in Solie 1980: 148.

<sup>30</sup> Solie 1980: 149.

of the totality that it represents.<sup>31</sup> Connected with this is the idea of hierarchy: the part is always subordinated to the whole.

According to Heinrich Schenker's analyses, tonal works are unified by a vital force – the Chord of Nature – which preordains the unfolding of the work, as does the seed of a plant or tree. *Tanzsuite* seems to invoke the Chord of Nature as an idea, only to subvert it. The Preamble, arguably the only moment in the piece when the *Deutschlandlied* is audibly present (at least once the listener is forewarned of its presence), suggests an organic conception. However, the way in which the piece subsequently *proliferates* (rather than unfolding teleologically) is more suggestive, I would argue, of a *rhizomatic* metaphor of growth (as elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*) than an organicistic one with a direct correspondence between 'idea' and work.<sup>32</sup> The promise of a suite with characteristic movement 'types' is not honoured. Only rarely – e.g. in the *Siciliano*, *Gigue*, and *Tarantella* – is a dance figure made the basis of a whole movement as in, say, a J.S. Bach suite.

The link between this conception and Hegel's model of history as teleology is readily apparent. Allegory documents the breakdown of this worldview, as its adoption by recent 'postmodernist' art critics such as Craig Owens makes clear. Lachenmann's fragmentation of traditional tonal music can be understood in this light.

### **Temporality and Spatiality**

In the work of Schenker, what becomes important is the abstract idea of unity, and the artwork as object of cognition. As Solie has pointed out, Schenker

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<sup>31</sup> De Man 1983: 191.

<sup>32</sup> The rhizome is an a-centred, non-hierarchical, a-teleological metaphor of growth. For a description of the 'rhizomatic' as compared with the 'arborescent' model of thought, see Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 'Introduction: Rhizome', pp. 3-25.

confounds the temporal with the spatial, applying a spatial metaphor – that of structure – to tonal works. ‘Schenker predicates his notion of totality not upon perceptual mechanisms in the observer, but upon the work of art itself.’<sup>33</sup> In mature Schenker, Solie observes, ‘the growth direction does not mirror the perceptual progress of the piece, but rather its conceptual progress from background to foreground.’<sup>34</sup>

Paul de Man also argues that the assumptions of organicism depend upon a repression of the temporal aspect of knowledge, a denial of the fact that knowledge can never achieve such a ‘moment of ecstatic visionary inwardness with nature.’<sup>35</sup> For de Man (after Saussure), allegory subtends the structure of all language.<sup>36</sup> As Norris puts it

... allegory is the one authentic mode of reading in so far as it acknowledges the inevitable failure of all attempts to make meaning coincide with the realm of intuition or phenomenal self-evidence. To read allegorically is always to recognize that understanding is a temporal process, one that takes place not on the instant of punctual, self-present perception but through a constant anticipatory awareness of what is lacking in the present.<sup>37</sup>

Norris adds that ‘renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, [allegorical art] establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference.’<sup>38</sup> *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* can, I would argue, be understood in this way. The form of the suite itself already implies a series of different pieces rather than a unified, ‘organic’ object. Further, the placement of text ‘outside’ the work, and the defamiliarization of the sources means that they are never fully present. The

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<sup>33</sup> Solie 1980: 151.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*: 153.

<sup>35</sup> Norris 1989: 318.

<sup>36</sup> In ‘From Work to Text’, Barthes, too, elaborates this idea of the dispersion of meaning. He asserts that the literary work is no longer to be thought of as a closed, centred object but instead as a process, an ‘activity of production’. Barthes thus posits a notion of structure that departs radically from the symbolist conception. Its metaphor is no longer that of the organism, but of the de-centred, open-ended *network*. For Barthes, the work no longer consists of motivated signs but of the free-play of signifying elements (see Barthes 1977: 155-164). This idea of the work as network provides a fitting description of Lachenmann’s ‘rhythmic nets’.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*: 327.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

technique of instrumental *musique concrète*, represents the forging of a distance with the source, the 'origin'. Lachenmann corrupts the authenticity of his sources, refusing the transparency of meaning.

*Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* embodies not an organic, self-present entity but a chain of deferral, the constant abjuration of meaning.

Lachenmann renounces full subjective autonomy through the action-based technique of instrumental *musique concrete*. Perception, as opposed to structural hearing, is also highly important to the composer, as is evinced by the centrality of the concept of 'liberated perception' to his writings. He does nevertheless also subscribe to a certain extent to Adorno's (Schoenbergian) idea of music as conceptless cognition (*Erkenntnis*), as is clear in his view of the demystifying function of music.

The *Tanzsuite* suggests an ambivalent attitude to structure. The Preamble, with its presentation of the *Deutschlandlied*, seems to hint at the possibility of an organic conception of the work. Yet Lachenmann undercuts this illusion. The confusion of inside and outside realms brings into question the notion of autonomy, and the use of diverse sources means that there is no single 'idea' as in organicism, but, rather, a 'polyphony' of 'ideas'.

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## **Part Four: Philosophical Perspectives 1**

“Liberated Perception” in the work of Barthes,  
Lyotard and Deleuze / Guattari

# 1. Hörer / Zuhörer

## Perception and Cognition

There are issues raised in Lachenmann's writings which suggest some sort of ambivalence on the part of the composer with regard to the key philosophical notion of subjectivity, the survival of which is so crucial to the thought of Adorno and the Frankfurt School. This discrepancy is notable given the many correspondences explored in Parts One and Two between Lachenmann's aesthetic position and the thought of Adorno.

There is a contrasting school of thought, epitomized by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard from the 1970s, which, in my view, is called to mind by this apparent divergence from the Adornian standpoint. Deleuze and Lyotard react in a very different fashion to Adorno to the problem of the threat to the subject under late capitalism. In works such as *Libidinal Economy* (1974),<sup>1</sup> and *Anti Oedipus* (1972),<sup>2</sup> there is to be found a wilful abandoning of the subject, even a tone of celebration as to its loss. History, too, ceases to exist as a force to be reckoned with for these philosophers. *Direct sense experience* becomes instead the only viable form of engagement with the world.

Lachenmann's notion of 'liberated perception', and his concept of *Hören* are highly evocative of Deleuze and Guattari's notions of schizophrenic experience and Lyotard's concept of intensity. In his essay, 'Accanto', Lachenmann elaborates these ideas in relation to his clarinet concerto. *Hören* can be understood as a mode of listening which bypasses the mental faculties of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lyotard - English translation 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze and Guattari - English translation 1983.

listener and accesses the nervous system directly. Listening according to this paradigm ceases to be cognition-based, and becomes instead a predominantly physical experience:

The 'listener' who, in the case of the Mozart, acquiesces in full understanding and agreement with a familiar musical language, will in this situation, where the familiar language is so decomposed [*Zersetzt*]<sup>3</sup> become a 'hearer': a physical acoustic perceiver [*Körperlich-akustisch Wahrnehmender*] who 'searches out' [*Abtasten*] realms of time and sound without being presented with co-ordinates – or perhaps one should say: he himself is 'searched out'. 'Hearing' [*Hören*] means experiencing oneself afresh, experiencing oneself as a changed person, but also as a person capable of change. 'Hearing' means, in contrast to 'acquiescent' listening: radically altering one's bearings, having to adapt oneself anew; it means, by probing unfamiliar structures, mastering hidden spaces in oneself.

In this experience of one's own potential for change, putting one's own strength to the test, reconciling oneself and coming to terms with the unfamiliar, something other than that moral or moralizing surfeit of false fluency, or uninspired [*platt*] cultural pessimism is set in motion – namely, the optimistic belief [*Hoffnung*] in one's own abilities to rise to new challenges of thinking and feeling.<sup>4</sup>

In the article 'On Structuralism', Lachenmann describes a similar attempt to break away from traditional ways of experiencing music, from 'prevailing structures of existence and consciousness'<sup>5</sup> – via the concept of 'liberated perception':

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<sup>3</sup> The German term also carries the meanings 'subverted', 'undermined' or 'decayed'.

<sup>4</sup> 'Der "Zuhörer", bei Mozart eine vertraute Musiksprache in Verständnis und Einverständnis mitvollziehend, wird dort, wo die vertraute Sprache sich so zersetzt hat, "Hörer": körperlich-akustisch Wahrnehmender, der ohne vorgegebene Orientierung Zeit- und Klangraum abtastet – oder vielleicht sollte man sagen: Er selbst wird auf eine ihm ungewohnte Weise von der Musik abgetastet. Hören heißt so, sich selbst als Veränderter, aber auch als Veränderbarer neu erfahren. Hören heißt im Gegensatz zum mitvollziehenden Zuhören: sich radikal umorientieren, sich neu zurechtfinden müssen, heißt, im Ertasten ungewohnter Strukturen verborgene Räume in sich erschließen. Und in dieser Erfahrung der eigenen Veränderbarkeit, im Erproben der eigenen Kraft, sich im Ungewohnten zu finden und zurechtfinden, setzt sich etwas anderes durch als bloß moralischer oder moralisierender Überdruß an jener falschen Sprachfertigkeit oder jenem platten Kulturpessimismus, nämlich die Hoffnung auf die eigene Fähigkeit, neuen Herausforderungen des Denkens und Fühlens gerecht zu werden' (Lachenmann 1996: 169).

<sup>5</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 100.

To break through prevailing structures affecting the material means wrenching, tearing the specific sound elements in these structures from their existing, apparently self-evident context and allotting them to different, newly-created categories which the composer has to establish. This means experiencing the familiar in an unfamiliar context, mobilizing, relaunching perception and making it accessible as experience. Thus at the heart of this process of destruction lies 'liberated perception'. ... This element of shattering the familiar by making us aware of and illuminating its structure creates a situation not just of uncertainty but also of deliberately created 'non-music'. This is at the same time an element of crucial importance for the process of listening, and it is only by allowing oneself to experience this 'non-music' that listening becomes genuine perception.<sup>6</sup>

The implication is that in order for listening to become 'genuine perception', the listener must free his mind from what he already knows, from the familiar, and open himself up to the unknown, the non-identical – in himself and in reality.

The moment of 'creative liberation' would seem to transcend the time frame of the work itself: time, as it were, points beyond itself. During the 'flash' of liberated perception, the individual sound is freed up to perception. This instant of 'exposed' sound functions like a window in the music: set free, it possesses its own structure in excess of that of the work. Yet, paradoxically, it is also a component of the structure from which it comes. During this structural 'mutation' (a turning inside-out), structure, understood as the entire work and embodying its communicative 'message', is now presented, transformed, in the short-term moment. The 'message' is now in the moment. Lachenmann is advocating a new form of structural listening which is not context-based in the conventional sense. He subverts the traditional, Schoenbergian idea of structural perception (where, broadly speaking, one must appreciate the whole to appreciate the Idea). If the short-term is, as it were, the 'structure', there is almost no difference between perception and understanding (cognition).

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<sup>6</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 100 - 101.

The concept of *Sprachlosigkeit* is also linked to the idea of liberated perception. In the essay 'Hören ist wehrlos – ohne Hören' (1985), Lachenmann writes,

... this is not just about listening to a type of music which bemoans the sad way of the world through scratchy sounds, nor, however, to a type of music which escapes from this world with some exotic sound, but to music in which our perception is sensitized and made aware of itself, of its own structure and in addition tries to make the perceiving spirit sensitive to those structures of reality to which such a process of composition is a reaction. In other words, music which is always open to adventure, which once again grasps the concept of beauty within changed, speechless [*Sprachlosigkeit*] conditions, in the famed hope that what comes from the heart although without words will still be taken to heart.<sup>7</sup>

Paradoxically, for Lachenmann it is the *Sprachlosigkeit*, not the *Sprachfertigkeit* moments of the work which communicate.

Whilst recalling the philosophies of Deleuze and Lyotard, the notion of liberating perception is also highly suggestive of the ideas and aims of the American experimental tradition. It will be useful to explore in more detail some of these ideas as a way of furthering an understanding of what Lachenmann intends on a musical level by this concept. Before doing so, however, it will be helpful to return to some of the wider philosophical implications of the concept mentioned at the opening of this section. The following two sections thus consist of a brief survey of some of the most important examples of the early thought of Lyotard and Deleuze.

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<sup>7</sup> '... geht es eben nicht um das Hören einer Musik, die den traurigen Weltlauf durch Kratzgeräusche beklagt, aber auch nicht um eine Musik, die vor dieser Welt in irgendeine Klanggexotik sich flüchtet, sondern um Musik, bei welcher unsere Wahrnehmung sensibel und aufmerksam wird im Grunde auf sich selbst, auf die eigene Strukturhaftigkeit, und die darüber hinaus versucht, den wahrnehmenden Geist sensibel zu machen für jene Strukturen der Wirklichkeit, auf die ein solches Komponieren reagiert: Musik also, die sich auf das Abenteuer einläßt, den Begriff Schönheit unter veränderten, sprachlosen Bedingungen nochmals zu fassen in der berühmten Hoffnung, daß, was von Herzen Kommt, trotz aller Sprachlosigkeit auch wieder zu Herzen gehe' (Lachenmann 1996: 135).

## 2. Lyotard's Libidinal Philosophy

The student revolt of the late 1960s was the last hurrah of the old world revolution. It was revolutionary in both the ancient utopian sense of seeking a permanent reversal of values, a new and perfect society, and in the operational sense of seeking to achieve it by action on streets and barricades, by bomb and mountain ambush. ... And yet this was not the world revolution as the generation of 1917 had understood it, but the dream of something that no longer existed: often enough not much more than the pretence that behaving as though the barricades were up would somehow cause them to rise, by sympathetic magic. The intelligent conservative Raymond Aron even described the 'events of May 1968' in Paris, not quite inaccurately, as street theatre or psychodrama.<sup>8</sup>

Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes* (1994)

The events of May were able to shake the whole edifice of bourgeois society because there were shifts in the social positions of desire from bottom to top and across the structures and institutions of France. For a time there were forces at play which could not be *represented* in the political theater. ... For a short while there were affects deployed elsewhere, not on the surface of capital. The movement ended when the rebellious intensities were captured by the machinery of representation (the Party, the political discourse of the established organizations) and compressed into exchange relations, into claims for higher salaries, university reform, into fictitious strategies for seizing state power, etc.<sup>9</sup>

Robert Hurley, 'Introduction to Lyotard' (1974)

### Intensity

The body of French philosophy epitomized by Jean-François Lyotard's work *Libidinal Economy* and by *Anti-Oedipus*, the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, can be understood in part as a reaction or outgrowth of the events of the late 1960s in France. Lyotard was during the 1950s and early 1960s a member of the leftist group *Socialisme ou*

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<sup>8</sup> Hobsbawm 1994: 446-7.

<sup>9</sup> Hurley 1974: 126.

*Barbarie* and later worked on the newspaper, *Pouvoir Ouvrier*. In 1968 he was teaching philosophy at Nanterre and became a militant in the March 22 movement, which he points to as an example of a politics of affirmation.

As Peter Dews has pointed out,

Having left *S ou B* in 1963, Lyotard ... became active in the *Mouvement du 22 Mars*, the spontaneist, anti-authoritarian wing of the May movement. 'The Movement of '68', Lyotard wrote, in this introduction to his first anthology of essays, 'seemed to us to do and say on the grand scale what we had sketched out in words and actions in miniature and by anticipation ...'. Nor was he slow to learn the anti-structuralist lessons of this political experience: '... an approach solely guided by the model of structural linguistics makes it impossible to understand the functioning of symbolic systems like those described by Mauss, or the appearance of ("revolutionary") events in a semantically "well-regulated" system like contemporary capitalism. In the first case, as in the second, there is a dimension of *force* which escapes the logic of the signifier.'<sup>10</sup>

This 'dimension of *force* which escapes the logic of the signifier' would continue to exist as a central concern for Lyotard throughout his career, and underpins his wholesale rejection of the idea of rational thought and of the autonomous subject in *Libidinal Economy*. Force, also expressed by Lyotard in terms of the ineffably singular, the heterogeneous, or the figural, is, in his opinion, entirely suppressed by rational thought systems and capitalist institutions. Whilst Adorno, also recognizing the repressive aspects of such systems, attempts a form of 'immanent critique', Lyotard endeavours to move beyond their categories altogether. In the spirit of 'The Movement of '68', he seeks to burst open their confines and to liberate experience, opening it to the ineffably singular, to that

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<sup>10</sup> Dews 1987: 111.

which cannot be represented.<sup>11</sup> It is this notion of 'intensity', I would propose, that resonates with Lachenmann's concept of 'liberated perception'.

*Libidinal Economy* represents a paradoxical attempt to imagine what experience might be like prior to the emergence of an autonomous, self-reflecting subject. The central notion of the book is that of a 'great ephemeral skin'. This fictional skin operates prior to all categories, identities and prior to language. Prior to any sort of representation, it communicates nothing but libidinal intensity. As Dews has put it, the ephemeral skin is 'constituted by the deployed surfaces of the body, which are swept by an incessantly mobile libidinal cathexis generating points of pure sensation or "intensity"'.<sup>12</sup> The skin is 'ephemeral' because it defies being 'fixed' by stable concepts, and it does not allow for abstractions – the intensity it projects is purely physical (hence 'skin'). As Hamilton Grant puts it, the skin 'could be considered as a sort of analogical presentation of difference independent of the (secondary) orders of re-presentation in which identity, signification and reference are determined.'<sup>13</sup> This idea can be seen as a reconstruction of the Freudian conception of the unconscious. Indeed, Bennington points out that Lyotard is particularly indebted to Freud's paper, 'The Unconscious' (1915). In this paper, Freud summarizes the 'primary process' as follows:

... exemption from mutual contradiction, primary process (mobility of cathexes), timelessness, and replacement of external by psychical reality – these are the characteristics which we may expect to find in processes belonging to the system Ucs.<sup>14</sup>

Important points to emphasize from Freud's conception, then, are the *dissolution* of conceptual oppositions and the *mobilization* of all fixed oppositions. The

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<sup>11</sup> Even Lyotard's later publications on postmodernism, and 'language games' - such as *The Postmodern Condition* (1979, English tr. 1984) and *Just Gaming* (1979, English tr. 1986) - can be seen as a continuation of these concerns.

<sup>12</sup> Dews 1995: 24.

<sup>13</sup> Hamilton Grant in Lyotard 1993: xii.

<sup>14</sup> Freud cited in Bennington 1988: 16.



possibility of critique is annulled. In valorizing the great ephemeral skin, Lyotard is advocating a means of moving beyond the contradictions of capitalist society.

## The Libidinal Body

The notion of the great ephemeral skin deconstructs the idea of the organic, unified body characteristic of traditional psychoanalysis. The following extended quotation demonstrates this, and also exemplifies *Libidinal Economy's* 'free-flowing', literary style.

It is not a part of the body, of what body? – the organic body, organized with survival as its goal against what excites it to death, assured against riot and agitation – not a part which comes to be *substituted* for another part, like, for example, in the case of this little girl, the fleshiness of the arm for that of the thighs and its faint fold for the vaginal slit; it is not this displacement of parts, recognizable in the organic body of *political economy* (itself initially assembled from differentiated and appropriate parts, the latter never being without the former), that we first need to consider. Such displacement, whose function is representation, substitution, presupposes a bodily unity, upon which it is inscribed through transgression. There is no need to begin with transgression, we must go immediately to the very limits of cruelty, perform the dissection of polymorphous perversion, spread out the immense membrane of the libidinal 'body' which is quite different to a frame. It is made from the most heterogeneous textures, bone, epithelium, sheets to write on, charged atmospheres, swords, glass cases, peoples, grasses, canvasses to paint. All these zones are joined end to end in a band which has no back to it, a Moebius band which interests us not because it is closed, but because it is one-sided, a Moebian skin which, rather than being smooth, is on the contrary (is this topologically possible?) covered with roughness, corners, creases, cavities which when it passes on the 'first' turn will be cavities, but perhaps on the 'second', lumps. But as for what turn that band is on, no-one knows nor will know, in the eternal turn. The interminable band with variable geometry (for nothing requires that an excavation remain concave, besides, it is inevitably convex on the 'second' turn, provided it lasts) has not got two sides, but only one, and therefore neither exterior nor interior.<sup>15</sup>

In the collection of essays published one year prior to *Libidinal Economy*, *Des Dispositifs Pulsionnels*, Lyotard urges,

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<sup>15</sup> Lyotard 1993: 2-3.

Don't react by falling back on the outmoded category of the individual subject, but think in terms of a future perspective with a free circulation of energy, freed from rule by commodities.<sup>16</sup>

The emergence of the subject, Lyotard contends in *Libidinal Economy*, can only occur through a cooling of intensity, a slowing down of the 'libidinal band'. This 'disintensification'

... allows the displaceability and non-identity of the drives/ pulsions and intensities to be arrested and given a designation and signification. It is through procedures of exclusion (notably negation and exteriorization) that the [libidinal] bar gives birth to the conceptual process ...<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, any form of representation occludes the libidinal band, and suppresses difference. As Dews has written,

For Lyotard each segment of the band is 'absolutely singular', so that the attempt to divide it up into conceptual identities implies the denial of disparities, of heterogeneities, of transits and stases of energy, it implies the denial of polymorphy.<sup>18</sup>

Lyotard's notion of 'investment', of the channeling of desire, can be understood in terms of Lachenmann's aesthetics. The 'investment', or pre-structuring of experience and the loss of spontaneity which this entails ('the bourgeois cliché of expression'<sup>19</sup>) is precisely what Lachenmann seeks to move beyond through 'creative destruction' and instrumental *musique concrète*.

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<sup>16</sup> Lyotard cited in Mertens 1983: 118.

<sup>17</sup> Hamilton Grant in Lyotard 1993: xii.

<sup>18</sup> Dews 1995: 23-24.

<sup>19</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 97.

## Affirmative Desire

No need to do a critique of metaphysics (or of political economy, which is the same thing), since critique presupposes and ceaselessly creates this very theatricality; rather *be inside and forget it*, that's the position of the death drive.<sup>20</sup>

Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* (1974)

'What brings us out of capital and out of "art" ... is not criticism, which is language-bound, nihilistic, but a deployment of libidinal investment.'<sup>21</sup>

Lyotard, *Des Dispositifs Pulsionnels* (1973)

*Libidinal Economy*, then, represents an attempt to transcend the division of subject and object, not through a Hegelian sublation of opposites, but by returning below the subject-object relation to uncover a force prior to their separation.

This philosophy embodies a rejection of the negativity of Critical Theory, in particular its insistence on maintaining the category of subjectivity in spite of its fragmented and alienated state under capitalist conditions. Indeed, this distinction has been isolated as one of the central points of divergence between modernist and postmodernist positions. Max Paddison, for example, has written that

The current engagement of Critical Theorists like Habermas with postmodernist/ antimodernist critics hinges on a fundamental disagreement regarding the nature of subjectivity and the relation of the Subject to the objective 'life-world'. Critical Theorists oppose to the decentred Subject of postmodernism the persistent modernist ideal of an autonomous self-reflecting Subject, battered and fragmented as it has now undoubtedly become.<sup>22</sup>

As Mertens, too, has observed,

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<sup>20</sup> Lyotard 1993: 3.

<sup>21</sup> Lyotard cited in Best and Kellner 1991: 155.

<sup>22</sup> Paddison 1996: 43-44.

... [Lyotard] refers to the Frankfurt School of Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas as still stressing alienation and still thinking in terms of the subject. [He] thinks that 'alienation can be evaluated positively, as a means of destroying capitalism from the inside.'<sup>23</sup>

Rather than negatively opposing capitalist conditions like Critical Theory (and facing up to the prospect of the indefinite impossibility of any sort of reconciliation) Lyotard's solution is to espouse a definition of desire as affirmative. He abandons the notion of desire as nostalgia, as lack, and embraces instead a notion of desire which is entirely positive and productive.

### 3. Deleuze and Guattari's 'Body Without Organs'

#### Schizophrenia as Emancipation

As a psychic decentring process whereby subjects escape from the bourgeois reality principle, its repressive ego and superego constraints, and its Oedipal traps, the schizophrenic process poses a radical threat to the stability and reproduction of capitalism.<sup>24</sup>

Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory* (1991)

Let a thousand machines of life, art, solidarity, and action sweep away the stupid and sclerotic arrogance of the old organizations.<sup>25</sup>

Félix Guattari and Toni Negri, *Communists Like Us* (1990)

Like Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari espouse a fundamentally undialectical stance with regard to the relation of subjectivity and society. In *Anti Oedipus*, both subject and object are seen as second order constructions, products of the activity of a-subjective 'desiring machines'. All forms of systematization -

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<sup>23</sup> Mertens 1983: 120.

<sup>24</sup> Best and Kellner 1991: 90.

<sup>25</sup> Guattari and Negri cited in Best and Kellner 1991: 93.

including that of theory - are viewed as inherently totalitarian and oppressive. Rational thought, as with Lyotard, is one such form of codification to be abandoned: 'It is not the sleep of reason which engenders monsters but a vigilant and insomniac rationality'<sup>26</sup> Deleuze and Guattari intone. The self-reflective subject is also 'part of these things we must dismantle through the united assault of analytical and political forces.'<sup>27</sup>

One of the central constructions of *Anti Oedipus* is schizophrenia, or the 'schizo-subject'. The schizophrenic mode of experience entails dispensing with subjective identity in order to permit the free flow of the libidinal energies that subtend representational and identity thinking. Schizophrenia is, for Deleuze and Guattari, the necessary condition of human emancipation from capitalist conditions. In *Anti Oedipus*, they coin the term 'schizoanalysis' for their theoretical project.

The task of schizoanalysis is that of tirelessly taking apart egos and their presuppositions; liberating the prepersonal singularities they enclose and repress; mobilizing the flows they would be capable of transmitting, receiving, or intercepting; establishing always further and more sharply the schizzes and the breaks well below conditions of identity; and assembling the desiring-machines that countersect everyone and group everyone with others.<sup>28</sup>

Schizophrenia is not seen in the conventional sense as an illness, but as an emancipatory psychic condition – a decentring process through which the repressive constraints imposed by the forging of the ego are evaded. This condition is considered the product of capitalism's 'decoding' of stable meanings and identities.<sup>29</sup> As Best and Kellner point out,

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<sup>26</sup> Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 112.

<sup>27</sup> Deleuze and Guattari cited in Best and Kellner 1991: 92.

<sup>28</sup> Deleuze and Guattari: 1983.

<sup>29</sup> The concept of 'decoding' resonates with Lachenmann's concept of 'defamiliarization'.

Capitalism subverts all traditional codes, values and structures that fetter production, exchange and desire. But it simultaneously 'recodes' everything within the abstract logic of equivalence (exchange value), 'reterritorializing' them within the state, family, law, commodity logic, banking systems, consumerism, psychoanalysis and other normalizing institutions... Capitalism rechannels desire and needs into inhibiting psychic and social spaces ...<sup>30</sup>

Whilst capitalism perpetually 'recodes', thus undermining its own subversive potential, schizophrenia represents this decoding tendency taken to an extreme, 'its inherent tendency brought to fulfillment, its surplus product, its proletariat, its exterminating angel'.<sup>31</sup>

### **Pleasure and Pain**

For Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenic experience is characterized by discontinuity and fragmentation. Past and present are no longer unified, and the individual moment in time takes on an overwhelmingly literal and vivid quality:

There is a schizophrenic experience of intensive quantities in their pure state, to a point that is almost unbearable – a celibate misery and glory experienced to the fullest, like a cry suspended between life and death, an intense feeling of transition, states of pure naked intensity stripped of all shape and form.<sup>32</sup>

Fredric Jameson's description of schizophrenia in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* is pertinent here. Jameson understands the condition as part of a 'crisis in historicity'<sup>33</sup> and the recent rise to dominance in Western culture of a spatial logic to supplant the older, temporal one. An effect of this perceived crisis is, for Jameson, the loss of personal identity. He describes the resulting experience as follows:

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<sup>30</sup> Best and Kellner 1991: 89.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*: 90.

<sup>32</sup> Deleuze and Guattari: 1984: 18.

<sup>33</sup> Jameson 1991: 25.

... the breakdown of temporality suddenly releases this present of time from all the activities and intentionalities that might focus it and make it a space of praxis; thereby isolated, that present suddenly engulfs the subject with undescrivable vividness, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming, which effectively dramatizes the power of the material – or better still, the literal – signifier in isolation. This present of the world or material signifier comes before the subject with a mysterious charge of affect, here described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity.<sup>34</sup>

This account of experience parallels that of Kant's theory of the sublime, with its admixture of pleasure and pain. It also resonates with Lachenmann's description of *Hören* as the experience of music in the absence of co-ordinates (the *Hörer* "searches out" [*Abtasten*] realms of time and sound without being presented with co-ordinates').<sup>35</sup> Also pertinent in this context is Lachenmann's description of liberated perception as 'spiritual provocation', 'interplay with the unquantifiable' and 'interplay with the incommensurable'.<sup>36</sup>

## Body Without Organs

... Deleuze and Guattari describe the body in terms of speeds and intensities, productive flows of forces seeking to escape the authority of unity, organization, and hierarchy, what they refer to as stratification. Thus, BwO (their abbreviation) refers not to a body that is literally without any organs, but rather a body that is not determined, not ruled or structured by those organs, whether sexual organs, heart, or lungs.<sup>37</sup>

Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* (1999)

The correspondences between *Anti Oedipus* and Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy* are clear. In addition to the issues discussed above regarding subjectivity and history, both texts feature a redundancy of language and an absence of

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*: 27-8.

<sup>35</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 169. See also Part Four, Section 1.

<sup>36</sup> 'Where art does not come into contact with the incommensurable ... where it avoids interplay with the unquantifiable, it is dead' (Lachenmann 1995: 101).

<sup>37</sup> Olkowski 1999: 57.



traditional philosophical argument in favour of rhetoric. A predilection for neologisms is one further aspect of this correlation: Lyotard's 'grand ephemeral skin' finds its counterpart in *Anti-Oedipus* with the notion of the 'body without organs' (BwO) – another site for the non-coercive distribution of intense differences, prior to the formation of the self-identical, organic subject. The body without organs (a concept formulated by Antonin Artaud) is an entity in constant flux, always 'in-between' stable identities. It experiences not ideas, but intense affects. Elizabeth Grosz has described this body as follows:

Unlike psychoanalysis, which regards the body as a developmental union or aggregate of partial objects, organs, drives, orifices, each with their own significance, their own modalities of pleasure which, through the processes of Oedipal reorganization, bring these partial objects and erotogenic bodily zones into alignment in the service of a higher goal than their immediate, local gratification (the ultimate goal being reproduction), the BwO invokes a conception of the body that is disinvested of fantasy, images, projections, representations, a body without a psychical or secret interior, without internal cohesion and latent significance.<sup>38</sup>

Both Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy* and Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti Oedipus* offer, I would argue, suggestive models of what Lachenmann would seem to designate by *Hören* as a means of musical experience.

It will be useful at this point to examine in more detail some of the deeper philosophical implications of the positions taken by Deleuze and Lyotard as compared with Adorno. In doing this, I hope to arrive at a better understanding of what is undeniably the value of Adorno's dialectical stance.

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<sup>38</sup> Grosz cited in Olkowski 1999: 57.

## 4. Postmodernism vs. Negative Dialectics

### The Aporias of Postmodernism<sup>39</sup>

Adorno's criticism of post-Hegelian philosophy (and his criticism of sociology) consisted of demonstrating that any philosophy (or sociology) which did not involve a notion of subject and object and their mediation falls into antinomies which can be derived from the social processes which underlie the theoretical thinking in question. Such philosophy depends too on identity thinking (reification).<sup>40</sup> Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science* (1978)

Studies have begun to emerge over the past few years on the affinities between postmodernism and Critical Theory, pertaining mostly to issues of subjectivity, history and the critique of representational thinking. Both theories have singled out for criticism the identity thinking associated with figures such as Hegel (see Part 1). The two philosophical currents highlight what they see as the repressive aspects of subjective reason and focus on that which it excludes in the name of closure and presence (hence the appearance of terms such as 'différance', 'intensity' and 'nonidentity' in their work). They attack the notion of a self-identical, all knowing subject, both at the level of *self-identity*, and in terms of the identity of subject and world, as object. Both schools of thought have turned to the aesthetic sphere as a means of subverting reified thought patterns.

Both see Hegel's assumption of the existence of *Geist*, ('spirit' or 'mind'), as the omnipresent force which drives the historical process, as problematic. The central notion of Absolute Spirit relies upon a transcendental subject, a subject

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<sup>39</sup> It has been argued that there are significant differences between the terms 'postmodernism' and 'poststructuralism'. Alastair Williams, for example, has claimed that 'poststructuralism's textual explorations of metaphysics, artistic autonomy, narrative and history challenge but do not jettison the discourses of modernity; many forms of postmodernism, in distinction, claim to be beyond this framework' (Williams 1997: 124). I retain this distinction: following Williams' definition of the two terms, the Lyotard and Deleuze of the 1970s are considered 'postmodern', whilst Derrida and de Man 'poststructuralist'. However, it should be noted that Dews, who is cited in this section, employs the term 'poststructuralism' to describe recent French theory in general – whilst I adopt the term 'postmodernism' for this purpose.

<sup>40</sup> Rose 1978: 62.

that surpasses both history and the concrete individual. Hegel's notion that the terminus of history can be reached through the dialectical process of the 'negation of the negation' seems to claim that even disasters such as war and acts of human cruelty eventually play a part in the realization of Absolute Spirit through the course of history. In other words, the notion that history has a purpose or is rational and teleological, is now also seen as suspect, not least since the culture it helped engender culminated with Hitler's fascistic regime in genocide.

Despite these affinities, the very different conclusions reached by Critical Theory and postmodernism must be taken into account – particularly with respect to subjectivity and its relation to the objective life-world, and to the relative importance assigned to history and tradition as meaningful forces to be engaged with.

As we have seen, Lyotard rejects the idealist notion of a self-identical, unified subject, as does Adorno, yet unlike Adorno, he also renounces dialectics.<sup>41</sup> In the essay 'Adorno as Devil' published in the wake of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti Oedipus*, Lyotard writes,

The dissipation of subjectivity in and by capitalism; Adorno, like Marx, sees there a defeat; he will only be able to surmount this pessimism by making of this defeat a negative moment in a dialectics of emancipation and of the conquest of creativity. But this dialectics is no less theological than the nihilism of the loss of the creative subject; it is its therapeutic resolution in the framework of a religion, here the religion of history. ... Art is a kind of Christ in its denouncing function. As for effective redemption, it is even further away than in Christology, and must be; art is not reconciliatory, that is its force, to hold itself inside nihilism, to assume it, and thus manifest it.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> For clarity, I will focus in what follows on Lyotard, although many of the essential points are equally applicable to Deleuze and Guattari.

<sup>42</sup> Lyotard 1974: 127.

In other words, according to Lyotard, by preserving the concept of negation, Adorno keeps all reconciliation at a distance. Art, as we have seen, has a central role to play for both theorists. As David Carroll has remarked,

Art, when it is considered – as it is by Adorno – as the manifestation of critical thinking, may be the sign of a loss or failure in terms of the criteria and values of traditional art, but it is also the indication that this loss will eventually be compensated for. Lyotard considers Adorno's aesthetics to be 'tragic,' but he demands that this loss be conceived affirmatively and not tragically, with no implication of possible reconciliation. The libidinal side of art is, for Lyotard, the affirmation of what in Adorno remains negative: the arbitrary, the fragmented, the irrational, and the non-dialectical. Libidinal aesthetics thus constitutes the reversal of critical theory and aesthetics, the affirmation of what is negative – not as if it were negative – but as if the negative were really the affirmative and in no need of reconciliation or redemption.<sup>43</sup>

Lyotard's essay constitutes an assault on Adorno for 'being content to be the "devil" in a world without true gods',<sup>44</sup> for retaining the category of critique. Lyotard seeks to move beyond critical reflection, beyond good and evil, and beyond any notion of reconciliation:

Totality is missing = there is no god to reconcile = all reconciliation can only be represented in its impossibility, parodied = it is a satanic work. You wasted your time replacing God with the devil, the prefix super – with the old sub-terranean mole, you remain in the same theological deployment. You pass from shamefaced nihilism to flaunted nihilism. Adorno's work, just as Mann's and Schönberg's, is marked by nostalgia. The devil is the nostalgia of God, impossible god, therefore precisely as a god.<sup>45</sup>

More recently, in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984), Lyotard elaborates a postmodern aesthetic of the sublime, as a negative moment within the modern. Derived from Kant, it marks the occurrence of an 'event' which escapes the grasp of pre-existing concepts or categories of experience (in

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<sup>43</sup> Carroll 1987: 50.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Lyotard 1974: 132-33.

Kantian terms, a discord between the faculties of 'common sense'). Whilst the sublime, as Lyotard understands it, is essentially a condition of the new, he takes the principle to nihilistic extremes. Discounting any sentiments of nostalgia for the loss of unity and absence of reconciliation in modernity (desire as lack) he calls instead for a *celebration* of difference, the affirmation of disunity and formlessness, a euphoric acceptance of the impossibility of reconciliation. Utopia ceases to be something which has yet to be attained, as in Adorno's 'melancholic' stance. For Lyotard, the category of identity should simply no longer exist. He asserts,

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement, we can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return to terror, for the realisation of the fantasy to seize reality. The answer is: *Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name.*<sup>46</sup>

As Dews has argued, one of the fundamental theoretical failings of postmodernism is precisely this 'lack of any concept of individuation as an identity which is developed and sustained through the awareness of non-identity.' He continues,

Post-structuralism does indeed seek for difference, but it does so through an immersion in fragments and perspectives, not perceiving that this splintering is itself the effect of an overbearing totality, rather than a means of escape from it.<sup>47</sup>

Adorno's solution to the problem of identity thinking is, as we have seen, to try on the contrary, to turn identity thinking against itself:

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<sup>46</sup> Lyotard 1992: 150 (my italics).

<sup>47</sup> Dews 1987: 233.

Totality is not an affirmative but rather a critical category. Dialectical critique seeks to salvage or help to establish what does not obey totality, what opposes it or what forms itself as the potential of a not yet existent individuation.<sup>48</sup>

Like Lyotard, Adorno also refers to the Kantian sublime, in his *Aesthetic Theory*. However, in a way that recalls Lachenmann's concept of 'liberated perception', he sees it as a process through which the subject is made aware of its own limitations - not as a pretext for destroying the identity principle, but as a means of redeeming it. The resemblance of Adorno and Lachenmann's positions can be seen by comparing two statements on the sublime below, by Adorno and Lachenmann respectively:

As works of art open themselves to contemplation, they begin to irritate the viewer, who becomes uncertain of his distance and his role as mere spectator. The highest summit of art may be this *instant of awareness*, where the subject realizes that the truth of an art work ought actually to be the truth about himself. This instant *redeems subjectivity*, including subjective, feeling-oriented aesthetics, by negating it. Traumatized by art, the subject is able to experience itself properly, dissolving its petrified features and waking up to the narrowness of its self-positing standpoint. Trauma is the true happiness the subject can find in art works. But it is a happiness fashioned against, and in spite of, the subject, which is why crying is the vehicle of sadness in view of one's mortality. This comes out in Kant's discussion of the sublime, which he located outside of art.<sup>49</sup>

... that moment of erring – in a double sense – goalless searching, in directions where there are neither paths nor signposts; and also erring in the sense of *a priori* failure because the goal surpasses the imagination. It is only in the strength displayed by the seeker to continue to err that the reality and latent presence of the goal reveals itself as hidden inside ourselves. Thus *errare humanum* reveals itself in a new dimension – Schönberg's 'highest aim of the artist: to express himself' – as identical with the highest aim of Man: to know himself.<sup>50</sup>

As his account of sublime redemption demonstrates, Adorno himself challenges the identity of concept and object and yet he refuses to abandon the principle of

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<sup>48</sup> Adorno cited in Dews 1987: 232-3.

<sup>49</sup> Adorno 1984: 379-80 - my italics.

<sup>50</sup> Lachenmann 1999: 27.

identity and to endeavour, as does Lyotard, to move beyond the terms of reference themselves.

## Adorno's immanent critique of totality

The polarity of subject and object can easily be taken, for its part, as an undialectical structure within which all dialectics take place. But both concepts are categories which originate in reflection, formulas for something which is not to be unified; nothing positive, not primary states of affairs, but negative throughout. Nonetheless, the difference of subject and object is not to be negated in its turn. They are neither an ultimate duality, nor is an ultimate unity hidden behind them. They constitute each other as much as through such constitution – they separate out from each other.<sup>51</sup>

Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966)

Thus, whilst both Adorno and the postmodernists address the same problems in their work, arguing for the acknowledgement of the role of the object in cognition, they reach very different conclusions. For Adorno, postmodernism's attempt to locate pure singularity is self-defeating, already a product of identity thinking. The problem as he sees it is not that of an irreducible split between concepts and their objects, but rather the notion that concepts are primary, that mind can know the world in its totality: 'Aware that the conceptual totality is mere appearance, I have no way but to break immanently, in its own measure, through the appearance of total identity.'<sup>52</sup> It is not conceptuality *per se* that is at fault, but the absence of self-reflection. The category of subjectivity is retained as a critical lever. Thus, Adorno seeks to remedy the hypostatization of metaphysics through immanent critique: 'To use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity – this is what the author felt to be his task ...'<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Adorno 1973: 176.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*: 5.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*: xx.



## The Contradictions of *Libidinal Economy*

It is precisely *not* a matter of *ana-lyzing* (not even 'schizo-analysis'), in a discourse that will necessarily be one of knowledge, but rather of sufficiently refining ourselves, of becoming sufficiently anonymous conducting bodies, not in order to stop the effects, but to conduct them into new metamorphoses, in order to exhaust their metamorphic potential [*puissance*], the force [*puissance*] of effects that travel through us.<sup>54</sup>

Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* (1974)

In seeking to dispense altogether with transcendental bases and foundations, Lyotard affirms a metaphysics of libido, a new transcendental foundation – the 'grand ephemeral skin' – thus defeating his own agenda. As we have seen, for Lyotard, this resists representation by concepts, which override the pure singularities and differences from which it is constituted. Indeed, he claims, concepts and identities can only be formed by means of a cooling of the intensity of the libidinal band. The upshot of this is a form of nihilism or amoralism. In a state of total affirmation, no moral or political standpoint can be adopted. If everything is to be affirmed, clearly nothing can be negated – thus any action or discourse forms an equally satisfactory conveyor of intensity. Just as language becomes redundant, so too does a critical engagement with reality. Art and politics dissolve into passivity ('Our politics is of flight, primarily, like our style', Lyotard has asserted<sup>55</sup>).<sup>56</sup>

It is questionable just how sincere this 'politics of flight' can really claim to be. Ambiguity of language – the constant oscillation between playfulness and seriousness – is indeed a central feature of postmodern discourse. Rhetoric is all-important, and language becomes redundant. Since meaning has become suspect, all attempts to convey meaning are renounced - nothing any longer can

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<sup>54</sup> Lyotard 1993: 258.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*: 20.

<sup>56</sup> Deleuze and Guattari also exhibit 'a decentring of ethics in favour of aesthetics' (Best and Kellner 1991: 107-8).

be attributed with significance. One could argue that this position represents an indulgence and a trivializing of the very real predicament of the modern subject lamented in Adorno's writings.

Because Lyotard affirms a form of naturalism isolated from consciousness (much like Nietzsche's concept of Becoming<sup>57</sup>), he cannot conceive of a self whose function it would be to overcome repression. The only alternative as he sees it, is to abandon the category of subjectivity altogether. 'Don't react by falling back on the outmoded category of the individual subject, but think in terms of a future perspective with a free circulation of energy ...'<sup>58</sup>. This contrasts with Adorno's stubborn preservation of the subject-object dialectic. As Dews has pointed out,

Adorno refuses to take the self-understanding of the philosophy of consciousness at face value: in accordance with the logic of disintegration, the claim to absolute identity, to the extent that it is realized, can only take the form of unprecedented fragmentation, and this contradiction points towards the possibility of another form of subjectivity, however difficult to conceptualize. By contrast, post-structuralist thought takes the repressive self-enclosure of consciousness to be definitive of subjectivity as such, with the consequence that 'emancipation' can only take the form of a breaking open of the coercive unity of the subject in order to release the diffuseness and heterogeneity of the repressed.<sup>59</sup>

Adorno exhibits a more complex view of subjectivity. He argues that subjectivity is inherently incoherent, embodying a tension between the strictures of selfhood and heterogeneous impulse. According to Adorno, the subject is not self-identical and unified, as the postmodernists would have it, but is instead split or fractured, a situation which, he claims, gives rise to perpetual pain and suffering. In order for subjective identity to be maintained, inner nature, he argues, must be repressed.

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<sup>57</sup> Lyotard repeats Nietzsche's splitting of Knowledge and Becoming. Peter Dews makes this point (see Dews 1995: 25).

<sup>58</sup> Lyotard cited in Mertens 1983: 118.

<sup>59</sup> Dews 1987: 230.

As Adorno argues in 'Sociology and Psychology' (and in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*), the relation of the subject to its other is in fact *constitutive* of subjectivity:

Although itself psychic in origin it is supposed to arrest the play of inner forces and check it against reality: this is one of the chief criteria for determining its 'health'. The concept of the ego is dialectical both psychic and extrapsychic, a quantum of libido and the representative of outside reality.<sup>60</sup>

The postmodernist dissolution of consciousness would not be seen by Adorno as a liberation, but, on the contrary, as a debilitating capitulation to a world of alienation and repression, an affirmation of the 'administered world'. To cite Dews once again,

...Lyotard's libidinal economy, far from preserving the singularity of each moment of experience, a preservation which could only be achieved within a discriminating continuity of experience, ends by embracing the punctuality, anonymity and indifference of the commodity form.<sup>61</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti Oedipus* runs up against similar problems. Like Lyotard, they attempt to dissolve the dialectic of the mind and objective nature, as the following passage from *Anti Oedipus* demonstrates:

... man and nature are not like two opposite terms confronting each other – not even in the sense of bipolar opposites within a relation of causation, ideation, or expression (cause and effect, subject and object, etc.); rather, they are one and the same essential reality, the producer-product ... Schizophrenia is like love: there is no specifically schizophrenic phenomenon or entity; schizophrenia is the universe of productive and reproductive desiring-machines, universal primary production as 'the essential reality of man and nature'.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Adorno 1968: 86.

<sup>61</sup> Dews 1987: 231.

<sup>62</sup> Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 4-5.

Through such assertions Deleuze and Guattari could also be accused of constructing a new metaphysics.<sup>63</sup>

To summarize: In the 1970s, Lyotard attempts to supercede Adorno and the notion of subjective identity. Deleuze and Guattari take Lyotard's project a step further: with the notion of schizophrenia, they *celebrate* the loss of the subject. Whilst Adorno sees subjective alienation in late capitalism as a *loss*, the French theorists view it as an opportunity for the wilful abandonment of the subject. In their depiction of constant flux and instability, anything can become anything else, and everything is irrelevant. History disappears as a force to be reckoned with – instead, there is only direct sensory experience. The tension between subject and object, individual and society, artist and objective material has broken down, and the subject surrenders itself to objectivity. By renouncing the subject, the possibility of critical resistance becomes impossible: if everything is to be affirmed, everything becomes an equally good (or bad) conductor of intensity.

The concept of non-identity elaborated by Adorno in *Negative Dialectics* is not just a rejection, but also a re-entering into the cracks and fissures within knowledge in the attempt to experience the world in a non-dominated form. According to Adorno, it is art that points the way to this non-coercive reality.

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<sup>63</sup> Best and Kellner argue, for example, that Deleuze and Guattari 'do not consider the possibility that even the characteristics of multiplicity and productivity of desire might also be historically conditioned, might be distinctly modern creations. There remains a fundamental realm of desire in their theory therefore, that is ontological rather than cultural in nature, a position which Foucault rejects in his more rigorously historical framework' (Best and Kellner 1991: 106).

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## **Part Five: Philosophical Perspectives 2**

### **Lachenmann, John Cage and the American Experimental Tradition**

# 1. John Cage and Libidinal Philosophy

## Lyotard and Cage

His vision of cyclical time, his view of the world as 'a monster of energy without beginning, without end ... a play of forces and waves of forces' enables him to reject any teleology, the notion of any movement being for the sake of another, and to open up a 'vertical' dimension of time, in which every moment contains its own justification.<sup>1</sup>

Dews, referring to Nietzsche's notion of eternal return, *Logics of Disintegration* (1987)

Throughout his writings, particularly during the period of his libidinal philosophy, Lyotard has endorsed the music of John Cage as an example of 'affirmative' art. In his essay, 'The Postmodernity of John Cage', Hermann Danuser has described the nature of the relationship between Cage and Lyotard as follows:

An affinity between art and philosophy reveals itself in this, Lyotard says, 'under the sign of their experimentation'. Of course this affinity is of a completely different kind from that which had occurred between serial modernism and the ideals of rational science under the sign of rationality in the Fifties. Just as Cage's music has eliminated the claims to unity and identity of a musical work, so Lyotard's philosophy reveals itself to be freed from having to realize the claim, from having 'to render an object as a concept'.<sup>2</sup>

According to Lyotard, Cage's work operates via the production of intense affects rather than symbolic representations. Indeed, the following statements from Cage support this idea:

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<sup>1</sup> Dews 1987: 133.

<sup>2</sup> 'Dabei zeigt sich eine Affinität zwischen Kunst und Philosophie, wie Lyotard sagt, "im Zeichen ihres Experimentierens". Natürlich ist diese Affinität eine ganz andersgeartete als die, welche im Zeichen der Rationalität in den fünfziger Jahren zwischen der seriellen Moderne und den Idealen einer rationalen Wissenschaft gegeben war. Gerade so wie Cages Musik den Einheits- und Identitätsanspruch des musikalischen Werkes aufgelöst hat, so zeigt sich auch die Philosophie bei Lyotard davon befreit, den Anspruch einlösen zu sollen, einen Gegenstand "auf den Begriff zu bringen."' (Danuser 1998: 150).

... living takes place each instant and that instant is always changing. The wisest thing to do is to open one's ears immediately and hear a sound suddenly before one's thinking has a chance to turn it into something logical, abstract or symbolical.<sup>3</sup>

'Old music has to do with concept and communication, the new with perception.'<sup>4</sup>

Some key features linking the philosophy of Lyotard and the music of Cage are summarized below:

### **1. Rejection of causal time in favour of the unique moment**

Lyotard's efforts to gain access to pure unmediated objectivity find a parallel in Cage's elimination of the idea of musical autonomy and dissipation of the tension between form and content. Both Cage and Lyotard reject outright the idea of representation in music, claiming that any attribution of symbolic meaning to sounds undermines their uniqueness. Lyotard has claimed that 'Composition is a desensitization of material.'<sup>5</sup> Alastair Williams has observed,

...constellation, for Adorno and Benjamin, holds open the tension between object and concept (in music, between form and content), while Cage's constructions tend to collapse this dialectic and capitulate to the object, as if it were unmediated.<sup>6</sup>

Michael Nyman has written that 'the avant-garde composer wants to freeze the moment, to make its uniqueness un-natural, a jealously guarded possession',<sup>7</sup> whilst the experimental composer wants to free the moment, to liberate it from any sort of symbolic or representational function. Jung's depiction of the *I Ching* concisely captures this distinction between two modes of conceiving time – Western and Eastern:

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<sup>3</sup> Cage cited in Nyman 1974: 1.

<sup>4</sup> Cage cited in Polin 1989: 226.

<sup>5</sup> Lyotard 1984: 92.

<sup>6</sup> Williams 1997: 99.

<sup>7</sup> Nyman 1974: 8.



The actual moment under actual observation appears to the ancient Chinese view more of a chance hit than a clearly defined result of concurring causal chain processes. The matter of interest seems to be the configuration formed by chance events in the moment of observation, and not at all in the hypothetical reasons that seemingly account for the coincidence. While the Western mind carefully sifts, weighs, isolates, the Chinese picture of the moment encompasses everything down to the minutest nonsensical detail, because all of the ingredients make up the observed moment.<sup>8</sup>

As Lyotard rejects dialectics, so too does Cage repudiate any notion of dialectical time. Mertens has described this in terms of the idea of 'macro-time': 'The nature of macro-time is essentially static, and duration is an atomized conglomerate of moments, without any relation to past or future.'<sup>9</sup> Such a fragmented experience of time is echoed in Deleuze and Guattari's model of schizophrenic experience.

## ***2. Perception aesthetic displaces communication***

Cage wants to avoid dictating the listening experience: his focus is on assigning a greater *creative role* to the listener than was previously the case. As Nyman has asserted:

Experimental music emphasizes an unprecedented fluidity of composer/performer/listener roles, as it breaks away from the standard sender/carrier/receiver information structure of other forms of Western music.<sup>10</sup>

According to Cage, music should not attempt to convey an idea in the Schoenbergian sense. Moment-to-moment perception and understanding should, in his view, equate. As Nyman puts it,

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<sup>8</sup> Jung cited in Nyman 1974: 8.

<sup>9</sup> Mertens 1983: 106.

<sup>10</sup> Nyman 1974: 20.

Traditional European music is based on ... manipulation: this is the 'logic' behind the growth and development of, say, a sonata form first subject and explains why composers can talk of musical *ideas*. Cage had discovered the simplest and most direct way of letting music develop according to the logic of *sound*, unhampered by any (non-sonic) pseudo logics or methodological strictures. If music was to be a language at all, it would henceforward be a language of statement.<sup>11</sup>

### **3. Search for pure objectivity and denial of subject**

Clytus Gottwald has said that 'According to Cage, once the subject has been silenced, one returns to pure being.'<sup>12</sup> Leonard Meyer has summarized Cage's denial of subjective intention as follows:

To experience reality as it is one must renounce all desires. Man is a part of nature. One must learn to exist like nature, simply existing without a purpose.<sup>13</sup>

This recalls Lyotard's renunciation of lack in favour of pure affirmation. His denial of the organic subject in *Libidinal Economy* and its replacement by a conduit for intense affects, the ephemeral skin, echoes Cage's attempt to achieve objectivity through the abandonment of control: 'Sound is sound and man is man. Let sound be itself, rather than a vehicle of human theory and feeling.'<sup>14</sup>

### **4. Rejection of history for myth of nature**

Lyotard, Deleuze and Cage reject history in their attempts to access an unmediated nature:

When Cage says: there is no silence, he says: no Other holds dominion over sound, there is no God, no Signifier as principle of unification or composition. There is no filtering, no set blank spaces, no exclusions; neither is there a work anymore ... Silence is displaced: it is no longer the

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*: 28.

<sup>12</sup> Clytus Gottwald in Mertens 1983: 116.

<sup>13</sup> Meyer cited in Mertens 1983: 109.

<sup>14</sup> Cage cited in Mertens 1983: 106.

composer's, the signifier's, Jehovah's silence that must remain unheard, be effaced, but silence as noise-sound of the involuntary body, the noise-sound of the libido wandering over bodies, 'nature,' that must be heard.<sup>15</sup>

### **'Adorno as the Devil' and 'Several Silences'**

Just as Adorno once placed Schoenberg in opposition with Stravinsky in the *Philosophy of New Music*, in the essays 'Adorno as the Devil' and 'Several Silences' Lyotard opposes Schoenberg to Cage. Whilst, for Lyotard, the serial music of Schoenberg and the negative dialectics of Adorno projects desire as lack, suffering and alienation, he champions the music of Cage which, he claims, is a music of pure affirmation, dealing not with representation, but with sounds as pure libidinal intensities – the *re-sensitization* of musical material. In Cage's music, the 'devices' of the secondary process which filter the free flow of libidinal energy are renounced:

... there is no device to receive these intensities: their singularity consists in their not being related by memory to units of reference (a scale, rules of harmony, or their hypothetical equivalent in the phenomenological body): there is no region in which to measure them.... What should be said is that no unity, no comprehensive unity, no composition is made with *this* noise, *this* sound, *this* singular intensity, but rather *in spite of* them. To hear this event is to transform it: into tears, gestures, laughter, dance, words, sounds theorems, repainting your room, helping a friend move. I can testify to the fact that a black cat (Lhermite) heard Kagel's *Music for Renaissance Instruments*: bristling of whiskers, fluttering of ears, prowling in the vicinity of the listening room. The intensity of noise-sound = an urge to produce something, circumstantiality, in an endless return where nothing repeats itself.<sup>16</sup>

For Cage, as for Lyotard and Deleuze, the goal is 'life as a work of art'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Lyotard 1984: 108.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*: 93.

<sup>17</sup> Goodchild 1996:185.

## 2. Cage, Lachenmann and musical material

### Cage and Instrumental *musique concrète*

Whilst our [European] music has developed under the pressures of our tradition, towards the controlled, the systematic, organized in every detail ... so Cage's development increasingly takes a completely different slant: the produced sound interests him less and less, he is dependent on the playing action, less and less is rationalized, and chance, flexible chance, plays a large role.<sup>18</sup> Hermann Danuser, 'Rationalität und Zufall' (1991)

... the word 'experimental' is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as of *an act the outcome of which is unknown*. What has been determined?<sup>19</sup> John Cage (1955)

There is a clear affinity between Lachenmann's technique of instrumental *musique concrète* and the process-based approach to composition that has developed in the wake of John Cage's work. Lachenmann himself has indicated the influence of Cage, Wolff and Brown on his music: 'The "fearlessness" of these composers in dealing with unusual sounds (and equally with normal sounds!) definitely gave me courage in my own continuing quest', he has said.<sup>20</sup>

As with many of Cage's scores, what is predetermined in Lachenmann's action scores is not the end product, but the *process*. As Mertens writes,

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<sup>18</sup> 'Während sich unsere neue Musik immer mehr, unter dem Druck unserer Tradition, zum Kontrollierten, zum Systematischen, bis ins Detail Organisierten hin entwickelt und nicht selten den Eindruck von nicht-isolierten Geflechtern elektrisch geladener Drähte macht, an denen man jeden Augenblick einen gewischt kriegen könnte, so zeigt Cages Entwicklung mehr und mehr eine ganz andere Richtung: Der hervorgebrachte Klang interessiert ihn zunehmend weniger, es kommt ihm auf die Aktion des Spielens an, immer weniger wird rationalisiert, unter der Zufall, der gelenkte Zufall spielt eine große Rolle' (Danuser 1991: 99).

<sup>19</sup> Cage cited in Nyman 1974: 1 (my italics).

<sup>20</sup> Lachenmann cited in Ryan 1999: 21.

Experimental composers do not deal with well-defined time-objects, but rather they outline a situation, a field in which sound may occur. What is important is not the product but the production process. In this context Schnebel uses the term *Kompositionsprozesse*: 'It is not the aural effect that is prescribed, but the process that generates it.'<sup>21</sup>

This notion of process is crucial to the libidinal philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari, and of Lyotard. For Deleuze and Guattari, the work of art is a functional machine: a *process*, not an end product. Its function is to produce intense affects, or *sensations*. For Deleuze and Guattari (to adopt the words of Daniel W. Smith), 'the aim of art is not to represent the world, but to present a sensation. ... every work of art is *singular*, and ... the conditions of sensation are at the same time the conditions for the production of the *new*.'<sup>22</sup> In *Anti Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari assert that 'The unconscious poses no problem of meaning, solely problems of use. The question posed by desire is not 'What does it mean?' but rather '*How does it work?*'<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the idea of process, instrumental *musique concrete* is understood as the 'experience of energy' and the 'manifestation of energy.'<sup>24</sup> This concern with the physicality of sounds is, as we have seen, also a part of Cage's aesthetic. Lachenmann's work for solo piano, *Guero* (see Part One, Section 3) epitomizes this concern, as does Cage's piece for voice and piano dating from 1942, *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs*. *Guero*, as Pace has observed, is 'thoroughly physical and theatrical', and 'does not contain a single note played on the keys'.<sup>25</sup> In *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs*, likewise, no notes are performed: the vocalist is accompanied only by the knocking of the pianist's fingers and knuckles on the body of the piano.

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<sup>21</sup> Mertens 1983: 108.

<sup>22</sup> Smith 1996: 41.

<sup>23</sup> Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 109.

<sup>24</sup> Lachenmann cited in Ryan 1999: 21.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

There is, however, a distinction between the aesthetics of Cage and Lachenmann, and this can be understood as being political in nature. In works such as *Guero* and *Pression*, the gesture of playing on the body of the instrument and renouncing *Sprachfertigkeit* (as conventional pitched sounds) - indeed the renunciation of conventional performance techniques altogether with instrumental *musique concrète* - can be seen as a repudiation of the entire capitalist notion of work as object. The influence of the highly politicized work of Nono is surely to be felt acutely in works such as *Accanto*: a flagrant gesture of disrespect towards existing cultural values (and, by extension, society) in many respects. Much of Lachenmann's music and thought is directed towards the extra-musical. In this sense, he can be linked, like Lyotard and Deleuze, to the zeitgeist of the late 1960s, when - significantly in my view - the technique of instrumental *musique concrète* was first formulated. Yet as we have seen, with Cage, and with Lyotard and Deleuze, it is as if politics is irrelevant. In spite of their experimental approaches to music and thought, they ultimately fall back on a form of escapism which is a far cry from the staunchly 'realist' approach taken by Lachenmann.

Having made links between the idea of liberated perception in Lachenmann's writings and Cage's notion of musical material, it will be useful to draw some direct comparisons between aspects of Lachenmann's music and comparable examples from the American experimental tradition.

Section 3 will focus on diverging constructions of subjectivity in La Monte Young's *X for Henry Flint* and Lachenmann's *Tanzsuite*, whilst Section 4 deals with diverging attitudes towards history in Gavin Bryars' *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* and Lachenmann's *Accanto*. I hope to show that, despite the fact that the rhetoric of Lachenmann's writings in some ways points to the philosophical positions of Deleuze and Lyotard,, the music itself demonstrates a consistently dialectical, critical approach.



### 3. The Composing Subject: Lachenmann vs. La Monte Young

#### Liberation through Limitation

As we saw in Part Three, Section 5, Lachenmann terms the effect of the radical paring down of musical materials 'structural hallucination'. On the face of it, the ideas presented in bars 110ff of the *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* – extended rhythmic repetition of the same musical object, the co-opting of the unintentional chance elements in the performance of this material in order to liberate perception – seem to suggest an affinity with Minimalist art. Indeed, in describing the desired effect of this extreme simplification of musical material, Lachenmann demonstrates a 'mystical' rhetoric reminiscent of Cage and Eastern philosophy:

And so these successive sections from the *Siciliano* offer an increasing narrowing down of the material and at the same time an increasing widening of differentiated experience. Whoever directs his gaze upon a single tree in a landscape comprised of many things, will perceive a further continuous landscape [within a single tree] and if he once more restricts his sight to the contemplation of a single leaf, yet again new horizons will strike him – of sight and thought – and an angle of vision will allow him to see other things in a new mysterious light.<sup>26</sup>

I propose here to compare this passage from the *Siciliano* to La Monte Young's *X for Henry Flint* (1960), perhaps the first and most elemental example of Minimalist music.

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<sup>26</sup> 'Und so bieten diese aufeinanderfolgenden Abschnitte des *Siciliano* eine zunehmende Verengung des Materials und zugleich eine zunehmende Erweiterung der Differenzierungs-Erfahrung. Wer in der Vielfalt einer Landschaft den Blick auf einen einzelnen Baum richtet, wird darin eine weitere unendliche Landschaft erblicken, und wenn er seinen Blick erneut verengt auf die Betrachtung eines einzigen Blattes, so werden ihm noch einmal neue Horizonte – des Sehens und des Denkens – aufgehen, und ein Blickwinkel wird den anderen in neuem geheimnisvollen Licht erscheinen lassen' (Lachenmann 1996: 134).



*X for Henry Flint* (1960) shows Young's predilection to limit the musical work to a single object or event (as compared with Cage's emphasis on multiplicity). *X for Henry Flint* eschews traditional classical music's discourse of contrasting materials in favour of the prolonged repetition of a single sound.

The performance directions to the piece dictate that a pianist should repeat a single loud cluster, using the forearms, in a uniform manner and for a long time. Keith Potter has observed that 'the longer a note is sustained, the more its overtones become clear.'<sup>27</sup> Sheer familiarity with the repeated cluster on the part of the listener results in the gradual foregrounding of its overtones. The interest of the piece therefore inheres not in the perceived repetition of an identical object, but in the fact that repetition evinces the play of difference beneath the surface, the differential subsurface. Subtle, unintentional changes of balance, dynamic, duration or pitch content between the various iterations lend an entirely different perspective to the 'same' sound event.

Like Lachenmann, Young is concerned with bringing the acoustic materiality of the sound in all its richness to the fore. The subtle nuances in performance specified by Lachenmann's pedaling instructions are certainly an aspect of Young's piece, too. Indeed, Cardew has commented that this chance aspect, or the presence of random variables in performance is in fact what the piece is essentially about: 'What the listener can hear and appreciate are the errors of the interpretation. If the pieces were performed by a machine this interest would disappear and with it the composition.'<sup>28</sup> Cardew says that although uniformity is stipulated ('as far as possible'), it is *variation* that is desired. 'It is simply this: the variation that is desired is that which results from the human (not superhuman) attempt at uniformity.'<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Potter 2000: 64.

<sup>28</sup> Cardew cited in Potter 2000: 48.

<sup>29</sup> Cardew cited in Nyman 1974: 14.

The key difference between Young's piece and the example of structure hallucination from the *Siciliano* consists essentially in the level of choice exerted by the composer in determining the overall sounding result. Young's worklist for *X for Henry Flint* leaves the choice of instrumentation remarkably open. It specifies that 'piano(s) or gong(s) or ensembles of at least forty-five instruments of the same timbre, or combinations of the above, or orchestra' may perform the piece.<sup>30</sup>

Lachenmann, on the other hand, specifies both pitch content and precise instrumentation. His repetitions are cast in a *Siciliano* rhythm and fully notated. Young's piece is not notated at all. Hence, not only does Young not specify instrumentation, but he also leaves open the choice of tempo, duration, and context – unlike Lachenmann, by whom all such parameters are determined in advance. The specified end point of Young's piece is decided by the performer(s) in advance of performing the piece. The margin of variables in Lachenmann's section of the *Tanzsuite* is, on the contrary, relatively small and restricted only to the performance act itself.

Thus, Young renounces subjective choice to a high degree. There are no expectations raised in *X for Henry Flint*, as it is undialectical and holistic in approach. To a certain extent, Young could be seen to bypass the expressive subject altogether.

Lachenmann is aiming at a similar focus for the listener's perception, yet the situation in which he locates it is a highly particular one. The unexpected focusing-in of the texture, the traditional rhythm, the amplification of the piano in the context of an orchestral work, above all the instruction that the piano sound should be *erstickt* (damped, strangled) contextualizes this moment of heightened perception. As Lachenmann himself has asserted,

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<sup>30</sup> Young cited in Potter 2000: 48.

Naturally, the principle of such *structure-hallucination* is not new; it is used in many varied ways in minimal and conceptual art. It serves above all as a rather magically orientated experience, and has a meditative function. In my piece it here forms a stage which one is steered towards and then it is left, a *structured state of material* which happens and then changes. For it is not a magically attracted state of passivity but the opposite, an active *act of will*, which *chooses the material* and drives it forward, gives character to the expression and rules the form of my music.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> 'Das Prinzip solcher Struktur-Halluzinationen ist natürlich nicht neu, es wird in der Minimal- und Konzeptkunst vielfach variiert. Es dient dort allerdings einer eher magisch gerichteten Erfahrung, hat meditative Funktion. Hier in meinem Stück bildet es eine Station, die angesteuert und wieder verlassen wird, einen strukturellen Aggregatzustand, der sich ergibt und wieder wandelt. Denn nicht magisch-faszinierte Willenlosigkeit, sondern im Gegenteil der Wille, der das Material bestimmt und weiter treibt, kennzeichnet den Ausdruck und regelt die Form meiner Musik' (Lachenmann 1996: 158).

## 4. Culture, Nature and Audio Tape

### *Accanto* and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*

*Jesus' blood never failed me yet*

*Never failed me yet*

*Jesus' blood never failed me yet*

*There's one thing I know*

*For he loves me so ...*<sup>32</sup>

Gavin Bryars, lyrics to *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1975)

*Jesus' Blood* (1995), like *Accanto*, employs a recorded tape as the basis around which the piece is structured and to which everything refers. In Bryars' case, the recording is drawn not from the classical tradition, but from the 'real world': it consists of the song of a London tramp. Of course, the source objects and the way they are treated are starkly different. Nevertheless, a comparison of the two pieces will help tease out some of the assumptions underlying Lachenmann's conception of handed-down material.<sup>33</sup>

As we have seen, Mozart's Clarinet Concerto symbolizes in *Accanto* a reified consciousness as perpetuated by the culture industry and the media. Lachenmann's critical approach is above all geared towards rendering visible the 'invisible' socialized aspect of the music, to demystify the deepest presuppositions behind its popularity. What has taken on the appearance almost of 'nature' is revealed as historical, a Lukácsian 'second nature'.

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<sup>32</sup> Bryars 1993.

<sup>33</sup> Bryars is, of course, British, yet his music subscribes to the American tradition and, arguably, should be considered a part of it. In the mid-sixties Bryars was based in New York and worked as a double bass player in John Cage's ensemble.

If the Mozart concerto in *Accanto* represents 'culture', the tramp's song in *Jesus' Blood* seems to represent the opposite pole: pure, spontaneous nature, unfettered as yet by the forces of culture.<sup>34</sup> However, rather than attempting to deconstruct illusion, Bryars *constructs* a web of illusion around the recorded song.

### Bryars and the 'Sound of Nature'

The recording around which *Jesus' Blood* is based is of a London tramp singing a sentimental religious song to himself. Apparently inspired by the 'non-abstract repetition ... with emotional overtones' of Pop Art,<sup>35</sup> Bryars took the recorded song and produced a loop, subsequently copying the loop onto a continuous reel. Rhythmically and tonally erratic, the original song possesses a peculiarly human, 'authentic' quality; an emotional integrity and directness which resonates with the primitive states of speech and melody favoured by Rousseau in his 'Essay on the Origin of Languages'. It could be seen to symbolize an idyllic, originary 'nature', unsoiled as yet by 'culture'. Its undeniable pathos is also the source of its strength.

It could be argued that, in isolating the tramp's song and placing it within the context of the artwork, Bryars causes us to hear the song 'anew'— as we would not have done had we encountered it in its original context. Bryars intensifies the meaning of the song, inviting us to reflect upon the life-world to which it belongs (in the sense of Heidegger's theory of 'disclosure')<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> The very fact that the song has been appropriated into the context of Bryars' piece in this way makes such an endeavour highly paradoxical and somewhat suspect. Just as Rousseau cannot express the 'originary' without recourse to 'derivative' writing according to Jacques Derrida, so Bryars, in the act of recontextualization, partly undermines his original intention. (See Derrida 1974: 229: Rousseau 'declares what he *wishes* to say, that is to say that articulation and writing are a post-originary malady of language; he says or describes that which he *does not wish to say*: articulation and therefore the space of writing operates at the origin of language.')

<sup>35</sup> Bryars 1993.

<sup>36</sup> See Cooper 2003: 108-111 for a discussion of Heidegger's theory.

Bryars adds an instrumental accompaniment to the song, in a simple incremental fashion. This process begins with a string quintet, followed by pizzicato bass and guitar, then woodwind, and so on until a full orchestral texture is formed around the solo voice. After around twenty-five minutes of slow culmination, accompaniment and song are faded out. The genuine, expressive quality of the song is, to a great extent, kept intact. Michael Nyman writes that this is 'a simple, straightforward, harmonious backing to the tune'.<sup>37</sup> The discreet harmony has an air of neutrality, almost artlessness, allowing the melody to stand in relief.

Ex. 37

Handwritten musical score for 'Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet' by Gavin Bryars. The score is written on a grand staff with three systems. The top system is labeled 'Voice' and contains the lyrics: 'Je-sus blood never failed me yet, never failed me yet, Je-sus'. The middle system is labeled 'Orchestra' and shows the instrumental accompaniment. The bottom system continues the lyrics: 'blood never failed me yet how can any? how far he lo-ved me so'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Gavin Bryars, *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*

<sup>37</sup> Nyman 1974: 146

Bryars' intervention is minimal: here, he has simply mapped accompaniment onto melody organically. The accompaniment is the outcome of a simple *process* of realizing the harmonic implications of the tune. Its principal is one of non-intervention, of the utilization of individual differences to creative effect - the outlining of a situation rather than the determination of a sound-object. No attempts have been made to generate harmonic interest in relation to the vocal line: unlike a Schubert lied, for example, there has been no endeavour to vary the harmonic accompaniment, to intensify the melody at a later repetition.

The accompaniment itself is ambiguous; too understated for a classical accompaniment, the idiom is that of the backing to a pop song, and yet this clearly is not a pop song. Indeed, aside from the orchestral build-up, the real expressive power of this piece emanates exclusively from the old man's own performance. Bryars respects the song's humanity and simplicity. The unobstrusive harmonic language serves to heighten its aura and expressivity, imbuing it with an almost mythical status. Here, Bryars would appear to side with Rousseau in postulating and valorizing a natural, almost pre-social origin, the very essence, perhaps, of what it is to be human.

There is a clear continuity between Bryars' interest in the irregular aspects of the tramp's performance and his involvement in the formation of the Portsmouth Sinfonia. 'What one hears at a Sinfonia concert', Michael Nyman has written, 'is familiar music, seriously dislocated'.<sup>38</sup> The philosophy behind the ensemble, bringing untrained musicians together to perform serious classical works, is an attempt to 'rearticulat[e] the classics' as Nyman puts it, or, in language more redolent of Rousseau, to reclaim the cultural to the 'natural', an intention also apparently in evidence in the 1975 version of *Jesus' Blood*. Through the deliberate admittance of what Howard Skempton has termed 'uncontrolled

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<sup>38</sup> Nyman 1974: 140.

variables',<sup>39</sup> both the piece and the Sinfonia endeavour to regain a lost spontaneity and validity. Such a process is strongly redolent of Lachenmann's early instrumental *musique concrete* pieces from the late sixties.

Whilst the recording in *Jesus' Blood* is heard throughout, in *Accanto* the very opposite is true. For the most part, the recorded Mozart is only allowed very brief fragments and snatches, chopped up through the staccato rhythms of Lachenmann's tape part. The string accompaniment to *Jesus' Blood* is largely intended to harmonize with the recording, to sympathize with it and to illuminate its original aura. The very opposite occurs in *Accanto*. Here, the accompaniment, or rather the surrounding context, distorts, fragments, obfuscates the recording, even ridicules it. Indeed, one could argue that for Lachenmann, the very use of a *recording* of the Mozart is a reference to the destruction of aura via mechanical reproduction, as Benjamin argued in his famous essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. Few contemporary works employ shock tactics as presented here in *Accanto*.

**(See Part 2 of this thesis, Ex. 16, *Accanto*, bars 192- 194)**

In response to the clarinetist shouting through his instrument in bar 192, the composer instructs the tuba player to shout back through his instrument in strictly notated rhythm: 'BITTE BRAZU DAS ZITAT' ('GO ON, BRAY THE EXTRACT!')<sup>40</sup> As in *temA*, although the tuba player's message is clear on the page, the sentence is fragmentary and distorted through the medium of the Tuba, creating a form of phonetic instrumental *music concrète*. The 's' and 't' sounds of "DAS ZITAT" are echoed and distorted by the trombone player's 'PST!'.

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<sup>39</sup> Skempton cited in Nyman 1974: 140.

<sup>40</sup> The word 'brazu' does not exist in German. It is a brassy, flutter-tonqued distortion of the word 'dazu' (literally, 'to it'). My English translation is a similar corruption of 'play'.



The clarinet reacts to the recorded excerpt with a further shouting sound; the piano performs a banal reduction of the accompanimental rhythm of the Mozart. Such derision *negates* the aura of the familiar classical work, mocking it, undercutting its presence. Lachenmann brutally 'defamiliarizes' his source, extracting its aura from it. Bryars on the other hand attempts to *illuminate*, to heighten the aura of the original song and foreground the integrity of the tramp's song. Bryars reacts with reverence, with a minimum of subjective intervention, allowing the song its own space, enabling it to speak.

Lachenmann constantly works to expose the Mozart as historically superseded, with its false depictions of harmony and unity. Its popularity is supported by listening habits which are regressive and uncritical. In the manner of Adorno, Lachenmann consistently alludes to the historicity of his material and seeks to move beyond it, to open up new perceptive worlds. Bryars, on the contrary, treats his material undialectically, recalling Cage's approach to material. There is no trace of critical evaluation or negation in *Jesus' Blood*: Bryars' approach to material is unreflective and affirmative.

As we saw at the end of Part Four, libidinal philosophy is far from unproblematic. Similar issues have been located within the sphere of music by Wim Mertens in *American Minimal Music*. Mertens writes that

... the general movement against the dialectic has led to the repudiation of the contradictions within the very society that shapes the music that gives up its bond with society. The unity of form and content assumes that the contradiction between subject and object, mind and matter is solved. This solution, however, has an alienating effect because of the absence of synthesis in social reality. Music is thus no longer related to historical-dialectical reality and loses its historical continuity.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Mertens 1983: 117.

For Mertens, minimal music, which has its roots in Cage, is the result of psychological regression and escapism, the replacement of external realities by psychic ones.

The so-called *religious* experience of repetitive music is on fact a camouflaged erotic experience. One can speak of a controlled pseudo-satisfaction because the abandoning of dialectical time does not really happen but is only imaginary. The libido, freed from the external world, turns towards the ego to obtain imaginary satisfaction. Freud defined this as a regression and a 'return to the infantile experience of hallucinatory satisfaction'.<sup>42</sup>

Mertens adds

According to Marcuse, the breakdown of dialectics is not a solution but is a symptom of the disease – the desertion of history in favour of a utopian world. This can only bring pseudo-satisfaction and will probably serve to strengthen the historical impasse for the worse.<sup>43</sup>

Lachenmann's whole approach aims to challenge such escapism in the form of what Adorno would call 'immanent critique':

Perception thus perceives itself and goes beyond this to perceive also its inability to penetrate both reality and its own structure. Thus it is reminded of its ability to overcome lack of freedom by recognition, and, in doing so, to achieve freedom. Self-experience, provoked by a creative medium, a creative liberation, then becomes a spiritual, i.e. 'artistic' experience, and vice-versa.<sup>44</sup>

This form of self-experience is strongly redolent of Adorno's *musique informelle* as a 'postulate of musical emancipation'<sup>45</sup> and the emancipated subjectivity alluded to by the rediscovery by the subject of its inner nature is an aim made explicit by Lachenmann in his writings. In the essay 'On Structuralism' he details

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*: 124.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 102.

<sup>45</sup> Adorno 1992b: 272.

a concept of 'self experience' through an experience of conflict with tradition. He writes

It is only now that one begins to listen differently, that one is reminded of the changeability of listening and of aesthetic behaviour, reminded, in other words, of one's own structure, one's own structural changeability and also of the element of human invariability which makes all this possible in the first place: the power of what one calls the human spirit. Inasmuch as aesthetic and social taboos are affected, subjected to strain, broken, the experience of music becomes an experience of conflict, a matter of controversy, and at the same time an opportunity to rediscover oneself.<sup>46</sup>

Such a stance is undeniably utopian, something which goes to the heart of Lachenmann's calling as an artist. In the conclusion to this thesis, I propose to consider how Lachenmann's concept of rejection can be understood as an 'expression of *hope (Hoffnung)*'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Lachenmann 1995: 101.

<sup>47</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 176.



## **Conclusion**

Lachenmann's Concept of *Hoffnung*

# 1. Exposing The Ego

## Touched by Nono

Sometimes, in the field of human achievement, we come across fascinating phenomena, superb achievements which earn our admiration and astonishment, not just because they are examples of the supreme confidence with which a genius treats his material, but because they demonstrate to us what the human spirit is capable of – the potential for which we are aware that we share some responsibility. Thus fascination and moral impact are combined. But there are also – much more rarely – phenomena which go far beyond just provoking astonishment, phenomena which the word fascination is inadequate to describe, implying as it does a degree of safe, detached observation. In such cases astonishment is not enough to describe our reactions, for these are phenomena which have a disturbing effect on our very existence, which ‘threaten’ not just to touch us but to actually change us. To change us by subjecting our ability to experience to a hitherto unheard of challenge and transporting us into zones of experience of ourselves where the ego is suddenly exposed, stripped of all the standard categories of civilization, and forced to redefine its perception of itself, and at the same time is challenged to bear such exposure, suddenly perceiving dimensions of its own existence which our subconscious is vaguely aware of but which we tend to avoid, taking shelter instead in a sort of well-tempered culture even if this consists of a reified invocation of pseudo-magical surrogates of such experience. This sudden, shocking awareness differs from the artificial astonishment described above precisely because it transports us to realms in which the creative spirit which provided us with access in the first place is just as exposed and unprotected as we are ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

Lachenmann, ‘Touched by Nono’, (1999)

Lachenmann’s description of his teacher Luigi Nono in the essay ‘Touched by Nono’, reveals much about what Lachenmann sets out to achieve in his own music. For instance, Nono’s concept of change ‘where the ego is suddenly exposed, stripped of all the standard categories of civilization, and forced to

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<sup>1</sup> Lachenmann 1999: 17-18.

redefine its perception of itself' resonates strongly with Lachenmann's own concept of liberated perception.

The personality of Luigi Nono as Lachenmann presents him here – polemical, tortured, vituperative, constantly self-critical and equally challenging of the assumptions of colleagues and friends – seems almost an idealization of what Lachenmann considers the composer's role in contemporary society to be.

My intention in this study has been to tease out some of the various philosophical and theoretical currents which pervade Lachenmann's music and writings. In the process an image of Lachenmann's aesthetic has formed itself, one that is in some respects highly ambivalent and contradictory. Lachenmann's position resists being squarely placed within a single tradition. Instead, he is better depicted in terms of a constellation of schools of thought (some of which are mutually contradictory), yet all of which contribute towards his complex dynamic of unremitting self-reflection and guarded utopianism.

## 2. Paradises in Time

### Liberated Perception vs. Libidinal Philosophy

... in nearly all of my pieces there are situations, which are no longer structured by me yet whose structure, however it manifests itself arises out of the intensity of the situation and forms only a part of my composition. These are my resting places (*Haltepunkte*), pauses (*Fermaten*), and more or less complex ostinati: they draw attention to hidden or neglected details, which in the normal course of events put in a peripheral appearance, just on the edge of the musical process and are usually overlooked. When however my pieces are entered by such situations then the results from the conscious sensitizing of the ear release a complex activity of perception as opposed to their static appearance. Possibly such moments refer to the experience of Cage's music but differing from his, they are temporary paradises in my music, 'paradises in time', which I find and then abandon.<sup>2</sup>

Lachenmann, *Paradises in Time*, Interview with Peter Szendy (1993)

Lachenmann's descriptions of 'liberated perception' and 'structure hallucination' see the composer at his most redolent of the affirmative standpoints of Deleuze and Lyotard. As we have seen, these philosophers endorse the ontologizing stance of John Cage for whom musical material is not historically situated (*Material*) but natural and unmediated (*Stoff*). Indeed, Dahlhaus remarks that 'Adorno's concept of material is a historical category, whereas Cage's idea of matter is a natural one'.<sup>3</sup> The issue has arisen, then, of a fundamental ambivalence in Lachenmann's thought. On the one hand, as we have seen,

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<sup>2</sup> 'Andererseits gibt es in fast allen meinen Stücken Situationen, die nicht mehr von mir selbst strukturiert sind, sondern deren Struktur, so wie sie sich ergibt, in einen bestimmten Moment aus der Intensität der Situation heraus entsteht und nun einen Teil der Komposition bildet. Das sind meist Haltepunkte, Fermaten oder mehr oder weniger komplexe Ostinati: Sie lenken die Aufmerksamkeit auf verborgene oder vernachlässigte Einzelheiten, die normalerweise als bloße Randerscheinungen an der Peripherie des musikalischen Prozesses blieben und von der Wahrnehmung übergangen würden. Wenn jedoch solche Situationen in meinen Werken eintreten, dann als Resultate einer bewußten Hör-Sensibilisierung, wobei sie entgegen ihres statischen Anscheins eine komplexe Wahrnehmungs-Aktivität auslösen. Möglicherweise beziehen sich solche Momente insgeheim auf die Erfahrung Cage, aber anders als bei ihm sind sie in meiner Musik vorläufige Paradiese, "Paradiese auf Zeit", zu denen ich finde, und die ich wieder verlasse' (Lachenmann 1996: 209).

<sup>3</sup> Dahlhaus 1987: 271.



Lachenmann adopts a posture of negative dialectics highly reminiscent of Adorno. Subjective expression, the composer's relation to tradition, and the historical dialectic of musical material all feature as central to Lachenmann's philosophy. Yet, talk of 'liberated perception', the '*Hören*'/'*Zuhören*' dichotomy, 'structure hallucination', and the employment of repetitive techniques similar to those found in the music of the American experimental tradition, seem to endorse a conceptual system highly at odds with Adorno's 'melancholic' stance.

These affirmative traces in Lachenmann's language would seem to imply not the conscious engagement with history, but *anamnesis*, a sense of time which is a-teleological and outside conventional Western diachrony and, related to this, a mode of experiencing music which is primarily perceptual rather than cognitive in nature. These ideas are undeniably present in Lachenmann's writings.

'Structure hallucination' occurs in an environment where the process by which sounds are created is highly controlled and predetermined, but the moment of 'liberated perception' relies on properties of the music that are out of the control of either the composer or performer – the 'hidden and neglected details' to which Lachenmann refers. This is what makes a comparison between instrumental *musique concrète* and John Cage's music, or the 'windows' of stasis in *Accanto* and *Tanzsuite* with La Monte Young's *X for Henry Flint*, pertinent.

Yet it is Lachenmann's framing of these moments within larger 'sound structures' and his constant recourse to the wider context of Western contemporary classical tradition that finally could be said to differentiate him from his American peers. '*Hören*' – as the striving towards the not-yet-conceptualized - should in fact be understood as referring not to a permanent condition but, rather, as a transitory state, arising from a *tension* between the conventional and the new. Lachenmann's 'paradises in time', are precisely what the composer suggests; *temporary* points of stasis, moments of arrival within a general context of

dialectical time. In practice, Lachenmann's preparedness to accept conflict between existing structures of experience and what Adorno has termed the 'instant of awareness' is more redolent of Adorno's 'fractured subject' than of the 'denial of the subject' associated with postmodernist theory.

### **Affirmation in the Negation**

The affirmative strand in Lachenmann's work should ultimately, I would argue, be understood in terms of Adorno's dialectical concept of *utopia*. For Adorno, art as an image of reconciliation is predicated upon the presence of irreconcilable opposites. Affirmation is understood not as separate from, but as a *moment within* the negation. Adorno in his *Aesthetic Theory* illuminates this paradoxical notion:

... pure negativity of content always has an admixture of affirmation. The brilliance radiated today by all anti-affirmative works is the appearance of an ineffable affirmation, the dawn of a non-existent that pretends it has being. Its claim to being passes away with the instant of aesthetic illusion. But what has no being nonetheless represents a promise, if it has the ability to appear. This relation between the existent and non-existent is the Utopian figure of art. While art is driven into a position of absolute negativity, it is never absolutely negative precisely because of that negativity. It always has an affirmative residue.<sup>4</sup>

For Adorno, this 'affirmative residue' is present 'in even the most negative of modern works as the possibility of change, of "the new", in relation to "the immutable", the pre-given.'<sup>5</sup> As Alastair Williams has argued,

The utopian dimension in Adorno's aesthetics of music becomes understood in a *more transformative than absolute sense*: the social content of music can constitute a form of

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<sup>4</sup> Adorno 1984: 332.

<sup>5</sup> Paddison 1993: 76.

resistance to dominant and deceptive ideologies, and may anticipate social structures in which individual fulfillment is congruent with the everyday organization of life.<sup>6</sup>

This 'relation between the existent and the non-existent' in Lachenmann's work has been widely misrepresented and even ignored: the spirit of provocation in his concept of rejection and his unerring tendency towards self-critique has frequently earned him the label of *musica negativa*. Consider, for example, the indignant reactions of Hans Werner Henze<sup>7</sup> and the English composer George Benjamin, who in a public talk tried to depict Lachenmann as 'old guard avant garde.'<sup>8</sup> Lachenmann has of course passionately refuted this criticism.<sup>9</sup> Even in the most destructive, 'speechless' moments of his music, there is to be experienced what he calls *Hoffnung*. As Lachenmann has asserted,

When the masks of fluency fall, the alienation unmask itself, but recognition helps deal with this, and in this sense I myself have never understood this work, just like my other works, to be anything other than an expression of *hope*.<sup>10</sup>

Mimesis is understood by Adorno as the 'non-conceptual affinity of a subjective creation with its objective and unposited other'<sup>11</sup> and Lachenmann's own utopian gestures can be interpreted in this light. Lachenmann, like Cage, attempts to embrace objectivity, but, crucially, maintains a *tension* between subject and object, tradition and the new, something that is relinquished by Cage.

The affirmative moment is experienced in Lachenmann's music as sensuous immediacy - that which is dependent on, and yet escapes domination by rational structures. Adorno often alluded to art's *promesse de bonheur* or riddle

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<sup>6</sup> Williams 1997: 147 (my italics).

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Lachenmann 1996: 331-333.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Hockings 1995: 13.

<sup>9</sup> See for example the 1983 essay, 'Offener Brief an Hans Werner Henze', in Lachenmann 1996: 331-333.

<sup>10</sup> 'Wo die sprachfertigen Masken fallen, entlarvt sich die Entfremdung. Aber Erkennen hilft bewältigen. Und in diesem Sinn habe ich selbst dieses Werk, sowie meine anderen Werke, nie anders verstanden denn als Ausdruck von *Hoffnung*' (Lachenmann 1996: 176).

<sup>11</sup> Adorno 1984: 80.

character, due to the irreconcilable presence of both mimetic and rational components ('What mimetic behaviour responds to is the *telos* of cognition, which it simultaneously hinders through its categories'<sup>12</sup>). Through reaching out to the non-identical, art provides an image of nature, and thus of reconciliation: 'The dignity of nature lies in [its] quality of not-yet, which by its expression repels all attempts at intentional humanization.'<sup>13</sup>

Thus for Adorno it is through the rupturing of preexisting forms and handed-down materials that art attains a utopian flavour (as opposed to, in Lachenmann's words, collapsing the dialectic, 'depending on ... old categories of listening' or 'settling in a virgin territory of unknown sounds'). Adorno is suspicious of all attempts to portray a harmonious state of affairs in a way that resembles Lachenmann's contempt for 'false fluency'.

It is ... the task of a true theory not to conceal and 'mediate' reality's ruptures by means of harmonious thought-forms, but precisely to expose them and through knowledge of them to contribute to overcoming them.<sup>14</sup>

In 'Touched by Nono', Lachenmann highlights the difference between Cage's and Nono's respective conceptions of musical material:

Nono's works mean more to me because – unlike Cage (and this is the difference between the 'seeker' and the 'redeemed') he at no point forgets the historicity of the material but rather preserves it with such radical action.<sup>15</sup>

By uncritically affirming unmediated sensory experience, Cage renders the challenge of history redundant. It is precisely Helmut Lachenmann's preparedness to preserve musical tradition through radical action and his

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<sup>12</sup> Adorno 1984: 80.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*: 109.

<sup>14</sup> Adorno cited in Buck-Morss 1977: 130.

<sup>15</sup> Lachenmann 1999: 29.

dialectical engagement with what he calls 'the complex activity of perception'<sup>16</sup> that endows his music with the potential 'not just to touch us, but to actually change us.'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lachenmann 1996: 209

<sup>17</sup> Lachenmann 1999: 17-18

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