

**Metonymy as a  
Creative Structural Principle  
in the Work of  
J.H. Prynne, Derek Bailey and  
Helmut Lachenmann  
with a Creative Component**

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by

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## Abstract

This thesis takes the linguistic concept of metonymy and examines its potential as a creative structural principle both in poetry and in music. I explore the role of metonymy in the work of the poet J.H. Prynne, the improvising guitarist Derek Bailey, and the composer Helmut Lachenmann. I have also deployed some of the ideas arising from this exploration in a modular composition for improvisers entitled *Representations*, recordings of which accompany this thesis. My argument is that metonymy provides a means by which a work of poetry or of music can be highly sensitive to the world which it inhabits, but can do so by itself being an inextricably linked part of this world, rather than an attempt to reproduce or represent it, or to simply pass judgement from the sidelines.

In my introduction I outline the literary theory of metonymy. I discuss the way that metonymy encompasses relationships both of contiguity and causality, and make the case that the many limitations inherent in metonymy (which have often led to its being perceived as inferior to metaphor) can in fact be seen as advantages, because of the way that they can bind the work of art to the real. I briefly discuss some previous applications of metonymy to music, and outline an understanding of musical metonymy based on linear dissimilarity, historical and social contiguity, the origins and agency behind particular sounds, and an occlusion of the structural middleground. The first chapter discusses the work of J.H. Prynne. I argue that a use of metonymy as a productive constraint is illuminated by a philosophical position according to which the world is known to be real because of the resistances it presents to the actualisation of our desires. I discuss the role of metonymy in the development of Prynne's poetic oeuvre, before illustrating my argument with a detailed analysis of the 2001 sequence *Unanswering Rational Shore*. In the second chapter I turn to the work of Derek Bailey. Drawing heavily on unpublished items from the Incus archive, I demonstrate the meticulous way in which Bailey constructed his improvisational vocabulary, and the senses in which that vocabulary and its deployment could be characterised as metonymic. I explore the influence on Bailey of Stockhausen, Beckett and Musil, and show how form and material in his work are inextricably entwined. The third chapter examines the work of Helmut Lachenmann and in particular the 1992 composition „... zwei Gefühle ...“, *Musik mit Leonardo*. I examine the role of the listener and the productive activity that metonymic structures require of them. I focus on Lachenmann's deployment both of actual and pseudo-causality in his music, as well as his use of historical reference in an indexical fashion. In my fourth chapter I present my composition for improvisers, *Representations*. I discuss its mechanics, development, and influences, and I set forth its relationship to the concepts of musical metonymy I have elucidated in the body of this thesis, under the headings of “arbitration”, similarity, referentiality and the relationship between material and the middleground. In a short concluding chapter I take another angle on the links between the themes of this thesis by discussing the role of rubbish in the work of Prynne, Bailey and Lachenmann, and its apparently paradoxical relationship with a certain concept of purity. This allows me to conclude by considering the relationship of metonymic structures to a conception of truth which, I believe, has a certain urgency in the contemporary artistic climate.

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# Introduction

O enchanting metonyms  
you don't know what you're getting into:

Sean Bonney, *Commons 1 – 12*<sup>1</sup>

My fundamental goal in this thesis is to examine the work of the poet JH Prynne and the musicians Derek Bailey and Helmut Lachenmann – as well as my own creative musical production – with a view to exploring what it is that lies between similarity and arbitrariness. That is to say, between connections based upon shared characteristics and those made forcibly, upon no basis other than wilful selection. The Dutch composer Antoine Beuger has highlighted a related continuum: ‘I think similarity is a very interesting concept as it locates itself somewhere between sameness and difference’ (Beuger in Saunders 2009: 240). In his music Beuger explores musical similarity by foregrounding difference where there might initially appear to be only sameness, proceeding from Leibniz’s observation that there is no repetition in nature.<sup>2</sup> I, on the other hand, take as my starting point the fact that – as Henri Bergson remarked – humans instinctively perceive resemblance (Bergson 1991: 165). In order to make different kinds of connection prominent it is at times necessary to downplay the role of similarity in order to disrupt the conventional ways in which we form connections.

The basis upon which these alternative forms of connection are made, and hence the most general answer to the question I have posed, might be something called ‘contiguity’. In the context of literary theory, contiguity is most thoroughly explored in the figurative trope known as metonymy. The Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of metonymy starts with its meaning in a rhetorical context, where it primarily refers to ‘the action of substituting for a word or phrase denoting an object, action, institution, etc., a word or phrase denoting a property or something associated with it’. This rather broad account is focused somewhat by the following qualification: ‘[b]ecause the association involved in metonymy is typically by contiguity rather than similarity, metonymy is often contrasted with metaphor’. It is from this distinction between metaphor and metonymy that I intend to begin. I understand metonymy to be, in the literary context, a figurative use of language which is grounded upon relations of contiguity (including causality) rather than

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1 Bonney 2008.

2 See for example Leibniz 1989: 327-8.

of comparison. I shall examine metonymy as a creative structural principle in both poetry and, in a necessarily expanded sense (because of the absence of straightforwardly semantic content), in music. To sharpen my understanding of contiguity I concentrate upon situations where syntagmatic structures are made discontinuous in such a way that the perceived continuity is not based primarily on similarity, though there is always an element of it in any semiotic relationship. I shall also examine various forms of both genuine and apparent causation; in a qualified sense I shall counter Adorno's claim that 'in works of art there is no such thing as natural causality' (Adorno, 2002: 293).

I begin this introduction by considering metonymy in relation to semiology generally, drawing heavily on the work of C.S. Peirce, Mohammed Al-Sharafi, and Hugh Bredin. I then explore the aspects of the literary theory of metonymy most relevant to my argument. The referential aspects of metonymy help in formulating an understanding of artistic material that is attentive to its *concrete* nature but also inextricably bound both diachronically to *history* and synchronically to its *social and technological situation*. Such an understanding is explicitly espoused by both the poet JH Prynne and the composer Helmut Lachenmann and is, I argue, implicitly present in the work of the improvising guitarist Derek Bailey. The many limitations inherent in metonymy (which have generally led to its being considered a weaker trope than metaphor) are, instead, considered to be an advantage because of the various ways that these limitations bind the work of art to the real. (Later in this thesis an examination of the role of limitation and exclusion will be linked to the interpretative, and indeed productive, activity of the reader of or listener to a metonymic artwork via the phenomenological interests of all three artists. The philosophers most referred to will be Bergson and Husserl.)<sup>3</sup> The introduction concludes with a sketch of the historical situation of the men whose work I examine, providing an outline of the reasons why studying this particular combination of artists is coherent and fruitful.

In the chapters that follow the introduction, I first examine the operation of metonymy in the later poetry of JH Prynne – in particular the sequence *Unanswering Rational Shore* – and then apply the concept to Bailey's musical vocabulary and the formal structure of his work, particularly his solo playing. Next, I focus on the ensemble music of

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3 Although they are methodologically distinct, and to an extent run along parallel tracks, my thesis is very compatible with the ecological approach put forward by Eric Clarke: 'Rather than considering perception to be a constructive process, in which the perceiver builds structures into an internal model of the world, the ecological approach emphasizes the structure of the environment itself and regards perception as the pick-up of that already structured perceptual information' (Clarke 2005: 17).



Helmut Lachenmann and specifically on his composition „... zwei Gefühle ...“, *Musik mit Leonardo*. I have myself creatively explored the ideas discussed in the critical part of this thesis, and others arising from them, in a modular composition for improvisers entitled *Representations*. Recordings of seven realisations of the piece form the practice-based component of my research; discussion and analysis of these, and of the *Representations* project as a whole, form the next chapter, after which I conclude with some more general reflections on the significance of the ideas discussed in this thesis.

## **0.1 Introduction to Metonymy**

Words are both material realities in the world and signs for other realities, both material and non-material. All language is limited, but these limits enable communication and comprehension. For example, syntactical structures could be seen as constraints, but their limitations help to organise an utterance and let us perceive its hierarchies and orderings. The imagination of the poet enters into a dynamic relationship with such limitations; metaphor and metonymy can both be either conventional or imaginatively inspired. Metaphor is traditionally seen as a sign of inspiration, but metaphors can be deployed conventionally just as much as any other figure; no one would applaud the poetic gifts of somebody who said they were ‘over the moon’ about a recent event. Conversely, metonymy can be deployed to display fresh insight.

### **0.1.1 The Nature of Metonymic Relationships**

Abdul Gabbar Mohammed Al-Sharafi helpfully indicates that contiguity (often cited as the primary element in metonymic relationships) and causality are of equal importance. (Al-Sharafi 2004: 105 & passim). In this he follows in the footsteps of C.S. Peirce, who in 1868 outlined three principles that regulate the association of ideas, and hence also the operation of semiosis:

“The association of ideas is said to proceed according to three principles – those of resemblance, of contiguity, and of causality. But it would be equally true to say that signs denote what they do on the three principles of resemblance, contiguity, and causality.” (Peirce 1991: 80)

The association of metaphor with the principle of resemblance and metonymy with that of contiguity has been commonplace at least since Roman Jakobson’s 1956 article ‘Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances’ (Jakobson 1971). But which figure of speech corresponds to causality? Hugh Bredin – who argues for a tripartite division of metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche rather than Jakobson’s twofold structure

– nevertheless includes linguistic relationships of causality under the heading of metonymy (Bredin 1984: 45-58). So we can say, for example, that ‘war is sad’, or, to use an example that Prynne points out, refer to ‘fearful symmetry’. This comes from Blake’s ‘The Tyger’: the tiger causes fear, and can thus be said to be ‘fearful’ (Prynne 1993: 57).<sup>4</sup> The fact that, in terms of figures of speech, metonymy seems to cover two of the three principles of signification, while metaphor only one, implies that it is a broader and more varied concept than has often been recognized.<sup>5</sup>

Bredin, while claiming that ‘[r]elation is one of those fundamental concepts, like existence or inference, which are incapable of explication in any simpler terms,’ suggests either viewing relations as predicates or ‘as a kind of ontological cement holding the world together’ (Bredin 1984: 53). To the latter end he produces a very helpful list, with examples, of types of metonymic relationship, which are in all cases two-way. That is, the first term of a pair can stand for the second and vice versa. His list consists of the following relations: cause/effect; inventor/invented; user/instrument; doer/thing done; passion/object of passion; container/contained; place/object in place; time/object in time; possessor/possessed; sign/signified; concrete/abstract (Bredin 1984: 48). This list, ‘if not exhaustive at least representative’ (Bredin 1984: 47) goes a long way towards revealing the variety and scope of possible metonymic relationships in language.

Peirce believed that a certain class of sign

“... must have some real connection with the thing it signifies so that when the object is present or is so as the sign signifies it to be, the sign shall so signify it and otherwise not. ... A weathercock is a sign of the direction of the wind. It would not be so unless the wind made it turn round.” (Peirce 1991: 141)

Signs which predicate real relations between the representamen (the sign proper) and its object were termed by Peirce *indices*. These are contrasted with *icons*, signs which are founded upon resemblance, and *symbols*, those which are based on convention.

‘Psychologically, the action of indices depends upon association by contiguity, and not upon association by resemblance or upon intellectual operations’ (Peirce 1955: 108). In studying relations based on contiguity I am not, however, claiming that it is possible to remove resemblance from consideration entirely; in emphasising contiguity I wish to balance somewhat the weight of emphasis that has been placed on metaphor in poetry and

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4 ‘This square-off of ‘fearfulness’, a reciprocal metonymy of effect for cause, gives much to the hypnotic concentration of the poem’s address; ...’

5 Though, as Aristotle reminds us, and pace Hume, we must always be on our guard to distinguish the two, ‘for there is a great difference between happening next and happening as a result’ (Aristotle in Russell and Winterbottom 1998: 64).

on similarity or parallelism in music, but not to claim that either associative idea could in any sense be done away with. Indeed, for indices to operate at all it is necessary that there be a certain similarity between the index and its object:

“In so far as the Index is affected by the Object, it necessarily has some Quality in common with the Object, and it is in respect to these that it refers to the Object. It does, therefore, involve a sort of Icon, although an Icon of a peculiar kind; ...” (Peirce 1955: 102)

Indeed, Bergson pointed out that similarity and contiguity have a kind of reciprocal relationship, such that, for example, “we cannot say of the words of a foreign language, when they call each other up in memory, whether they are associated by similarity or by contiguity” (Bergson 1991: 170-1). We might, however, conclude that a more skilled interpreter will perceive contiguity where a less informed person might see only similarity. The beginning student of French might find two very distinct words (‘dimanche’ and ‘malheureusement’, for example) similar in that they both fall into the category of ‘French words’; the fluent speaker would be more aware of their differences and hence that connections between them are a matter of contiguity. Similarly two references in a contemporary piece of music – one to, say, Bach, and the other to Schumann – might be heard by a less skilled interpreter merely as two similar references to “classical music”. Such thinking is relevant to Helmut Lachenmann’s ideas about the aura of a piece of music or musical material: ‘the history of the material in wider, extramusical contexts, in all spheres of our social and cultural reality’ (Lachenmann 2004b: 58).<sup>6</sup> Lachenmann does not intend his music to be only accessible to those with a certain training, knowledge or experience but he does explore the effects such training has upon the very structure of that which is perceived. A skilled interpreter will be likely to perceive less resemblance than an unskilled listener and to have an increasing sense of differentiation, and hence be more sensitive to contiguous relationships and the contexts in which they are bound.

### **0.1.2 Referentiality as Constraint**

How does contiguity operate when deployed in metonymic expressions? Bredin’s interpretation of metonymy is wholly referential. He argues that ‘what occurs in a trope is not a change in the meaning of a word, but a change in the object to which it normally

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6 Although there is always also a dialectic in Lachenmann’s work with immediate physical perception and sensation. He also does not stipulate that the aura must be consciously explored; it also encompasses ‘our conscious and subconscious awareness, our archetypal memory, both collective and individual’ (Lachenmann 2004b: 58). Even in the case of the subconscious, however, the level of skill of the interpreter must make a difference: a skilled interpreter might perceive certain things without bringing them to conscious awareness that a less skilled interpreter might not register at all, at any level of consciousness.

refers. To use Frege's distinction, it is an alteration in reference, not in sense' (Bredin 1984: 46).<sup>7</sup> He then takes this further to claim that 'metonymical relations are relations between things, not between words' (Bredin 1984: 52).<sup>8</sup> (Of course if one metonymically cites literature, the things between which the relations exist may themselves be words.)<sup>9</sup> He goes on to state one of the most common objections to metonymy:

"... [a] metonymy neither states nor implies the connection between the objects involved in it. ... We must already know that the objects are related, if the metonymy is to be devised or understood. Thus, metaphor *creates* the relation between its objects, while metonymy *presupposes* that relation. This is why metonymy can never articulate a newly discovered insight, why it lacks the creative depth of metaphor. Metonymy is irresistibly and necessarily conventional." (Bredin 1984: 57)

This conventionalism is what gives metonymy its stability. And yet the situation is not as clear-cut as Bredin supposes. One cannot create *any* metaphorical relationship between objects; there must be a shared property that can be recognized, and that is shared in a sufficiently interesting and appropriate way for the reader or listener to accept that the metaphor works. (Monty Python's 'Oscar Wilde' sketch tests these boundary cases: 'Your Majesty is like a stream of bat's piss', it is claimed, because 'you shine out like a shaft of gold when all around is dark'.<sup>10</sup>) Through re-reading and reflecting on a poem, one can find metonymic relationships where they had not previously been perceived.

In fact, the complement to the view that metonymy is utterly hidebound and conventional is that it is too open-ended to be of any use. As Al-Sharafi puts it, '[i]f metonymy is arbitrary, the argument forwarded by Bredin ... then metonymic relations are in fact open-ended' (Al-Sharafi 2004: 60). But are they arbitrary or merely conventional?

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7 Frege would not necessarily have acquiesced to this appropriation of his terminology, since for him such a change of reference necessarily resulted in a change of sense, except in the case of proper names, pronouns and so forth.

8 Jacques Lacan seems to subscribe to the opposite view. Speaking about the expression 'thirty sails', in his essay 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious', he argues that 'if the thing is supposed to be based on reality [*réel*]' then we are left with 'hardly any idea what we are to conclude about the size of the fleet ... for a ship to have but one sail is very rare indeed. This shows that the relationship between ship and sail is nowhere other than in the signifier, and that metonymy is based on the *word-to-word* nature of this connection' (Lacan 2006: 421). It seems to me, however, that even if the singular 'sail' comes to stand for all the sails on any given ship, the relationship between the two is still referential. It being understood that ships have sails, the singular sail becomes itself a metonym for all the sails a ship possesses, which then has a metonymic connection to that which possesses it (and hence them). Standing on the shore it would be very difficult to count exactly the number of sails possessed by a given ship, which is what Lacan would seem to require before granting that the connection between 'sail' and 'ship' is other than lexical. Lacan helpfully forces us to clarify the stages of figuration that comprise a given metonym, but he does not dissuade me about its referential nature.

9 This relates to Peirce's view that relative pronouns are indexical because they direct the attention to the previous incidences of actual words. See Peirce 1955: 110.

10 The sketch from which this passage comes can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uycsfu4574w> (accessed 14/06/10).

Metonymy may well be open-ended, but as Umberto Eco teaches us, the fact that a text is endlessly interpretable does not preclude false interpretations, and thus the issue becomes an ethical one, and the task the production of a *responsible* interpretation. Eco argues that:

“To say that interpretation (as the basic feature of semiosis) is potentially unlimited does not mean that interpretation has no object and that it “riverruns” merely for its own sake. To say that a text has potentially no end does not mean that every act of interpretation can have a happy end. ... we can accept a sort of Popper-like principle according to which if there are no rules that help to ascertain which interpretations are the “best” ones, there is at least a rule for ascertaining which ones are “bad.”” (Eco 1990: 143 & 169)

The open-endedness of metonymy can, therefore, be seen as an ethical challenge to the reader to produce a responsible interpretation, just as the framing of the conditions in which that interpretation will take place is an ethical responsibility required of the poet. As Al-Sharafi argues:

“The choice of one part to represent the whole or the whole to represent a particular part may not be seen as an innocent one. ... Metonymic relations are motivated and purposeful.” (Al-Sharafi 2004: 53)

However, the constraints on the individual language user’s deployment of metonymic relations are greater than is the case with metaphorical connections. This is part of Bredin’s point: there may be various reasons why ‘keel’ (or ‘sail’) is a suitable metonym for ‘ship’, but it would be very difficult for the individual language user to propose ‘porthole’ as an equally appropriate metonym, even if they could justify it plausibly. Thus, at the same time as contiguous relations are troublingly open-ended, metonymy seems both constricted and constricting.

Peirce wrote that:

“A real relation subsists in virtue of a fact which would be totally impossible were either of the related objects destroyed; while a relation of reason subsists in virtue of two facts, one only of which would disappear on the annihilation of either of the relates. ... Rumford and Franklin resembled each other by virtue of being both Americans; but either would have been just as much an American if the other had never lived. On the other hand, the fact that Cain killed Abel cannot be stated as a mere aggregate of two facts one concerning Cain and the other concerning Abel.” (Peirce 1991: 194-5)

Metaphor works via relations of reason, which may be more or less strong or urgent but which could apply to either party in the absence of the other, while metonymy requires real relations between its component parts. Indeed, one may go further than saying that metonymy is more literal than metaphor, and say that it is also *realistic*. This, at least, is the claim made in one of the texts quoted by Al-Sharafi:

“Metonymy is realistic, it is referential and it is contextually relevant, and this is what makes it a concept of powerful interpretive force. ... The concern of metonymy with details that belong to what semanticists call ‘semantic fields’ make metonymy an inherently semantic and cognitive phenomenon that is not exotic to our normal conceptualization process.” (Quoted in Al-Sharafi 2004: 39)<sup>11</sup>

The realism of metonymy lies in its referentiality and in the way it ties the text within which it is employed to the particularities of its context. Lacan wrote that ‘[i]n a general manner, metonymy animates this style of creation which we call, in opposition to symbolic style and poetic language, the so-called realist style’ (Lacan in Gallop 1985: 126).<sup>12</sup> But its realism is not limited to application in literary styles we would call “realist”: the fragmentary encyclopedism of modernist poetry such as Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* and Charles Olson’s *Maximus* poems – both hugely influential upon Prynne’s writing – are heavily metonymic in operation. We can say instead, more generally, that metonymy is inextricably entangled with the shared social reality of language and language’s relation to the world. Jakobson echoes Wittgenstein when he quotes from a 1953 paper on “Results of the Conference of Anthropologists and Linguists”:

“There is no such thing as private property in language: everything is socialized. Verbal exchange, like any form of intercourse, requires at least two communicators, and idiolect proves to be a somewhat perverse fiction.” (Quoted in Jakobson 1971: 82)<sup>13</sup>

He qualifies this by saying that ‘for an aphasic who has lost the capacity for code switching, the “idiolect” indeed becomes the sole linguistic reality’ (Jakobson 1971: 82). So the dominance of the idiolect is evidence of linguistic impairment. Prynne’s metonymy can, I suggest, be seen together with his tendency to awaken obscure but not extinct meanings of words (meanings almost always available to anyone looking in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*) as part of a wider project to focus on the historical and social realities of language and our own place within them.<sup>14</sup> By refusing to countenance a reader of some mythical ‘average’ competence, Prynne highlights the collective aspects of language, which are of course both a limit and the basis of a supportive environment; our expression is bound yet also set free from individual whim. As Terry Eagleton has written: ‘Sharing signs isn’t a substitute for sharing things; it is a way of sharing them more

11 The text quoted is ‘Mummy, I Like Being a Sandwich: Metonymy in Language Acquisition’, in Panther and Radden (1999), *Metonymy in Language and Thought*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

12 The text quoted is Lacan, Jacques (1981), *Le Séminaire III: Les psychoses*. Paris: Seuil, 1981.

13 The text quoted here is *Indiana Publications in Anthropology and Linguistics*, VII (1953): 15.

14 “Once a poem gets written and I have located a word which this poem has given to me – I’ve won out of the English language another word for my small vocabulary of words that really mean and matter to me – back to the etymological dictionary: where does it come from, what does it originally mean, what great hinterland of implications lies behind this perhaps quite ordinary word?” J.H. Prynne interviewed by Peter Orr in *The Poet Speaks*, a series produced by the recorded sound section of the British Council in London, 1963 (Quoted in Sutherland 2010: 141-2).

deeply' (Eagleton 2009: 94).

### 0.1.3 Connotation and Denotation

In the study of language, references are commonly divided up into connotations and denotations. Paul Ricoeur counters Frege's rather positivistic view that only scientific texts can be truly referential: 'The desire for truth motivating the push from sense towards reference is ascribed expressly by Frege only to scientific statements', while his own 'aim is to do away with this restriction of reference to scientific statements' (Ricoeur 2003: 260-1). According to the view ascribed to Frege, "[l]iterature' would be that sort of discourse that has no denotation but only connotations' (Ricoeur 2003: 260). Such a view might chime with the radically non-referential view of Prynne's work that has been ventured by critics such as Peter Ackroyd in his *Notes for a New Culture* (Ackroyd 1976: 129-131). But increasing research into Prynne's poetry has revealed more and more the scope of its referentiality, which encompasses – but is by no means limited to – geological, medical, philosophical, theological and sociological material, frequently in an extremely specific rather than loosely connotational fashion. Max Black states the issue very clearly. (Even though he is discussing metaphor rather than metonymy, the insight applies, I believe, to figurative language in general.) He argues that:

“... [t]he literal paraphrase inevitably says too much – and with the wrong emphasis. One of the points I most wish to stress is that the loss in such cases is a loss in cognitive content; the relevant weakness of the literal paraphrase is not that it may be tiresomely prolix or boringly explicit (or deficient in qualities of style); it fails to be a translation because it fails to give the insight that the metaphor did.” (Black 1962: 46)

Al-Sharafi points out that it has been argued both that metaphor is connotative and metonymy denotative and the exact opposite (Al-Sharafi 2004: 43-44). He concludes:

“... that there is a great deal of connotation involved in both tropes. ... In any act of figuration there is a connotative background and what might sometimes seem denotative is nothing but an act of lexicalisation through the process of demetaphorisation or demetonymisation whereby the signifier-signified relationship gets naturalised to the extent that people think it is real and mandatory while in reality it is a connotation.” (Al-Sharafi 2004: 44)

The problem with such a view, however, is that it pushes denotation further and further away. Any linguistic expression has a history; if taken to an extreme, Al-Sharafi's logic might seem to imply that any act of linguistic denotation is merely naturalised connotation, and so physically pointing might be the only denotative act left to us, and even that could be rife with misunderstanding.

Consider the term 'head count': it may well be that heads are literally being

counted; the metonymy comes into play because the purpose of the count is to count whole people, and it is assumed that all the heads being counted also have bodies attached. Even in a phrase such as ‘the ham sandwich left the bar’ there is a literal ham sandwich being denoted, it is just that it has also come to stand for the person with whom it is associated. This is different from a simple metaphor such as ‘the sky wept’ where a comparison is being made between rain and tears (as well as – interestingly – the mood that both are *metonymically* associated with), and no literal weeping is involved at all. However we decide to divide up the territories of connotation and denotation, the crucial point is that in everyday language all aspects of a metonymic expression are usually, in various ways, literal; it is their combination that is figurative.

#### 0.1.4 Figurative Consistency

I do not in any way want to argue that Prynne employs a naïve sense of reference, where all aspects of his poem are in a one-to-one relationship with the external world, and thus merely a reflection of or comment on it. The situation is complicated – or rather enriched – by the fact that, as I have already stated, words themselves are material realities. Therefore one cannot legislate strictly on consistency of figurative reference. Prynne made exactly this point in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* published on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 1971 where he took issue with F.R. Leavis’s famous complaint that Shelley’s ‘tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean’ in the ‘Ode to the West Wind’ ‘stand for nothing that Shelley could have pointed to in the scene before him; the “boughs,” it is plain, have grown out of the “leaves” in the previous line’ (Leavis 1949: 205). Prynne grants the aptness of Leavis’s observation ‘that in the sequence of overt or implied metaphor or simile the initial ground for comparison from which the figure rises often has less primacy in the direction of later development than the new areas of reference introduced by the figure’ but denies that this necessarily ‘induces confusion and exemplifies a damaging, central weakness of mind’ (Prynne 1971a). On the contrary, he concludes:

“... I should have thought it possible by now to argue that the variable transfer of the criteria for imaginative coherence from the grounds of figurative language to the forms of language resulting from overlapping figurational transformation is a major source of excitement and energy in Shelley’s writing.” (Prynne 1971a)

In Prynne’s own writing referentiality does not stand in place of the figurative, but occupies a more complex field that shifts between the two and does not allow one to parcel off poetic figuration as merely decorative, nor claim that all language is figurative.<sup>15</sup>

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15 Al-Sharafi claims that even some of the most mundane-sounding texts have, through metonymy, a figurative dimension. He writes of the text ‘Mary went to the kitchen. She found the fridge empty. She



Such a mode of thinking has been a constant throughout Prynne's writing career. Compare these texts from 1961 and 2009, respectively:

“It is the imagination's peculiar function to admit, draw sustenance from, and celebrate the ontological priority of this outside world, by creating entities which subsequently become a part of the world, an addition to it. Hence the tensions between metre and rhythm, between credibility and dramatic cogency, in fact the stringencies of artifice and discipline generally which constitute the dimensions within which the imagination is realised and becomes intelligible, embody both the process and its difficulties, and the resistances proper to its substance.” (Prynne 1961: 30)

“... [poetry] comprises at its most fully-extended an envelope which finds and sets the textual contours of writing in how things are; while also activating a system of discontinuities and breaks which interrupt and contest the intrinsic cohesion and boundary profiles of its domain, so that there is constant leakage inwards and outwards across the connection with the larger world order.” (Prynne 2010: 126-7)

In the earlier text, Prynne is arguing in essence that the apparently arbitrary, or at least artificial, constraints that have traditionally been seen to characterise literary production are not mere impositions designed to emphasise what Veronica Forrest-Thomson referred to as ‘poetic artifice’; rather they are the means by which the imagination operates upon the real. Just as elsewhere in life we know the world to be real because it resists our desires, so it is in poetic composition. Traffic with these resistances can move in varied directions, however, and this is the import of the later extract: it is in the nature of poetry not only to set down in writing the limits of ‘how things are’ but constantly to ‘contest’ those very limits. In keeping with these ideas, Prynne does not rigidly partition sound from sense in his poetry. He has paid critical attention to the way in which phonetic features of the language may be treated by poets as motivated (Prynne 1993) and how the phonological structure of words, in the context of the history of their poetic deployment, can be considered as the basis for poetry, in contrast to conceiving of it, fundamentally, as rhythmically organised language (Prynne 2010). Such a way of thinking means that, while not denying the value or accuracy of Saussure's main insights, poetry can be seen as a writing practice where arbitrary relationships of similarity between signifier and signified (whether onomatopoeic, metrical or otherwise) can be put to productive work.<sup>16</sup> Metonymy

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opened the freezer and took out some ice-cream.’ (Al-Sharafi 2004: 10) that its comprehension ‘is dependent on activating pieces of knowledge that are not mentioned in the text. In other words, the interpretation of this text goes beyond its literal expression to a figurative dimension of text interpretation’ (*ibid.*). This argument seems, if taken to its logical conclusion, to make it almost impossible to make any non-figurative statement, if the criterion for figurativeness is that the interpretation of a text requires knowledge not contained within it. Surely no text definitively teaches us how to read it: the very comprehension of the language in which the text is written must always lie outside the text's power to convey.

16 For Prynne, ‘[w]ithin Western language systems, and in English thereby also, the items of speech-performance are written word-forms and their spoken, phonic equivalents. Does the form of the written

is for Prynne a tool for making this happen, because metaphor is, in general, too tied to older ways of thinking about sound and sense. Regular metrical schemes and – especially – rhyme foreground similarity and thus also downgrade its importance. Prynne does on occasion employ rhyme and relatively conventional rhythmic regularity, but almost always in a parodic or at least heavily problematised fashion. Rhyme and metre are certainly not the means of a return to any reified conception of beauty.<sup>17</sup> Contiguous relations emphasise historical and social connections and thus force the reader to search for real relations, and help to undermine facile conceptions of the “arbitrary”.

## 0.2 Metonymy in Music

### 0.2.1 Previous applications of metonymy to music

I am not the first to propose metonymy as a relevant term in the discussion of music. One rather unsatisfactory usage is that of Roger T. Dean, who appears to understand it merely as a synonym for synecdoche. In spite of this he does highlight the two domains of most interest to us: instrumental technique and formal structure. On the first he writes:

“Perhaps all social problems are problem-solving events in some sense; but what problems are tackled within a group of free improvisers? Are they problems deriving from the autonomous self-referentiality of music? For instance, they might concern how to make a sound on an individual instrument, perhaps a string instrument, converge with two other simultaneous sounds from other instruments. This might be achieved empirically by changing the mode of attack of the string instrument until an appropriate combination of multiphonic tones (seeming to have several pitch centres) is produced on several strings, so that the various components of the sound have sufficient overlap (or metonymy) with the other sounds. (In literary theory, objects or word-objects are metonymic with each other if they display part-whole relationships; this often depends on physical characteristics (for example fingers-hand).)” (Dean 1992: xv)

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word have a sense-bearing relation to its meaning? Does the sound of the word express, or modify, or in any way contribute to, its sense? ... If language is a system of meanings and meaning-relations, then any kind of efficient carrier which could encode and deliver its discriminations would be adequate to efficient performance; there is no need for an idea to be matched by a word-form at an individual level: the sign is *arbitrary*. But if language is a social code of interactions, in which performance is an expressive procedure within a context of sense-bearing acts, then anything that *can* count towards meaning *may* do so: intonation, style-level, choice of words and of their sounds and echoes ... If the *form* of words can itself designate and specify some part of their sense, then the sign is not arbitrary: it is said to be *motivated*, implying that the idea or meaning expressed has affected the form of the word in such a way that the form can be ‘read back’ to reveal at least some part of the idea or meaning which motivated it’ (Prynne 1993: 1-2). Prynne concludes his discussion of this matter thus: ‘Blake’s production of the word ‘tiger’, and from the word the full portrait of the creature’s powerful challenge to our idea of a benevolent creation ... works by moves and counter-moves which are all part of the language process in its largest sense, and of the world to which it is connected. We may if we wish leave arbitrariness in more or less full control of the central citadel of linguistic theory, but out in the larger semantic fields and forests its writ does not successfully prohibit a wider and more hybrid repertory of contrarious procedures’ (Prynne 1993: 35).

17 As a case in point, consider Prynne’s reading of the seventh stanza of ‘Ein Heldenleben’ (*Poems*: 355) on the DVD *River Pearls* (Wilkinson 2008).

This in fact points more toward Lachenmann than Derek Bailey (though unintentionally so). One of the goals of Lachenmann's concept of *musique concrète instrumentale* is to direct the attention of the listener to the real human labour involved in producing sound from an instrument, something which conventionally 'good' technique often deliberately obscures. Hence, cause-effect metonymies can at times take precedence over symbolic relationships in our perception of the music. Dean also uses the term to refer to a mode of structuring an improvised solo, an alternative to motivic improvisation, 'in which the initial motive was continuously the basis of the continuing developments'. He refers to:

"... chain improvising in which there is a metonymy between successive motivic entities. The term 'metonymy', taken from literary theory usage ... indicates that while there is direct continuity from beginning to end, the final motivic variants in chain improvising are very much further removed from the initial material than in the case of continuous motivic improvising." (Dean 1992: 49)

Such a process can be seen in freely improvised music in Evan Parker's soprano saxophone solos, which consist of long streams of activity, comprised of rapid sequences of pitches (including harmonics and multiphonics) but often only gradually evolving, and made possible thanks to circular breathing. This is not, however, an example of a metonymic musical practice. Every element in such an improvisational "chain" is not only adjacent to its neighbours, it is very similar to them: only certain features will change with each movement to a new "link" in the chain; this is how the continuity of such a process is perceived. In Derek Bailey's solo music, however, adjacent elements are frequently extremely *dissimilar* from one another. It is the very *lack* of relationships of similarity between proximate units which leads me to propose a metonymic understanding of Bailey's musical organisation: contiguity is foregrounded via a relatively low incidence of similarity. (This is not, of course, a distinction of value between the two approaches, rather a technical distinction between modes of signification.)

In his *Decentering Music*, Kevin Korsyn analyses music criticism in tropological terms. For example, he says of Rose Rosengard Subotnik's 'Classical Music as Post-Kantian Critique', on Chopin's Op. 28 No. 4 (in her *Developing Variations*) that for her:

"[t]he piece is a "quasi-spatial . . . inventory" of parts that lie side by side; the "entity" or whole known as A minor is reduced to "a few highly individualized aspects"; the layers are "relatively discrete," separated in the manner of metonymy, lacking "an implicit and unifying tonal premise" that might make them cohere through metaphorical resemblance; in pointing to "an outside source from which they must emanate," the musical events are reduced to manifestations of an agent, effects of an external cause, suggesting the act/agent and cause/effect relations associated with metonymy." (Korsyn 2005: 114)

Lachenmann's „... zwei Gefühle ...“, *Musik mit Leonardo* also seems to lack a ‘unifying tonal premise’, either in terms of pitch or of timbre: there is no single musical element or process that we can perceive as its *raison d’être*. However, neither are the composer’s decision-making processes foregrounded via the obvious application of unifying compositional decisions to disparate material; rather, the ‘cause/effect relations’ that we are most aware of are often the sounds that result from the physical activities of the musicians, some traditional, some very far from traditional. Many of the sounds are deliberately exposed as the genuine acoustic consequences of specific actions. Where compositional decisions are audible as such, they often take the form of a kind of pseudo-causality: sonic events “cause” one another by analogy with the acoustics of events in the non-musical world. Lachenmann employs fragmentation in the form of his music as one of his methods of forcing the listener to consider their own acts of perception. The composer intends that in the presence of apparent incoherence we become aware of the agency of our own self and our desire for coherence, reflecting upon what it is that we feel to be lacking in the present incoherent situation. This sensation should lead to our actively searching for and forming connections between the sonic and visual “inventory” laid out before us, which may well have to be of a different sort than those to which we are accustomed.

### 0.2.2 Contiguity and Sequentiality

Even after Adorno’s observation that ‘[e]very musical phenomenon points beyond itself by reminding us of something, contrasting itself with something or arousing our expectations’ (Adorno 2002: 6), music’s representational aspect is frequently considered to operate only metaphorically or through simple and rather limited similarity (such as the mimicking of natural or human sounds, either through direct similarity (the swell and retreat of the ocean signified by *crescendo* and *decrescendo*) or contiguous connotation (the sound of cow bells signifying the pastoral)).<sup>18</sup> All of this downplays the *actual* physical labour of producing sounds, and the *actual* physical limitations of the sound producing apparatuses employed. In their different ways Derek Bailey and Helmut Lachenmann emphasise both this labour and its related limitations. They do this partly through employing a disjunctive sequentiality, which can result in a situation where the most immediate source of coherence is the simple fact that a series of sounds are produced by the actions of a single musician. Bailey’s and Lachenmann’s non-sequiturs are of a different sort either to those

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<sup>18</sup> I should make clear that these examples chosen are deliberately simple; theorists such as Derek Cooke and Suzanne Langer, among others, have attempted more sophisticated explorations of analogical relations in music.

employed by serialism or to those which were developed in the wake of the Second Viennese School.<sup>19</sup> Adorno observed that:

“The organic aspect, which was still the idea behind Schoenberg’s concept of the instinctual life of sounds in free atonality, referred to the close contact between different musical complexes, just as in tonality. Only what comes into direct contact gives the impression that it is growing organically.” (Adorno 2002: 309)

Both Lachenmann and Bailey are careful to handle the contiguity between events in their music so that such involuntary organicism does not emerge. The sequentiality of Lachenmann’s compositions and Bailey’s improvisations are such that the listener must search elsewhere for the sources of the coherence that must be present for any artwork to be meaningful (even if it proves to be unified by discontinuity). These sources turn out to be, at least in part, historical and social. Albrecht Wellmer has elaborated Adorno’s point about the indexical nature of music and spoken of a “world-relation”:

“This example [Schubert’s *Winterreise*] certainly shows that the question of world-relation in music cannot simply apply to extra-musical “references”, in the sense of expressive contents and “tone painting”; at the same time – and more importantly still – it is rather a matter of a “world-relationship”, as Adorno in particular showed repeatedly in his major musical analyses, precisely with regard to instrumental works – from Beethoven to Mahler, Schönberg and Webern.” (Wellmer 2004: 77)<sup>20</sup>

Such an analytical tradition is one that Lachenmann himself occupies: see, for example the analyses of Beethoven’s ‘harp quartet’ (op. 74), Webern’s opus 10/IV, and his own music (*Air*, *Fassade* and *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*) in his 1985 essay ‘Hören ist wehrlos – ohne Hören’ (Lachenmann 2004: 116-135).<sup>21</sup> For Derek Bailey, as for any free improviser, the direct relation of the player to the instrument is recontextualised by being plunged into an improvisational group where social relations are contingent but nonetheless real.

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19 The latter attempted to be more phenomenological but neglected the actual operation of human perception in favour of scientific abstraction, a case in point being Stockhausen’s theories of the unity of time which were technically accurate but false in applying an abstract continuity to a discontinuous human perceptual apparatus.

20 M.J. Grant has argued that indexicality can be used to distinguish experimental music from other forms of contemporary composition. It can, for example, help in distinguishing ‘works such as Lucier’s or Tenney’s which do not *represent* a metaphor of science but *present* its actual physical realities’ and hence display a sense of acoustics and psychoacoustics distinct from that of ‘composers such as Gérard Grisey, in whose works the study of physical and acoustic processes is subordinate to the idea of form created with the assistance of these theoretical principles’ (Grant 2003: 187). The distinction is interesting but I am not sure it is entirely sustainable: while there is a divergence of approach in the composers referenced here, Lucier’s work is distinguished by a different rhetoric of presentation more than it is the – impossible – absence of any such rhetoric. Directly physical connection is, in Peirce’s thought, only one of a variety of forms of indexicality. At any rate, as I shall demonstrate, Lachenmann displays a great interest both in this and in referentiality more generally, which are complementary within the kind of metonymic approach to music that I am outlining.

21 We should also note that for Lachenmann the *Winterreise* is an example of ‘new music as a domain of discovery for a structurally sensitised perception’: ‘Neue Musik als Reich der Entdeckungen für eine strukturell sensibilisierte Wahrnehmung’ (Lachenmann 2004: 357).

Lachenmann, as a composer, stage-manages these relations more (as for example in sound sequences which mimic the sonic characteristics of physically necessary relations in the material world). Nevertheless he makes use of contingent contiguity (that which is forced upon him by the nature of the material rather than that which results from his arrangement of his material) in a way neither tonality (the “organic” or “natural” whole) nor total serialism (the “abstract” or “rational” whole) do. But he also recognises that he is stage-managing, which is why he is a dialectical composer<sup>22</sup> and knows that it is ideological either to profess to let sounds be themselves<sup>23</sup> or to think that “natural” harmonic relations are a way of ensuring a unity both rational and empirical.<sup>24</sup>

In analysing perceptual and interpretative activity we must follow Saussure and distinguish syntagmatic from paradigmatic structures. It is my contention that certain syntagmatic structures force a particular kind of paradigmatic choice. This is based on a distinction with its roots in Jakobson, as elucidated by John Philips:

“For we have learned that the syntagmatic axis (where context is the decisive factor) involves the whole empirical situation, that is, everything that is at any time present to my experience. Yet this “whole” remains meaningless without its interaction with the paradigmatic axis, which provides resources for understanding and expression that are fundamentally the province of systems, institutions, laws, principles and rules of operation.” (Phillips, n.d.)

This implies that we need to refine our definition of metonymy as it operates in Prynne and Bailey. If we rigidly align metonymy to the syntagmatic axis and selection of alternatives to the paradigmatic axis, we lose what is special about their procedures: it is precisely the oddity of Prynne’s syntactic constructions/combinations that sends us looking for alternatives (selection rather than combination), but we are (usually) prevented from making metaphorical acts of reference, and hence have to rely on contiguity. Thus, it is not that Prynne makes references and that this alone shows the importance of metonymy in his poetics; rather, it is that his syntactic structures and semantic content combine to force the

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22 It is his intention to compose ‘with reference to an innovatively oriented work-ideal that subjects our experience of music to constant dialectical renewal’ (Lachenmann 2004 (2): 56). Compare Prynne’s view that ‘active human knowledge is thus inherently dialectical and in dispute with itself and its base in reality’ (Prynne 2010: 142).

23 John Cage’s oft-cited ambition. Note that Iyad Mohammed concludes that ‘in Lachenmann’s musical aesthetics and his theory of perception, the acts of listening, composing and performing are brought together on the basis of the similarity of their essence and role in human existence’ (Mohammed 2004: 94) which directly contradicts Cage’s famous claim that ‘Composing’s one thing, performing’s another, listening’s a third. What can they have to do with one another?’ (Cage 1999: 15).

24 Such as can be found in the writings of Paul Hindemith, who ‘repeatedly cites his acoustical researches as ‘natural’ justification for his theories, implying that they are therefore inherently superior to other theoretical conceits of the time such as the twelve-tone system, for which he presumably felt no such natural justification could be found’ (Anderson 2000: 10).



reader into acts on the paradigmatic axis but at the same time prevents them from being metaphorical. For example, he often exploits the double function of words that can in different contexts serve either as verbs or nouns, but refuses to supply a semantic context that would resolve the dilemma. We find in *Acrylic Tips* the passage ‘cut your lip / in mischief gashes all succulent racked’ (Prynne 2005: 540). Is ‘gashes’ a noun or a verb? Which answer we give will determine whether we consider ‘gashes’ semantically bound to that which precedes or that which follows it (as well as determining whether ‘mischief’ modifies the cutting of the lip or the ‘gashes’ themselves); in different readings we can experiment with both options, but we cannot resolve the two comfortably – the tension always remains.

In a related way, the reductiveness of Bailey’s musical vocabulary focuses the attention of the listener on the acts both of selection and combination. As with all music, we make predictions about what will follow while listening; in an improvised context these predictions often situate themselves explicitly in relation to the choices made by the performer. That is, an audience will often interpret the music based on what they surmise to be the intentions of the musician. Once one has become familiar with Bailey’s vocabulary, the familiarity of the material available to select from (that is, the rigour with which Bailey sticks to the parameters he set out for himself in his vocabulary) means that combination is often foregrounded over selection in the mind of the listener (in contrast to some jazz improvisers, for example, whose goal – at least in theory – is to downplay the formulaic nature of their material so that it is not the juxtaposition of its elements that is most apparent but the selection of “just the right note” at “just the right time”<sup>25</sup>). Choice is of course always constrained by the limits of the system, context or material. But Bailey’s reasons for choosing certain gestures may well not be what we have surmised them to be, so that the thread of implication we are following during a given sequence of music may end up proving fruitless and require us to reconsider the connections between the elements. A rhythmic motif we have been following may dissolve, for example, but harmonic elements of a recent passage might then become the focus of our attention. As with Prynne’s syntax, we cannot have it both ways at once and choosing one path often necessitates abandoning others, as well as reinterpreting past events.<sup>26</sup> This is unlike much

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25 Such a practice was illustrated for me by cornet player Taylor Ho Bynum in a private conversation. Bynum observed how astonishing it was for him to listen to a solo by tenor saxophonist Ben Webster and be stunned by its richness, and then attempt to learn it on his instrument – only to discover that it contained only notes from a simple pentatonic scale. Webster’s deployment of his material masked rather than displayed its limited scope.

26 Compare Slavoj Žižek’s interest in ‘the notion of a choice/act which retroactively opens up its own

other music because Bailey is not attempting to guide the interpretational responses of the listener. Composers may often set up an apparently predicative thread of activity only to subvert it, but in Bailey's music these threads only become apparent through deliberate focusing of the listener's intention. This would be the case even were we somehow to have access to his decision-making process: improvisation's relation to the objectivity of the musical material (that is, the instruments or devices used to make sound) mean that the improviser – like the composer, but in a much more exposed way – does not have a monopoly on ways of perceiving the coherence of their work.

Closely attending to Bailey's music in this way means that we have to abandon any simplistic conception of his always subverting *any* regularity at all: in fact, on the micro level he often repeats pitch patterns or rhythmic formulations, but he refuses to allow any of these to become stabilised. Combined with his lack of interest in mid-level formal structuring (such as creating clear subsections within an improvisation, for example), this adds up to an occlusion of the middleground. A whole improvisation will, at least post factum, have a particular structure; moment-to-moment events will be perceived by the audience according to the same horizon of present experience (only a few seconds) as any music. But as units of time lengthen – as the present becomes the immediate past and then the remembered – Bailey refuses to stabilise the musical experience by introducing perceptible regularities at this level. Nevertheless, a presumption of disruption becomes, paradoxically, a basis for making connections: expecting discontinuity, continuity and similarity foreground themselves. This is in a way the mirror image of the procedure at work in Evan Parker's solo music as I described it above, where we expect similarity (through repetition) and thus the alterations to what has been repeating are what draw attention to themselves.

Removing a clear middleground has, of course, the effect of rendering it a site of great importance. By middleground I understand a structural level, initially identified by analogy with painting (that which lies between foreground and background) but expanded to refer to that in the work of art which lies between the minute moment-to-moment or element-to-element details of the artwork and its structural characteristics on the most global scale.<sup>27</sup> Similar experiences have been noticed by a composer working with

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possibility' (Žižek 2009: 203).

<sup>27</sup> The trombonist and composer Radu Malfatti makes a similar distinction when he refers to form, structure and material. Form refers to global features, material to the minute details and structure to something akin to a 'function of event-density' (Warburton 2001). The distinction is helpful but I find the terminology less so, given the fact that all the levels involve the deployment of material and that both structure and



Prynne's work as inspiration, namely Eric Ulman. He writes of how 'shifts in focus between rough intuitions and minute detail-work are common to both my reading of Prynne and my composing' (Ulman 2009: 148). If the middleground is excluded, one must constantly *shift*: one cannot merely remain suspended between the particular and the general because there is nowhere to stand. This also has temporal consequences. Ulman goes on in his article to quote from NH Reeve and Richard Kerridge:

"The techniques of the writing – the indeterminable referents of deictic terms like 'it' and 'there', and the characteristic ways in which the turns of the line-ends enact the constant slippage of what looked secure, underpin the engagement with a problematically intermediate position between stasis and flow." (Reeve and Kerridge 1995: 64)<sup>28</sup>

Such stop-go momentum of course has a rhythmic profile all of its own, variants of which can be found in the work of Prynne, of Bailey and also of Lachenmann.

### 0.2.3 Summary and justification

Let me now pause to gather together the main elements which lead me to argue for a fruitful application of the term metonymy to music. Following Jakobson I use the word metonymy to apply generally to semiotic processes based on contiguity, as distinct from those grounded in similarity, which are referred to as metaphorical. I begin from a philosophical understanding of the world whereby we know it to be real because of the way it resists our desires. This is applied to the artistic sphere through an exploitation of the *limiting* features of metonymic connections (so often seen in the past as merely a flaw). Causality is also brought in under this heading, in the sense that it is an exploration of what happens when we act upon the resisting real. I argue that it is possible to formulate an understanding of material that explores the concrete realities of a given material in itself rather than merely as a conduit for abstract ideas, but does not neglect the ways in which that material is bound into the historical and social situations wherein it is, or has been, deployed and which have marked and shaped it. The specific strategies that I am considering as metonymic are as follows:

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form, in their more conventional senses, can be seen to operate at every level as well.

28 Deixis is a concept closely allied with indexicality and hence with metonymy. It is also associated with Prynne's notoriously indeterminate and yet emphatic pronoun use. This has a history that could be traced back through Henry James. Slavoj Žižek has written of the 'extreme form of what [Seymour] Chatman called "appositive deixis" (63), in which a pronoun is given first, anticipating the real subject which follows in apposition, as in the very first sentence of *The Wings of the Dove*: "She waited, Kate Croy, for her father to come in ..." - a minimal gap is thus introduced between the nameless "she" and her determinate qualification, indicating the uncertain and vacillating character of every qualification' (Žižek 2009: 125). The reference is to Seymour Chatman, *The Later Style of Henry James* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972).

- A strategy of linear dissimilarity that prompts the listener or reader to search for alternative forms of coherence.
- In some cases, a deployment of historical or social contiguities to provide such coherence.
- In other cases an emphasis on causality and agency, either natural or artificially generated.
- An occlusion of middleground structures, so as to maximise the possibility of discovering metonymic relationships.

So why have I chosen these three artists in particular? Derek Bailey and JH Prynne are the strongest examples I know of the kind of metonymic practice I have begun to outline; Lachenmann displays a number of important applications of metonymic thinking without being, perhaps, at root as metonymic as the other two in the senses I am developing. They are all of comparable age (Bailey born in 1930, Lachenmann in 1935 and Prynne in 1936) and all three have a strong background in ‘mainstream’ artistic practice (Bailey in jazz, Lachenmann in the German musical tradition and Prynne in the English poetic tradition). For all their artistic radicalness and innovation, they all share a certain attitude to experimentation, not holding it to be – in and of itself – of great importance. As Lachenmann puts it, ‘[t]he problem isn’t to search for new sounds, but for a new way of listening, of perception’ (Lachenmann in Steenhuisen 2009: 162). Or as Bailey wrote:

“One thing which quickly becomes apparent in any improvising is that one spends very little time looking for ‘new’ things to play. The instinctive choice as well as the calculated choice is usually for tried material. Improvisation is hardly ever deliberately experimental. When the ‘new’ arrives, if it arrives, it appears to come of its own accord.” (Bailey 1992: 73).

Engagement with the material (and particularly in Lachenmann’s case engagement with this engagement with the material) are more important than “the new”. The restrictions of a metonymic way of thinking of material and form – seen as non-arbitrary but rather historically and socially binding – help prevent such an approach from descending into complacency.

In fact, all three share an attitude to history, one which is implicit in Bailey’s work but explicit in the other two. Prynne has written of an engagement with ‘the sedimented products of an earlier poetic history’ (Prynne 2010: 128), which, as his concern with etymology has long demonstrated, he believes to be alive and active in the very words of

the language itself as they exist in current usage. Similarly, Lachenmann considers musical instruments to be sedimented products of an earlier (musical, but not only musical) history, and hence an attention to them simply as neutral sound producing devices, while productive, is deluding itself if it thinks it can thereby escape an engagement with history: ‘that which is experienced in all its physical immediacy for its part defines itself through, or perhaps represents, a context determined by the rules of play’, and these rules include an attention to ‘the “aura”, i.e. the history of the material in wider, extramusical contexts, in all spheres of our social and cultural reality’ (Lachenmann 2004 (2): 58). This means that Lachenmann’s continuation of the Modernist project is better characterised as Late Modernist (which is the term usually applied to Prynne’s writing, such as on the back cover of the Bloodaxe editions of his collected *Poems*) rather than as postmodernist. As David Lesser writes, ‘unlike others, notably Karlheinz Stockhausen, Lachenmann’s work stems, in its inception, as opposed to many of its actual sonic characteristics, from the conflicting influences and pressure particular to the broad trends of Modernism within the history of German or related German language 19th- and 20th-century art, culture and social critique’ (Lesser 2004: 108). In this Lachenmann is unlike, for example, Brian Ferneyhough, whose unrepentance in retaining a sonic surface marked by “traditional” Modernist attributes of density, serialisation and disjunction in the midst of other available stylistic options marks him out as, in this sense, more of a postmodernist.<sup>29</sup> Ferneyhough would not allow himself the regularity of rhythm to be found in Lachenmann’s *Salut für Caudwell*, for example: it would not fit in with his avoidance of regularity and repetition (stylistic characteristics of earlier Modernisms), but in fact it allows Lachenmann to work dialectically with the idea of steady pulse,<sup>30</sup> and create disorientations of a sort not to be found in Ferneyhough’s work. In this sense Lachenmann is therefore more Modernist in spirit than Ferneyhough. Similar observations could be applied to Prynne with regard, for example, to the use of rhyme in 1999’s *Pearls That Were* or of character and narrative in *Triodes*, from the same year (Prynne 2005: 451-474 and 477-514). Bailey seems to think that such considerations do not matter (‘[t]he material is never fixed and its historical and

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29 Though he would of course still describe himself as a Modernist. See his essay ‘Parallel Universes’ (Ferneyhough 1998: 76-83), which draws upon Deleuze and Guattari, whose *A Thousand Plateaus* is a crucial text of postmodernist theory (albeit a postmodernism of resistance rather than of acquiescence). For example: ‘it is via this combination of stylistic continuity and the sharing of partially communal “personal vectors” that the linearly-accretive enrichment of “local histories” can pretend to reconcile the autonomy of the late-Modernist subject with the rhizomatic saturation of conceptual space by the non-directional free play of deracinatedly objectivized signifiers in a field composed entirely of “minor narratives”’ (Ferneyhough 1998: 82).

30 ‘If there is any single value central to modernism, I would claim it is its dialectical nature: for virtually every position modernism has adopted, it has also formulated a critique’ (Heile 2004: 165).

systematic associations can be ignored' (Bailey 1991: 106)) but I shall argue that Bailey's retention of the standard tuning and the standard physical relationship of the player to the instrument means that his practice is much more closely aligned to that of Prynne and Lachenmann than his explicit comments might suggest.

Such attitudes to history – contrary to the *tabula rasa* insisted on in music in Darmstadt in the 1950s (replacing outmoded customary practices with a supposedly rational constructivism) and in a very different way in certain poetic movements at roughly the same time, which insisted upon the immediacy of the lyric voice (opposed to arcane, convoluted and obscure modernisms) – mean that all the artists I am considering have had to steer between two opposed tendencies. They inherit the gains of the artistic revolutions of the twentieth centuries without naïve attachment to singular “solutions” to age-old artistic conundra. For Lachenmann, although his compositional procedure seems to begin with quasi-serial rhythmic organisation, he is critical of total serialism, which concerned itself ‘with naked, quasi-unconscious parameters, with quantifiable measurements and permutational mechanics that know nothing of their own effects’ (Lachenmann 2004b: 61). But to assert “pure sound” and a constant search for new sonority as a solution to such inattentive structuralism would also be a mistake and risk ‘withering away in the sonically “interesting” – i.e. boring – no man’s land of exotic defamiliarisatory acrobatics’ (Lachenmann 2004b: 66). The related pitfalls for poets are described by Anthony Mellors:

“... literary critics who depend on arguments based on post-phenomenological and poststructuralist theory too often end up by positively evaluating modernist texts in terms of ‘rupture’, dislocation and ‘disunity’, as if forms of non-unity possess value in and of themselves. In fact, modernist writing only falls into one side of this binary opposition or another when it is least successful: if the gesture to symbolic coherence is too blatant or if its metonymy results in an indifferent word-salad, the poem becomes an object that is always already read and fails to offer significance beyond the self-enclosed space of the text.” (Mellors 2005: 12)

Prynne describes the task of the contemporary poet as ‘not to subside into distracted ingenious playfulness with the lexicon and cross-inflectional idiomatics, but to write and read with maximum focused intelligence and passion’ (Prynne 2010: 130). His writing practice has shown that formal games of the kind employed by the Oulipo group, while they may have their place, cannot in themselves be the solution either. Bailey shows the same sort of mindset, as his attitude to pitch demonstrates: desiring maximum improvisational flexibility, ‘it became necessary to reject all tonal, modal and atonal organisation in order to leave the way free to organise only through the powers of

improvisation' (Bailey 1980: 127). This does not of course mean that Bailey thought he could achieve an arena where he could indulge freely in spontaneous and unconstrained activity. Rather, the purpose was to avoid systematic prejudgement of his choices, so that there would at any point in time be a maximum of improvisational options open to him. Hence in dealing with the problems associated with pitch in such a way of thinking, merely to retreat into a world without stable pitch, where "sound" took over as the musical material, would not do either: 'pitch had to take a greater part in the language, for without it I didn't have sufficient resources' (Bailey 1980: 127).

### **0.3 Chapter Outlines**

In my first chapter I focus on the work of JH Prynne. Beginning with Prynne's relationship to Romantic concepts of the imagination (as found in Coleridge and Wordsworth), I go on to consider both his critical writing on metonymy and its role in the development of his poetic oeuvre, before concluding with a detailed study of the 2001 sequence *Unanswering Rational Shore*. I look in turn at the semantic fields important to the work, the role of omission, of intertextuality, and of sound, before concluding with a discussion of truthfulness in poetry.

In my second chapter I consider the work of Derek Bailey. After a brief historical sketch of the way Bailey developed his improvisational vocabulary, I focus on the details of that vocabulary: his treatment of pitch, his relationship to the control of his instrument, and some of his specific instrumental techniques. I consider the influence of Karlheinz Stockhausen, Samuel Beckett and Robert Musil on Bailey's work, and more generally the important concept of exclusion. I then explore the formal consequences of his vocabulary. Here I begin by considering his work in relation to Adorno's projected *musique informelle*. This leads me to a consideration of form in relation to the listener, a phenomenological treatment of the music, and an exploration of the physicality of memory. Finally I examine technological, externalised memory in the form of recorded music and discuss its relationship to the evanescent character of improvisation. Throughout this chapter it is my aim to illustrate the ways in which Bailey developed and employed what could legitimately be described as a metonymic musical vocabulary, and to show the formal advantages that were the result.

I next turn to Helmut Lachenmann, and examine in particular the composition „... *zwei Gefühle ...*“, *Musik mit Leonardo*, although in this chapter more than previously I

expand my focus at the relevant points to consider Prynne and Bailey as well. I begin with a development of my ideas about the listener, employing George Lewis's concept of the 'participatory listener'. I examine the sectional ambiguity characteristic of Lachenmann's concept of form, which leads us to the role of expectation in his music. Following this I explore the composer's treatment of instrumental physicality and sound: I start by discussing his concept of sound families, compare *musique concrète* and *musique concrète instrumentale*, and then consider indexicality in Lachenmann's music, in terms of both genuine and pseudo-causality. The particular role of the guitar in „... zwei Gefühle ...“, *Musik mit Leonardo* is contrasted with Bailey's treatment of his instrument.

In the fourth chapter I discuss the development and realisation of my modular composition *Representations*. The mechanics of the work and the specific nature of the various influences upon it are set forward. I then argue for the relevance of metonymy in relation to my work, under the headings of "arbitration", similarity, referentiality, material and the middleground, and memory. The themes that have been elaborated in the body of the thesis meet here in the speculative arena of creative work.

The final chapter concludes this thesis by briefly discussing three terms as a way both of tying together and looking beyond the themes I explore in the body of the thesis; these are rubbish, purity and, once again, truthfulness.

# Chapter One

## Metonymy in JH Prynne's Critical and Poetic Work

### 1.1 Imagination and the Real

For English Romanticism's greatest theorist, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the function of the imagination was *esemplastic*. That is, its role was to shape perception into oneness, in a creative activity that was the human analogue of the creative being that is God:

“The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former ... It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify.” (Coleridge 2000: 313)

JH Prynne's affinities have long lain more with Wordsworth than with his most famous friend, but Prynne differs from him too on this subject. Wordsworth most famously refers to imagination in a direct invocation:

Imagination! – lifting up itself  
Before the eye and progress of my song  
Like an unfathered vapour ...

(*The Prelude*, 1805, VI, 525-527;  
Wordsworth 1979: 216)

For Coleridge imagination is the ‘prime agent of ... perception’, while for Wordsworth it can be the object of the *song* which, the poem claims, possesses its own perceptive faculties (dependent as these must be on the faculties of the singer). The creative gratuity of the imaginative process is still paramount; yet, according to Geoffrey Hartman, imagination for Wordsworth is more reflexive: he defines it as ‘consciousness of self raised to an apocalyptic pitch’ (Hartman 1987: 17). Such apocalypticism, paradoxically, renders the song independent of the singer by a minute attention to his perceptual, emotional and imaginative ‘progress’. Such is the dialectic of Romanticism.<sup>1</sup> In Prynne's Modernism, heir to Romanticism much more than herald of its negation, his explorations of scale and perspective (which move from the tiniest biological minutiae<sup>2</sup> to stretches of time vastly beyond direct human apprehension<sup>3</sup>) mean that such an understanding of subjectivity and the imaginative process must of necessity be radicalised beyond

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- 1 That is to say, contrary to some contemporary dismissals of Romanticism on the basis that its intense focus on the minutiae of individual experience exhibited an unpleasant self-absorption or even hubris, such a focus is justified by a belief in the presence of shared characteristics in even our most private experiences.
  - 2 For example, the importance of the otolith crystals in the inner ear throughout 1983's *The Oval Window* (Prynne 2005: 311-339).
  - 3 ‘The Glacial Question, Unsolved’ (Prynne 2005: 65-7).

Wordsworth's apocalypticism and must fragment itself, even while its traces remain.

Prynne believes in the transmissibility of thought via the medium of language, in thought as related to discourse, to a shared *endeavour*. Hence his poetic investment in etymology, as an index of the synchronic and diachronic aspects of language use by actual human speakers or writers. Such a perspective sees words as facts in the world, as well as codes for representing it, and thus any imaginative application of them (that is, any poetry) must of necessity also be a *working with* words as material (with representational, historical, sonic and other connotations and denotations that are, if not wholly objective, certainly not "merely subjective" in any sense which might be in accordance with the self-obscuring ideology of "choice" characteristic of late capitalism). Prynne's conception of the material with which he works tallies closely with the following account given by Adorno (as does Helmut Lachenmann's, as we shall see later):

"Material cannot be thought of except as the stuff with which the composer operates and with which he works. And this in turn is nothing less than the objectified and critically reflected state of the technical productive forces of an age with which any given composer is inevitably confronted. The physical and historical dimensions mutually interact." (Adorno 2002: 281)

Prynne hints as to his own conception of the imagination in a commentary on Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper", a text that directly deals with the song and the singer:

"This may seem a counterintuitive role for imagination to play, to hold in place to the real rather than to conjure some unitary overview in mental representation; we may understand this more clearly if we do not too readily accept Coleridge's account of this role as beyond question definitive." (Prynne 2007: 16)

For Prynne, the imaginative act can be an act of fidelity to the concrete details of the multiplicities of the real, which must respect both these multiplicities and the interconnectedness of the world. This real includes the products of the poet's creative activity, as we saw in the introduction. As such the imagination constantly confronts its own limits. These limits also, however, have an apparently bathetic side: limitations consisting of the inertia of the all-too-familiar; of the everyday and the ordinary. It has long been held in the Western poetic tradition that it is poetry's job to transcend such modalities. Hence the exaltation of the imagination that occurred in parallel to Romanticism's collapse of the epic to the lyric, and hence the exaltation of metaphor as the intrinsically poetic process par excellence. Prynne's procedure (one of whose starting points was the reimagining of the epic in the work of Charles Olson, and a non-lyric



reading of Wordsworth, as we shall see later) is often to challenge the presumption of bathos in the mundane, but to do so without transforming it in such a way that it ceases to be mundane. As he writes in “L’Extase de M. Poher”, ‘rubbish is / pertinent’ (Prynne 2005: 162).<sup>4</sup>

Wordsworth expressed what became the standard view of the virtues of metaphor:

I mean to speak  
Of that interminable building reared  
By observation of affinities  
In objects where no brotherhood exists  
To common minds.

(*The Prelude*, 1805, II, 401- 405;  
Wordsworth 1979: 86)

The poetic imagination is the means of transcending the normal limits of perception, and the metaphor the means by which the insights achieved are transmitted to others. However, Max Black provides the contrasting view: ‘[a] metaphor operates largely with commonplace implications. You need only proverbial knowledge, as it were, to have your metaphor understood’ (Black 1962: 239). To spot resemblances everywhere is to think metaphorically, but is not necessarily the mark of insight and originality it is so often taken for, in poetic as much as in philosophical thought.<sup>5</sup> But this does not mean that we can set up contiguity as a more profound relation or simply trump metaphor with metonymy, any more than Prynne’s respect for the operation and language of scientific enquiry means that he holds scientific truth to be of a superior order to that of poetic truth. In his talk on Willem de Kooning’s painting *Rosy-fingered Dawn at Louse Point* Prynne makes the observation that ‘[i]n no sense, even momentarily, is this picture a theosophical reverie’ (Prynne 1996: 40). Footnoting this insistence, he quotes Svetlana Alpers, paraphrasing Samuel van Hoogstraten’s 1678 text *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst: Anders de Zichtbaere Werelt*, to the effect that:

“If the world is looked at in this way [through the eyes of a close attention], it is not the differences between things but their resemblance that is most problematic. Apparent resemblances can produce confusions in our perception of the separate and distinct

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4 See also the strikingly similar idea expressed by percussionist Jamie Muir: “Instead of transmuting rubbish into music with a heavily predetermined qualitative bias ... leave behind the biases and structures of selectivity (which is an enormous task), the ‘found’ attitudes you inherit, and approach the rubbish with a total respect for its nature as rubbish – the undiscovered/unidentified/unclaimed – transmuting that nature into the performing dimension.” (Quoted in Bailey 1992: 96)

5 Nietzsche put this argument very strongly. As cited by Adorno, he argues that ‘[h]e who seeks to mediate between two bold thinkers ... stamps himself as mediocre: he has not the eyes to see uniqueness: to perceive resemblances everywhere, making everything alike, is a sign of weak eyesight’ (Adorno 2005: 74).

identities of things.” (Quoted in Prynne 1996: 60)

The challenge is to perceive the web of relationships while not reducing the whole to a grey mush; to perceive the object in itself and its inseparability from its context, conditions and causes. In keeping with such a challenge, the concept of *quality* is of great importance in Prynne’s earlier work, particularly in *The White Stones*: see for example the titles ‘Quality in that Case as Pressure’ and ‘Concerning Quality, Again’ (Prynne 2005: 78-9 and 82-3, respectively). To mention quality is to connote the way it is conventionally contrasted with quantity (particularly so given the preponderance of financial and numerical themes in Prynne’s previous collection, *Kitchen Poems*), and hence to suggest the idea of discrimination rather than the finding of similarity. Quality implies specific characteristics, as opposed to quantity, where we find the numerical comparison of the degree to which certain qualities are shared. Thus, quality must be primary for we must have a conception of a quality and perceive it as shared before we can quantitatively evaluate it.

For Henri Bergson, memory itself is also a way of reinforcing our connection to the physical world, not of divorcing ourselves from it:

“Consider memory. The body retains motor habits capable of acting the past over again; it can resume attitudes in which the past will insert itself; or, again, by the repetition of certain cerebral phenomena, which have prolonged former perceptions, it can furnish to remembrance a point of attachment with the actual, a means of recovering its lost influence upon present reality: but in no case can the brain store up recollections or images.” (Bergson 1991: 225)

So both memory and imagination can be put to work in the service of a rigorous application to the material world and its realities, rather than being seen as necessarily the site of error, self-deception and fantasy wherein misleading representations are stored. The issue of representation is a central and charged part of Theodor Adorno’s philosophy, and one which provides another context for the importance of specificity of reference:

“Consciousness that interpolates some third thing, the image, between itself and what it thinks, unwittingly reproduces idealism; a corpus of representations is substituted for the object of knowledge, and the subjective arbitrariness of such representations turns out to be that of hierarchy and domination. The materialist longing to grasp the thing wills precisely the opposite of that; the full object can be conceived only in the absence of images. This absence of images converges with the theological ban on graven images.” (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, quoted in Jameson 1990: 119)

Not that this idea is in itself a new one:

“For it is not merely the radical difference of the individual work that general theories of beauty, or of art, or of the aesthetic, both miss and repress; it is also the will to the

transaesthetic, to a truth beyond the work and a worldly referentiality in some more general sense, the vocation of Joyce or Aeschylus, of Dante or of Po Chu-yi, to engage the world itself and to be something more than mere 'art', that remains unregistered and invisible in the accounts of a traditional philosophical aesthetic." (Jameson 1990: 130-1)

Something of this 'ultra-realism' (going beyond, subverting or ignoring the conventions of realism in the name of a greater proximity to reality) is to be found both in JH Prynne's poetry and Helmut Lachenmann's music. In Prynne, referential metonymy is one of the major devices he employs to this end; in Lachenmann his *musique concrète instrumentale* stymies any tendency to see music as merely 'transmitted' through the physical, rather than as a social and material phenomenon (though Lachenmann is no crude materialist; there is a distinct dialectic with transcendence in his work which thickens the plot).<sup>6</sup>

To refuse to interpose a representation between subject and object is to attempt to hold with ever increasing immediacy to the real, to what is, and to avoid the 'domination' of representation not by ignoring it but by strenuously avoiding it. Any criticism of Prynne's poetry as lacking emotion is testament to a general unwillingness to come to terms with material and its working in a direct way, unmediated by an artist's already having decided what they want their work to make us think. We fear making our own minds up, and mistake coded signifiers for unmediated transmission of expression. As Derek Bailey observed:

"I don't like the idea of imposed expressiveness ... that if you play a sequence of notes and it doesn't sound good enough, that you should put a bit of heart and soul into it. A guy came up to me and said, 'You don't use any blue notes.' And I told him I simply work with basic musical materials and try to sort them out. That's what I'm interested in – fiddling around with scales and harmonics and open strings and bumps and scratches and bangs – using anything that's available. He said blue notes were a part of the language too, but I disagreed, saying they were expressive devices. I don't buy the idea that some guy who plays a blue note is somehow telling you more about the state of his soul." (Quoted in Macnie 1989: 144)<sup>7</sup>

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6 Lachenmann ends his essay 'Philosophy of Composition – Is There Such A Thing?' as follows: 'This only leaves the question: where is "above"...?' (Lachenmann 2004b: 69)

7 Lachenmann concurs with such a view, but emphasises the dialectical counter-argument: 'Expression is created on the reverse face of that on which the composer is working. [...] I am reminded here that the highest degree of expression in the music of the 'expressionist' Alban Berg is famously indicated in his score 'without expression' ...' (Ryan 1999: 22) Thus, Lachenmann can use the coded signifiers themselves as material. As Benjamin Schweitzer writes about a passage in *Schwankungen am Rand* featuring a unison D, this 'enables the playing in *unisono* on two strings in all string instruments ... Lachenmann does not explicitly restrict the use of vibrato, and the natural reaction of a traditionally educated player (most probably expected by the composer) would be to enforce the intensity of the sustained note with at least a slight vibrato, which supports the expressive sound effect. ... exceptionally, Lachenmann makes use of implicit, not explicit, notation. It seems that this recourse on an isolated, customary 'expressive' feature became something like a fixed topos in Lachenmann's musical language, as if to let in a glimpse of the conventions that still affect both performance and reception' (Schweitzer,

This is not to say that to work with material in this way is to open the door to any interpretation whatsoever. Adorno's commitment to the material is where he situates his sense of artistic freedom, but that freedom must be dialectical and thus achieved through constraint. As Jameson puts it, we find in many places in Adorno 'the exceedingly characteristic idea that the contemporary artist's freedom is to be found not in free-floating subjectivity somewhere, whether in choice or caprice, but rather in the objective constraints of the material itself' (Jameson 1990: 164). Through his deployment of metonymy, Prynne exploits the constraints of his chosen material: language itself.

## 1.2 Metonymy in JH Prynne's Critical Work: Constraint and Continuity

In 'China Figures', his 1983 review of *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, a translation (with an introduction and annotations) by Anne Birrell of a sixth-century Chinese anthology of poetry, Prynne notes a positive sense of limitation in the Palace Style poetry collected in the anthology, one closely tied to our mortal experience on earth, and thus an argument for the superiority of metonymy over metaphor:

"... the tendency of this anthology is to shew how acutely felt the restrictions of time and space can be, constraining the visual image which seems free of confining location to serve as part of a metonymic system which encloses and pre-empts the largesse of unattached metaphor." (Prynne 1983: 685)<sup>8</sup>

Note the moral ambivalence about the glittering attractions of metaphor: metonymy's limitations may force the poet to deploy it *responsibly*, a requirement far less pressing in the case of metaphor. In his more recent theorising on poetics, too, Prynne proposes a philologically responsible understanding of poetic meaning, and underlines its close relation to limitation, in the specific sense that the features of a language, however they have come about, are independent of the given poet at a given time. He has no ability to evade or deny them. For Prynne, Garrett Stewart's *Reading Voices; Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley, 1990) goes about things the wrong way:

"Here an interesting repertory of troping and punning word-forms is recovered from literary texts by speech-based elision of written (printed) word boundaries and by extending the purview of rhyme-formations; but the ideological pre-commitment to a totally free play of linguistic accident within the text's arena of potential signification leads without real hesitation directly to a totalising suspension of readerly disbelief in regard to the outcomes. Everything experimentally possible is allowed instant, autonomous plausibility, because the echoic and scriptive transgression of textual directives and priorities is assumed to override text meaning while quite inconsistently presuming the intact data of lexical word-meaning. Such programmatic refusal to

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2004: 156).

8 This essay was also appended to the 1986 Penguin edition of Birrell's translations.

countenance interpretative rank-ordering of relative probabilities, within social, historical and authorial frames as well as within the performance horizons of the text, amounts to assigning an ungraded force de frappe to both signal and noise equally, in what are in any case only selected fragments within the carrier medium; ...” (Prynne 1993: 50)

Prynne argues that we must be responsible because the tools at our disposal are very powerful; Stewart is chastised for reading anything he wants out of sonic (or other) features, safe in the knowledge of the continuing existence of ‘the intact data of lexical word-meaning’. Prynne is not nearly so sanguine; there is not a positivistically hermetic domain of lexical meaning on which any froth can safely be floated to divert and entertain us but not actually affect the text in any fundamental way. Prynne’s own preferred approach pays more heed to the binding historically-derived realities of etymology and phonetics:

“... the patterns discovered by phonological analysis are in varying degrees binding, and not selective options (like for instance a poet’s metrical choices): they function as rules of the base structure. ... the rules give shape and expression to the grammar of speech, to its rational and evolutionary linguistic skeleton which supports the productive inventiveness of textuality.” (Prynne 2010: 131)<sup>9</sup>

These ‘binding patterns’ are never merely arbitrary, but inform as to material and social conditions.

A suspicion with the dogma of the arbitrary also ties in to the theme of the two lectures by JH Prynne collected as *Stars, Tigers and the Shape of Words*, from the footnotes to which comes the challenge to Stewart. In the lectures he argues that a major critical lacuna exists between theoretical emphasis on arbitrariness and all those ‘students of literature writing industriously about effects of language which are features of sound, of expressive word-forms and style choices, as if these were directly part of the phenomenon of meaning’ (Prynne 1993: 2). Word forms may not be semantically motivated, as any good structuralist knows, but poets habitually write *as if they were*, and make use of the tendencies of readers – whether conscious or unconscious – to behave as if they were. A clear sighted look at this crucial phenomenon of poetic meaning and interpretation has been sadly lacking, Prynne argues. Such an examination would necessitate an attention to poetic effects that may seem insecurely founded if looked at from a strictly etymological

9 Prynne here echoes Adorno, who claimed that ‘the assertion that someone has mastered a language ... only possesses a meaning worthy of mankind if he has the strength to allow himself to be mastered by that language’ (Adorno 2002: 319). Elsewhere, such as in his ‘Keynote Speech at the First Pearl River Poetry Conference, Guangzhou, China, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2005’, Prynne has expressed this idea with the metaphor of language as the medium in which poets swim, just as fish do in water (Prynne 2005b). But see also, per contra, ‘Mental Ears and Poetic Work’: ‘... using a set of implements does not mean being used by them’ (Prynne 2010: 127).

standpoint, but which are actually constrained by the deeper rules of phonological form. He concludes his lectures thus:

“... Shakespeare’s audience understood the effect of ‘fitful’ in ‘Lifes fitfull Feuer’ [Macbeth 3.2.23] as soon as they heard it, because it was self-explainingly constructed by familiar rules of word-formation, and also because its sound-context was equally predictive of its function; that they could not have heard or seen this word ever before was not a difficulty, because it raised an instant echo of its apt fittingness and plausible origin. ... We may if we wish leave arbitrariness in more or less full control of the central citadel of linguistic theory, but out in the larger semantic fields and forests its writ does not successfully prohibit a wider and more hybrid repertory of contrarious procedures.” (Prynne 1993: 35)<sup>10</sup>

If the charge of arbitrariness is leveled at the work of either Bailey, Lachenmann or Prynne, it is likely to be in a somewhat more general sense, and because of its linearly disjunctive nature. Decisions about continuity are, however, almost exclusively based on convention rather than necessity, so that there is not in principle anything less arbitrary about a melody than a musical sequence governed by timbre, for example. The surface fragmentation that is apparent in all three artists aligns them with the quintessentially Modernist aesthetics of collage or montage; one does, however, of necessity experience their works in the first instance in a linear fashion. The reader’s experience of the linearity of Prynne’s poetry is very different from that of less syntactically adventurous poetry. The paradigmatic choices that the syntactically unusual structures of Prynne’s late work force in the reader are one of the main sites where he puts metonymic procedures to work. Paul Ricoeur believes that:

“Syntax represents the order of the necessary, ruled by completely formal laws concerning the condition of the possibility of well-formed expressions. Contiguity stays in the order of the contingent, where each thing forms a completely independent whole. So metonymic contiguity appears to be quite different from syntactic liaison.” (Ricoeur 2003: 211)<sup>11</sup>

In Prynne’s later poetry, these two phenomena are constantly in tension with one another. The reader can often find assistance in a metonymic reading of the text as a whole, which

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10 Related arguments to this one have been made in a critical tradition influenced by Prynne, that also draws strongly on thinkers such as Adorno, and that wishes to dissociate an avoidance of mimesis from the charge of thereby also untethering the text from demonstrable standards of interpretation. Simon Jarvis makes the following point: “‘There is nothing London-like about the name ‘London’.” Yes; but this does not mean that the name is “arbitrary”. On the contrary, such a claim is the mythical suppression of the whole history by which the name London has come to be attached to the city. ... That the name London has come to be attached to these streets and squares is in truth no more really arbitrary than the fact that the city indeed stands there; the judgment of “arbitrariness” merely marks the limit of our patience for enquiring into the question, our instrumentalist willingness to suppose that if something appears very difficult to find out, this is likely to be because it is in principle unknowable.” (Jarvis 1999: 158)

11 We should register a doubt here as to whether linguistic structure is such that syntactical laws could ever be described as ‘completely formal’.

rather than adhering to a linear sense of form keeps in play multiple connections between semantic units (both those internal and external to the poetic sequence itself) that build up in the reader's mind over the course of the sequence. And yet, the strength of grammatical bonding means that the poetry does not allow us to construe it merely as a series of lexical items to be linked to each other in any way we see fit.<sup>12</sup> Ian Patterson has referred to the process of reading Prynne as follows: '... these poems, which partly acquire their sense through a process of reading backwards as the forward movement picks up on words and phrases and allows patterns of signification to take shape' (Patterson 1991: 238). Semantic hierarchies are continually challenged and rearranged. Lee Spinks finds such a process operative in 'The Ideal Star-Fighter' from *Brass*. He analyses the following sentence:

It pays to be  
simple, for screaming out, the eye  
converts the news image to fear enzyme,  
we are immune to disbelief. (Prynne 2005: 165)

as one that 'does not merely describe the transition between one state of being and another: it enacts this transition through a series of metonymic cuts that prevent any one of these phrases from becoming the explanatory ground for any of the others' (Spinks: 2000). In this reading of Prynne, his poetry recalls Helmut Lachenmann's description of listening to some of his own music:

"The first sound of Beethoven's 7<sup>th</sup> *Symphony* is music already. I hear an A sharp triad there – and I'm in this magical field already. The first sound of *Mouvement* is nothing. It's a piece of information only. Two marimba sticks are rubbed against each other, and two strings play a glissando. So what? What's going to happen?" (Lachenmann in Defilla 2005; translation from the DVD subtitles)

Lachenmann makes the opening sounds of this piece deliberately "flat", in a similar way to Prynne's tendency to make the opening lines of his late sequences particularly rebarbative and apparently "meaningless": 'The shut inch lively as pin grafting'; 'At leisure for losing outward in a glazed toplight'; 'Pacify rag hands attachment in for muted' (Prynne 2005: 312, 410 and 553). Interpretation can only begin *within* the text, looking outward, rather than presupposing a conventional relationship between word and world and then looking

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12 Even though, as Prynne has observed, 'a largely metonymic mode may have less need of an elaborately subordinating or fully-determined syntax, since the activity of reference and meaning implied by the figures is located not so much in what is transcribed as in the coded implications lying outside the text' (Prynne 1983: 683). I should qualify the inclusion of this passage by noting the radical dissimilarity of Chinese poetic syntax from that found in English; nevertheless, I believe that the point holds, despite the enormous resultant differences between its specific manifestation in the Chinese poetry Prynne is discussing here and his own work.

“into” the poem to see how successfully its words represent the world.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.3 The development of JH Prynne’s poetic oeuvre and the role of metonymy within it

For how long has metonymy had such a central role in Prynne’s poetry? Is it a constant from his earliest to his latest work? Although he may have expressed a desire early on to ‘suppress the | breaks’ (Prynne 2005: 64), his late work, as we have seen, is often radically disjunctive. It is a fraught question in studies of Prynne how much there is a ‘break’ between his early and late work. We saw in the introduction that one strand of the thought behind his poetry, at least, is more or less consistent from before his first published collection right up to the year of his last-but-one publication, 2009.<sup>14</sup> There is, nevertheless, a clear, if under-discussed, break between the poems in his earliest collection, *Force of Circumstance* and his later work. This is largely because the earlier poems are often in regular stanzaic forms, using regular metrical forms and end-rhymes that Prynne has to the most part eschewed since then (though not without exception – see for example the sixteenth, eighteenth and twentieth poems in *Not-You* or most of *Pearls That Were*)<sup>15</sup>, and also because Prynne has omitted *Force of Circumstance* from any of his collected editions. This break is to an extent analogous with that between Bailey’s commercial career and his improvisational work. Even so, the tone and themes in the first collection have plenty of continuity with his later work. The remark that

we shape  
Ourselves into wedges, to split  
What cannot be ignored (Prynne 1962: 9)

would not have been out of place in *Kitchen Poems* or *The White Stones*; neither would the sudden unexpected vehemence at the end of ‘Resins for Smoke’:

This is a place to remember the past  
Or perhaps for a blind suppliant hatred. (Prynne 1962: 40)

More controversial is the proposed break later in Prynne’s work, most often situated at the time of the collection *Brass*. This break is sometimes proposed by critics who lack sympathy with Prynne’s later work, as a way of excusing them from dealing with its full

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13 Thus, of course, interpretation of the world must similarly begin from an internal perspective. As Jeremy Noel-Tod expresses it, ‘[f]or Prynne the world is known provisionally and from the inside; like Wordsworth, he makes poetry by tracing the “fluxes and refluxes” of the mind’ (Noel-Tod, n.d.).

14 *Sub Songs* was published by Barque Press in May 2010, just as I was completing work on this thesis.

15 Prynne 2005: 396, 398, 400 and 451-474 respectively.



implications. But some of those sympathetic to Prynne also propose a radical break. Peter Riley, for example, is of the opinion that:

“There are at least two JH Prynne poetries, polarised as early and late, and I for one find them so separated from each other that I don’t see how one can be in the tradition of the other, let alone anybody else’s.” (Riley 2007)

John Wilkinson seems somewhat to agree:

“The period from 1969 to 1971 saw Prynne’s break with Olson poetically and politically. *Brass* (1971) is the book with which a new British poetics influenced by European dialectical lyric (especially Trakl, Celan, and Ungaretti) is inaugurated, and is a work of such power that all ambitious British poets continue to work in its shadow, knowingly or not.” (Wilkinson 2007: 121)

It is clear that there was a break with the ‘Olsonian’ mode and that it had significant repercussions. The point is whether to locate it so exactly really represents the complex movement of Prynne’s poetry. Wilkinson writes that:

“The materialism of *Brass* works at several levels. The first is epistemological. Prynne’s writing drew on multiple ways of knowing, a characteristic fated to be misread as postmodern discursive relativism. In reality it was a truth-seeking by way of poetry, reconnected with the ambitions of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The second is political, refusing easy sentiment, disdaining spirituality, rooted in economics and biology, and intensely interested in the everyday signs of capitalist depredation.” (Wilkinson 2007: 121-122)

This description, however, could also be applied, I think, to the first collection in *Poems*, dating from three years before *Brass*; namely *Kitchen Poems*. N.H. Reeve and Richard Kerridge wonder ‘whether the changes *Brass* introduced were so absolute and fundamental, or rather an intensification of an already established effect’ (Reeve and Kerridge 1995: 76). Prynne’s politics may perhaps have firmed up since then, but the interest in the relationship between capitalist economics and the everyday is there even in the titles of the poems, such as ‘Sketch for a Financial Theory of the Self’ (Prynne 2005: 19-20).<sup>16</sup> There are thematic links that run throughout Prynne’s oeuvre. Jay Basu wrote of *Red D Gypsum* in 2001 that:

“... it displays the extreme syntactic disruption which has characterised Prynne’s work since the late 1970s. There is, though, a suggestion in the most recent texts of a move into a ‘late late’ phase. Certainly ‘For the Monogram’ and *Red D Gypsum*, as well as the current long poem *Pearls That Were* (which often assumes conventional verse forms), all seem more lyrically rhythmical than do the harsher disjoints of 1993’s ‘Not You’ [sic] or 1994’s ‘Her Weasels Wild Returning’. The interrogation of pastoral themes and the preoccupation with natural cycles and processes, characteristic of Prynne’s earlier work, are strongly resurgent in these recent productions.” (Basu 2001:

<sup>16</sup> Prynne observes in the preceding poem, ‘Numbers in Time of Trouble’, that ‘the Marxist comet burns with / such lovely, flaring destruction’ (Prynne 2005: 17).

19-20)

I would not want to argue (as I am sure Basu also would not) that there is a simple retrenchment to more conventionally ‘beautiful’ forms in the latest Prynne, after a rebarbative middle period. But neither, I think, would it be correct to argue that beauty is an impossibility in late Prynne, that we must always regard anything approaching a direct statement with such suspicion that we invert its meaning, assume that Prynne’s work can *only* be ironically disruptive. Arguing for absolute breaks tends towards an obscuring of important details, as much with regard to poets and musicians as it did with Althusser’s insistence on an absolute division between the early and the late Marx.

One could also argue that it was around the time of *The Oval Window* and Prynne’s engagement with Chinese poetic practice that a metonymic mode of poetic organisation began to be apparent, and hence locate another break here. David Caddy is of the opinion that ‘[t]he arc of Prynne’s poetry over the past forty years may be said to have broadly moved from a metaphorically based open field lyricism towards a metonymic and etymological challenge to the reader’ (Caddy 2008).<sup>17</sup> Caddy implies however that the move towards metonymy was part of a general move away from ‘open field lyricism’, that is, the early mode of Prynne’s writing, heavily influenced by Charles Olson and Ed Dorn. Keston Sutherland joins those who locate the essential break as occurring with the composition of *Brass* (1971):

“But just as important for an account of Prynne’s writing is to understand how impressive and beautiful Olson’s ideas were to him, and how these ideas commanded the thinking and imagination of someone who was, already in the late 1960s, at the very beginning of his writing life, a much greater poet than Olson ever was himself. I emphasise that these ideas were beautiful to Prynne; I think even that he loved them, and that he loved Olson for being the person who expressed them with such force as he did. I read Prynne’s *Fire Lizard*, of which there is a hand made copy among Olson’s letters from Prynne held at the University of Connecticut, bearing the inscription “For Charles, across the water, with love, New Year’s Day 1970, Jeremy,” as a last confession of that love – consciously the last Prynne would make. Unless we can understand this, we will not see quite how difficult *Brass* was for Prynne, or be able to judge at what an immense and grievous expense of spirit he accomplished it; and if we underestimate that first and primary expense, we will mistake the whole course of Prynne’s later work.” (Sutherland 2007b: 61-2)

There is metonymy in *Brass*, of course, but it would be hard to see its presence as the main technical differentiator between this volume and those preceding it. We find rather a darkening and radicalization of the figurative devices used in *The White Stones*, although

17 Jeremy Noel-Tod has argued something very similar: ‘Early Prynne sounded like a man talking to men, albeit a visionary lecturer; later Prynne sounds like language talking to itself. This is the logical development of a poetic founded on metonym [sic] and etymology rather than metaphor’ (Noel-Tod).

there is a marked interest in the literal at times which chimes with some of the possibilities that are explored through metonymy in the later poetry. ‘The Ideal Star-Fighter’ admonishes us: “Do not take this as metaphor” (Prynne 2005: 166). But even this has Olsonian roots. Prynne argued in his 1971 lecture on *Maximus IV, V, VI*:

“You see, when if one read those great “Lucy” poems of Wordsworth’s as lyric  
Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course,  
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

If we took that as lyric, then it would always be partial, it would always be incomplete. There would always be that pathos of something more. Those rocks, those stones, those trees, however, participate in the whole, Each [sic] of those little fragments that lie on those large pages in the second batch of *Maximus* participate in the whole; each of those little phrases has within it the curvature of the whole of the spatial condition. ... So, that curvature is present continuously in what we hear. It becomes the singular condition, so that everything we take is literal, and not an instance of something else, we escape the metaphor.” (Prynne 1971: 24)<sup>18</sup>

So metonymy does not itself mark the crucial break between the Olsonian and post-Olsonian Prynne, and the later poet would of course be impossible without the earlier one; for all that this break is important I would argue that we need to look at ‘the /breaks’ (Prynne 2005: 64) in the plural anyway: is the contrast between *The White Stones* and *Brass* more or less crucial than the break between the more pre-Olsonian *Force of Circumstance* and *Kitchen Poems*? And is the break – for all that there is a change that occurs with *Brass* that needs to be registered – quite as absolute as Sutherland strenuously emphasises if Prynne can speak about Olson as he does in the excerpt above in the year that *Brass* was published?

In the 1970s Prynne experimented with a self-exemplification that has clear connections with metonymy. As Ian Patterson writes of *High Pink on Chrome*:

“In a fairly obvious sense the sequence is what it says it is: in its original incarnation the book embodied its title, in that the card self-wrappers are technically to be described, as the title legend suggests, as High Pink on Chrome, and this insistence on the surface of what is presented recurs in the poems on a number of occasions, as for instance in ‘ink/

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18 Note that there are many other potential poetic sources for an attempt to ‘escape the metaphor’. One of these is German Expressionism. As Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton write, ‘The Romantic poet still worked from observation to construction, or vice versa, keeping his analogies usually explicit. Metaphor therefore never loses its fictive quality. The Expressionist, on the other hand, aims to eliminate this fictive element. Either he submerges the analogy, or he suppresses it.’ (Hamburger and Middleton 1966: xxvii). By obscuring the analogy metonymic connections become more important. Indeed, German grammar facilitates a basically metonymic strategy where adjectival nouns come into play – see for example the poems of George Trakl in the same volume: ‘den weissen Lidern des Toten’, (p. 134) loses quite a bit being translated as ‘his dead white eyelids’. Or ‘O, das Blut, das aus Kehle des Tönenden rinnt’, (p. 128) – ‘O the blood that runs from the throat of the musical one’, similarly. *Not-You* quotes a fragment by Trakl entitled IM FRÜHLING (Prynne 2005a: 401); is there a certain mischievousness here, in the complete quotation of a fragment, rather than the usual fragmentary quotation from something complete?

over ground woodpulp'. Like certain fungi, the lurid sheen of the book announces a danger: metal is now not only a metonymic token of value, it is a circumambient and toxic presence in the foodchain, with consequent requirements to redefine the pastoral. What the eye doesn't see, the liver dies of. Agribusiness has transformed the landscape in a more potent and pervasive way than the clearances or enclosures ever succeeded in doing. ... This could be seen as Prynne's response to Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City*." (Patterson 1991: 242-3)

This suggests that perhaps metonymy in Prynne begins in earnest with 1968's 'A Note on Metal'.<sup>19</sup> But it is in a complex and possibly dialectical relationship with literal reference. Also, metaphor has not been completely avoided: if the poem "really is" high pink on chrome, then this is in some way a metaphor signaling the reader to look for other self-exemplifications.

Nevertheless, I would argue that the involvement with Chinese poetry that seems to have begun around the time of the 'China Figures' essay has had as profound and continuing an effect on Prynne's writing as his discovery of Olson in the 1960s. There can be radical change without a single Edenic moment of catastrophe as well; as Prynne's poetry itself should teach us, linearity is not always the best model. *The Oval Window* could be seen to have set the stage for all the work that follows it (were the picture not complicated by the *Brass*-like bitter lyricism of *Bands Around The Throat* or the cascading narrative of *Triodes*).

## 1.4 *Unanswering Rational Shore*

### 1.4.1 Semantic Fields

We shall now turn to examining the operation of metonymy and its associated procedures in detail in a single text, the 2001 sequence *Unanswering Rational Shore*. If the first two stanzas are, as they appear to claim, a 'prolusion', then it is no accident that the lion's share of the themes of the sequence are already present in them.<sup>20</sup> They are many and various, but include the following, in no particular order: violence or conflict ('scrape or belt', 'dispute', a hint even of a boxing or wrestling match in 'counted out'); inheritance ('parenthood', 'accession'); 'dots' (which recur throughout the sequence); doubles ('layer

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19 "For a long time the magical implications of transfer in any shape must have given a muted and perhaps not initially debased sacrality to objects of currency-status, just as fish-hooks and bullets became strongly magical objects in the societies formed around their use. But gradually the item-form becomes iconized, in transitions like that from *aes rude* (irregular bits of bronze), through *aes signatum* (cast ingots or bars) to *aes grave* (the circular stamped coin). The metonymic unit is established, and number replaces strength or power as the chief assertion of presence." (Prynne 2005: 129)

20 All quotations in this paragraph come from Prynne 2005a: 519. All subsequent references to *Unanswering Rational Shore* will merely give the page number from Prynne 2005a in brackets in the main text.

for layer', 'even' – as in even numbers, perhaps); Christianity ('passion play', 'diluvium' – alluding to Noah's flood); numbers, sequence and counting, both in the numerical sense and in the figurative sense as to whether something is significant or not ('counted out' again); music ('vibrato fretting'); eyes ('optic rage'); mass gatherings of people ('as many as crowd in through / the door'); illness or negative reactions ('allergic', 'dyscrasia' – this also brings in blood because dyscrasia is especially a blood disorder, hence the idea of circulation crops up in the margins); sequence ('early', 'late' – also 'layer for layer' again, in the sense of material building up historically); and finally fairly mundane commercial or retail language ('make an offer'), which also brings the question of cliché into the poem's remit.

All of these themes make repeated appearances throughout the sequence. It is worth noting here how often they are made to do double duty. A given word or phrase can metonymically stand for multiple semantic areas, such as the way 'counted out' refers at least to money (perhaps wages?), to sequence and to violent contest (boxing). Thus they perform a poetic linking function, enabling the various elements of the sequence to connect to one another in a structured but also largely non-hierarchical way, in the manner in which given words or themes recur at different points in the sequence with different emphases, depending on the context and the particular focus of the reader's attention at each point.

The semantic areas that permeate the poem thus act somewhat as semantic rhymes unifying the sequence. Before tracing a few of these through, to illustrate how the process works, it is important to look briefly at the heritage of the idea of semantic rhyme in the study of Ezra Pound's poetry. Despite his disagreement with Pound about the mode of operation of Chinese poetry (in a seminar on translation held in London on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2008, Prynne described Pound's researches as 'pioneering in spirit' but 'based on some profoundly ignorant mistakes' (Prynne 2008)) the idea of subject rhyme propounded by Hugh Kenner in his *The Pound Era* (1972) is relevant to the understanding of metonymy in Prynne. (Also, P.H. Smith and A.E. Durant have shown (Smith and Durant 1979) that Pound's practice shows more sympathy for and skill with metonymy than his direct pronouncements, thus chiming with Prynne's comments to the same effect in 'China Figures'.)<sup>21</sup> Part of the appeal of the idea is the way in which it can be employed to

21 Prynne finds that the annotations to 'The Jewel Stairs' Grievance,' Pound's translation of Li Po's *Yü Chieh Yüan*, actually show him to be sensitive to the connotational web of the Palace Style poetry (Prynne 1983: 675). Note also that Pound's crucial editorial work on that most seminal of modern poems, *The Waste Land*, have been described as metonymic. Lee Spinks claims that 'much of the credit' for the

demonstrate perceptible patterning. Hugh Witemeyer does this by using the a/b/etc code traditionally used for the patterning of end-rhyme (Witemeyer 1979). But of course sonic rhyme can also be internal, so it could perhaps be said that Prynne's late work makes use of internal subject rhyme.

We shall now trace three of the semantic threads that run through the sequence, which might be called in shorthand *counting*, *firing* and *redeeming*, though we shall also see how these threads interweave and tangle with others. After the references to counting and numbers we have already seen on the opening page, the next continues with 'to pay your even way' (520). The fact that the word 'even' is used in an 'odd' way could be a weak pun. Pairs are even numbers, of course, hence there is a second link to the theme of counting (one with a long history in Prynne's work; we hear of the 'primacy / of *count*' in 'Sketch for a Financial Theory of the Self' from 1968's *Kitchen Poems* (Prynne 2005: 20)). Later the opposite of even crops up: 'at odds' (525), which links both to the theme of conflict and that of gambling: 'take a flutter' (523). On the next page we get 'count' itself (524), after which the action becomes congealed into physical objects: 'ready-to-eat counters' (528). Thus the idea of the perfunctory is reintroduced (it was there from the outset in page 519's 'counted out'), as well as the idea of one thing standing for something else – the 'counter' as token, perhaps part of a game, whether serious or trivial. This is important for a major theme of repetitive non-identity to which we shall come later. In this case there is also a reference to the Eucharist, the 'ready-to-eat counters' being perhaps the 'offertory selection' (528), which suggests a prepackaged salvation and more of a Protestant rather than a Catholic theology (transubstantiation would require that the host be seen as infinitely more than a counter). The next page gives us political overtones with 'recounted' (529), though a simply narratological reference (as in the narration of previous events) is also present. Then the puns about significance become explicit: 'Who doesn't count won't / matter' (531). This suggests either an idiomatically punning tautology or some great significance for mathematics. Indeed, on the same page there is reference to 'an arithmetical curiosity', in inverted commas in the poem also, which acts against the previous phrase to suggest a mere intellectual diversion rather than something of fundamental importance.

The firing theme begins on page 521 with a 'snap of firing up'. This obviously

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poem's radical nature 'must go to Pound, who enforced a number of metonymic cuts upon the surface of Eliot's manuscript at the point where this impulse toward organic unity was leading Eliot to include some rather second-rate pastiche' (Spinks).

associates both job layoffs and the launching of missiles. It is possible that these missiles avoid ‘Gravity’s Rainbow’ (Pynchon 1975) – that is, do not come back to earth – because ‘what goes up goes further’ (525). Indeed, there are many references to the upward movement of the sun and the time wherein this happens in the sequence (‘hard morning light’ (524), ‘rising sun’ (523)) but not many to its descent. At the start of the second half of the sequence we do find ‘sun again set’ (527),<sup>22</sup> but on the same page we get ‘breakfast’ and ‘frank daylight’. We also find later in the sequence ‘sun’ (529), ‘foil up ... choosing up’ (531), and ‘rising’ (533). The linking of time with a specifically circular movement (one that *Unanswering Rational Shore* seems not to deny but to problematise) also has echoes of earlier preoccupations: the last page of *A Night Square*, from 1971, says that the book ‘takes its place in a diurnal sequence which already comprises *Day Light Songs*, *Fire Lizard* and *Into the Day*’ (quoted in Dorward 2004). The possibility of unchanging linear progress is also raised on page 533, where we find that it ‘gets well and then gets better’ – a heavily ironic statement, given that the line also refers to ‘all the fun of the pit’ (though this of course links both hell and pit mining). Apart from the verbal echo of ‘what goes up goes further’, the two parts of the poem are linked numerologically in that the phrases occur, respectively, on the seventh and last page of the first half of the poem (525), and on the seventh and last page of the second half (533).

The final theme I promised to trace briefly was that of redeeming. The word redemption occurs early in the sequence, ‘excused panels advising early redemption’ (523). There is a classic Prynian bathetic pun on the redemption of a soul and the redemption of a voucher (or token, or counter even?). Forgiveness is transformed into the much more equivocal idea of excuse, and we are advised to get our salvation, like our shopping, done in good time for Christmas. This links up with the much firmer medieval idea of the necessity for salvation as portrayed in the mystery plays: the ‘passion play’ referred to twice in the sequence (519 & 528).<sup>23</sup> On the same page as the second of these there is a great deal of reference to Christianity; not only the ‘offertory’ and ‘ready-to-eat counters’ we have already seen but also the typical foodstuff of modern Western Christmas (certainly in Britain and the United States), whether Christian or otherwise: ‘the favourite minces a hot share / of the pie’ (528). The linearity of traditional Christian eschatology resonates with the ideas of sequence and development we have already encountered, while the commercial meaning of ‘redemption’ also shakes hands with other

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22 And for the sake of thoroughness we should also note ‘overnight’ (530) and ‘down’ (531).

23 Once in each of the two halves of the sequence.

words in the poem, such as ‘warranty’ (524).

Is there an increasing abandonment of meaning in later sequences such as this one, or do new modes of coherence manifest themselves in the midst of an apparent increase in rebarbative-ness? As Reeve and Kerridge say about such technical recurrences in *The Oval Window*:

“The effects released by the evocation and partial denial of what we have already seen are too various for the technique of recycling to be written off as merely abstract and formulaic. Neither our memory, nor our capacity to predict what may come, seem able to provide a safe enough ground for the organizing of meaning, and the poem itself appears to look sardonically on our discomfort.” (Reeve and Kerridge 1995: 151)

This puts one in mind of the operation of interconnection in *Gravity’s Rainbow* (Prynne and Pynchon having been already brought together in Kevin Nolan’s epic essay (Nolan 2003)):

“About the paranoia often noted under the drug [Oneirine], there is nothing remarkable. Like other sorts of paranoia, it is nothing less than the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that everything is connected, everything in the Creation, a secondary illumination – not yet blindingly One, but at least connected, and perhaps a route In for those like Tchitcherine [a character, not another pharmaceutical] who are held at the edge.” (Pynchon 1975: 703)

Such a possibility should be in our minds as we trace the connections in Prynne’s late work. A paranoid metonymy would, presumably, be unable to discover anything not connected to another object. There is also the parallel fear, of course, that things are *not* connected, ‘anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long’ (Pynchon 1975: 434). Like Pynchon’s novel, *Unanswering Rational Shore* plays with these extremes and the dialectical opposition between endless novelty and complete circumscription; the reader can at times feel either the paranoid or the anti-paranoid sensation. Having said that, with repeated readings the connections in Prynne’s work become more and more apparent, and thus the anti-paranoid position is more or less defeated.

#### 1.4.2 Omission

This is not to argue that after a couple of readings we are able to place everything in *Unanswering Rational Shore* neatly into one or more thematic categories. There is always a residue, and the sequence remains fragmentary in impression in many places, with semantic coherence refusing to dovetail with syntactic coherence and vice versa. (‘Elastic bravery tell your friends, profile margins / dilate the soft annular parallax.’ (528)).

Organising our sense of the poem by means of association is in large part a *secondary*



activity; as Bergson puts it, ‘*Association*, then, is not the primary fact: *dissociation* is what we begin with . . .’ (Bergson :165). In confronting the poetic sequence, we begin by breaking it down in order to build it back up again. This relates to Prynne’s conception of what constitutes poetic language. If dissociation is connected with omission, which it must be, because one cannot omit something without having first dissociated it from a whole, then this is crucial component of what it means to shape a piece of writing poetically. As Prynne puts it, poetry ‘is an intensely shaped activity, and the shape essentially consists in leaving things out’ (Prynne 2005b: 12).

Omission is also crucial to the forming of interpretations, and thus one explanation of the preponderance of detail in Prynne’s work is to force such acts of interpretative omission. Peter J. Bellis reads Melville’s novel *The Confidence-Man* as showing that in orthodox readings of the text, ‘textual unity and consistency are produced not by interpretation but by exclusion.’ Hence:

“Most critics are quick to spot the temptations to “confidence” in *The Confidence-Man*, but they must ignore the way in which the text itself is a temptation to interpretive confidence. The “standard line” in fact proves rather gullible in the end – about the identifiability, self-consistency, and unity of both selves and texts.” (Bellis 1987: 568)

This is relevant to our enquiries because the epigram to Prynne’s 1972 sequence *Into the Day* consists of the final words of Melville’s novel (Prynne 2005a: 201). It is interesting to compare Prynne’s emphasis on omission here with these observations by the composer James Saunders:

“For me notation should be efficient, meaning it should serve its purpose without containing redundant information, even if a lack of explicit direction in some areas creates particular contingencies in its realization (looking at what composers don’t notate is always revealing).” (Saunders 2009: 355)

For linguistic metonymy to be operative, the links must be left out – otherwise one would have literal language. But in a traditional score, there is perhaps a common assumption that things aren’t left out: that the score is a picture of the music. Various forms of experimental music, Lachenmann’s among them, have challenged this, partly by returning to an older idea of tablature, of the score as a directive to action first and foremost, rather than a representation of the resulting sound. My piece *Representations* very deliberately omits a constantly changing gamut of compositional directives. But Saunders’ point is that composers *can’t help* leaving things out – which is different from the sort of “interventionist omission” that Prynne seems to mean. There is, however, something of Saunders’s type of omission in the way the poet cannot control (or take account of)

everything; here the social and historical materiality of language that Prynne discusses in ‘Mental Ears and Poetic Work’ begins to come into play.

This act of omission is only one of two features Prynne singles out in setting forth his understanding of poetic language. We shall leave the second for the conclusion of this chapter. The first is part of a ‘radical economy’ (Prynne 2005b: 12). As a result of the procedure of omission ‘the record becomes acutely symbolic and displaced: nothing is complete, nothing is entire, nothing is fully and totally recorded. And yet the incomplete part, the gap, becomes a sign or index of the whole’ (Prynne 2005: 12). If the ‘incomplete part’ is therefore a kind of synecdoche, it must then fall for Prynne within the purview of metonymy: ‘metonymy comes to include synecdoche, since the part which implicates the deleted whole becomes by convention the sign or name for that whole...’ (Prynne 1983: 674-5).

### 1.4.3 Intertextuality and Cliché

We saw in our introduction that one of the charges commonly leveled against metonymy was its reliance on preexisting contiguous connections. This is in fact a condition that allows for a creative use of cliché. Prynne writes in ‘China Figures’:

“Literary figuration in Palace Style Poetry, and in the earlier kinds of writing assembled in the *Jade Terrace* anthology, emphasizes what [the Sinologist Bernhard] Karlgren has in a more general context aptly called ‘metaphor with a history.’ The stylistic history, or occasionally the cosmology or other typological ordering, comprises the precursory system which makes the use of coded metaphor a metonymic rather than metaphoric procedure; and it is the subtlety of intelligible allusion, varied and superimposed, which here shews the power of metonymy both to support metaphor and to exceed it.” (Prynne 1983: 675)

Individual creativity in the use of metaphor is not the main goal of such writing; rather the literary history of the use of certain figures is taken into account and allows the author access to a rich store of allusion in a compressed and elegant fashion (and hence metaphor can be deployed in a metonymic fashion).<sup>24</sup> It could of course be argued that such a literary manner is merely the exploitation of cliché, but Prynne argues that:

“... to speak of *cliché* not descriptively but as a term of confident disparagement merely imports into a different literary tradition the demands generated by a preference for metaphoric discourse. ... the *Jade Terrace* anthology is an instructive case-book in the wide and subtle potential of writing in which cliché plays an importantly positive part.” (Prynne 1983: 677)

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24 Which requires a reader sensitive to such allusions: Prynne observes how ‘the unattentive reader of Dr Birrell’s translations, inattentive to her notes, might take the figures of comparison in these poems to be rather flat and lifeless metaphors, rather than formal patternings based on adept metonymy’ (Prynne 1983: 675).

In Prynne's own later poetry the exploration of cliché takes on a darker complexion where its relation to the destructively unreflective platitude is made evident, and the 'precursory systems' that are explored are not only literary but expand to encompass all the restrictive networks of late capitalist existence. The manipulation of idiomatic expressions enables the poet to make very subtle explorations of the relationship between metonymy, cliché and irony. They begin to make an appearance early: 'dirt cheap', 'oh baby' (520). A certain cynicism of tone is immediately apparent. This develops into a peculiar form of punning on the next page: 'absence decrees its neatened locations' (521) seems to be a weird reworking of the old saw 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'. The original phrase is metonymic because it talks about time in terms of space; the spatial condition of absence is a metonym for the temporal span during which two lovers are separated. Prynne collapses this back into a phrase that only refers to space, but the reference to the proverbial expression metonymically brings ideas of time into play as well. At the end of the same page two idioms are collapsed into one another: 'breaking open its fall' combines 'breaking open' and 'breaking its fall', forming another kind of double syntax, but one relying on the preexistence of idiomatic expressions. Prynne's technique here is related to but distinct from that used by Georges Bataille in his *Histoire de l'Oeil*, as analysed by Roland Barthes:

"... everything changes ... if instead of pairing objects and actions in accordance with the laws of traditional affinity ("break an egg", "put out an eye") we dislocate the association by taking each of its terms from different lines, in other words if we let ourselves "break an eye" and "put out an egg". Compared with the two parallel metaphors (of the eye and of tears), the syntagma now becomes crossed, because the liason it suggests takes from the two chains terms that are not complementary but distinct. This is the law of the Surrealist image as formulated by Reverdy and echoed by Breton ("the more remote and right the relations between the two realities, the more powerful will be the image")." (Barthes 2001: 81)

Prynne's aim, however, is not the creation of new (Surrealist) *images*, but rather a fracturing and re-articulation of the idiomatics of the language. Indeed, the expressions Prynne employs or distorts are often *spoken*, referring the reader to the social actualities of language use, not to say its banalities: 'just pick it up on the way home' (527). The initial jolt operates in Bataille much as in Prynne, but Prynne focuses here on the linguistic expressions themselves rather than creating new metaphors.<sup>25</sup>

What of other instances of cliché in *Unanswering Rational Shore*? 'Petrol in search of flame' (532) recalls newspaper lonely hearts advertisements, with the threat of a truly

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25 The 'eyeball' of 522 has nothing to do with the uses to which Bataille puts the image.

explosive relationship. Human relationships are also the most obvious site for the exploration of issues of trust. Credulity is chastised but shrugging acquiescence also registered: ‘sucker’; ‘well why not’ (524). What we are told can be ‘hard to chew’ (524), a variation on the more common ‘hard to swallow’, suggesting the difficulty comes at an even earlier stage. This becomes a physical metaphor on the next page: ‘the sense discharge clamping the mouth cavity’ (525), which is a savagely reductive and dismissive portrayal of language. We end up with ‘not a word left on the plate’ (525) which connects the issue of truth with that of inheritance by metonymically bringing to mind parental instructions to eat all that is put in front of us. Perhaps the question of the possibility of becoming fully adult is somewhere near the heart of the sequence.

John Wilkinson has written that ‘Prynne’s poems do not allow an allusion to dilate. They move on’ (Wilkinson 2010: 304). This is quite right; but we can achieve a certain dilation by ourselves moving on, or over, to the texts alluded to. In *Unanswering Rational Shore* it seems to be a feature of a number of the quotations used – and it is the reason why I identify such citation as metonymic – that their relevance to the sequence becomes apparent when we consider what is contiguous with the quotations not in Prynne’s poem, but in the texts from which they derive. Apart from the epigram (which derives from Goya), the earliest literary reference I have found in the sequence occurs on the first page, in the second stanza. The phrase ‘by field and stream’ (519) is to be found in the following sonnet by the American poet Jones Very (1813-1880):

*The Song*

When I would sing of crooked streams and fields,  
On, on from me they stretch too far and wide,  
And at their look my song all powerless yields,  
And down the river bears me with its tide;  
Amid the fields I am a child again,  
The spots that then I loved I love the more,  
My fingers drop the strangely scrawling pen,  
And I remember nought but nature’s lore,  
I plunge me in the river’s cooling wave,  
Or on the embroidered bank admiring lean,  
Now some endangered insect life to save,  
Now watch the pictured flowers and grasses green;  
Forever playing where a boy I played,  
By hill and grove, by field and stream delayed.<sup>26</sup>

Of course nothing in Prynne is ever singular of interpretation, and there is also possibly a

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26 See <http://members.aol.com/ericblomqu/very.htm#600> (accessed 5/6/08).

reference to ‘the world’s leading outdoor magazine,’<sup>27</sup> which of course means mainly hunting and fishing, and thus the euphemistic artificiality of our construction of the countryside and dominating relationship to it.<sup>28</sup> This contrasts with the fond view of nature in Very’s poem, eloquent about his lack of eloquence, and paradoxically making a poem about the way in which the direct experience of nature prevents the poet from attending to his composition. The reference to the experience of a child has resonance in Prynne’s sequence, but the most interesting associations are clearly metonymic, in that they are to be found in Very’s life and poetic practice more generally. He was a friend of Emerson and Hawthorne,<sup>29</sup> and in later years entered into an apocalyptic madness more in keeping with the tone of Prynne’s poem. In the autumn of 1838 he told his students at Harvard to ‘Flee to the mountains, for the end of all things is at hand’, and later attempted to convince the people of Salem that he was the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>30</sup> More prosaically, but perhaps more importantly, Very’s literary output consisted almost entirely of Shakespearian sonnets. There are a great deal of Shakespearian references in *Unanswering Rational Shore*, and thus Prynne joins Very as a poet with a Shakespearian heritage. In fact, there are references in Prynne’s sequence to *The Tempest*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Macbeth* and to *Hamlet*, as well as to *King Lear*.<sup>31</sup> Prynne is not starry-eyed about Shakespeare, however; he is only too aware of the history of bad performances by ham actors, as we see in the ‘ham on the bone’ and ‘ham sand- / wich’, though it is not clear whether there were ham performances of the ‘play’ at the ‘globe’ or whether they began later (521, 532, 529 & 529 again, respectively). Will Poole has pointed out the references to *The Tempest*, where in Act V, in the same speech where he abjures magic and promises to break and bury his staff and drown his book, Prospero proclaims, as his spell on the visitors lifts:

Their understanding  
 Begins to swell, and the approaching tide  
 Will shortly fill the reasonable shore,

27 See for example see [www.fieldandstream.com](http://www.fieldandstream.com) (accessed 5/6/08).

28 Though this too has its metonymic dimension: Prynne notes in ‘China Figures’ that metonymy ‘includes euphemism and the euphemistic pun’ (Prynne 1983: 674-675).

29 The latter certainly important to Prynne, given his novel *The Scarlet Letter*, whose heroine is Hester Prynne; this is clearly referred to by Prynne’s 1998 sequence *Red D Gypsum*, which in its original chapbook format had a large red ‘D’ on the cover.

30 See the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/Lisle/dial/hs-very.html> (accessed 5/6/08).

31 Michael Grant, in his ‘Buxtehude in kedgerie’: on J.H. Prynne’s *Unanswering Rational Shore*. (<http://michaelgrant3.blogspot.com> (accessed 18/3/09)), spots the *Lear* reference on p. 529: ‘... the allusion in the first line, via ripeness, globe and one, to ‘Ripeness is all’, ore and all in line two echoing and lending it their support.’ See Edgar to Gloucester, *King Lear* V.ii.15.

That now lies foul and muddy.

(*The Tempest*, V.i)

Thus there is an echo of this in the title, which Poole interprets as implying that Prynne's text 'probes the Shakespeare supposition . . . that the tide of the understanding does and will meet the shore of the rational in a snug fit' (Poole 2006: 76). There is a direct quotation – flagged up as such by inverted commas – from *Two Noble Kinsmen* I, iv, where the Queen says to Theseus 'to thee no star be dark' (520).

Soon afterwards a more canonical play makes an appearance. On the fourth page of the sequence we find the sentence 'Hold still over / time to strut and fret, you the debonair chicks / grabbing a tartlet, on a fashion spree.' (523) Nestling in the middle of this is a quotation from this famous speech:

She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word.  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

(*Macbeth* V.v.17-28)<sup>32</sup>

This is such an oft-quoted speech (and has indeed given titles to whole books, such as Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*) that the use of literary quotation is brought into relation with questions of cliché, such as we discussed in Prynne's use of idioms. More important, however, is the metonymic association that the reference to this speech allows us to make with Macbeth's expression of the endless sequence of undifferentiated days. As well as metonymically associating with Shakespeare's expression of this idea, the phrase 'strut and fret' enacts it directly in its internal repetition of 't' sounds.<sup>33</sup> Keston Sutherland has observed:

"The later poetry is split up with mockery of indistinct, hollow figures miming out a ventriloquism of the revolutionary phrase: prophetic souls at the garden party convention pressing forward to the barrier, as *Unanswering Rational Shore* singles

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32 See also the next poem in the sequence (524) where 'leads on' might contain a faint reminiscence of the common idiomatic misquotation of *Macbeth* V.viii.33 ('Lead on, Macduff', where the text is actually 'Lay on, Macduff').

33 I am grateful to Harry Gilonis for this observation.

them out in its doppelganger's non-identity parade.” (Sutherland 2007b: 55)<sup>34</sup> The idea of endless succession that is both endlessly identical and yet, in its very repetition, always different, finds direct expression in the poetry: ‘The likeness in / white was nowhere near exact’; ‘a charade of distinction’; ‘sexual preening overtly / lavish in symmetry’ (520, 522 & 524 respectively).

The sequence as a whole could in fact be argued, numerologically at least, to also be ‘overtly / lavish in symmetry’. It consists of two pairs of seven-line stanzas (which always enjamb between themselves) on each of its fourteen pages. There is a blank page between the seventh and eighth pair, so that the whole is also made up of two series of seven. The pairing reflects the epigram, which doubles the caption from the third in Goya's series of etchings *Los Desastres de la Guerra*, ‘lo mismo’ (‘the same’). Thus we have already a theme of identity and difference – the epigram repeats itself exactly, and yet, merely by being a repetition, the second ‘lo mismo’ cannot be the same as the first. In like manner, the overall structure of the poem and the structure of each page mirror each other in a numerologically exact fashion. It is also crucial that the number of stanza pairs (pages) and of lines on each page totals fourteen, which is the number of lines contained in a sonnet. Melissa Flores-Bórquez notes in addition to the above that the epigram contains fourteen letters, so that the mathematical formal self-similarity is to be found in the poem at every level: stanza, line and letter (Flores-Bórquez 2007). Such self-similarity, or literal exemplification of internal semantic content, is reminiscent of that we noted earlier with regard to *High Pink on Chrome*.

The concepts of succession, identity and difference are not new to Prynne's work. In *The Oval Window* we find what Reeve and Kerridge describe as a claim ‘that there are no stable alternatives or complements to the main ‘order’, only the play of endless replacements’ (Reeve and Kerridge 1995: 178): ‘What else null else just else’ (Prynne 2005: 325). The syntactical form of this line underlines the Beckettian heritage in Prynne.<sup>35</sup> The passage to which Sutherland refers (‘Prophetic souls at the garden party

34 Further to this, it may be worth noting that the title of the first novel by Douglas Woolf, *Hypocritic Days* (an author Prynne greatly admired, and in whom he has maintained an interest, judging by the presence of a review of Woolf's novel *Fade Out* in *Prospect* 6 (1964) and a reference to ‘woolf notes’ on p. 15 of *To Pollen*) is taken from the poem ‘Days’ by Ralph Waldo Emerson, which describes the days of the title as ‘marching single in an endless file’. It is also worth noting that Prynne's last-but-one sequence, *Streak~~~Willing~~~Entourage* Artesian (London: Barque Press, 2009) seems to continue the exploration of nonidentity from *Unanswering Rational Shore* by directly repeating elements of it. We find, for example, ‘prolusion’ (2); ‘the same the same!’ (3 – see ‘lo mismo lo mismo’); ‘parenthood’ (6); ‘proximal’ (9); and both ‘appellate’ and ‘sublation’ (12).

35 But note that this does not imply a shallow bleakness of outlook. Linking Beckett to the source of the epigram to *Unanswering Rational Shore*, Prynne wrote to Douglas Oliver that it was ‘better to recall

convention press / forward to the barrier for a better, look how well / it suits at every chance they get.’ (530)) of course makes a reference to *Hamlet*: ‘O my prophetic soul! My uncle!’ (*Hamlet* I.i). Hamlet’s eavesdropping on his father’s brother is referred to later on the same page in the punning ‘anyone’s closet uncle’. Once again the phrase alluded to is so common as to be almost cliché; the reference to the garden party suggests the kind of middle class people who might utter phrases such as ‘O my prophetic soul!’ without really thinking about it. The ‘convention’, however, suggests a stranger paranoid world, where garden parties are sold, perhaps (though there is also a reference to the ‘party convention’ in the American political sense); then we almost get the common phrase ‘for a better look’, but the comma intervenes so that we wonder whether something else has been omitted, as the vantage changes: we are asked to look at the ‘souls’, rather than consider what they are looking at.

The metonymic import of the reference to *Hamlet* is more about ideas of corrupted inheritance rather than non-identical succession. Earlier, however, there is another such literary reference but to a later author. On only the second page of the sequence we find ‘who struts up / like potted meat to deliver’ (520). This is an allusion to Joyce’s *Ulysses*, where Bloom sees an advertisement that runs as follows:

*What is home without Plumtree’s Potted Meat?  
Incomplete.  
With it an abode of bliss.* (Joyce 1992: 91)

Later, Bloom finds in his bed crumbs of the potted meat that his wife Molly has shared with her lover Blazes Boylan, which makes Prynne’s ‘deliver’ sound like a sexual pun. Immediately following this we find the following passage, where Bloom reflects that:

“... each one who enters imagines himself to be the first to enter whereas he is always the last term of a preceding series even if the first term of a succeeding one, each imagining himself to be first, last, only and alone, whereas he is neither first nor last nor only nor alone in a series originating and repeated to infinity.” (Joyce 1992: 863)

As well as being reminiscent of another of Prynne’s enthusiasms, Samuel Beckett (especially texts such as *Watt* and *How It Is*) this is clearly another instance of or variation

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Adorno’s comment: ‘He over whom Kafka’s wheels have passed has lost for ever both any peace with the world and any chance of consoling himself with the judgment that the way of the world is bad; the element of ratification which lurks in resigned admission of the dominance of evil is burnt away.’ Yet that too is mistaken in demanding indelible permanence of the negative, like so many common-place misreadings of Beckett, as if the effect of desperation cannot strongly alter a life without causing a total subjugation to its strength. I studied a full set of Goya’s *Desastres* while at Tübingen, and the ignominy of survival was never more distant in my thoughts’ (5<sup>th</sup> February 1990, quoted in Wilkinson 2010: 320-321).



on the theme of endless indifferent sequentiality. The Joycean reference is in fact metonymically linked directly to the *Macbeth* quotation, by the word ‘struts’ that precedes the mention of ‘potted meat’ and prefigures the Shakespearian quotation, three pages later. Prynne hints at Bloom’s endless sequence by hinting at ideas of reincarnation (‘mottoes of survival next time’ (522)) followed by a more Christian idea of life after death, compromised by a financial image: ‘to raise the stake beyond demise. Whatever else, / the gap between one and the next accepts advance bids, ...’ (522).

I shall mention one final literary quotation. The reference ‘a plate of devils rising // in deference’ (529), which alludes to Frank O’Hara’s ‘In Memory of My Feelings’: ‘or am I naked with a plate of devils at my hip’ (O’Hara 1991: 108). This reference brings in the question of autonomy. John Wilkinson is of the opinion that

“... the interrogative resistance to the delusions of autonomy in selfhood and in poetic text conducted in Frank O’Hara’s ‘In Memory of My Feelings’ and pursued in his later conversational poetry, resistant also to the consolations of childhood which are Ashbery’s compulsive and career-long resort, remains an important precursor to Prynne’s ferocious rebuttals of the desert temptations of freedom.” (Wilkinson 2007: 25)

But Sutherland, putting the case for a break between the early Prynne and the Prynne from *Brass* onwards, argues that in early Prynne we find, derived from Olson, the idea that ‘[w]e who are small through the loss of illusion and the loss of self-estrangement are small in number: the few who care. This, as Prynne himself once said of the idea of unfixable performative self-fashioning in Frank O’Hara’s ‘In Memory of My Feelings,’ is an American idea’ (Sutherland 2007b: 14). In a footnote Sutherland informs us that ‘Prynne concluded his discussion of ‘In Memory of My Feelings’ [at the ‘Poetry and Language’ lecture series, University of Cambridge, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2003] with the remark: ‘if I were living in Baghdad now I would not be prepared to read a poem like this.’’ (Sutherland 2007b: 14).

There is, though, a distinct inheritance from O’Hara in Prynne, as Kevin Nolan has noted and Wilkinson approved: ‘Kevin Nolan’s essay [‘Capital Calves’] can be read as an admiring protest against the scorched-earth poetics which are O’Hara’s surprising legacy in Prynne: . . .’ (Wilkinson 2007: 25). Whatever Prynne’s discomfort with the representations of American identity in O’Hara’s poem in the light of recent US imperialistic activity, there is much in the American poet’s practice that resonates in Prynne’s, even as late as 2001. The desire to jolt the reader through similes is one: ‘like a camel / ravishing a goat’ (O’Hara 1991: 107). Another is the way that O’Hara’s poem

gains cohesion through the interweaving of diverse images and themes, even though they are metaphorical and *stand for* other things in a more conventionally poetic way than Prynne's abrupt metonymical practice. Be that as it may, a number of the motifs in 'In Memory of My Feelings' find echoes in *Unanswering Rational Shore*, suggesting that the poem may have been in Prynne's mind during the composition of his poem.<sup>36</sup>

Such citational procedures as these are not Prynne's exclusive province. In his „... zwei Gefühle...“, *Musik mit Leonardo*, which I shall examine in some detail in my third chapter, Helmut Lachenmann makes use of text to introduce a reference to Gustav Mahler without going so far as to quote any of his music. In the centre of the piece, other members of the ensemble besides the main speakers have the text 'O Mensch gib acht, Was spricht die tiefe Mitternacht' (pp. 26-31). This is from Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, but was also, crucially, set by Mahler in the fourth movement of his Third Symphony (it is in fact the opening sentence), which was originally titled 'what man tells me', and thus for Lachenmann an expression of humanism.<sup>37</sup> The connection is slim, but this is precisely how such metonymic citation works: it is fragile and easily missed, yet if spotted serves to locate the work in the midst of a web of specific connotations. It is also important to the specific form of metonymic citation that I am referring to that the citation itself does not merely exemplify the particular idea or theme in question. A metonymic chain must be initiated; that is, the work cited must be contiguous with something else which supplies information not contained in the quoted material, and which could be seen as the motivation behind the citation. So, to refer to Mahler by quoting Nietzsche is just such a procedure. Similar devices were also employed by Lachenmann's mentor, Luigi Nono. When, for example, he employed the series from Schoenberg's opus 41 in

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36 Such as 'guerrilla warrior' (O'Hara 1991: 110 – reminding us that the Peninsular War which Goya's etchings illustrate was such a war, just like that of the 'shining path' that Prynne mentions on p. 524); 'uncle' (*ibid.*: 106); 'numerals' (105); 'along the shore' (109); and 'parachute' (110 – see Prynne's 'empty cockpit' p. 523).

37 In this, the subject is specifically man's confrontation with the sublime, not the sublime as it were in the abstract – in contrast to the titles of Mahler's other movements, with their references to nature-themes (flowers, animals), religion (angels) or emotions (love). Lachenmann's piece also contains musical echoes of this movement, such as the tension-filled silences and the care with which final consonants – especially 't's – have to be enunciated by the vocalists. For a related procedure where the citation *is* musical, see the 'Aus allen Fenstern' section of Lachenmann's opera, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* where, to quote the composer, 'the music gathers together a series of abrupt orchestral punches from the historical literature: Stravinsky's dance finale from SACRE DU PRINTEMPS (»Danse de l'élue«), Beethoven's CORIOLAN overture, the finale of Schoenberg's ORCHESTRAL VARIATIONS op. 31, the opening of PLI SELON PLI by Boulez, the final A minor chord of Mahler's SIXTH, the six note fff chord in Alban Berg's WOZZECK and others: all these entries, unchanged yet still alienated beyond recognition by their removal from their original environs, their forced proximity and their mutual confrontation' (From the booklet to Lachenmann 2002: 11 [translation modified with reference to the German original, p. 5]).

*Variazioni canoniche sulla serie dell'op. 41 di Arnold Schoenberg* (1942), the intention was to bring into the work's remit a whole host of contiguous elements. Schoenberg's composition is a setting of Byron's poem 'Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte', which is a bitter expression of disappointment at Napoleon's decline: Byron wished 'to indicate that his Napoleon, the true Napoleon, was not the backslider who compromised his belief in movements of national liberation, who signed the Concordat with the Pope, who crowned himself Emperor, and whose incessant campaigns caused enormous havoc and loss of life in Europe, but the young general filled with republican ideals who, militarily and politically, had liberated the Italian states' (Clubbe 1997). Though he never made the connection explicitly himself, it is commonly agreed that as Schoenberg set Byron's text in 1942, during his own exile, he had Hitler in mind. Thus the supposedly 'purely' musical adoption by Nono of one particular Schoenbergian series (though Nono's piece is not itself serial) in fact metonymically signals it as also an anti-fascist artwork. As we have seen, the problem with metonymic connections is that it can be difficult to know when to stop; as Joseph Conrad has his narrator say about Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*:

“... to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of those misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.” (Conrad 1974: 48)

#### 1.4.4 Sound

Prynne insists on a crucially acoustic dimension to poetic composition, involving a decomposition of the sounds that surround the poet on a daily basis:

“The poet works with mental ears. Via this specialized audition the real-time sounds of speech and vocalised utterance are disintegrated into sub-lexical acoustic noise by analogy with the striking clatter of real work in the material world. Plus also bird-song, weather sounds and the cognates.” (Prynne 2010: 128)

We might compare the views of the composer Antoine Beuger:

“So, instead of assuming music to have some finite number of basic elements to start with, I am suggesting the opposite: the matter of music is ‘all that is (sounding)’. The form of a specific music, then, is the way it cuts into this infinitely dense continuum.” (Beuger in Saunders 2009: 231)

Sound and music have long been a site wherein questions of the identity of a structure's components can be tested: repetition always implies both sameness and difference. In *Unanswering Rational Shore* identity and difference are not just semantically or referentially evoked. There is also a great deal of sonic repetition in the sequence, beginning on the first page, and including plenty of alliteration, often with very crisp

consonants requiring careful enunciation. Thus we find ‘passion play’, ‘dot / difference’, and ‘door to the diluvium’. There is also literal repetition: ‘layer for layer’. Sometimes two consonants engage in a complex repeating pattern: ‘Appelate at **dictum at / its debit**’. And vowels are not neglected; the long *a* sound is very important, in phrases such as ‘age layer for layer’, and it in fact bookends the page as a whole, with ‘scrape’ in the first line and ‘late’ at the end.<sup>38</sup>

If we turn directly to the end of the poem we find the same features: alliteration (‘sand spun’, ‘beat, break’ ‘leaf by shaded leaf’, ‘true to tint’) and repetitive vowel sounds (such as the complex sequence of ‘o’ sounds in ‘both .. swallows ... gorging ... young’).<sup>39</sup> In fact, these features are prominent at various densities throughout the poem. Sometimes particular sounds even occur in immediate succession, either blending (‘contain nutrients’, 529) or repelling each other like similar magnetic poles (‘trap points’, 531). These echoes and repetitions can be very dense indeed, such as on the third page of the second half of the sequence. There we find ‘me my keeper at key at bay’ (where the repetition is intertwined between ‘m’, long ‘e’, and ‘k’ sounds), ‘fingering fair pay for fixed play’, ‘pickled pepper’, ‘devils rising // in deference’, ‘sale skimming’, ‘sun on recounted spectral stent’, and most complex, the structure of hard ‘t’, ‘c’, ‘z’, ‘s’ and ‘ur’ sounds in ‘to craze / the glass it burns and grind its cutting purse’ (529). Note also the unexpected singular ‘grind’, which turns the end of the stanza into an injunction (‘Grind its cutting purse!’) rather than the expected continuation of the description of what ‘it’ does. The awkwardness of late Prynne, as with Derek Bailey’s solo guitar music, can be reconsidered as a precise poise if we are willing to change direction as often as he asks it of us. Though I should note that there is also another possible construal, which is grammatically less odd, even if semantically just as peculiar. It is possible that ‘it burns’ is subordinated to ‘the glass’, in which case ‘the glass’ that ‘it burns’ is ‘craze[d]’, rather than burning being an activity intended ‘to craze / the glass’.

These are just some of the most prominent sonic repetitions, however; they occur on every single page of the *Unanswering Rational Shore*. Taking alliteration as an exemplary case, consider the following: ‘Costive / profane credit’ (520); ‘never on notice’, ‘arm in arm’ (521); ‘circle closes corset’ (522 – this not entirely a sonic repetition, of course, but the attention Prynne gives the ‘g’ in the first line of Blake’s ‘The Tyger’ [*Stars, Tigers etc.*: 25] shows his attention to all the possible patternings of poetry, visual

38 All quotations in this paragraph are from 519.

39 All from 533.

along with all the others); ‘earthly emotion’, ‘chance is blank and chanced’ (523); ‘well why not’, ‘fight this fight’ (524); ‘soft and sprung’ (525); ‘indistinctly invited’, ‘sun again set’ (527); ‘past ... passion play’ (528); ‘barrier for a better’ (530); ‘run and run’, ‘vapour in vacant’ (531); and ‘hardly a ham’, ‘private parts’, ‘tip to tip’ (532).

## 1.5 Truthfulness

As promised above, we shall conclude this chapter by turning to the second quality of poetic language that Prynne highlights in his ‘Keynote speech’, which, it turns out, is that of truthfulness:

“Truthfulness is an attitude, and a performance, a stance, and an accomplishment, that people can do when they understand the power of truth and work with it and for it.”  
(Prynne 2005b: 13)

Prynne demonstrates a complex understanding of the way that truthfulness relates to truth, or performance to declared content. David Trotter refers to Paul Celan’s essay ‘Der Meridian’ in relation to the phrase from Georg Büchner’s *Dantons Tod* with which Prynne titled his elegy for Celan, ‘Es Lebe der König’:

“Celan remarks that although Lucille’s ‘Long live the King’ (‘es Lebe der König’) might seem like reactionary nostalgia for the ancien régime, it does in fact represent an act of freedom, a ‘counter-word’ (Gegenwort) which annuls the sham piety of political conformism; it pays homage not to political totems, but to the durable and humanising majesty of the absurd (‘die Gegenwort des Menschlichen zeugenden Majestät des Absurden’).” (Trotter 1984: 219)

Reeve and Kerridge gloss this with relation to the quotations from *All’s Well That Ends Well* that find their way into *The Oval Window*:

“Lavatch is no more necessarily committed to the ideas articulated in his speech than Lucile was in Büchner’s play; it was the occasion and context of their utterances that gave them such declaratory force as they had.” (Reeve and Kerridge 1995: 165)

A truthful performance is not the same thing as the truth-content of any particular utterance. Dramatists and novelists have, of course, always known this but – allowing for certain exceptions such as Robert Browning – an awareness of this fact has been surprisingly lacking in poetic criticism. Prynne radicalises this insight beyond the more straightforward case of dramatic structures in poetry, and maintains a commitment to truthfulness while writing poetry where even sense, let alone truth, can often be hard to divine. He discussed this issue in a recent paper, returning via truth to the topic with which we opened this chapter, the imagination:

“The discourse of poems is rather usually less directly able to be construed and

normalized than the ordinary language of every day. The discourses of modernism in Western poetics make steeper descents into sub-intelligibility; and in my own case I am rather frequently accused of having more or less altogether taken leave of discernible sense. In fact I believe this accusation to be more or less true, and not to me alarmingly so, because what for so long has seemed the arduous royal road into the domain of poetry (“what does it mean?”) seems less and less an unavoidably necessary precondition for successful reading. The task, however, is not to subside into distracted ingenious playfulness with the lexicon and cross-inflectional idiomatics, but to write and read with maximum focused intelligence and passion, each of these two aspects bearing so strongly into the other as to fuse them into the enhanced state once in an old-fashioned way termed the province of the imagination.” (Prynne 2010: 132)

Once again the employment of the imagination is an operation of attentiveness and fidelity rather than speculation. Thus the trustworthiness of a piece of writing can be deliberately made into a site of uncertainty and contest.<sup>40</sup> That this is so is indicated by Peter Middleton, who writes of how John Wilkinson, Robin Purves and Drew Milne have all written critical texts on Prynne that:

“... openly speculate as to whether the poetry’s asseverative enfolding of readers by the force of its syntactical emulations of urgent moral appeal, and its apparent promises of achievable insight, should be trusted.” (Middleton)

Similarly, when expressing enthusiasm for his poetry it has become common to appeal to a sense of trustworthiness, even if the nature and location of its authority remains obscure. Indeed, Prynne is of the opinion that ‘clean hands do no worthwhile work’ (Prynne 2010: 132).

Prynne is also of the opinion that ‘it’s quite difficult, in the sense I’m using now, to be truthful if you’re holding a paint brush, or to be truthful if you’re practising the flute’ (Prynne 2005b: 13). I would argue that part of Helmut Lachenmann’s musical project (which we shall encounter in our third chapter) is to disagree with this proposition. Before this, however, we shall turn to a specific musical vocabulary and the process of its construction; a construction carried out with an attention to physical and historical realities and a conception of part and whole that, I believe, justifies the characterisation of the procedure as metonymic: the work of improvising guitarist Derek Bailey.

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40 So to read it would be to participate in a modernist tradition that John Muckle traces to George Oppen. According to Muckle, “Sincerity’ for Oppen is tainted with this sense of a corrupted political language.’ This relates to Oppen’s ‘reading of Heidegger and his hope that if poetic language is not quite a test of truth it might at least be a test of sincerity’ (Muckle 2007).

## Chapter Two

### Derek Bailey: Form as the Consequence of Material

#### 2.1 The Development of a Vocabulary

Derek Bailey's first attempts to improvise freely occurred in the rather non-swinging surroundings of early-sixties Sheffield, in a trio with the bass player Gavin Bryars and the drummer Tony Oxley that they called Joseph Holbrooke. Their attempt to find a new way to improvise was deliberate and considered, and involved much work with compositional devices. The only widely available extant early recording of the group is a ten-minute improvisation on John Coltrane's piece 'Miles Mode', recorded in 1965 and released by Incus records in 1999.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning and end of the piece the guitar playing derives very obviously from the jazz tradition, though with the introduction of elements that the jazz mainstream of the time would have found hard to understand, such as seemingly motiveless pauses. In the middle of the track, however, Bailey can be heard exploring areas that have more in common with his later work – muted sounds, scratches and scrabblings that are driven not by a compositional agenda but by the desire to improvise with his colleagues using timing and timbre more than harmony and rhythm.

In 1966 and 1967 Bailey made recordings of his solo playing for his personal study, which were released by John Zorn's Tzadik label in 2002 under the title *Pieces for Guitar*. Here we can hear Bailey exploring the resources of the guitar so as to enable him more fully to occupy the kind of territory he discovers in the middle of 'Miles Mode' without having to begin from a jazz platform. As he put it to Henry Kaiser in 1975:

“Now I found as regards the instrument – naturally – that whatever traditional equipment I had on the instrument was no use in these situations. It was no good coming on like Charlie Christian while somebody was playing a gong and somebody else was sawing off the end of the bass. While it might now be perfectly acceptable in Holland to do that ... – in fact, it'd bring the house down – there were obvious musical incongruities about this. So as regards to changing the way I played to suit the musical situation, that was how it started. I mean, this went on for years, you understand.”  
(Kaiser 1975)

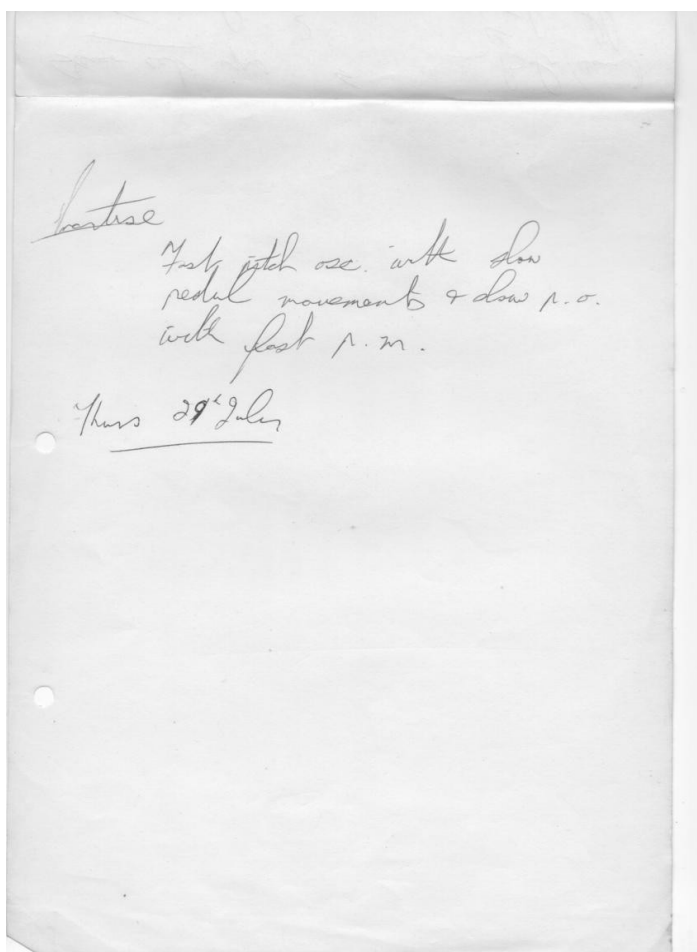
Bailey's 'Three Pieces for Guitar' are brief compositions using serial pitch organisation, inspired by Webern and an attempt to develop resources for playing intervallically (rather than harmonically, as is usual in jazz).<sup>2</sup> He can be heard improvising on two of these

1 The trio did reform for a few concerts and studio recordings in 1998 and 1999. I should note here a debt to Allen Fisher's *Gravity as a Consequence of Shape* as inspiration for the title of this chapter.

2 '... I thought (and I still think) that intervallic manipulation of pitch is less restricting and more productive than other ways of pitch management ...' (Bailey 1992: 107). The score of the first and the beginning of the second of these pieces can be seen in reproduction in the booklet to *Pieces for Guitar*.

pieces at the end of the CD. Using a method in some ways strikingly reminiscent of his return to jazz material on the 2002 CD *Ballads*, Bailey plays the compositions, when he reaches them, in a straightforward way, and does not attempt to improvise ‘on’ each section of them, but rather to use their general atmosphere to inform the way he improvises, particularly when he is directly approaching the composition.

Elsewhere on the CD one can hear small motifs (‘Bits’) that Bailey wrote down for himself. He continued this practice throughout his life, the aim being to develop a range of improvisational resources, but not to combine them into compositions - their use was intended to be entirely in improvisational contexts. The archives of Bailey’s record label, Incus, contain many such notes, including notes from Bailey to himself specifically on what to practice.<sup>3</sup> In one notebook, for example, we can see the kind of exercises that Bailey concerned himself with when working with the stereo amplification setup he was using at the time:



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<sup>3</sup> The archive, maintained by Karen Brookman, is the source for all my reproductions of and quotations from Bailey’s unpublished manuscript material.



The text here runs: ‘Practise: Fast pitch osc[illation] with slow pedal movements + slow p[itch] o[scillation] with fast p[edal] m[ovements].’ Thus we can see that Bailey’s intention with his stereo set-up was not to increase volume but to gain an additional musical resource that could interact with more conventional resources, such as pitch.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, for a period subsequent to that documented on *Pieces for Guitar* timbre became the most important musical parameter for Bailey, supplanting his interest in serialism.

Bailey’s work over the next few years works its way through the implications of his discoveries in the mid-60s. The conscious attempt to develop a more appropriate vocabulary was put to the test in a number of improvising ensembles. By the mid 1970s Bailey had more or less arrived at his mature style, though of course his playing continued to vary and develop over the next thirty years.<sup>5</sup> It was also at this point that he stopped playing in regular groups and focused heavily on solo playing, intending to avoid what he saw as the ossifying process that begins to take place in groups that improvise together regularly, as well as to develop his material further:

“I looked to the enormous reduction in outside information and the increased responsibility for overall continuity to demand and ‘force’ the development of a more comprehensive and complete improvising language.” (Bailey 1980: 127)

In its turn, his relationship with solo playing also changed over the course of his career.

The preceding sentence follows a passage that appears in both editions of *Improvisation*:

“[W]hen other more aesthetically acceptable resources such as invention and imagination appear to be absent, the vocabulary becomes the sole means of support.” (Bailey 1980: 127 & 1992: 106)<sup>6</sup>

In the second edition, however, Bailey does not refer to the positive benefits of ‘forcing’ the development of a vocabulary, but rather comments simply that such wholesale reliance on the vocabulary ‘it seems to me, is where the main danger in solo improvisation arises’ (Bailey 1992: 106). The earlier edition of the book followed immediately on from the

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4 Bailey commented on his stereo set-up in 1988: ‘Yeah, I used to use a kind of quasi-stereo setup. Electronics people never tired of telling me that it wasn’t true stereo. I used to have a stereo amp with two speakers, and the lead from the amp to the speaker was intercepted by a volume pedal. I had two volume pedals, and I used to jiggle around a bit. I quite like it for playing solo. The people I played with objected to it; they said it was like playing with a guitar a hundred yards long. They objected to me sitting on one side and my signal coming out on the other side. I used it for a couple of years, until it no longer supplied the answers to the questions’ (Dery 1988: 76).

5 For example, he was at this time still using stereo amplification and sometimes a second guitar with additional strings, both of which he later abandoned; in the 1990s he began making increased use of feedback and distortion, and so on. Bailey told Ben Watson in 1998: ‘I’ve come to like certain electric treatments of the guitar, come to find things in it I didn’t previously find. It’s more resourceful than I might have thought – bits and pieces, what’s in it and what’s not in it, what you can get out of it. It’s not a stylistic adjustment’ (Watson 2004: 420).

6 The second edition reads ‘have gone missing’ rather than ‘appear to be absent’.

period when Bailey subjected his vocabulary to intensive scrutiny, a deliberate attempt to avoid musical ossification. A decade later, with the vocabulary well established, Bailey's continuing commitment to improvisation meant that he became much more sensitized to the potential problems of stagnation and reification inherent in any vocabulary, no matter how flexible. The danger still, however, lies more in the way the material is combined than in its elements per se. Thus, the bases of his vocabulary remained the same, and it is these bases that we shall focus on.

## **2.2 The Details of the Material**

Bailey never attempted to mystify his procedures; never felt that to understand his own music technically might risk damaging its intuitive component. Hence the continual process of writing down his discoveries, which culminated in a projected technical manual about his guitar playing. This was, however, never completed, so all we have are handwritten notes in the order Bailey set them down, with occasional notes to himself about what the introduction should include, and in what order he should present the material in the book.

### **2.2.1 Pitch**

We shall begin by focusing on Bailey's approach to pitch, which is one of his most original contributions as an improviser. Some improvisers feel that the deliberate use of pitch (with its history as the musical parameter to which the Western tradition has devoted the most attention) is impossibly weighed down by its past and thus a hindrance rather than a resource. Bailey, on the other hand, said to Mark Dery in 1988:

“I'm attracted to stuff I can shift around, which is why I've concentrated on pitch, because it is the most manipulable element in music – more so than timbre. There are so many elements in music, and the great beauty of it, to music, is that it lends itself to improvisation. It's unique. I don't think you can improvise as well in any other activity, and I don't think you can play music any better way than to improvise it.” (Dery 1988: 78)

Following the period during and immediately after the recording of *Pieces for Guitar*, pitch came to have a greatly increased importance in Bailey's music. He began with an appreciation of the utility of atonality as a means of freeing up musical sequentiality. He reiterated such thinking years later:

“Tonality is like an argument, and the answers to the questions are always the same. Play Gmin7, C13, and the next chord has to be one of three or four things. . . . Atonality is a way of moving from one point to another without answering questions - almost a series of isolated events. Atonality has a non-grammatical quality, a non-causal

sequence to it.” (Bailey speaking in 1987, quoted in Watson 2004: 213)

But even such a treatment came to be seen as too restrictive in the parameters it imposed on the music:

“[F]or me, as for many improvisers, the tonal organisation of pitch seemed of little use in free playing. Gradually it became clear that any system which depended on systematic pitch organisation removed too much of the explorative aspect of the activity. One could approach the unknown with a method and a compass but to take a map made it pointless to go there at all. So it became necessary to reject all tonal, modal and atonal organisation in order to leave the way free to organise only through the powers of improvisation. And to facilitate this the vocabulary had to be built up from what I can only describe as non-tonal materials. Earlier I had almost discarded pitch except as a means of creating atonal effects. But I found that playing solo - having to assemble a vocabulary that was complete - I needed all the help I could get. So pitch had to take a greater part in the language, for without it I didn’t have sufficient resources. And I had by this time realised that to deliberately eschew the use of pitch, one of the the most manipulative<sup>7</sup> of musical elements, would be, for an improviser, perverse. But all my previous uses of pitch - tonal, modal or atonal - had been too specific and unhelpful. So pitch had to be utilised but its grammatical constituent had to be neutralised. It had to be non-tonal.” (Bailey 1980: 127)<sup>8</sup>

So even atonality became too restrictive a concept for Bailey’s purposes, to be replaced by the idea of the *non-tonal*. This does not, however, preclude the retention of some atonal elements or even, in fact, occasional hints of tonality. To illustrate this let us look at a brief example of the treatment of pitch in Bailey’s later music, namely the first 2’45” of the encore Bailey played at his solo concert in the Downtown Music Gallery in New York on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2001, as documented on the DVD *Playing for Friends on 5<sup>th</sup> Street*.<sup>9</sup> This passage is very pitch-centred, and thus not only straightforward to transcribe, but also a useful test site for the role of pitch as a material resource in Bailey’s late music. The most immediately apparent feature of this music could be said to be the extent to which Bailey exploits the standard tuning structure of the six-string acoustic guitar. Thus we find many natural harmonics – the pitch classes A, B, D, E, F# and G being probably the most common. There is a continuum in the use of these harmonics, running from the melodic patterns entirely in natural harmonics around 1’53" to 2’00" (employing the pitch classes

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7 The quotation from the interview with Dery on the previous page suggests what may be a misprint in this passage. While it is true that Bailey may have been interested in the effect of pitch on listeners, he shows little sign elsewhere of any interest in deliberately manipulative effects, so I suggest that ‘manipulable’ would in this context make more sense than ‘manipulative’. Though one should also compare the use of ‘manipulative’ on p. 110 in Bailey 1992.

8 A comparable process can be witnessed in the reintroduction of pitch into the music of Helmut Lachenmann, following its marginalization in earlier works such as *Air*. Lachenmann has observed that ‘[o]nly by re-including unalienated sounds can one prove that it is not only about the simple fracture of outside sonority, but also about breaking up and breaking free the practice of perception inside ourselves’ (Lachenmann 2004: 395). (Translation follows Schweitzer 2004: 158)

9 O’Haire 2004. A transcription of this music can be found as Appendix One.

F#, G, E, D and C#, so possibly implying an E Dorian tonality) to the passage around 1'03", where the pitch d<sup>2</sup> is played not only as a fretted note but as three different harmonics (the 7<sup>th</sup> of the E-string, 4<sup>th</sup> of the D-string and 3<sup>rd</sup> of the G-string). The same pitch with the same sound-production method is played three different ways; thanks to microtonal differences in pitch due to the idiosyncracies of the harmonic spectrum and the different thicknesses of string, melodic difference becomes 'flattened' into timbral difference (in a manner that may be common in various forms of, for example, spectralist music, but is unusual in the context of improvised guitar music, and indeed guitar music in general). Between these two extremes lies the phrase preceding the 'melodic' phrase mentioned, at 1'46" to 1'50", where a vestigial melodic gesture is present in the move from F# to G, but the 'flattening' referred to previously is also found, in that the F# is repeated five times, alternating between the 3<sup>rd</sup> harmonic of the B-string and the 5<sup>th</sup> of the D-string. This focus on timbre intersects with the next major element of Bailey's improvisation, which is a use of timbral difference *in place* of any conventional motivic elements, vestigial or not. From 0'32", there is an extended passage where the same pitches are played first as natural harmonics or as open strings, and then as fretted notes. In a similar way the passage from 2'27" to 2'43" is all composed of various ways of articulating the pitch b<sup>1</sup> (with the occasional b<sup>2</sup>).

This same thinking, employed horizontally, is also put to use vertically, in the construction of chords. Bailey typically makes use of fretted notes and natural harmonics to replicate pitches, but of different timbres, in the same chord. This feature is found most extensively in the long passage beginning at 2'44", where various rhythmic arpeggiations are applied to a chord consisting of b<sup>1</sup> – e<sup>2</sup> [natural harmonics] – b<sup>1</sup> – e<sup>2</sup> [fretted] – f#<sup>3</sup> – b<sup>3</sup> [natural harmonics]. The pitch-repetition combined with the motoric arpeggiation creates a peculiar fusion of movement and stasis in our perception of the music. The chords employed earlier in the improvisation use a similar construction but exhibit a distinct preference for close intervals (often minor seconds). Owing to the tuning of the guitar (mostly in fourths) we thus get chords of mixed timbre (harmonics and fretted notes) consisting of minor seconds stacked in fourths, such as b flat<sup>1</sup> – b natural<sup>1</sup> – e flat<sup>2</sup> – e natural<sup>2</sup> (1'31") or b<sup>1</sup> – e flat<sup>2</sup> – e natural<sup>2</sup> – a flat<sup>2</sup> – a natural<sup>2</sup> (1'27").

These chords are carefully chosen, according to criteria that Bailey acknowledged having derived from listening to twentieth century modernist music. On the same visit to New York that this concert was recorded, however, Bailey recorded a session where he

deliberately interwove jazz ballad playing with his mature improvisational language.<sup>10</sup> A hint of this can perhaps be heard at the very beginning of the improvisation (0'06"), where a D minor seventh chord is played, root-third-seventh, followed by a bare D-A fifth, creating a melodic descending minor third in the top voice. This type of playing is conspicuous in its absence later in the improvisation; it is doubly so because Bailey actually refers to it so early on. The next gesture also has two elements, the top pitches of which move from b flat<sup>1</sup> to a<sup>2</sup>, the same pitch that served as the 5<sup>th</sup> of the D. Thus there is an audible melodic pattern, pitch class C down to A, then B flat to A – but the second gesture is displaced by an octave to form a major seventh. Also, the first a<sup>2</sup> was fretted, while the second is a natural harmonic. After this the harmonic a<sup>2</sup> is juxtaposed against b flat<sup>1</sup> and a flat<sup>1</sup> – characteristically Modernist major seventh and minor ninth intervals, and also exploiting the guitar's construction in the way Bailey slides between them. All of these features (wide intervals, timbral variety with static pitch, and so on), are characteristic of Bailey's improvisational language.

### 2.2.2 Control

In the interview with Kaiser, the interviewer prompts Bailey to go into more detail about his ideas of non-tonality:

**Henry Kaiser:** I wanted to ask you about something you said in the Lloyd Garber interview (in *Guitar Energy*, 1972) around the discussion of non-tonality. You said that ideally if you played two notes, there wouldn't be any point of connection, except in so far as the notes followed from each other in time. What kind of intellectual ways do you treat the grammar of what you do, the continuity of it, the linear or long movement?

**Derek Bailey:** Well, I don't think the grammar lies in the pitch.

**HK:** Does it lie in mental associations of different kinds of sounds?

**DB:** It lies in the sort of musician you are. It's like everything you know about music or would like to know about it, and what you know about the instrument. I mean, some of it will be in the instrument, some of the structure, if you like.

**HK:** How so?

**DB:** It's to do with this instrumental impulse we were talking about, Curt Sachs' instrumental impulse,<sup>11</sup> that if you're playing an instrument in a certain way that's got a physical side to the playing of it – that is, it's not just two wires plugged into your brain, there's a whole physique about it, you use both feet, both hands – then many times there are going to be occasions where there are physical continuity things. They're all variables, of course. But if you play two notes, for example, in very quick succession, then probably you're going to play the third note in quick succession; and

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10 This was the CD *Standards* (Tzadik TZ 7620), which was originally intended to be entitled *Ballads*, but Bailey was dissatisfied with the material and so recorded another attempt in a London studio. It is this later recording that appears on the CD *Ballads* (Tzadik TZ 7607), which was released first.

11 The reference is to Sachs 1977.

that's more than anything a physical thing. If you played the third note after a gap – if you play a sequence of notes with a very differentiated spatial relationship – then that's probably less of an instrumental thing. (Kaiser 1975)

Here Bailey turns his attention away from pitch as an isolable category to examine the instrument as a whole, which he seems to regard as more important. Part of this way of thinking about the instrument involves a rethought relationship between technical skill and execution. A high level of control is desirable, but the smoothing out of unpredictable features of the instrument's behavior is not:

“Although some improvisers employ a high level of technical skill in their playing, to speak of ‘mastering’ the instrument in improvisation is misleading. The instrument is not just a tool but an ally. It is not only a means to an end, it is a source of material, and technique for the improviser is often an exploitation of the natural resources of the instrument.” (Bailey 1992: 99)

Bailey speaks in the Kaiser interview about some specific instances of this:

“A device I use sometimes is to play something quite nothing - sloppy would be a good word – then try to figure out what it was. So then you slow it down a bit and try to look at what it would have sounded like if you had played it properly. It's deliberately very indeterminate. There are also certain things I find very difficult to control, like some of the noisy things. I don't know exactly what they're going to sound like when I play them. A little trick I've been working on lately is sliding the pick on the side of the string, which can produce a high scream. It may not work at all, and the pitch is totally unpredictable. And there are quite a lot of things like that where you can't tell exactly what the result is going to be. So you can move into those things. I prefer them to silence. Anyway, I believe Cage has a copyright on silence.” (Kaiser 1975)

He goes on:

“When you can do something really well, that's when it gets more or less no good to you. Because you know exactly what's going to happen the moment you start it. You're just going to do it. And there are some things I've never gotten the hang of and those are the things I quite like. I've been playing them for years, and I've never had complete control. I mean, I know exactly what's happening. But I couldn't produce the same thing twice doing these things. As soon as I can, I'll stop playing them. But some things, I know what's going on all the time. They're patterns really. I may as well be playing licks. But they're useful in that they form the basis of the language and you can get some impetus going from them. You can keep the thing moving along like that. But it's in other areas where the music can carry on, where you can be in it. Those are the areas where the work is – unless you're going to be an improviser in the pure sense and never get the instrument out of the case except when you go on the gig.” (Kaiser 1975)<sup>12</sup>

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12 Note that this is exactly what Keith Rowe (longtime member of improvising group AMM and famous for laying the guitar flat, unlike Bailey who always played in the conventional posture) claims to do: ‘I don't rehearse. I never practise. I never take the guitar from the case. I only ever touch the guitar in the context of performances, unless I rewire the pickups’ (Rowe quoted in Warburton 2001b: 40). Bailey greatly admired Rowe's work, perhaps as a kind of mirror image of his own approach. He told Watson, ‘I know Keith's playing. I think he's a remarkable artist. I think he's the kind of person we should all be in a way, but AMM . . .’ (Watson 2004: 425)

Bailey's admission that 'I may as well be playing licks' is somewhat surprising, and might be pounced on by some of the critics of his concepts of 'non-idiomatic improvisation'. In fact, it is refreshingly honest, and a necessary consequence of any way of improvising besides that of the proverbial "pure" improvisers. Bailey's practice was oriented towards strategies that would enable him to explore the malleability of specific musical materials.

### 2.2.3 Timbre and Instrumental Specificity

The pitch structures available to Bailey were conditioned by the standard guitar tuning, something that he never varied. In an interview in *The Wire* from 2004 Bailey observed:

"I might play the guitar in a way which nobody else plays but I play guitar, I wouldn't do what I do on any other instrument. It's very specific. I like the construction of it and the basic tuning, like fourths and a major third. That plays a significant part in what I play, harmonics, open strings, fourths." (Keenan 2004: 44)

In an earlier interview, however, Bailey emphasised the attractiveness of the relative *lack* of distinctiveness of the intervallic structures common on the guitar:

"I have to say that whoever first thought of the standard guitar tuning was a genius; it's the most adaptable tuning you could possibly think of. If you only wanted to play minor seconds, or fifths, or fourths, you could think of better tunings; but if you want *everything* to be available, that sequence of fourths with that major third in it lends itself to more things than any other single tuning. See, tuning's inclined to stamp itself on the sound of music, and I'm not interested in that; I want a tuning that will not stamp itself on the music." (Dery 1988: 147)

Other features of the instrument did, however, fundamentally stamp themselves on almost every aspect of Bailey's playing. The radical nature of his improvising style was, perhaps paradoxically, derived from a close examination of the basic characteristics of his chosen instrument. On the following manuscript page, one can see at the bottom Bailey's note to himself to add 'Something about significance of being able to play 5 different middle Cs. (This is not for anyone who thinks the middle C on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string is the same as the middle C on the 6<sup>th</sup> .)' In itself of course this is not an earth-shattering insight, but it enabled Bailey greatly to exploit timbral differences between notes of identical or similar pitch (as we saw in our analysis of the excerpt from *Playing For Friends on 5<sup>th</sup> Street*) and thus an approach to the instrument that did not ignore pitch but rather subverted it by regarding it more as one descriptive element among many applied to a given sound than as a parameter imposed from without. (Though it should be noted that, in a dialectical reversal, to achieve such a role for pitch in his music Bailey had to pay great attention to getting his guitar as in tune with itself as possible!)

N.B.

all pitch contour  
written in treble or bass clef  
or both.

This  
to prefer  
more  
able with  
finger

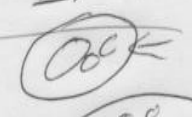
→ } 0 = STOPPED NOTE

Occasionally  
apply only  
to one f  
note.

→ } ◊ = HARMONIC

(also  
= étouffé (deadened))

→ } □ = OPEN STRING

←  usually indicates play together  
usually indicates sustain.

Something about significance of being  
able to play 5 different middle  
Cs. (this is not for areas without  
the middle C on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string is the same  
as the middle C on the 6<sup>th</sup>)



Bailey's aspirations towards a non-tonal mode of playing involved investigating the specific qualities of the guitar to such an extent that pitch was only one element of a more complex and interrelated musical totality, involving timbre and other issues such as rhythmic possibilities. (It might be very difficult to play certain rhythms fluently on the strings behind the bridge, for example.) Bailey's music could be seen to have links with certain non-Western musical traditions where the inextricable nature of pitch is a given, such as for example the Chinese ch'in.<sup>13</sup> Bailey's techniques even have direct reminiscences in the techniques used on that instrument: the "Ying-ho" for example involves open strings being plucked 'to produce notes corresponding to those produced by [left h[and] finger moving on stopped string'<sup>14</sup> - that is, exploiting the timbral contrast of two different articulations of the same pitch (stopped or open). Bailey clearly found there to be some interesting practical parallels to work through, in that he did work with players of Chinese classical string instruments, notably the pi'pa player Min Xiao-Fen, with whom he recorded two albums.<sup>15</sup>

Exploring different ways of playing the instrument can lead to somewhat counterintuitive fingering patterns – in this case the resourcefulness of the instrument is in maintaining the player's interest, keeping them on their toes as they monitor the relationship between sound and gesture. There are many cases of this in the musical examples that Bailey notated; to name just one, consider the notebook extract reproduced on the next page. As indicated on the first manuscript page quoted, fretted notes are signified with conventional noteheads, harmonics with diamonds, and open strings with squares. The simultaneous combination (or immediate juxtaposition) of different timbres is something that Bailey focuses on throughout the notes for the guitar book, and indeed throughout his playing, as one can hear on any of his recordings. The specific focus of this page is on altering the pitch of notes after they have been struck by bending them behind the bridge, in the context of four-note chromatic clusters. These clusters would, of course, be very straightforward to play on the piano, but on the guitar they are not at all intuitive.

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13 The BBC released a record of *Chinese Classical Music* in 1968 (REGL 1M) which includes a reproduction of a set of characters describing certain techniques for playing the Ch'in, which accompanies a recording of the same techniques on the LP. See Appendix Two. The comparison of Bailey's playing with Ch'in music has been made elsewhere; for example Derk Richardson is of the opinion that 'strains of everything from the 20<sup>th</sup> century musical theory and compositions of Schoenberg and Webern to the ancient Chinese zither known as the chin [sic] (the only instrument known to have meticulously notated timbre) might be running through the vaults of [Bailey's] subconscious' when he plays (liner notes to Bailey and Kaiser 1995).

14 See example 43 in Appendix Two. Of course, these same techniques can be found in other instrumentally oriented string musics – notably Delta blues.

15 *Viper* (Avant (Japan) O50 (CD) 1998, rec. 1996) and *Flying Dragons* (Incus CD50 (CD) 2002, rec. 1999)

being ptd from behind bridge:

Harmonic (◇) glass

integrated raised lower note & lower >

Raise 1st (◇) - strike chord -  
lower 1st thro' chord

Cluster - more open strings thro' cluster

1st 1st thro' cluster

A musical staff diagram showing a cluster of notes. The notes are marked with a square (□) and a diamond (◇). Above the staff, the text reads "SUSTAIN - RAISE G# THRO' OTHER NOTES".

Open thro' cluster

A musical staff diagram showing a cluster of notes. The notes are marked with a square (□) and a diamond (◇). Above the staff, the text reads "SUSTAIN - RAISE B THRO' OTHER NOTES".

A musical staff diagram showing a cluster of notes. The notes are marked with a square (□) and a diamond (◇). Above the staff, the text reads "SUSTAIN - RAISE E THRO' OTHER NOTES".

In the second example above, a cluster from B to d has to be produced with an open-string (B), an octave harmonic (d) and two notes very high (20<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> frets – or possibly 21<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>) on the E and A strings, respectively. The requirement for all four notes to sustain simultaneously, combined with the ‘abstract’ pitch content, interacts with the specific construction and possibilities of the instrument to create a distinctive sound, and a very distinctive set of physical and musical challenges.

In the first edition of *Improvisation* Bailey listed some of his favoured musical resources in a footnote:

“A list of the types of measures which proved successful would include:- combining pitch with non-pitch (‘preparing’ it but not using a fixed preparation), constructing intervals from mixed timbres, a greater use of ambiguous pitch (e.g. the less ‘pure’ harmonics - 7th onwards), compound intervals, moving pitch (which includes glisses and microtonal adjustments), coupling single notes with a ‘distant’ harmonic, horizontally an attempt to play an even mix of timbres, unison pitches with mixed timbres - elements of this kind, and many others, proved useful.” (Bailey 1980: 128)

The exclusion of this passage from the second edition of the book is related to the worry that an overreliance on specific musical devices could petrify the music. Bailey goes on to say that

“... the appearance of these elements in a list is misleading. A vocabulary only achieves whatever significance it might have through its use as part of a language.” (Bailey 1980: 128)<sup>16</sup>

Hence, in keeping with the absence of ‘stylistic adjustment’ we noted earlier, perhaps it is not surprising to find in the guitar book manuscripts (which I suspect – from their general condition and look – to date from around the 1990s) much continuity with the devices specified in the list above, which was published in 1980. We have already seen the chromatic clusters with one note bent behind the bridge – this is ‘moving pitch (which includes glisses and microtonal adjustments)’, as well as an example of ‘constructing intervals from mixed timbres’.

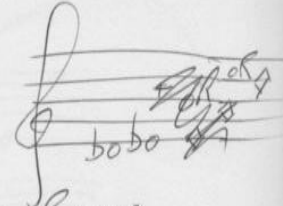
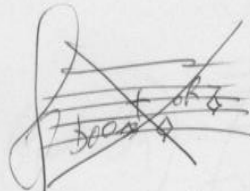
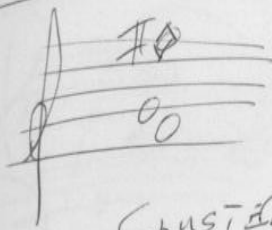
On the next page we can see ‘coupling single notes with a ‘distant’ harmonic’. Note the schematic nature of the pitch material: three note chromatic clusters, with the central pitch displaced by an octave. We also see the construction of the guitar intervening

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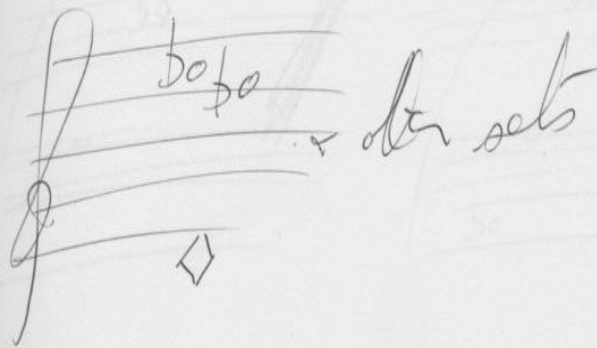
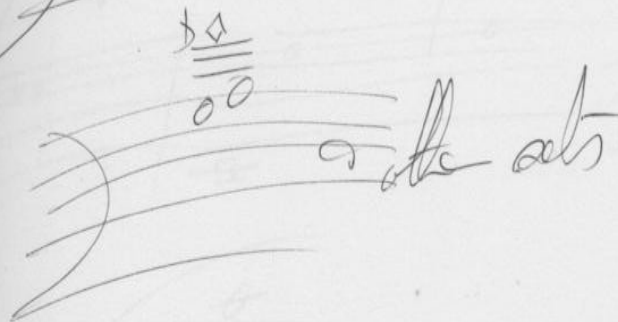
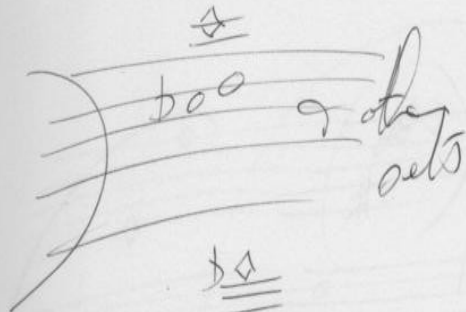
16 I do not believe that Bailey means to imply that a musical vocabulary is nothing without particular syntactical structures, but rather intends to make the more prosaic point that a vocabulary is meaningless unless actually deployed: the distinction is between vocabulary and *parole*, rather than *langue*, one could say. Elsewhere in the archive there is a note which reads: ‘To make up a language solely upon a perception of what it is to express never leads to a real language because language grows in meaning by a process of articulation. Articulation is its life.’ For more discussion of Bailey and the application of linguistic metaphors to music, see Lash 2006a.

NOTE SETS (3)

- CLUSTERS - ONE NOTE TRANSPOSED



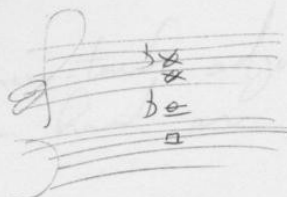
CLUSTERS - ONE NOTE DISPLACED



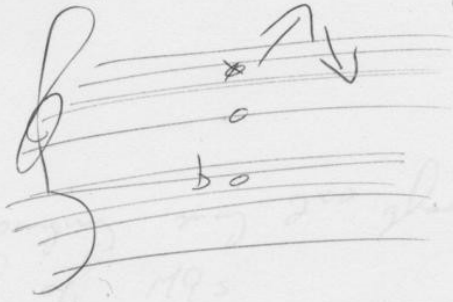
very clearly in this type of material (as well as the limits of the human body), in that these chords are only possible because of the location of natural harmonics on the neck of the guitar – in relation to the fretted notes available in a given position – as well as the limits of the reach of the left hand. In fact, these examples are comfortable to play and do not require a stretch of further than four frets from first to fourth finger, which is the customary position on the guitar anyway.

M9 below deadened 4<sup>th</sup> (fingers between top 2 strings)

e.g.



M9 below pulled over note (string pulled over edge of board)



Pitch combined with non-pitch (‘‘preparing’ it but not using a fixed preparation’) can be seen in the preceding example. The text at the top runs ‘M[inor] 9[th] below deadened 4<sup>th</sup> (finger between top 2 strings)’. This produces a rattle as the strings are muted by the finger and bounce against the fingernail. The text in the middle says ‘M[inor] 9[th] below pulled over notes (string pulled over edge of f[inger]board)’, which creates a similar effect as the string rattles against the frets and the edge of the neck.

### 2.3 A Metonymic Vocabulary

Having established the details of Bailey’s musical development, and something of the specific nature of his resources, I now wish to claim that every element of Bailey’s instrumental vocabulary was in some sense metonymic of the guitar itself, as a physical and a musical object. To do so would be to follow JH Prynne’s conception where metonymy comes to include synecdoche. Unlike, for example, JS Bach’s cello suites (which, just as in the case of Bailey’s music, are the result of a complex intertwining of physical conditioning by the nature of the instrument and abstract musical conditioning imposed from outside), in Bailey’s music his vocabulary was deliberately designed so that any element could – at least in theory – follow any other: his ideal improvisational vocabulary was ‘something which is endlessly variable, all parts of which are always and equally available’ (Bailey 1980: 126). Thus any individual element of Bailey’s vocabulary exists not in a hierarchical relationship with the remainder of his vocabulary, but stands metonymically adjacent to any other element.<sup>17</sup>

The activation of his resources in the temporality of the playing situation was both the purpose of the developmental work Bailey engaged in and its limiting circumstance. In the moment of playing (and to an extent of listening) all the elements of Bailey’s vocabulary are potentially present and it is not clear whether a given relationship is best described as similar or contiguous because the categories collapse into one another. This is put to musical use in the malleability of musical meaning that Bailey exploits. This has been eloquently expressed by another improvising guitarist, very much his own man but clearly strongly influenced by Bailey, namely John Russell, who writes:

“One of my aims is to have the ability to use all the sound elements that the instrument can produce and, in improvising, to constantly pick and choose their meaning (i.e. their

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17 Note the extent to which this has affinities with the serial thinking which, we have seen, interested Bailey at the beginning of his explorations of free improvisation: ‘In serial composition as a whole unity is regarded as a fact, as an immediate reality. In thematic, motivic music, on the other hand, unity is always defined as becoming and thus as a process of revelation’ (Adorno 2002: 295).

musical function) within the context of a developing music.” (Russell 1993)  
Such a description also fits Bailey’s practice. Indeed, he goes beyond this to allow all sorts of seemingly alien methods of musical organisation to have a productive impact, so long as they retain a secondary, transitory presence:

“For myself, I find tonal, atonal, serial, rhythmic, aleatoric and many other kinds of ‘devices’ useful, both to choose and to organise the material I use, but I never, or very rarely, adopt their systematic implications.” (Bailey 1980: 131)

Pitch, timbre, rhythm and their varying forms of organisation are all aspects of Bailey’s music but in the physicality and temporality of unfolding improvisational performances their hierarchical relationships can constantly shift (which may account for the consternation sometimes felt by listeners used to music that rigidly prioritises one or other element when first encountering free improvisation).

### **2.3.1 Influences (1): Stockhausen**

For this malleability to be available, exclusion became crucial to the character of Bailey’s playing, just as it was to the poetics of JH Prynne (and in fact, according to Prynne, to all poetry). In music, and in Bailey’s case particularly, the question of exclusion is to a large extent a temporal one. In the first edition of *Improvisation*, Bailey quoted Wittgenstein (‘If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness then he lives eternally who lives in the present’ (Bailey 1980: 152)) as one of his ‘more acceptable definitions’ of improvisation. In the same edition of the book he also comments on the exclusionary nature of his musical development:

“Having now removed the possibility of a continuity created by the vocabulary organising itself through inherent or associated systems, the use of regular rhythm, the use of an overall plan and now finally by the exclusion of the group situation, the way was open for a continuity constructed from the unique juxtaposition of events. Or, having been relieved of the threat of all causal or systematic ordering, the succession of events could be mainly decided by the attractiveness of their momentary juxtaposition, and, as a consequence, those powers which govern improvisation could gain even greater influence over the choices and decisions being made at the moment of performance.” (Bailey 1980: 129)

Such a rigorous conception of form is reminiscent of Luigi Nono’s ‘proscription of anything that might be indebted to traditional notions of melody or harmony’ (Croft 2009: 38), as well as to Stockhausen’s concept of Moment Form. Bailey refers in *Improvisation* to the influence upon him of ‘early electronic music’, which more than likely includes Stockhausen (Bailey 1992: 128; see also Bailey 1980: 107). Stockhausen spoke of time in Moment Form in terms that sound very like Bailey’s quotation from Wittgenstein: ‘This is

not an eternity that begins at the end of time, but an eternity that is present in every moment' (Stockhausen quoted in Kramer 1978: 179). Also, according to Jonathan D. Kramer, in *Moment Form* 'continuity is no longer part of musical syntax, but rather it is an optional procedure' (Kramer 1978: 179). This is precisely the state which Bailey felt he achieved through his focus on solo playing, where 'the succession of events' had no causal obligations but was purely 'optional', based on the choices of the performer. As he told Mark Dery, 'You know, if you want a sequence of notes, most guys will play them on the same string to get a matching tone. My way's the opposite. I try to destroy the continuity that a sequence of pitches provides' (Dery 1988: 78). This did not necessitate a sensation of stasis; exclusion of customary consequentiality combined with an intense focus on detail can produce its own energy, as Adorno recognised in the music of Webern (which, if not directly influential on Stockhausen's ideas about *Moment Form*, was certainly hugely significant for the general musical context in which they were developed – and was also, as we have seen, one of Bailey's primary interests):

“Every single note in Webern fairly crackles with meaning. In the absence of the accustomed surface continuity, it is this that gives the work what Schoenberg called internal flow: that breathless breath amidst events which seem wholly uneventful in traditional terms.” (Adorno 2002: 180)

Of course for Stockhausen *Moment Form* had very little to do with improvisation (he termed his explorations of the latter 'Intuitive Music'). Bailey's questions to the clarinetist Anthony Pay about performing in Stockhausen's improvisational pieces display a certain scepticism (Bailey 1980: 89-92; Bailey 1992: 70-73). While for Stockhausen improvisation necessitated a bypassing of the conscious, regulative mind (which was achieved through a somewhat dubious retention of supposed compositional authority), Bailey perceived the possibility of deliberately constructing a comprehensive vocabulary in order to take advantage of the musical benefits conferred by *Moment Form* in a spontaneous fashion that could encompass both intuition and conscious reflection.<sup>18</sup> Bailey's approach also has similarities to, but is distinct from, an approach described by George Lewis in an unpublished paper on the phenomenology of improvisation which, judging by the note in Bailey's hand slipped inside, it would seem that Bailey read closely.

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18 It is also possible, it should be noted, to form an improvisational vocabulary upon inclusion rather than exclusion; or, more precisely, on the exclusion of exclusion. The Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg said as much to Bailey: 'One of the things that inspires me in making any gesture, musically and theoretically, is its relationship with daily life in which there is no such thing as exclusion. ... Of course, I don't mean daily life transformed into music but in certain respects there are parallels between the music and daily life. For example in the respect that very vulgar things are happening near to very aesthetic things; people go pissing one moment and have deep philosophical thoughts the next. Or maybe both at the same time' (Bailey 1980: 149; Bailey 1992: 131).



Describing an improvisational approach he terms ‘apparent randomness’, Lewis observes that:

“The unity of the music arises from its nature as continuum in its purity; this continuum is apprehended as a whole by the improviser, as a unit in which each part has equal significance.” (Lewis 1974: 60)

This is a very accurate description of Bailey’s approach; the distinction comes earlier when Lewis describes how, in this type of playing:

“... recollection has consciousness of precisely the emptiness of protentions. ... With no ordered past or future, there is no need to presentify anything, or to refer any present recollection to a past event, or to refer any past event to a present one.” (Lewis 1974: 47)

This is an exclusion too far. While an approach such as this would perhaps be the most precise way of applying Moment Form in an improvisational context, it may also be the case that maintaining such a mode of consciousness while playing is an impossibility. By abandoning the drive to improvise a united, “well-shaped” work, but allowing various metonymic connections to have the force they will – and making use of reminiscences and expectations as they arise without forcing their shape in a heavy-handed fashion – Bailey creates the distinctive motion of his music, which in its occasional admission of regularity and predictability is thus more unpredictable than Lewis’ (or Stockhausen’s) rigorously unpredicated structures.<sup>19</sup>

Bailey could have had a personal connection with Stockhausen’s ideas through his work in the Music Improvisation Company (from 1968 to 1971) with Hugh Davies, who immediately prior to that had worked closely with Stockhausen, including on pieces in Moment Form such as 1964’s *Mikrophonie I*. The most concrete evidence of an interest in Stockhausen’s formal ideas, however, comes from the fact that the archives contain a realization of *Plus Minus*, the opening of which can be seen on the following page.<sup>20</sup> The realization is of a single page from the score (53 events) for guitar, although there are references in the manuscript to other layers, whose nature is unclear.<sup>21</sup>

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19 I take the term ‘unpredicated’ from the poet Peter Riley who described his own work *Excavations* (Hastings, Reality Street: 2004) to me in an email dated 17<sup>th</sup> June 2006 as reminiscent of Bailey’s improvising in that it ‘risks an unpredicated sequentiality’.

20 This also provides an interesting link with Lachenmann, in that Lachenmann prepared a partial realization of the piece as part of Stockhausen’s Cologne music course in 1963 and 1964 (Lachenmann 2004: 205) He referred to the experience as a long-overdue supplement to his studies with Nono (see Toop 2004: 141).

21 The ‘symbol page’ and ‘note page’ from the score that Bailey appears to have used are reproduced as Appendix Three; these do not have significance for my research but I include them because their identification may prove helpful for further research on Bailey and as the score pages are not numbered, to append them seemed the simplest method of indicating which pages Bailey employed.



It is possible that Bailey's realization was to some extent a polemical response to Bryars; an assertion of the value of a musical surface consistent in its inconsistency (rather than cutely referential) and of the value – expressed by the very concept of Moment Form – of the productive power of acausal sequentiality, rather than ironic juxtaposition. Later in his career Bailey would have seen the process of realizing a score such as *Plus Minus* as a needlessly indirect way of making music, and one that fetishized the role of the composer, but the very existence of the realization is evidence of a period when Bailey took the ideas behind it seriously enough to put a great deal of effort into their exploration.

### 2.3.2 Influences (2): Beckett and Musil

Another interesting item included in the Incus archive is an unfinished score based on Samuel Beckett's short 1966 text 'Ping'. It would appear to be an original composition for soprano saxophone, horn, trombone and guitar. The score is complete for the soprano and the horn, while the trombone part is unfinished and the guitar part absent and only evident from the cues written into the other parts. The first page of the soprano part is reproduced on the following page. It is evident that the composition is closely tied to the actual text, from the frequent occurrences of the word 'ping', which also recur throughout the text (where they function something like a kind of 'reset button' that prompts the text to begin again). Certain elements of the text were clearly to be spoken during the performance, such as 'fixed elsewhere' on the page just quoted; whether these were to be spoken by the performers, by other(s), or whether perhaps the whole piece was intended to accompany a reading of the text, is unclear. Aside from the evidence of Bailey's great interest in Beckett (and the fact that this clearly trumped his focus on improvisation to the extent that he was interested to produce a fully notated score based on the writer's work), the specific choice of text is also interesting, in relation to the structure of Bailey's music. The vocabulary of Beckett's text is limited, and so one has the sense of a permutation of elements.<sup>22</sup> This permutation is not systematic, however; literal repetition of sentences is rare. This is in contrast to a text like 'Lessness', from 1969, where the text is constructed out of twelve paragraphs, which are simply presented first in one sequence and then in another. Of course, internal echoes and the sense of an elusive narrative structure tend to obscure this fact on a first reading. Nevertheless, it seems significant that it was not this formalist model but the irreducible structure of 'Ping' that inspired Bailey, given that such a structure also characterises his music.

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<sup>22</sup> See the discussion of textual exhaustivity in Barlow 1998: 233-240. We learn there that *Ping*, a text of 962 words, draws on a vocabulary of only 123 (*ibid.*: 238).

SOPRANO

1.

Handwritten musical score for soprano and guitar. The score includes vocal lines with lyrics "KISS (TROMBERG)" and "VOICE: FIXED ELSEWHERE", and guitar accompaniment with various techniques like harmonics and trills. Performance instructions include dynamics (mf, pp, f, p, mp), articulation (>), and tempo markings (♩ = 70, ♩ = 60, ♩ = 100).

Tempo markings:  $\text{♩} = 70$ ,  $\text{♩} = 60$ ,  $\text{♩} = 100$

Performance instructions: *mf*, *pp*, *f*, *p*, *mp*, *DB*, *TRILL*, *GTR HARMONICS*, *STOP DURING GTR*, *KISS*, *(TROMBERG)*, *VOICE: FIXED ELSEWHERE*

Signature: J.S.

There are also in the Incus archives a number of quotations from Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, indicating that Bailey was attracted by the idea of a 'music without qualities'. One scrap of paper, for example, reads:

A Music without Qualities:

unfixed – available to take on a function that depends on the circumstances /

possibilities

Early in Musil's novel (this is not one of the passages Bailey quotes, but is nonetheless suggestive), we find the following:

“So the sense of possibility might be defined outright as the capacity to think how everything could ‘just as easily’ be, and to attach no more importance to what is than to what is not. ... Such possibilarians live, it is said, within a finer web, a web of haze, imagining, fantasy and the subjunctive mood.” (Musil 1979: 12)

Though Musil implies a somewhat pejorative tone here, the description does resonate with the maximally varied number of possible choices at any given moment at which Bailey aimed in his improvisational methodology. Gilles Deleuze has pointed out the commonalities of Musil's work with that of Beckett:

“What Blanchot says about Musil is equally true of Beckett: the greatest exactitude and the most extreme dissolution; the indefinite exchange of mathematical formulations and the pursuit of the formless or the unformulated.” (Deleuze 1998: 154)<sup>23</sup>

Bailey did sometimes work in a permutational, or quasi-permutational way. An example of this can be found in an interview in *Guitar Player* magazine from 1988:

“Well, I practice playing patterns of notes on the top two strings and the bottom two strings. I play a sequence of intervals up and down the guitar, just on the outer strings. All the exercises are compound so when I say a major 7<sup>th</sup>, I mean a major 7<sup>th</sup> plus an octave. I have an exercise that starts with *F* on the top string, and then you play *F#* on the bottom string, which is a major seventh. Then I go to a lowered fifth, which is *C* on the second string, and then to a major seventh, which is *Db* on the fifth string, followed by a raised fifth, which is *A* on the top string. Then you repeat the pattern, going to a major seventh, which is *Bb* on the bottom string, a lowered fifth, which is *E* on the second string, a major seventh, which is *F* on the fifth string, and then a raised fifth, which is *C#* on the top string. And you go up and down the fretboard like that, repeating this pattern.” (Dery 1988: 73)

So by limiting the strings on which he plays, and defining a specific intervallic sequence, Bailey again comes up with a constantly mutating exercise. But as also mentioned above he did not adopt the systematic implications of such procedures, or aim at exhaustivity. Aspects of Bailey's practice are analogous to the serial rhythms upon which Lachenmann often bases his music:<sup>24</sup> permuted (if not exhausted) “basic elements”; but when Bailey

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23 Deleuze's footnote here (p. 202) runs: ‘Maurice Blanchot, *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), p. 211. The exacerbation of the meaning of the possible is a constant theme in Musil's *The Man without Qualities*.’

24 See Lachenmann 2004b: 62-4 and also part of Lachenmann's discussion of his Second String Quartet in Lachenmann 2004, in particular pp. 237-240, or the translation in *Contemporary Music Review* 23:3, pp. 67, 70 & 72-3. Prynne's relationship to permutation is similar to that of Bailey and Lachenmann: it is employed at times but never thematised or brought to the forefront. It is perhaps no accident that *Word Order*, which echoes Beckett's *How It Is* (see especially its opening and closing poems: Prynne 2005: 360 and 377), is also Prynne's most obviously permutational poem (see Prynne 2005: 367).

plays with others (just as when Lachenmann starts to consider the actual sounding matter of music) we are back with Antoine Beuger's idea of music as operating by cutting into an infinite continuum. The continuum contains metonymic causal relationships, as well as metonymic links to history and society.

### 2.3.3 More Exclusions

Deleuze observes how 'the realization of the possible always proceeds through exclusion, because it presupposes preferences and goals that vary, always replacing the preceding ones' (Deleuze 1998: 153). Bailey willingly accepted the constraints of the 'basic tuning' of the instrument, as well as the conventional playing stance with the right hand picking and left hand fretting notes as ways of focusing his explorations (and thereby entered into a direct musical relationship with the history of guitar playing and its conventions). As Gary Peters writes, echoing ideas we have already seen expressed by JH Prynne and Helmut Lachenmann:

"It is not a question of how much material the improviser has available but in what ways the material contains, sedimented within it, historical patterns of human engagement and creativity that impose limits on what can and cannot be done on the occasion of the material's subsequent reworking, whether improvised or not." (Peters 2009: 11)

Bailey was wrong when he claimed that free improvisation 'pre-dates any other music' (Bailey 1992: 83). On the contrary, as John Corbett points out, it is not a 'transhistorical' form of music but is 'specifically embedded in the political, social and cultural structures that have incompletely bounded what can function as music for the last thirty years, give or take a few' (Corbett 1995: 237).

In fact, to achieve clarity in this Bailey had consciously to avoid many of the other uses the guitar has been put to: the first exclusion Bailey had to make when he began to work in a freely improvised way was of the commercial music he had previously been playing. It is worth noting his changing attitudes to his past in commercial music, also evidenced by differences in the two editions of *Improvisation*. Linear time is a simplification rather than a complete misrepresentation. Some events do of course happen before other ones. Bailey's work as a commercial guitarist, though not without its relevance to his improvising, was for the most part something he made a clean break from. New to the later edition, however, is a realisation of the value of the years of commercial music and mainstream jazz that Bailey played before discovering free improvisation. He writes that

“... this ‘improvising language’ was, of course, superimposed upon another musical language; one learned, also empirically, over many years as a working musician. Working musicians, those found earning a living in night clubs, recording studios, dance halls and any other place where music has a functional role, spend very little time, as I remember it, discussing ‘improvising language’, but anyone lacking the ability to invent something, to add something, to improve something would quickly prove to be in the wrong business. In that world, improvisation is a fact of musical life. And it seems to me that this bedrock of experience, culled in a variety of situations, occasionally bubbles up in one way or another, particularly playing solo. Not affecting specifics like pitch or timbre or rhythmic formulations (I’ve yet to find any advantage in quoting directly any of the kinds of music I used to play) but influencing decisions that affect overall balance and pace - judging what will work. The unexpected, not to say the unnerving, can also occasionally appear. Recently, it seems to me, some reflection of the earliest guitar music I ever heard occasionally surfaces in my solo playing; music I have had no connection with, either as listener or player, since childhood.” (Bailey 1992: 107-8)

In the earlier text, I surmise, Bailey was too close to the experience of playing such music, which he eventually came to hate:

“During that time, over the sixties altogether, even after I moved back to London and started playing with John [Stevens], Paul Rutherford, and Evan [Parker], I was still doing studio work. I could work one day and easily get a week’s money. It was an easy way to make a living and also do what I wanted to do. But I sorta hated it, and I’d never hated any musical work I’d done before. I’d disliked some of the music, but I’d never hated the job.” (Bailey quoted in Corbett 1994: 238)

At the time of preparing the first edition of his book Bailey could only see a radical break between it and his improvisational work. With the passing of time, however, the links became apparent, just as the great advantages of his once-new vocabulary over his previous resources became seen as potential sites of codification and ossification, whereas previously their development was itself an escape from such processes. He maintained his commitment to his original vocabulary, however: as he notes above, when his commercial past came to seem relevant it was in relation to questions of ‘balance and pace’, not ‘pitch or timbre or rhythmic formulations’. It should, though, be pointed out that Bailey’s eschewal of jazz was not quite as comprehensive as he made out. Though he was generally loath to revisit it, he in did so at certain points in his career and not only towards the end of his life: see for example the track ‘The song is ended’, from the LP *Company 3*, a duet with the Dutch drummer Han Bennink.

The passage quoted above about excluding all causal or systematic structures from his music was itself excluded from the second edition of *Improvisation*, one of the reasons for this being, as we have seen, that the musical gains of the period of solo playing had mostly been achieved, so now solo playing was more an economic necessity than an

interest in itself. By 1992 Bailey was of the opinion that:

“The essence of improvisation, its intuitive, telepathic foundation, is best explored in a group situation. And the possible musical dimensions of group playing far outstrip those of solo playing.” (Bailey 1992: 112)

Exclusion has, in fact, also been used as a method of working towards free group improvisation. John Stevens did this with his Spontaneous Music Ensemble – which Bailey of course played with – as did the *Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza*:

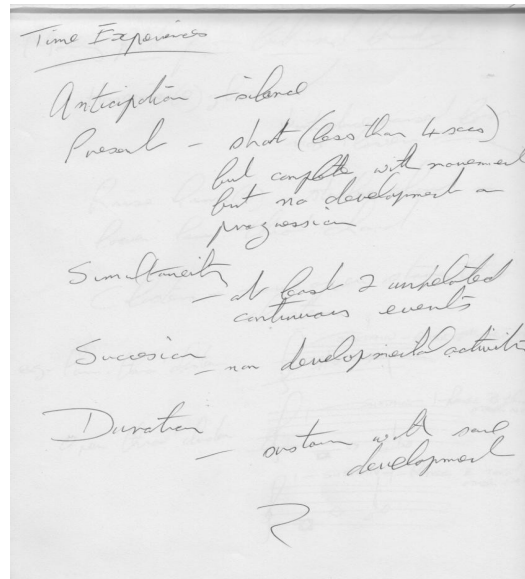
“[Franco] Evangelisti ... saw Nuova Consonanza as the first step on the way to a new sound world which could in fact no longer be called music. This step was a negative one. The collective work assumed a set of commandments that were accepted by all members: no priority of an individual player was allowed, no sound was to be produced which was bound to the tonal system, no rhythmic periodicity should be created, no easily remembered motives were to be introduced, no exact repetition of a former occurrence was to be performed. The list was expandable to include all clichés, as well as those of the avant garde: do not construct a jargon of negativity, do not allow the visual to predominate over the acoustic.” (Borio 1992)

Bailey’s attitude to this can be seen in his view of the Music Improvisation Company – contrary to Evan Parker, who tends to describe the group in technical methodological terms as half-way between SME atomism and AMM ‘laminar’ playing. Bailey saw it more in terms of a fruitfully frictive combination of personalities and propensities, and hence a precursor of his ever-changing Company Weeks, where groups of musicians with varying degrees of familiarity with each others’ work were brought together to improvise in constantly changing configurations (see Bailey 1992: 95-6). So Bailey’s temperament suited a rigorous marshaling of his own resources, which could then be plunged into all kinds of musical situations (many set up by himself), as opposed to others more inclined to set more explicit (even if not formalized) ground rules for a group situation.

We have noted that the concept of exclusion in music is largely a temporal one. Bailey comments explicitly on his ideas about the perception of time early on in the notebook. The relevant page is headed Time Experiences and the text runs as follows:

Anticipation	–	silence short (less than 4 secs) but complete with movement but no development or progression
Simultaneity	–	at least 2 unrelated continuous events
Succession	–	non developmental activity
Duration	–	sustain with some development ?



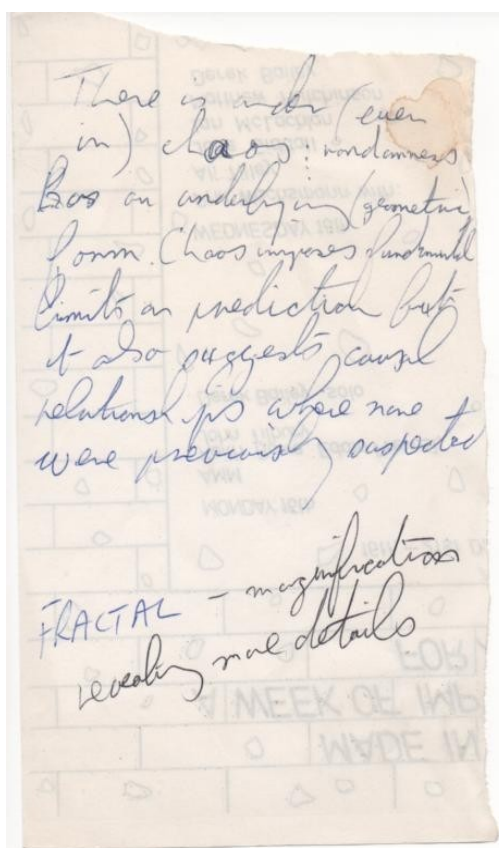


We can see from these notes evidence of Bailey's close concern with matters of musical development. He was interested in a music that continually *moved*, but did not *develop* in any predictable fashion. Of course, Bailey – like almost every musician – was actually interested in surprising successions, in continuities that were unpredictable but also satisfying and interesting. In the programmes on improvisation that he made for Channel Four television, Bailey observes that in freely improvised music 'regular, repeated, insistent rhythm – and melody, preferably exaggerated in its affective parts – are things that we can touch on, but by their nature we couldn't insist on them in the way that popular music does' (Marre 1992). He seemed to believe that there would be connections in anything: it was breaking obvious connections that one had to concern oneself with, rather than creating continuity: that would take care of itself.

## 2.4 Form

We should not assume, however, that Bailey was attempting to create a formless music. Bailey wrote that one could say that free improvisers 'seem to prefer formlessness', but that '[m]ore accurately, they prefer the music to dictate its own form' (Bailey 1992: 111). The scrap of paper reproduced on the following page is from elsewhere in the Incus archives and the text runs as follows: 'There is order (even in) chaos: randomness has an underlying (geometric) form. Chaos imposes fundamental limits on prediction but it also suggests causal relationships where none were previously suspected.' This is an almost verbatim quotation from the byline to an article on chaos that appeared in *Scientific American* in 1986 (Crutchfield, et. al. 1986). The lines beneath this sentence run 'FRACTAL – magnification revealing more details', which suggests that Bailey was

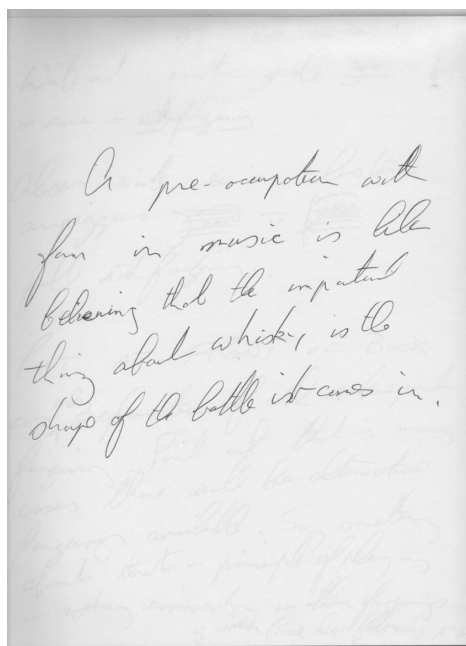
interested in chaos theory and that he deliberately wished to avoid or obscure simplistic large-scale formal structures specifically to facilitate a greater richness of interconnection between the musical elements at play.



In this Bailey's playing could be seen to have something in common with much of the late work of JH Prynne, who often uses formal structures so simple and repetitive (such as a given stanza length – or a pair of identical stanzas – repeated on every page of a sequence) that the attention is also focused on the richness of connections between the semantic units, without there being any obviously prescriptive hierarchy of relationships at play. It could also be argued that Bailey's perception of the greater urgency of disrupting continuity rather than constructing it runs in parallel to Prynne's belief (discussed in our previous chapter) that to distinguish things in their individuality is of greater importance than continually to search for resemblances. The force of syntax and of the human faculty of perceiving patterns in sound are not to be taken lightly nor is there a futile attempt to destroy them, but rather their tensile strength is made manifest precisely through constant challenge.

Given all this it is not, perhaps, surprising that Bailey was fairly scathing about ideas of form in music as they are usually expressed. The way that his command of his

material interacts with his memory (the material is commanded by being held in his physical and mental memory) generates the form of his music. In the notebook we have been quoting from, Bailey is very firm about the all-too-common obsession with form in music.



This text runs: 'A pre-occupation with form in music is like believing that the important thing about whisky is the shape of the bottle it comes in.' Paul Hegarty is of the opinion that when Bailey played he aimed to create music that was:

“... constantly moving, purposely trying to stay away from generic gestures, and in so doing he would highlight the kind of repetition Deleuze has in mind, where the artwork shows us a repetition that is always only occurring the first time.” (Hegarty 2005: 67)

The reference is to Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*, where according to Hegarty:

“Deleuze estimates that to recall in a way that genuinely repeats makes the repetition an event in its own right, always for the first time, which, in turn, brings the ‘original’ to be ...” (Hegarty 2005: 66)

Given the fact that the French word ‘répétition’ is also the word for rehearsal or practise, we have here a very suggestive way of looking at the contradictory and paradoxical way that Bailey aimed at continual freshness from familiar materials, continually surprising juxtapositions and recombinations of a known vocabulary.

#### **2.4.1 *Musique informelle***

Perhaps we could say that Bailey’s formal goal was always to repeat for the very first time? This could be seen as a development from his early interest in serialism, where as Adorno points out ‘[a]bsolutely nothing may be repeated and, as the derivative of One

thing, absolutely everything is repetition.’ In spite of Adorno’s dismissal of improvised music,<sup>25</sup> Bailey’s music begins to look very like Adorno’s speculative ‘informal’ music, which has had to ‘rethink this dialectic and incorporate it into its own organizational structure’ (Adorno 2002: 284). The physical interconnectedness of the sound-making properties of the guitar mean that for Bailey ‘the unmediated is not the individual note, but the individual configuration [*Gestalt*]; it should be seen as relatively flexible and distinct from contrast and progress’ (Adorno 2002: 299).

Adorno’s general definition of informal music is of

“... 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.” (Adorno 2002: 272)

Bailey, I would argue, fulfills this requirement in the rigorous development of his material. The way that this material was specifically designed for himself, and not imposed on the musicians with whom he played is, however, less reminiscent of Adorno’s ideas. Whereas Adorno’s *musique informelle* was to be completely free from alien intrusions, Bailey focuses on what he described as *playing*, which he insisted was a rich and hard-to-define concept: it does not merely refer to instrumental physicality and a privileging of process over product, but rather a gathering at a single place and time for musical purposes, with no explicit preconditions save the choice of musical partners and, for the most part, the agreement not to discuss the music beforehand. The material of the other players could, then, be derived from all sorts of sources which fall foul of Adorno’s proscription on the alien. And yet, the way that the musical encounters Bailey most valued were structured (seen at their clearest in his Company Weeks) of course were an attempt *not* to impose any alien restrictions, save those inherent in the material – if we can consider both the players’ technical resources and the players themselves (their sensibilities, temperaments, characteristic choices, and so forth) as material, which in an improvised setting we surely must. Seen from this perspective Bailey’s way of working did not include alien material per se, but rather revealed the conditions inherent in such an expanded conception of material: that is, its social and historical bonds, which could then be metonymically present in the resulting music. Bailey’s choice of collaborators ranged over the whole musical spectrum from jazz to classical music to folk musics to electronic

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25 “The complex forms by means of which succession is internally organised as such would be inadequate for any improvised, non-written music-making.” (Adorno 2002: 295)

music to people without musical backgrounds but engaged in sound production. By playing with such a range of people Bailey was able to stay on his own turf (freely improvised playing) and yet come into contact with almost every element of global musical activity, each collaborator metonymic of a specific range of social, musical and aesthetic practices, with which they and Bailey could improvisationally engage, manipulating different aspects of his vocabulary as the situation demanded. As a striking example, see the effect on Bailey's rhythmic choices necessitated by playing with hard-hitting free funk rhythm section of Jamaaladeen Tacuma and Calvin Weston on the CD *Mirakle* (Tzadik TZ7603 CD 2000). Bailey's exploration of the musicians with whom he collaborated, both of their material and of them as individuals (particularly in terms of their decision-making processes), then, are not so different from the attitudes of Prynne and Lachenmann to the history, materiality and referentiality inherent in their respective material.

#### 2.4.2 Form and the Listener

The sense of history which Bailey engages is very rarely linear, based on references to the repertoire, but more structural – an exploration of the physico-musical conditions of guitar music. Similarly in the structure of his improvisations Bailey avoided a linear conception of form. We have seen how in the course of reading a late JH Prynne sequence, certain elements become significant through the way in which they recur in altered forms or interact with one another. Hierarchies of significance are not usually strongly indicated by the poet, so it is in the way that the attention of the reader organizes their experience of the poem that one's own sense of it is constructed. Certain signs *emerge* from one's reading as central, as those around which one organizes one's sense of the poem. This is not to say that such organization is merely personal (let alone arbitrary) but that there is more than one way to skin a cat, and that different readers will end up with different architectural senses of the structure of the work.<sup>26</sup>

Something very similar, I believe, happens when one listens attentively to a free improvisation by Derek Bailey; perhaps particularly to a recorded improvisation, which one can hear any number of times. Certain features of the music can serve as organizational markers, but again their significance must be emergent, they must *become* such, in the listening process: Bailey was not one for 'theme and variations'! The poet

<sup>26</sup> The way that Prynne's late sequences tend to be constructed in repetitive stanzaic forms of equal length underlines this point: the formal layout of the poems on the page is so regular that we cannot look there for hints as to structural significance, as we perhaps could with his middle-period sequences, such as *The Oval Window*.

Peter Riley has reflected on this issue:

“One of the things I never really sorted out is what constitutes a piece in improvisation. ... I mean, motifs would be one, obviously, but I don’t know how much he ever did that. And perhaps he wasn’t interested in it being a piece. ... There can be particular technical sound production things which will characterize - largely characterize - even a quite long improvisation.” (Riley quoted in Lash 2006b)

Riley is uncertain about the answer to his question, and even raises the possibility that Bailey had no interest in such coherence. But even in the face of Bailey’s efforts to avoid creating conventional ‘pieces’ of music, we the listeners must organize our experience of the sounds that we hear, otherwise we would not even be able to tell that Bailey was subverting the norms of musical construction. And part of how we do that is to cling – even if provisionally, or for short periods at a time – to certain elements of the music which emerge from it as significant; we test their significance against the ongoing development of the music, which can either reinforce our sense of their importance or cause us to sideline or jettison them in favour of other elements. This process can be unusually rapid in listening to Bailey’s music, but it operates nonetheless. And indeed, it does seem that this was the kind of coherence that interested Bailey, as the following passage from *Improvisation* indicates:

“Rather in the way that memory works, perhaps, a piece can be criss-crossed with connections and correspondences which govern the selection and re-selection of events as well as guiding the over-all pacing of the piece. Simultaneously, events remembered and events anticipated can act on the present moment.” (Bailey 1992: 111-2)<sup>27</sup>

Bailey is referring here to the processes of the improviser, but the result of such processes is a meaningful form which can be interpreted by a listener, even if the connections that they make are not precisely the same as those made by the musician. One of the great pleasures of listening to Bailey’s music, for me, is the way the listener can engage both with how he keeps the maximum number of musical possibilities alive (inclusion), but also how he remains sharp by from time to time introducing clear and unambiguous ‘realities’ (exclusion). An example of this can be found in the middle of the piece ‘The Victoria and Albertville Part 1’, a live duo recording of Bailey with multi-instrumentalist Anthony Braxton (here playing saxophone). Braxton plays a clear three-note phrase, which Bailey then echoes the first two notes of very deliberately. Bailey’s decision not to copy the third then becomes almost audible in itself. The very use of such an approach to form enables a

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27 The combination of past and future in the present moment reminds one of the title of a late composition by Lachenmann’s former teacher, Luigi Nono: *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* (1988/89), which also hints at the ways that our conception of the past and future may be idealised – either can be what we want them to be.

mode of listening and comprehension that is exploratory but nonetheless limited (and hence subject to evaluation).

#### 2.4.2.1 The Epoché

Bailey's description of time-consciousness here seems clearly influenced by that of Edmund Husserl, perhaps influenced by George Lewis's essay on the phenomenology of improvisation. Husserl's ideas are summarised as follows by Izchak Miller:

“The primal-impression had by me at *t* is that feature of my [perceptual] act which is responsible for my being aware at that instant of a particular tone-phase as sounding *now*. The manifold of retentions had by me at *t* are those features of my act which are responsible for my being aware at that instant of a continuity of earlier tone-phases as extending into the *past* from that instant. And the manifold of protentions had by me at *t* are those features of my act which are responsible for my being aware at that instant of a continuity of later tone-phases as extending into the *future* from that instant.” (Miller 1982: 134)<sup>28</sup>

Bailey was possibly also interested in Lewis's adaptation of the Husserlian idea of the phenomenological reduction, or epoché, to improvisational consciousness:

“The musical epoché, while reminiscent of the Husserlian epoché, differs in that the musician does not suspend the judgment upon the being of the world, but instead radically asserts the world to be subject to the music, and to have a musical meaning; every other meaning of the non-musical world is suspended.” (Lewis 1974: 22)

That is, the exclusion proceeds by a form of *inclusion*: all sensory information received by the improvisers is a form of input into his or her musical consciousness, and hence potentially consequential for the course of their music-making; the possibility of non-musical sensory input is thus excluded. Accompanying Lewis' typescript is a note by Bailey, which reads:

“George's 'musical epoché' P21 – 23 as a description of PLAYING (No adequate description of 'playing' for an improviser. Not same as playing for musicians who don't imp[roviser]. etc etc – George's as one (best?) description.” (Handwritten note inserted in Lewis 1974)

This implies that Bailey may have read Lewis's work in preparation for the first edition of *Improvisation*; he perhaps decided against including his concept of the epoché because he

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28 We should note that not everybody finds Husserl's account to be a valuable one. Critic and poet Simon Jarvis, a former student of Prynne's and great supporter of his work, quotes with approval p. 43 of Michel Henry's *Phénoménologie matérielle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), where Henri discusses Husserl's 1905 lectures on the phenomenology of the consciousness of time and characterises it as consisting of 'pieces of being and nothingness which constantly swap places in a magical transubstantiation, such that that which stands on the narrow summit of the now not only has one foot on the earth and one in the void, it tumbles endlessly from the first to the second, tottering like a drunken man or like someone trying to go backwards on a conveyor belt or an escalator'. Jarvis continues: 'Such an idea of time is the foundation of nihilism' (Jarvis 1998: 5).

felt it to be too philosophically technical for his purposes. Nevertheless, this could shed light on Bailey's insistence that the 'historical and systematic associations' of the improviser's material 'can be ignored' (Bailey 1980: 126; Bailey 1992: 106). Rather than claiming that the material does not have such associations, the point is that they do not need to be operative in the improviser's consciousness: they will be there anyway and can to an extent be reintroduced by the listener. Lachenmann insists on the composer's self-awareness of all such phenomena – though even he somewhat admits the point by conceding that the 'world-relation' of the work itself cannot be directly discussed (see Lachenmann 2004b: 68), but for the improviser they could well prove a misleading distraction at the point of playing. Lewis also observes that in improvised music 'both the music and the musician combine the elements of subject and object in relation to each other as creation and creator': the artwork is in a sense a quasi-subject, but in addition '[a]s the production of music begins ... so does the improviser's role as "quasi-object" for his own improvisation' (Lewis 1974: 26-7) Seen in this way, improvised music radicalises the conventional metonymy of artist for artwork ('It's a Rembrandt').

### 2.4.3 Memory

Bailey wished to challenge rather than obliterate the musical memory. His professed interest in the way 'that memory works' chimes with one of JH Prynne's interests. In Prynne the interest is at times more explicitly biological and neurochemical. In 'Thanks for the Memory' from 1974's *Wound Response* (Prynne 2005: 220) Prynne explicitly demonstrates his interest in the mechanics of memory. The poem is entirely composed of technical scientific language. In fact, as we can now discover in the age of Google, it is literally composed of such language, being a verbatim transcription of a section from the 1972 essay 'A Molecular Basis for Learning and Memory' by Edward M. Kosower (Kosower 1972: 3295). Prynne's contribution has merely been to choose the beginning and end point of his excerpt and to lineate it to resemble poetic writing. Of course, Prynne's acts of selection are highly significant: the poem concludes with the open-ended, methodologically hopeful but inconclusive 'There is evidence', rather than the more specific and thus prosaic statement in the source text that 'There is evidence that disulfide links are near the receptor sites'. By thus selecting and omitting, Prynne's use of the Kosower text conforms to Prynne's definition of poetic shaping: 'the shape essentially consists in leaving things out' (Prynne 2005b: 12). The discovery of the source means that the poem could also act as a metonym for the subject of the article as a whole, which is the



problem of time in relation to memory; that is, the relation of permanent memory (whose ‘activity becomes evident after minutes or even hours’) to the first, electrical stages of memory, whose timescale is orders of magnitude different, ranging from 2 to 500 milliseconds (Kosower 1972: 3292).

For Bergson, memory originates in relation to sensori-motor function, as a means of storing certain motor actions that occur in the hope that they might be useful if a similar stimulus recurs in the future. As he himself puts it:

“Let us, for a moment, suppose our psychical life reduced to sensori-motor functions alone. ... Here then we seize association of similarity and association of contiguity at their very source, and at a point where they are almost confounded in one – not indeed thought, but acted and lived. They are not contingent forms of our psychical life; they represent ... the tendency of every organism to extract from a given situation that in it which is useful, and to store up the eventual reaction in the form of a motor habit, that it may serve other situations of the same kind.” (Bergson 1991: 166-7)

Bailey’s account of how improvising develops musical techniques is very reminiscent of Bergson’s account of the development of memory itself:

“Probably a large part of most improvising techniques is developed to meet particular situations encountered in performance. But most practical musical situations imply other hypothetical situations, and so one technical device might be developed to cover a wide range of possibilities. An extension of technique might have certain musical implications which might in turn produce *further* technical implications, which might reveal further musical implications – that sort of extrapolation or rationalisation is one of the many ways in which the instrument can supply the music.” (Bailey 1992: 99)

Thus for Bailey there is no sense that a focus on memory implies an approach in any way divorced from the physicality of playing an instrument, but rather that memory is a means of exploring and exploiting that physicality for musical ends. The influence is not all one way, however, with memory monitoring and organising the sensori-motor functions:

“So, on the one hand, the memory of the past offers to the sensori-motor mechanisms all the recollections capable of guiding them in their task and of giving to the motor reaction the direction suggested by the lessons of experience. It is in just this that the associations of contiguity and likeness consist. But, on the other hand, the sensori-motor apparatus furnish to ineffective, that is unconscious, memories, the means of taking on a body, of materializing themselves, in short of becoming present.” (Bergson 1991: 152-3)

‘Present’ has both spatial and temporal meanings: the current time, as experienced by the subject, and the immediate physical surroundings of that subject. Improvisation exploits and explores both. Indeed, Evan Parker, an improviser who certainly has his differences with Bailey but who probably, in the long run, has more in common with him than not, talks about his relationship to his instrument explicitly in the kind of terms we have seen

Bergson use, and going on to echo Bailey's comment on deriving music from the instrument:

“In the end the saxophone has been for me a rather specialised bio-feedback instrument for studying and expanding my control over my hearing and the motor mechanics of parts of my skeleto-muscular system and their improved functioning has given me more to think about.” (Parker 1992)

Thus in a way that Bergson illuminates, the improvising musician (at least, the type of improvising musician exemplified by Bailey and Parker) explores both the possibilities and limitations of their physicality and perceptual apparatus through an intense relationship with a chosen instrument.<sup>29</sup> The formal qualities of the resultant music can neither be separated from the nature of the musical material, nor the physicality (gestural, neurological) of the improvisors themselves.

## **2.5 Repetition and Recording**

This means that live improvisation is by nature evanescent and unrepeatable. However to make this the only site of our consideration of improvisation would be to obfuscate its realities, and the constant presence of recording as an adjunct to the live moment.

Therefore I shall close this chapter with some thoughts on the relationship of freely improvised music to recording, and the relevance of metonymy in such considerations.

When recorded and listened to again, an improvisation displays a definite fixed form. A recorded improvisation is thus closer to Bergson's one extreme wherein contiguity would be merely a reproduction of the consecutive sounds of a past performance. It is possible when one becomes familiar with a recorded improvisation to anticipate upcoming events, which can make them seem like they emerge from the current activity. But it is also possible that one has merely memorized their contiguity, which the linearity of listening can make seem like logical consequence. I do believe, however, that there are insights to be gained by considering Bailey's recording practice as metonymic. He wrote in the liner notes to his first solo recording that:

“As long as it is fairly representative of what you're concerned with, whether it is a strikingly successful improvisation or not doesn't seem to me that important.” (liner notes to Bailey 1971)

Thus the work is an ongoing process, and each released recording metonymic of it as a

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<sup>29</sup> George Lewis observes that ‘one's cogito in improvisation is an instrumentally extended cogito; the improviser cannot regard his instrument as separate from the improvisation, and he cannot consider a “pure, ideal” improvisation separate from an instrument’ (Lewis 1974: 47).

whole, rather than a specific example of a completed work in itself.<sup>30</sup> This is not to make metonymy into merely a synonym for exemplification. Mark Wastell and Brian Marley, in the introduction to the book they recently edited, *Blocks of Consciousness and the Unbroken Continuum*, explain the origin of their title. The first part refers to Morton Feldman, but the second

“... arises from something Derek Bailey said in, if memory serves, the latter half of the 1970s, during a *Melody Maker* interview. He described how a record producer had taken tapes of some long improvisations of his and then subjected them to radical pruning. The producer started at the beginning of each piece, and as soon as he'd heard enough of Bailey's music he cut the tape at that point. Bailey seemed remarkably unfazed by the way his improvisations were being chopped into smaller pieces. He also said, perhaps in a different interview, that he felt his improvising was continuous, broken only by the moments when he set down his guitar.” (Wastell and Marley 2005: 5-6)

Thus any given recording by Bailey is merely a slice of an ongoing process, and thus contiguously summons the whole. Bailey would sometimes deliberately emphasise this by using an alarm clock to signal the end of a solo improvisation rather than bringing things to an 'organic' conclusion.<sup>31</sup> Harry Gilonis has spoken about how and why he abandoned his effort to keep track of sequential periods in Bailey's playing.<sup>32</sup>

Bailey recorded a great deal of music, and after his death our only access to his music is via recordings. Thus we should not brush this experience under the carpet via a romantic reference to the purity of the improvised 'moment'. An important question is the extent to which improvisation subverts the malaise that recording has introduced into the reception of the music (the stage that Jacques Attali refers to in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* as 'repetition' – a very different form of repetition from that of Deleuze), or the extent to which improvised music, much like jazz before it, has only taken the form that it has because of recording. Ideally there is a dialectical relationship between the two. There is a genuine immediacy to the live free improvisation which is radical compared to the majority of supposed 'live' performances in the modern Western world, where, as Bailey puts it,

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30 Something that is also the case with recordings of my modular composition *Representations*, which I discuss in my final chapter.

31 Examples of this can be heard on the CDs *Aida* (Dexter's Cigar dex5, originally Incus) and *LACE* (Emanem 4013), as well as seen on the DVD *Live at G's Club* (Incus DVD, 2009).

32 “In part this was a fiction created by the obviously patchy sampling created by recordings and concerts; though there were clearly years when, e.g., he was investigating his '19-string guitar', after which it was set aside, I felt there were less-clearly defined periods when, for example, he made particularly strong use of harmonics. But I certainly wouldn't, now, want to try and lay down such a model of periodicity; even the notion of early- middle-, late-Beethoven, which has always seemed to me logically unassailable – has recently come in for stick. Bailey seems to go back to things later; or integrate lots of micro-enquiries from his whole playing life into a cadence – I'd hesitate to say narrative.” (interview with Harry Gilonis in Duncan 2006: 146)

everything that live musicians play has ‘to be totally familiar to the people *not listening* to it’ (Bailey in Corbett 1994: 228). But it is also the case that recording has had a transformative effect on improvised musics. Evan Eisenberg writes in his book *The Recording Angel* that ‘I will argue that records not only disseminated jazz, but inseminated it – that in some ways they created what we now call jazz’ (Eisenberg 2005: 118). This is surely correct; Eisenberg makes good points about impromptu composition being encouraged in recording studios to avoid paying composer’s fees, and even speculates that skipping records might have influenced jazz’s syncopations. He underplays, however, the importance of records for later generations of jazz musicians simply learning the music: Lewis Porter’s biography *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* provides evidence of how much Coltrane learnt from records.<sup>33</sup> Eisenberg does say, in passing, ‘[i]n every sense, records are the conservatory of jazz: its school, its treasure-house and thesaurus, its way of husbanding resources’ (Eisenberg 2005: 123). The conservatory can be conservative, and of course this same process has been the means via which some attempt now to ossify and standardise jazz and other improvised musics such as blues. Kevin Korsyn observes that ‘[Hegel’s] *Erinnerung* is living, interiorized recollection, while *Gedächtnis* is mechanical, external memory, memory that relies on mnemonic devices, on external aids such as writing’ (Korsyn 2005: 151). We may remember going to a concert, but the concert can also be mechanically remembered for us and preserved as a CD or LP. Further on the importance of memory with regard to expectation, Korsyn brings our attention back to Husserl, observing that: [his] ‘schema is considerably complicated by the fact that we can have retentions of previous retentions, and retentions of retentions of retentions, and so on’ (Korsyn 2005: 168). As his manuscript notes on ‘Time Experiences’ evidence, Bailey was interested in a way of being musically ‘in the moment without denying the passage of time or the listener’s perception of connections between events. Listening to a recording of improvised music for the first time *is* rather like listening to the music live. And in fact, due to the absence of large-scale formal structures in Bailey’s music, and hence the difficulty of representing the form of any performance in one’s mind, it can be so for quite a few listenings.<sup>34</sup>

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33 See Porter 1999; for example, pp. 71-2.

34 This relates to composer Chris Dench’s idea of ‘time-binding’: ‘Time-binding is fixing – to a greater or lesser degree – the internal life of an abstracted period of time, the Time Capsule. ... As a composer, I am primarily concerned with time-binding through a fully written-out score. Other composers, especially performer-composers, may bind time through less completely prescribed mechanisms, such as recorded improvisation. If the improvisation is not recorded, the time is only bound for that one performance – it is not available for time-travel’ (Dench 2007: 76) Or: ‘Loosely bound musics are easily retained in memory, where tightly bound musics are increasingly hard. However, one could argue that this is in inverse

In a sense any one recording is metonymic in the way attending a single Bailey concert was: one slice out of a life of improvising. In another sense, however, records of freely improvised music actually *combat* the metonymic way that recorded music is instrumentalised in our culture:

“Sound tracks are even worse. We associate atonality with horror and anxiety; this may help a score like *Wozzeck* to succeed but dooms much of Schoenberg and Webern, whose attempts at serenity seem guilty by association. In the same way, the language of Debussy comes to express only sensuality, the language of Mozart only old-world grace, the language of jazz only insouciance. Each language is reduced to a couple of phrases, and with our huge vocabulary we cannot say anything, we can only quote.” (Eisenberg 2005: 87)

Freely improvised music, in its all-too-predictable unpredictability has for the most part not proven usable in such a way.<sup>35</sup> The fact Bailey ran a record label is only apparently paradoxical: records provided him with more income and more gigs, so why not make them? But his objections stand:

“The whole of people’s listening lives is built around records if I understand it right. But it’s all endgame – it introduces the endgame to something that is for me primarily not about endgames.” (Bailey quoted in Watson 2004: 413-414)

The echo of Beckett may well not be coincidental. Note also that pianist Ian Pace has said that Lachenmann’s music does not work as well on CD as live (while Sciarino’s might work better) because of the way that recording abstracts from the human physicality of making musical sounds.<sup>36</sup> The same might be true of improvised musics (such was certainly Cornelius Cardew’s opinion)<sup>37</sup> although more recently certain improvisers have made much use of the potential of recording techniques such as close miking (for an interesting meeting of approaches see the trumpeter Franz Hautzinger’s duo CD with Bailey).<sup>38</sup> Bailey suggested, with characteristically dry wit, a utopian employment of recorded improvisation as non-mindnumbing background music; or rather, not background music at all (music *not* to be listened to) but music for waiting, an opportunity to *listen* when there was nothing else to do, to pay attention to the details of the music rather than use it as a metaphorical conduit for particular emotions. In this he echoes the desire we have already seen expressed by J.H. Prynne to find a method of reading where ‘everything

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proportion to the rewards from doing so. Tightly bound music has to be reabsorbed over and over again in order to maximise the resolution of the internal image, each time providing some intriguing addition of detail either forgotten or previously missed’ (Dench 2007: 80).

35 Though Evan Parker suggests people have tried; commenting on a film session, he observes: ‘I was tired by this time of being used to represent various types of psychosis’ (Parker 2007: 201).

36 At a question and answer session after a solo recital at the Holywell Music Room in Oxford on 5/2/2008

37 See ‘Towards an Ethic of Improvisation’ in Cardew 2006: 125-134, esp. 130-1.

38 GROB 425 CD (2002)

we take is literal, and not an instance of something else' (Prynne 1971: 24):

“I said to somebody that they should try this shit in elevators . . . imagine you've got to pass a bit of time, it'd be nice to play this in a railway station. It's just something to listen to instead of being reminded of something.” (Watson 2004: 418)

Metonymic structures in art can enable one to make connections with other things without themselves being reminiscent of them. In the next chapter, I shall examine this procedure at work in the music of Helmut Lachenmann, with a specific focus on the role played by the perceptions and expectations of the listener.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Perception and Expectation in Helmut Lachenmann's „... zwei Gefühle ...“, *Musik mit Leonardo***

In the following chapter I shall examine the metonymic features of Helmut Lachenmann's music, focusing in particular on his 1992 composition for ensemble, „... zwei Gefühle ...“, *Musik mit Leonardo*. I first discuss the participatory role of the listener, then examine the piece's sectional form. Next I cover the role of the listener's expectations in relation to the construction of the composition, before moving into an exploration of contiguity and causality (particularly in terms of Lachenmann's "sound-families" and use of "pseudo-causality"). I conclude the chapter with a comparison of the role of the guitar in Lachenmann's music with the uses to which it is put by Derek Bailey.

#### **3.1 The Participatory Listener or Reader**

How does the experience of listening to Helmut Lachenmann's music relate to our sense of its formal characteristics? David Lesser observes that 'some critics have gone as far as to suggest that [Lachenmann's] work is essentially 'formless' in any conventionally analyzable sense' (Lesser 2004: 107). This is true only in a narrow sense. As with the music of Derek Bailey, our sense of the form of Lachenmann's music derives directly from our own behaviour as listeners. The mind of the improvising musician engages in a complex and constantly shifting process of temporal recollection and anticipation, a process which is also at work in the minds of the audience. George Lewis, coining the term 'participatory listener', describes it as follows:

“The participatory listener performs the constitutions and syntheses necessary to learning about the music, while maintaining his quasi-objectivity, thus refraining from falsification of the music. He listens closely to the realization of the musical work, and perhaps poses to himself in phantasy alternative courses of improvisatory action which could also have been taken.” (Lewis 1974: 70)

While he acknowledges that 'different constitutions of unity may be found within the music', Lewis insists that 'all of these may be valid as long as they arise from a true process of attempting to learn about the music' (Lewis 1974: 67). The bassist Simon H. Fell, a collaborator of Bailey's, spells out how this relates to the intentionality of the improvisers themselves:

“Audiences [at concerts of improvised music] will hear things that aren't there. That doesn't mean they're mistaken; the act of listening synthesizes relationships,

anticipations and responses in the music that aren't literally there. But they are there if you hear them." (Fell quoted in Cowley 2000: 23)

The listener might, for example, hear a certain sequence of events involving more than one performer as an instance of the players listening to and audibly responding to each other in certain ways, when in actual fact the attention of the musicians at that point had been on some other aspects of the music. Fell links this to the features he values in literature:

““When I read a poem I pick up on multiplicity, polyvalence, ambiguity,” ... He recalls a lecture by the distinguished poet JH Prynne, and “being amazed at the many different ways he could find of reading through a four-line extract. It led into a new dimension”.” (Cowley 2000: 23)

I have shown how in JH Prynne's poetry, particularly his late work, individual poems are very hard to read in isolation, but how nonetheless, over the course of a sequence in its entirety, patterns of reference, sound and other features help us to gain a sense of its meaning. This meaning is never final or fixed; rather the engagement with shifting, coalescing and dissipating strands of coherence is a crucial part of the reading process, and meaningful in itself. Our behaviour as readers contributes to our sense of the form of the work; the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (a significant influence on Prynne, as the early essay 'Resistance and Difficulty' indicates) claims in *The Structure of Behaviour* that 'behaviour is a form' (Merleau-Ponty 2004: 49). Just as with a live improvisation, this process can never be repeated: we cannot help behaving differently every time we read a text, and so each rereading will have its own pattern of attention and inquiry. This is of course always the case: my argument is that Prynne deliberately builds such matters into the form of his later work.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Peter Middleton wonders whether this could form the basis of an interpretation of Prynne:

“Could a prosody be constructed from a rhythm of interpretative demands experienced as operating on several axes of readerly obsolescence as it were (of difficulty, of register, of proximity to literary tradition), so that part of the poem's music was this complex cognitive and emotional movement over the time of a reading which would be irreversible, irreparable? It would not be reproducible.” (Middleton n.d.: 36-7)

Although Lachenmann's music is not improvised, the composer also demands a

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1 The back cover to the first edition of Prynne's collected *Poems* included the following passage, which underlines this point: 'Although the language is expensive of attention and persistence it also counts its own cost and is answerable to the changing directions of enquiry and argument igniting it' (Prynne 1982). It is important to note that such ideas have clear roots in Romanticism, such as the work of the painter Caspar David Friedrich. Joseph Leo Koerner argues that 'Friedrich aspires to make meaning appear not as the artist's constructed invention, but as the outcome of the individual viewer's own ordering and interpretative labour' (Koerner 2009: 102). We must also remember that fragmentation was not a Modernist invention: 'The paradox of the co-presence of the fragmentary and the systematic is articulated by Schlegel in his *Athenaeum* Fragment 53: 'It is equally deadly for the spirit to have a system and to have none. Therefore, it will have to decide to combine both'' (Koerner 2009: 119).



participatory listener. In his essay ‘Hören ist wehrlos – ohne Hören’, Lachenmann claims that ‘the subject of music is listening, perception that perceives itself’ (Lachenmann 2004a: 117).<sup>2</sup> He intends to compel the listener to his music into becoming aware of their perceptual activity and its relation to their own activity and passivity.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, our experience of each individual element of one of his compositions contributes to our sense of the whole. It is, however, not just that the parts *add up* to the whole, but that it is only through our perception (necessarily an active perception) of the nature and function of the parts that we are able to gain a sense of the whole at all. Formal decisions are actively required of the listener: do we consider a certain change in the music to be a transition to a new section, or merely a development of the current one? In Lachenmann’s work we do not have access to the smoothness of what Adorno describes as ‘traditional listening’, where ‘the music unfolds from the parts to the whole, in tune with the flow of time itself’ (Adorno 2002: 271). One of the main tools the composer uses to bring this situation about is the way he handles the middleground structures of his music, which display a particular type of ambiguous sectionality. Lachenmann challenges his audience to engage with his music in a particular way through a distinctive combination of linear dissimilarity and the occlusion of clear middleground units of structure, the effects of which I shall explore in the context of an examination of the role of expectation in the listener’s experience of this music.

### 3.2 [Aside on Research Methodology]

„... zwei Gefühle ...“, *Musik mit Leonardo* is a composition for speakers and ensemble written by Helmut Lachenmann in 1992. I began my research into this piece by listening to different recorded versions of it, and organized my initial thoughts about structure around what I could hear. The versions I focused on were the 1994 Ensemble Modern recording conducted by Peter Eötvös available on ECM and the 1995 Klangforum Wien recording conducted by Hans Zender, on Kairos. The piece is also part of Lachenmann’s opera, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*, so I also listened to recordings of the opera, and to a DVD concert film of „... zwei Gefühle ...“ available on Wergo (which also includes a 15-minute documentary about the piece), and a full length documentary about the piece made in 1998 by Uli Aumüller. However, in order to focus my inquiries I concentrated on the

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2 ‘Der Gegenstand von Musik ist das Hören, die sich selbst wahrnehmende Wahrnehmung.’

3 John Wilkinson is of the opinion that JH Prynne’s reading of Wordsworth’s ‘The Solitary Reaper’ leads us to infer that the responsible reader is expected to ‘challenge at all points the self-deceptions liable to infect his or her reading’ (Wilkinson 2010: 325).

two audio recordings of the piece as separate entities.<sup>4</sup> Following repeated listenings and note-taking, I proceeded to examine the score of the piece. Inevitably I will constantly refer to the score in what follows, and so it may seem as if my approach only differed in sequence from a more traditional approach. This may be the case; but it seems to me that because of the great importance of timbral specificity of Lachenmann's music, an approach too wedded to the score would be more at risk than usual of overemphasizing some elements and underemphasizing others. By always referring back to the audible results, I hope to have avoided the worst of this risk. And by using two different recordings, and referring to the score, I have avoided the danger of putting too much emphasis on details that are merely idiosyncrasies of a given performance. I have not focused greatly on differences between the two performances; while there are plenty (the most obvious being that the ECM recording employs two narrators, while the Kairos only one, the composer himself) I have rather hoped to triangulate the score and the two recordings to get a view on what characterizes the piece, than to explore specifically the issues of interpretation that arise. Seeing a performance would have been ideal, but was sadly not possible, though at least the DVD recording gave me some information as to how the piece comes across in the live situation.

### 3.3 The Ambiguity of Sectional Form

In her discussion of Helmut Lachenmann's ensemble composition *Mouvement (- vor der Erstarrung)*, Elke Hockings writes that:

“There are clear differences in textures, forms of articulation, speed, mood, etc., but a division into sections through listening is not easy, not least because the energy states and forms of articulation of most sections do not change abruptly but more or less gradually and often in an overlapping fashion. There are frequently a number of general pauses inserted in the score, but they are frequently not obvious to the ear because of the many other surrounding hesitations and pauses.” (Hockings 2005: 91)

This is equally true of the slightly later „... *zwei Gefühle ...*“, *Musik mit Leonardo*. The middleground is only rendered obliquely and ambiguously. Nevertheless, attempting to come to an understanding of the form of the piece, not in the sense of being able neatly to parcel it into sections, but in terms of following its developments – the course of its energies – is exactly what Lachenmann expects from his listeners. Lachenmann, as we have seen, is interested in new forms of *perception* which become aware of themselves as such, rather than in new sounds for their own sakes, and it is only through the elaboration

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<sup>4</sup> I should also note that there is at least one more recording available that I have not heard, on DURIAN 097/098-2

of sounds in time – that is, through form – that such self-reflective perception may be prompted.

The broader sectional divisions can, however, be established more easily in „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ than in some of Lachenmann’s pieces because the way that the text is divided up allows clear divisions between the sections containing text and those that do not (though this in itself says nothing of the sectional divisions of the music). Sections containing text alternate with instrumental passages, as shown in the following table.

*Table One*

<b>Text</b>	<b>Score pages</b>	<b>Bar numbers</b>	<b>Kairos timing</b>	<b>ECM timing</b>
‘So donnernd’ to ‘entgegenstellt’	1 to 22	1 to 106	0'00" to 5'07"	0'00" to 4'35"
(instrumental)	22 to 26	107 to 130	5'08" to 6'09"	4'36" to 5'36"
‘Doch ich’ to ‘hervorgebracht hat’	26 to 34	131 to 167	6'10" to 8'07"	5'37" to 7'23"
(instrumental)	34 to 41	168 to 198	8'08" to 11'06"	7'24" to 10'08"
‘Ich wand’ to ‘herrschte’	41 to 55	199 to 271	11'07" to 16'21"	10'09" to 15'11"
(instrumental)	55 to 63	272 to 303	16'22" to 18'34"	15'12" to 17'37"
‘Als ich’ to ‘sein möchte’	63 to 71	304 to 348	18'35" to 22'59"	17'38" to 22'24"

These divisions have a complex and subtle relationship to the musical transitions in the piece. It would not be quite true to say that the musical transitions overlap the divisions of the text, because in fact there is a musical transition whenever a section of text comes to an end; but these transitions are frequently disguised. There are also many musical changes during each section. It may in fact be easier on the first few hearings for the listener to follow the recurrence and transformation of various musical features than to hear the divisions facilitated by the text.

In the broadest terms, one could say that the piece begins densely and often relatively loudly, with many differentiated fragments of sound. It then moves into a more sustained and still section, before the density and dynamic level increase again. Finally the piece ends with a relatively long, very quiet and still passage – disturbed briefly right before the conclusion by one brief outburst. Lachenmann has used this shape before. Indeed, the sketch I have just outlined would also apply to *Intérieur I*, written a quarter of

a century earlier and which, according to Yvonne Drynda, Lachenmann considers ‘his true Opus 1’ (Drynda 2000).<sup>5</sup> In the film about „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ by Uli Aumüller, he refers to the latter piece as featuring ‘a diminuendo in mass, and a crescendo in intensity’ (Aumüller 1998).<sup>6</sup>

In many older compositional practices, the nature of the motivic material ‘was an invaluable guide to a piece’s formal structure. „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“, perhaps surprisingly, includes what seem to be very dramatic motivic gestures, but what the listener should make of them, structurally, is a more difficult question. One example would be the chromatically ascending four note motif, crescendoing to fortissimo, in the brass and reeds – bars 97-98 in the score (Kairos: 4'43"; ECM: 4'15"). This grabs the ear, but what is one to make of its prominence – should one be able to trace related figures elsewhere in the piece? One could perhaps note that the opening bass clarinet figure (bars one to three) is a four note chromatic figure (though descending rather than ascending); or that in bar 9 the harp plays a four note chromatic cluster (Kairos: 0'25"; ECM: 0'22"). Moving further afield, there is a long chromatic ascent in the bass clarinet (joined by the bass flute) in bars 69 to 72 (Kairos: 3'11" to 3'24"; ECM: 2'47" to 2'59"). But none of these figures particularly draw attention to themselves, and bare chromatic material such as this is sufficiently neutral that any attempt to draw it out as thematically significant feels forced. Motives seem to be offered to us, but if we form expectations as to their likely recurrence, such expectations are foiled, guiding us to look elsewhere for the piece’s formal coherence.

The composer’s manipulation of tension and release at the microlevel in the earliest part of the piece contributes a great deal to the fragmented yet forward-moving sensation here. Tension is built and released by the composer’s handling of linearly differentiated timbral areas. New areas continually open up which the listener feels could be explored for sustained periods of time, only for them to change after a few seconds. Though the alterations can be dramatic they never result in a series of undeveloped textural ideas. Specific sonic areas do recur, and when new ones enter the old ones are still in play. (Particularly important in the opening moments of the piece are low reeds, strident brass, piano used in such a way as to emphasize its timbre [for example through extremes of range], percussion – mostly timpani or sounds with very short decay, and high quiet strings. The pressed bowing and the guitar only become prominent later on.) The contrast

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5 ‘sein eigentliches Opus 1’

6 ‘Ein Diminuendo der Masse, und ein Crescendo der Intensität.’

between dry sounds and resonant ones is important in achieving this effect. On page 24 (Kairos: 5'33"; ECM: 5'01"), a passage of resonance is presaged (the piano is allowed to sustain, for example), but is not allowed fully to occur – reeds and brass intervene. The resonance of the sounds makes us perceive time as closely related to space, so that following a ‘drier’ passage the presence of more resonance which needs space to reverberate in (and hence musical space – that is to say time) sets up a musico-structural expectation, which Lachenmann then subverts by cutting it off and entering the very sparse dry world of pages 25 to 31 (Kairos: 5'38" to 7'33"; ECM: 5'06" to 6'49").

The way such sudden changes are handled in the piece is key to Lachenmann’s treatment of formal sectionality and progression. Sudden changes occur often: for example, the *fff* pressed string textures that begin abruptly after the GP in bar 36, or the sudden increase in activity at bar 287 (Kairos: 17'22"; ECM: 16'14"). However, Lachenmann is very fond of inverting the function of such moments. So, for example, the outburst at bar 287 can sound like a clear sectional break, following as it does a long period of relative quiet, but by bar 289 we have returned to a texture similar to that which preceded the burst of activity. So we may be tempted to view it merely as an interpolation, were it not for the fact that the new texture, while similar to what went before (toneless and flautato bowing, toneless flute playing, and so on) is nonetheless also markedly different (the strings are much more still, and the tam tam enters, rubbed in a way not heard before in the piece). So clearly some kind of transition has occurred, but the composer deliberately leaves us unsure as to how to categorize it; thus the details of the form can remain mysterious even after repeated listenings.

The opposite strategy appears at bar 107. Here (Kairos: 5'07"; ECM: 4'36"), the first part of the text has come to an end, and there is a double bar line in the score. The only instruments playing in bar 106 are the timpani, which both stop at the bar line; the celli, contrabass and contrabass clarinet all begin on the downbeat of the new bar. So visually this appears to be a clear sectional break, but because the text has become relatively sparse by this point in the piece anyway, and because the new textures emerge seamlessly out of those preceding them, it is only in retrospect that the listener is likely to realise that the voice has been silent for a longer period than usual, and thus that a sectional division must have happened at some point in the past.

### **3.3.1 Sound and Form**

Lachenmann wrote in his early essay ‘Klangtypen der Neuen Musik’ that he wished to

move beyond the dualism of “sound” and “form” (Lachenmann 2004a: 20).<sup>7</sup> Hence, ‘the key concept of such listening is called “structure”’ (Lachenmann 2004a: 118).<sup>8</sup>

Lachenmann’s thinking resonates strongly with the thoughts of JH Prynne on poetic composition. Prynne believes that semantic questions (‘for so long ... the arduous royal road into the domain of poetry’) are ‘less and less an unavoidably necessary precondition for successful reading’ (Prynne 2010: 132). However, the poet cannot take this situation as license ‘to subside into distracted ingenious playfulness with the lexicon’: he can no more remain wholly within a mere ‘performative sonority’ (roughly, “sound”) than he can ‘the paramount abstraction of inferred ideas and beliefs’ (which corresponds to “form”, at least in some of its senses): rather semantic and non-semantic (including sonic) elements must form an ‘intense hybrid’ (Prynne 2010: 133).

Therefore the types of formal blurring that Hockings identifies do not indicate that Lachenmann is uninterested in the sequential structure of his compositions, but rather the opposite, and they are specifically intended as a challenge to the perception of George Lewis’s ‘participatory listener’. Lachenmann, like Boulez and other composers before him, refuses to make a clear distinction between form and material. As he demonstrated in the ‘Klangtypen’ essay, the most elementary sonic particles display what could be described as formal qualities. In an essay published in 2004 he refers to

“... the sonic typology I “provisionally” conceived some 30 years ago, whose five forms – cadential sound, colour-sound, fluctuating sound, textural sound, structural sound, or indeed sound-cadence, tone colour, sound-fluctuation, sound-texture, sound-structure – derive successively from one another and – in part as sounds, in part as process – dissolve the duality of sound and form, instead dialectically assigning the one to the other.” (Lachenmann 2004b: 60)

He goes on to say that:

“... form, then, is in fact the “arpeggio” of a sound-space to be explored through listening. This does not overlook, it should be noted, the problem of equating the experience of a musical, and thus irreversible sequence with the exploration of a “space”.” (Lachenmann 2004b: 60)

In listening to Lachenmann’s music we find ourselves, as we do when reading JH Prynne’s later work, employing our memories in conjunction with our perceptions to make something that approximates to – while never becoming as definite as – a personal and individual formal account of the piece in question, in defiance of strict linear sequence. (It may be that the image of the cave in the text by Leonardo da Vinci that the composer sets

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7 ‘... wo es kein Dualismus mehr gibt von „Klang“ und „Form“.’

8 ‘Der Schlüsselbegriff solchen Hörens heißt “Struktur”.’

in „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“, and from whence the title derives, had appealed to Lachenmann partly because of this metaphorical idea of form as a space to be explored.<sup>9</sup>) It should be noted, however, that Lachenmann’s forms are not analogical: the larger scale form is not simply the elementary particle writ large. Such a way of thinking would be metaphorical, but Lachenmann is, I believe, more metonymic. Contiguous features of the composer’s sonic vocabulary are the means by which the listener navigates through form, but the form of any given composition is necessarily unique. In this Lachenmann distinguishes himself not only from spectral thinking but from composers who claim *only* to deal with the material specificity of the sonic material itself. As he has written about the advent of total serialism in the 1950s, ‘a belief in the possibility of proceeding (yet again!) from neutral ‘sound-values’ involved a secret dialectic with the aesthetic considerations that had ostensibly been excluded from the discussion’ (Lachenmann 1980: 20). Just as JH Prynne understands that one cannot subvert the power of syntax or of etymological morphology by ignoring it, Lachenmann realises that if one is not to be trapped by reified conceptions of the nature of the aesthetic one cannot jettison all such ideas but must enter into conscious struggles with them.<sup>10</sup> David Lesser characterises the musical expression of these struggles as

“... the conflict of binary tensions between differing forms of acoustic phenomena, as in *Wiegenmusik* (1963), where the tensions between the performer’s gestures and our acoustic perception, and between sonic decay and silence ... finds an especially touching appearance, or in the monumental *Klangschatten – mein Saitenspiel* (1972), where the composer has referred to the work ‘relying on the dialectics of *refusal* and *offer*’. This could even be seen in the more recent *Mouvement (-vor der Erstarrung)* (1982-1984), where the composer seems to be reappraising many of the structural principles of these earlier scores in the radically sped-up context typical of a number of his works from the mid-/late 1980s and early 1990s. Lachenmann also explores the inherent tensions between expectation and listeners’ preconceptions ... The extraordinarily rich surfaces of Lachenmann’s best work, with their often very rapid alternations of textures and playing techniques, which form pairs or groups in dialectical opposition to one another, are the surface indicators of other more deeply

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9 We actually do not know what the opening section of the text is about. All the things it describes are actually being negatively compared to something else which makes a louder noise and a greater commotion. We could speculate as to what this is, or locate the original text to find out for sure, but more important for Lachenmann is the way that an evocative scene can be summoned up while still leaving a sense of absence at its centre, a mystery and an unknown into which the listener’s imagination can penetrate.

10 Adorno put the problem as follows: “The aesthetics of expression, where it is consistent, ends with the temptingly arbitrary act of substituting what has been understood ephemerally and by accident for the objectivity of the thing itself. The opposite thesis, however, that of the forms set in motion by sounding, comes down to empty stimulus or the mere existence of something that reverberates, where this stimulus lacks the relationship of the aesthetic *Gestalt* to something that is not itself, through which it first constitutes itself as aesthetic *Gestalt*. Its simplistic and thus once again popular criticism of signifying language is paid for with the price of the artistic.” (Adorno 2002b: 117)

buried developments.” (Lesser 2004: 111)

It has not been my intention to attempt to excavate these developments, at least in the sense of performing a poietic analysis that reconstructs the process of composition, but more to attempt an esthetic analysis which focuses on the perceptions and expectations of the audience, which necessarily will also contain elements of neutral description.<sup>11</sup>

Hockings quotes from a private correspondence between herself and the composer, in which Lachenmann advised her, in a letter of March 27, 1994:

“Do not torment yourself too much with analyses. The question is always: which means are used in which ways, why and to what effect, or better, inasmuch to what innovative effect. It is therefore more important to define the categories which are used, installed and stretched rather than to measure things—hence it is more important for analysis: WHAT IT IS rather than how it is made—processes which are often totally buried under later interventions.” (Hockings 2005: 90)<sup>12</sup>

Lachenmann, like any composer, uses certain processes which are to a degree consistent from piece to piece, but he never enslaves himself to them, or conceives of his pieces as dramatizations of the unfolding of such processes. The audible end result is always paramount and this means that once composition is underway on any given piece, earlier procedural schemata can be abandoned if the music seems to be heading in a different direction. Referring to the ‘structural melodies’ that are the skeletons upon which he builds most of his pieces, Hockings comments that ‘this structural melody does not determine the overall design as its notation often becomes increasingly lax towards the end of a work and sometimes even disappears entirely’ (Hockings 2005: 94). Austin Clarkson, in fact, has claimed that ‘Lachenmann, as did Busoni, Varèse, Wolpe, and others before him, rejects systems and trusts in the intuitive form-sense to guide the creative process’ (Clarkson 2004: 54). Clarkson’s comment is, however, misleading in that it could be read as implying an unreflective method (if ‘intuitive’ also implies, up to a point, ‘unconscious’). Lachenmann’s formal structures may not be fully systematic in a post-serial sense, but they are always both deeply heard and extremely carefully constructed, often with the expectations of the listener firmly in mind. His music is also empirical in the sense that it relies on actual acoustical testing:

“I have not a good inner ear and so sometimes the noises, as soon as you have a normal pitch, the noises get pale, for instance. So I have to find out ... It’s an experimental way, in the rehearsals, as it should be in my eyes, a little bit, a way of correcting, and I

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11 On the terminology see Nattiez 1982 (in particular pp. 244-5).

12 Compare Prynne’s reference (in a footnote) to an essay by Christian Wolff, about which he notes with approval that ‘the composed feature-system is mostly not directly or even inferentially accessible to a listener’ (Prynne 2005: 147).



ask the timpani player ‘Please take another brush, it’s not sharp enough’, and so on.” (Lachenmann in Coleman 2008)

Such experimentation does not imply that Lachenmann lacks a clear idea of how he wants his music to sound, only making his decisions during rehearsal, but rather the opposite. Sonic and formal elements are so intertwined in his music that timbral perception is part of one’s formal understanding of a given piece: there are no empty structures that are merely ‘filled’ with material, but rather it is in active listening to all elements of the music that one comes to have a formal understanding of it. We shall shortly examine that material itself in more detail, but first we will look more closely at the role that expectation plays in our engagement with this music.

### 3.4 Expectation

In listening to Lachenmann’s music, as with any music, we build up our sense of the whole by making predictions (whether conscious or unconscious) as to the implications of the parts. As we have seen, however, the composer does not provide us with a clear progression building up from minute detail, via midlevel sectionality, up to global form, against which we can assess these expectations. We might have expected Husserl to have something to say about this, but though he illustrates his ideas on time-consciousness with the example of a melody, it is a melody already known, and thus the structure of our protentions during it are not fundamentally different from those of our retentions. As Izchak Miller observes, ‘Husserl’s discussion of the notion of protention is, unfortunately, very sketchy’ (Miller 1982: 135). David Huron has, however, examined expectation in music very thoroughly in his book *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*. He explains his terminology of expectation as follows:

“*Schematic expectations* represent broadly enculturated patterns of events. Different schemas may exist for different styles or genres, as well as for common patterns (like major or minor) that cross stylistic boundaries. *Veridical expectations* represent long-term patterns arising from repeated exposure to a single episode, token, or work. *Dynamic expectations* represent short-term patterns that are updated in real time, especially during exposure to a novel auditory experience such as hearing a musical work for the first time.” (Huron 2006: 231)

Lachenmann manipulates all three of these forms of expectation. In „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ the explicit semantic material present in the form of the spoken text allows Lachenmann to work with expectation more directly than he might otherwise have been able to.<sup>13</sup> The

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13 The full text used in the composition, and a table of its distribution throughout the score and between the various speakers, comprises Appendix Four.

structure of the second part of the composition is gripping because of its combination of urgency and stasis. Varying lengths of static time ('eine Zeit lang'; 'geraume Zeit') are combined with sudden concentrations into a present moment ('nun'; 'plötzlich'). In addition, there are throughout the piece often pauses in the middle of words, which create a sense of *waiting* that would have been more difficult to achieve with purely musical materials. A particularly notable example of this is what the composer does with 't' sounds. He almost compulsively holds them back, creating pregnant pauses that are brought to an end by explosive consonants. These are most dense towards the end of the piece: 'e-' in bar 255 (Kairos: 15'26"; ECM: 14'07") is only followed by '-twas' in bar 257 (Kairos: 15'30"; ECM: 14'12"); immediately following we have 'un-' in bar 258 and '-terscheiden' a bar later, while 'ver-r-bo-' on p. 53 (Kairos: 15'45"; ECM: 14'32") is not followed by '-t' until bar 264 at the start of the next page (Kairos: 15'50"; ECM: 14'39"). But these gestures are in fact prefigured by the GP in bar thirty-five between 'sam-' and '-t' (Kairos: 1'28"; ECM: 1'16"), and the break between the '-tell'- and 't' of 'entgegenstellt' in bars 105-106 (Kairos: 5'02"; ECM: 4'30").

The text is examined phonetically, and thus its sonic qualities can be explored and links made between instrumental and vocal sonorities. The composer is determined, however, not to lose the semantic content of the text, however difficult it may be for the audience to keep track of it. Lachenmann judges these difficulties very carefully, only fragmenting the text within certain limits. He is also very specific about its delivery:

“The speakers’ function is not to declaim the text “highly expressively” ... They must shape the sometimes overlapping and juxtaposed sequences of words and texts by determining the nuances of the speech melody in such an unequivocal way that the listener is able to follow the course of the text, decipher it and understand it by accumulating and storing, as it were, its individual segments in his or her memory. The performance instructions found in the speakers’ parts and which make deliberate use of the standard Italian terminology are thus to be understood as something like instructions for “phonetically music-making” instrumentalists. This should not be taken to mean “expressionless” declamation, since this would precisely have an “expressive” effect in a mannered sense.” (Lachenmann 2002)<sup>14</sup>

The listener is deliberately challenged to reconstruct a linear text out of a non-linear presentation. Words can be broken up between the speakers, but the shuffling only happens within sentences, not between them – and usually between adjacent words, at that. There are two exceptions, the first being pp. 48-49 (Kairos: 13'54" to 14'28"; ECM: 12'39"

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14 On the Kairos recording of *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* these directions are very emphatically ignored, in what is an extremely “dramatic” delivery which, ironically but unsurprisingly, actually diminishes the drama of the music.

to 13'09"), where the sentence that ends '... eine Zeit lang verweilte' does overlap with the next sentence ('Ich hockte mit gekrümmtem Rücken'), which itself overlaps with the start of the one following that: 'Die müde Hand aufs Knie gestützt...' This produces the most dense and fractured section since the beginning, whereas from about page nine to page forty-eight the complexity of the fracturing of the language is generally less. For example, note how when a text by Nietzsche is introduced, spoken by members of the orchestra, the text from Leonardo is spoken in complete words in the right order, albeit with rather long gaps between them into which the Nietzsche text is – much more fragmentarily but still in the right order – inserted (pp. 26 – 31; Kairos: 6'10" to 7'33"; ECM: 5'37" to 6'42"). Also, the minimal nature of the instrumental activity at this point focuses one's attention sharply on the words. The second exception to the fracturing of only relatively short passages of the text is on pp. 64 – 65 (from Kairos: 18'48"; ECM: 17'53"), the climactic passage 'erwachten plötzlich in mir zwei Gefühle: Furcht und Verlangen.' Here a fragment of the start of the second half of the text, 'irre umher', creeps back in (although whispered so easy to miss), and the syllables are generally extremely well shuffled. Lachenmann clearly did not want to make this section stand out through easy semantic transparency, so instead he makes it very knotty and difficult, while still allowing the ear to pick up the crucial syllables such as 'zwei', 'Ge-', '-füh-', 'furcht', '-dver-', '-la-'. He gives the listener a chance to work out what the passage is, even if accounting for every phonetic detail in this section remains very challenging.<sup>15</sup>

How does Lachenmann deploy schematic expectations in „... zwei Gefühle ...“? Without attempting anything like a coherent theory of the use of pitch in the piece, it is worth noting that though Lachenmann's pitch language is fully chromatic, and that while he does not in this piece make explicit reference to other works of music, tonal materials that by their very nature refer in general to the history of (tonal) music are definitely present, if submerged. For example, in places tonal references are buried in the harmony, meaning that the listener is highly unlikely to pick them out as such without reference to the score, but definitely giving a very different colour to the harmony than would be possible in their absence. So for example, in bar fourteen (Kairos: 0'37"; ECM: 0'32"), one trumpet descends a tritone and the other ascends a whole tone, giving a resultant pattern of two major thirds (the first enharmonically spelt as a diminished fourth) – see Figure One.

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<sup>15</sup> Appendix Four, part two, contains the text as it is presented in the piece, and indicates how it is divided between the voices.

Figure One

Figure One shows three staves of music. The top staff is for Trumpet 1, the middle for Trumpet 2, and the bottom for Trombone. All are in 4/8 time. Trumpet 1 plays a quarter rest followed by a dotted quarter note Bb and an eighth note A. Trumpet 2 plays a quarter rest followed by a dotted quarter note B and an eighth note A. The Trombone plays a quarter rest followed by a dotted quarter note B and an eighth note A. Dynamics are marked *ff* for all parts. The Trombone part includes a glissando from B to A, indicated by a slur and a sharp sign above the notes.

When combined with the trombone's F# - E glissando we actually end up with two second inversion major triads, though the voice-leading, the briefness of the motif (it only lasts a semiquaver) and the other reeds and piano all serve to complicate and obscure the situation. To take another example, the piano plays a very slow rising passage in bars 222 – 233 (Kairos: 12'46" to 13'30"; ECM: 11'41" to 12'18"), as seen in Figure Two.

Figure Two

Figure Two shows two staves of piano music. The top staff starts at bar 222 and the bottom at bar 228. The music is in 4/4 time and features a very slow rising passage. The top staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by a dotted quarter note Bb, a half note B, and a dotted half note B. The bottom staff begins with a quarter note B, followed by a dotted quarter note B, a half note B, and a dotted half note B. Dynamics are marked *ff*. The passage ends with a cadence on a dominant chord (G major), indicated by a sharp sign above the final note. A dashed line labeled "15ma" spans across the end of the passage.

Could one say that the passage starts in E minor (with the Eb/A possibly as a rootless B dominant?), moves through F minor and ends on the dominant of G major? There is a hint of a cadence at the end, as the C moves up a tone and the B falls a fourth. We are so high on the keyboard by this point, however, that the higher pitches barely register in their own right; what we actually hear at the end sounds more like the first three notes of Bb major (Bb – C – D). In any event, the specific analysis is not really the point – Lachenmann is concerned to maintain ambiguity at all times – but rather the fact that generalized tonal echoes are definitely present in the piece. Lachenmann's skill, in fact, lies in introducing them while managing to avoid a limiting sense of referentiality.

The same could be said for the sound-painting in the piece. Although it might well seem an approach at odds with Lachenmann's modernist instincts, there are clear evocations both of the volcanic activity referred to by the first part of the text, and the cave

environment of the second. The programme note refers to a ‘Mediterrane Klanglandschaft in unwirtlicher Höhe’, rendered into English in the Kairos booklet as ‘A Mediterranean landscape at an inhospitable altitude’, though of course the German actually refers to a ‘soundscape’, or literally a ‘sound-landscape’. It is difficult to pin down exactly what parts of the music might be read in this way, but certainly in the first part of the piece the fragmentary nature of the sounds – the music as well as the text seems like ‘bits’ that need to be put together – combines with the tendency for crescendi to fortissimo that suddenly cut off to create a certain explosive sense; shards being thrown about, perhaps. In the second part there is more use of resonance and echo, as well as various breathy sounds. The combination of very high string harmonics plus toneless bowing on the bridge with breath sounds in the brass (filtered by the use of mutes) in bars 239-240, for example, can easily be heard to evoke the echoey, windy environment of a cave (Kairos: 13'57"; ECM: 12'41"). The composer manages the inclusion of referential material in such a way that the material enriches our perception of the music by drawing on our schematic expectations, but in fractured or subliminal ways which do not restrict the other ways the music engages and fulfills (or subverts) our expectations.<sup>16</sup>

The fragmentary and ambiguous nature of much of the piece means that veridical expectations are a little harder to build up than in much other music; nevertheless the piece passes into the memory more easily than many works of integral serialism or chance organisation, because of the close attention paid to audience expectation by the composer. Once formed, veridical expectations of „... zwei Gefühle ...“, *Musik mit Leonardo* operate in the same way as they would in any other music. It is worth comparing this aspect of the piece with Derek Bailey’s music, where – leaving aside for a moment the question of repeated listening to a recorded improvisation – the situation is somewhat different. Bailey’s wish ‘horizontally ... to play an even mix of timbres’ (Bailey 1980: 128) could be seen as a remnant of the interest in serialism that he displayed early on in his career as an improviser. Just as Schoenberg’s “contratonal” music attempted to neutralise the tonal expectations of the listeners – Huron and Paul von Hippel have shown that Schoenberg deliberately constructed rows that avoided being reminiscent of tonal pitch

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16 More direct sound-painting occurs in Lachenmann’s opera, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*. As David Metzger writes, ‘it is surprising how illustrative certain passages can be. For example, in the scene where the girl and the grandmother rise to heaven, Lachenmann conveys the growing gulf between heaven and earth by pushing up in range from the already stratospheric heights in the strings and plunging the heavy sonorities in the lower brass further and further down. ... It is hard to imagine a Baroque depiction of the Ascension being any more descriptive’ (Metzger 2009: 204).

structures (Huron 2006: 342)<sup>17</sup> – so Bailey’s music, as we have said, aims at highlighting the dynamic expectations of the listener by flattening any schematic expectations. By employing various audible connections (whether of motive, rhythm, texture or timbre) irregularly but not infrequently within a generally disjunctive environment, we are prevented from simply expecting disjunction (as we can in some works in Moment Form, or some chance-derived musics) so our expectations of the moment-to-moment progress of the music become highly charged.

Huron also argues that:

“When we experience an auditory stimulus for the first time, the experience is initially coded in short-term memory. This short-term memory provides the basis for dynamic expectations as the auditory experience continues to unfold. If our experience is sufficiently salient it will be retained in episodic memory – meaning that we will be able to recall the experience as an event in our autobiographical past. We can use this episodic memory to form veridical expectations that inform future listening experiences. If we hear many nearly identical performances, the original autobiographical memory may become obscured and the veridical expectation will no longer be linked to the memory of a specific exposure. If broadly similar auditory stimuli are experienced many times over a long period of time, then the memory will be transformed into a mental schema that provides the basis for schematic expectations.” (Huron 2006: 266)

With a live improvisation, we may have vivid episodic memories, but we can never hear the music itself again, even though we may be (or become) very familiar with the performer(s) in question. So, to refine the point made previously, it could be argued that with Bailey’s music, we go directly from dynamic expectation to schematic, bypassing the normal sense of the veridical. This can in fact be the case even with repeated exposure to Bailey’s music (as a whole, rather than to one particular recorded improvisation), because in all his improvisations the dynamic expectations we form are not subordinated to middleground structures.

### **3.5 Instrumentation, Contiguity and Causation**

#### **3.5.1 “Sound families”**

We shall turn now to the relationships between the elements from which Lachenmann built his composition. Prominent at the beginning of „... *zwei Gefühle ...*“, *Musik mit Leonardo* are various wind textures combining pitched material (frequently very low, from

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17 It will not come as a surprise to listeners to the Second Viennese School that Huron and von Hippel’s results suggested that Webern’s rows were even more atonal (their preferred word is *contratonal*, a useful addition to the vocabulary alongside *non-tonal*), while Berg’s less so. See Huron 2006: 406, n. 16

contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon, and/or tuba) with various differentiated breath sounds from flutes and brass; different ‘scratched’ and ‘pressed’ string textures, combined with different harmonics or ‘sphärisch’ whispering textures; and combined plucked string timbres including harp, double bass and also, by extension, low piano tones. All these sound-conglomerations have analogues throughout the piece. The sparse string and wind textures at the very end, for example, could be seen as transformed variants of the denser textures with which it begins. The piece could also be said to traverse extremes of pitch, beginning as it does with the third D below middle C (in contrabass clarinet and tuba) and ending with the fifth Eb above middle C as harmonics in the two violins. Lachenmann refers to such timbral/instrumental grouping as ‘families’. He writes that:

“... “structure” could thus be understood as a more or less complex projection and overlaying of allocations – though I sometimes prefer to term the latter “families”: the separate projected particles take effect together, each in its own fashion, with regard to a common context as yet undergoing definition: each family member is an individual entity, not simply – as was the case in both the compositional and conceptual aspects of the original serial practice – quantitatively identified gradations of a character already defined within each separate component.” (Lachenmann 2004b: 61)

The multiplicity of transformations inherent in such an approach makes an exhaustive catalogue probably an impossibility. Nonetheless, certain features stand out, and it is primarily via such features that Lachenmann engages the listener’s dynamic expectations. The metaphor of the family also, while by no means precluding similarity (the metaphor is based on the idea of ‘family likeness’ – certain ‘families’ often becoming characteristic of the work of a given composer<sup>18</sup>) does at least open the door to contiguous relationships, rather than the serial concept of ‘gradations’ – or in other words, of similarity revealed by means of dissimilarity.

The idea of ‘acoustic fields’ employed in the programme note clearly shows that here Lachenmann does think more in terms of gradations of continua than mutually exclusive oppositions, as much with regard to timbre as to structure, but not abstracted in relation to any artificial quantitative measure. Pitch can blur into non-pitch, or rather pitched sounds often emphasize other aspects of their construction than their pitch content. This can be achieved, for example, through range, such the extremely high piano pitches on page forty-six (which may remind us of related devices in other pieces, such as *Ein Kinderspiel* and the ‘Siciliano’ from *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, though the piano

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18 Compare JH Prynne on the development of the poet: ‘To build a writing framework over an extent of regular practice, across many years, accumulates a profile more and more singular. Even family likeness may not be sufficient to accomplish recognition in full detail’ (Prynne 2010: 127).

writing in both of these has a rhythmic drive absent here). Lachenmann makes very deliberate connections between different instruments, in keeping with his oft-repeated idea that composing means ‘building an instrument’.<sup>19</sup> He has not abandoned his early conception of *musique concrète instrumentale*; as he says to the Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin about the first, dense section of the piece, ‘it is a kind of *Allegro agitato*. And a great deal of this energy lies in your instruments’ (Aumüller 1998).<sup>20</sup>

Sometimes the instrumental connections in „... *zwei Gefühle* ... “ are imitative, based on easily perceived similarities. The pitch swoops that occur on pages 34 and 35 of the score (from Kairos: 8'00" and ECM: 7'16") are found in the guitar (using a slide), the strings (especially pizzicato celli and contrabass) and on the timpani. However, within the imitative sequence Lachenmann actually builds new sonorities by using such timbral/gestural parallels simultaneously. Thus, what may first strike the ear in bars 170 to 172 are swoops on the guitar followed by echoing gestures in the timpani. But in fact the guitar is only the most prominent (or the most immediately identifiable) element in a ‘new instrument’ constructed out of the guitar and the strings (except the contrabass); there is even in the score the explicit indication ‘*Streicher genau synchron mit Gitarrenglissando*’. And the timpani glissandi are enriched by upwardly sliding double stop pizzicati in the celli and contrabass that may also not be apparent on a first listen.

Such composite ‘instruments’ are present right from the start of the piece. The score enables one to see clearly how the opening wind sonority is built up from sustaining low reeds and tuba, with a serrated breath sound on top from the bass flute, all given impetus at the beginning by a brief cor anglais F#. Elsewhere, the synthesis happens not so much chordally as sequentially, so that for example in bar sixteen, the harp and pizzicato contrabass present what is really a single musical idea, which they can do because their timbres are so similar (see Figure Three: Kairos: 0'41"; ECM: 0'36"). They are different enough, however, to give an extra richness through a touch of *klangfarbenmelodie*.

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19 See, for example, Lachenmann 2004b: 56.

20 ‘Das ist eine Art *Allegro agitato*. Und eine ganze Menge von diesen Energien sind in eure Instrumente gelegt.’



Figure Three

### 3.5.2 *Musique concrète* and *musique concrète instrumentale*

Lachenmann's approach to instrumental physicality and specificity enables him to make use of very precise effects derived from the nature of the instrument in question, effects which will only work at a certain place on an instrument and are not abstractly transposable with respect to pitch, for example. With respect to the violins in bar eighty-one of „... *zwei Gefühle ...*“, *Musik mit Leonardo* for example, Lachenmann writes:

“With a high muting stop (c.  $c^4$ ), an extremely high and brilliantly rattling downward pitch glissando can be produced on a relatively short section of this string (beginning 2-3 cm within the fingerboard) with a slow downbow and a very cautious shifting of the pressed bow towards the middle of the fingerboard; a rising pitch glissando is produced with an upbow and by shifting in the opposite direction in accordance with the varying distance between the bridge and the point of contact of the bow.” (Lachenmann 2002)

Lachenmann's investigations of the physical processes required to create sound from an instrument explore the given structures inherent in the instrument, the process of playing it and our method of perceiving the result. The results of natural causation *can* be part of the work of art.

We should note here the extent to which *musique concrète instrumentale* is in fact a reversal or inversion of Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète*. Schaeffer insisted upon the importance of acousmatic or reduced listening, in which (analogously to the phenomenological reduction, or Husserlian epoché) the listener suspended inquiry into the origin of the sounds heard and merely focused on their concrete form and detail (a listening practice evoked by Prynne when he speculates that ‘maybe we can listen to the rain / without always thinking about rain’ (Prynne 2005a: 100)).<sup>21</sup> Schaeffer's term refers

21 This is from the conclusion to Prynne's most explicitly musical poem, ‘Thoughts on the Esterházy Court Uniform’. The poet links such an idea to the operation of similarity; immediately following the lines quoted, we are told that ‘we / trifle with rhyme and again is the / sound of immortality’ (Prynne 2005a: 100). But we should treat with caution any apparent utopian overtones in this passage: ‘trifle’ is clearly pejorative, and do we really believe in immortality? Earlier in the poem we are warned that the impression of return that similarity can afford may help us avoid dealing with what is really present: ‘should it start / to rain—the world converges on the idea / of return. To our unspeakable loss; we make / sacred what we cannot see without coming / back to where we were’ (Prynne 2005a: 99) and later: ‘each time what / we have is increasingly the recall, not / the subject to which we come’ (Prynne 2005a: 100).

to Pythagoras's practice of lecturing his followers from behind a screen, so they concentrated merely upon his words, not his appearance. Lachenmann specifically demands the opposite; in the score to his 1969 solo piece for cello, *Pression*, he asks that

“If possible, this piece should be played by heart, or at least in such a way that (a) the pages do not have to be turned, and (b) the score does not block the view of the cello and bow.” (Lachenmann 1980b)

The score, that could easily act as an informal screen and force the listeners to think only about the sounds produced by the cellist and not the actions required to produce them, is to be removed as an obstacle, so that aural and visual perception can proceed in parallel. The relationship between effect and cause is very deliberately displayed for the audience to inquire into. Substituting an effect for a cause, or vice versa, is a metonymic procedure, and so it can be here, in a sense: depending on whether one concentrates on the visual or the aural at any given moment it is the way that the other relates or does not seem to relate – expresses or subverts a sense of identity between the two – that much of the force of this piece (and most of the rest of Lachenmann's output, particularly in the 1960s and 70s) derives from. Rather than the form of reduced listening advocated by Schaeffer, Lachenmann's exclusion is different:

“A glance at the physical, energetic, immediately perceptible anatomy of sound-events implies the exclusion of a mode of listening “polished” by tradition and habit.” (Lachenmann 2004b: 58)

### 3.5.3 Indexicality: Gesture and Tradition

In his programme note Lachenmann refers to ‘rubble from the traditional supply of affective gestures, realigned as a resounding connection of acoustic fields, internally articulated in different ways’ (Lachenmann 2004a: 402).<sup>22</sup> We might recall Rose Rosengard Subotnik's comments about Chopin, to which we referred in the introduction. But where she refers to the way that ‘the “entity” or whole known as A minor is reduced to “a few highly individualized aspects”’, Lachenmann's rhetoric is more forceful and conjures up the whole ideology of postwar Modernism in music: a ruined tradition, only available to the composer now as rubble. Lachenmann has broken down traditional materials, and attempts to make them cohere not merely via emphasis on his own compositional agency but via the microstructure of the sounds themselves. Not being a postmodernist, however, Lachenmann needs a way to draw on the affective resources of traditional gestures without seeming to import undigested chunks of the standard repertoire

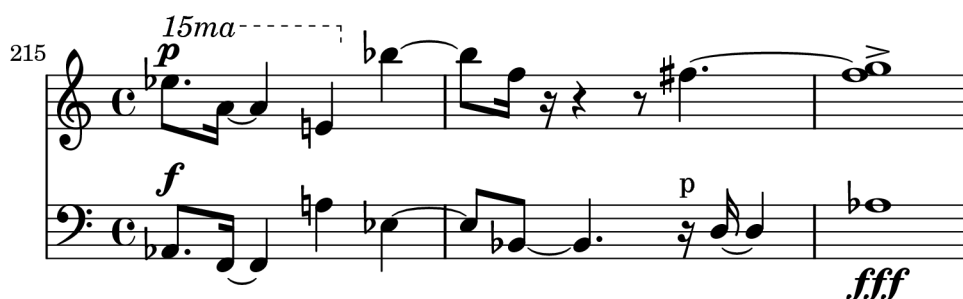
<sup>22</sup> ‘Trümmer des überlieferten Vorrats affektiver Gesten, neu gepolt als klingenden Zusammenhang aus innerlich verschieden artikulierten akustischen Feldern’.

All subsequent references to the programme note are to be found on this same page

into his music. (In Huron’s terminology, we would say that Lachenmann denies himself, for the most part, the resources of the schematic expectations present in listeners familiar with the canon of Western concert music.)

Look for example at the passage beginning in bar 215 (Kairos: 12'22"; ECM: 11'18"). The piano part from bars 215 to 217 is shown in Figure Four (omitting the pedalling indications and the A natural that enters on the final semiquaver of bar 217).

Figure Four



The left hand of the piano begins with a clear five-note motif, which the other instruments mostly double this, or harmonize at the fifth in very high registers, but with subtle complexities in the way they overlap. The motif enters strongly, but after two bars has decayed into what is more or less an internally variegated echo, with strong attacks coming less and less frequently. The motif overall is reminiscent of Varèse, and Michel Roth suggests a reason why:

“... one fundamental gesture in Varèse’s music is a rhythmically complex chordal accumulation slowly decaying into a few stray pitches. As Gérard Grisey would have put it, such accumulations are written-out acoustical “archetypes” whose internal laws, incidentally, are surprisingly congruent with what Helmut Lachenmann defined as the “sound-types of new music” (1967).” (Roth 2006: 480)

Dynamic expectations in this case are then more to do with energy and the ways in which we are trained to hear consequence in sounds in our everyday life: for example a crescendo followed by a decrescendo as a car passes us, or a loud impact followed by quieter reverberations when an object falls off the table. Gestures such as these mimic the real indexicality of such sounds and so are the compositional complement to the genuine indexicality Lachenmann explores with his *musique concrète instrumentale*. (As we have noted, the metonymy in the latter case is also one of effect for cause: the audience is directed to search for the cause of a given sound in the physical activity of the musicians.) The composer observed during an interview in 2003:

“If I hear two cars crashing – each against the other – I hear maybe some rhythms or some frequencies, but I don’t say, “Oh, what interesting sounds!” I say, “What

happened?'" (Steenhuisen 2009: 162)

Simon Jarvis emphasises the same point:

"The familiar story, in which an initially non-signifying pure noise, a series of tones, pitches and timbres, is only subsequently assembled into signification, is a numbed recapitulation of a narrative which has long ceased to hold the attention of other departments. ... [F]ar from representing the obvious starting point, '*hearing a pure noise* demands a highly artificial and complicated frame of mind' ... what when we wake at 6 o'clock is heard across the street is at once the noise of the venture capitalist's BMW, rather than a kit-form data-set we then piece together as the acoustic afterimage of that vehicle ... ." (Jarvis 1998: 8)<sup>23</sup>

A related argument is presented by Eric Clarke in his ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning:

"When perception proceeds in an unproblematic way, we are usually unaware of the sensory aspect of the stimulus information, and are only attuned to the events that are specified by stimulus structure. But when that relationship is problematic, the stimulus structure itself can become more evident." (Clarke 2005: 32)

Prynne would agree with this – as would Pierre Shaeffer, who knew that acousmatic listening was specialised and difficult listening. The reduction Prynne proposes in 'Mental Ears and Poetic Work' ('the real-time sounds of speech and vocalised utterance are disintegrated into sub-lexical acoustic noise by analogy with the striking clatter of real work in the material word' (Prynne 2010: 128)) is, precisely, recognised as a reduction, not the poet's naturally given starting point. In Lachenmann's music there has also been a reduction from the sounds of everyday life – these sounds are generally either accidental or the incidental result of purposive action not acoustically directed; here the action and resultant sounds are their own purpose.

In „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ the text does not merely float on top of the music, but is deeply intertwined with it, and Lachenmann's most direct means of achieving such a state of affairs involves using the acoustic characteristics of the text's phonetic material. Voices and instruments are combined, or correspondences between them demonstrated, just as much as between different instruments. Lachenmann explores acoustical similarity but also manufactures contiguity through rhythmic simultaneity: that is, he forms associations between dissimilar elements merely by presenting them in close proximity. These associations also often take the form of a pseudo-causality.

Concrete examples of this could include the following. There is a combination of similar sounds in bar 78 (Kairos: 3'40"; ECM: 3'15"), where the '-t-' in the voice is

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23 Jarvis's quotation is from Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.

coloured by the trombone and trumpets making a ‘t’ sound into their instruments simultaneously. But Lachenmann also combines dissimilar sounds: in bar twenty-five, ‘-trom-’ is spoken in unison with a six-note cluster in natural harmonics from the strings, taking advantage of the scordatura in use (Kairos: 1'05"; ECM: 0'56"; see Figure Five). The chord is comprised of the full chromatic gamut from the D above middle C to the Ab above that. The crescendo in the strings makes the pitched sound seem to emerge from, to be a consequence of, the unpitched syllable. This is, of course, a composed mimesis of a physical procedure (such as the sound of an impact followed by its acoustic consequences) rather than a literally acoustic effect. Similarly, and immediately following, in bar twenty-seven, ‘we-nn’ is in unison with the beginning of a sustained flautato played right at the stopping finger in the two violins.

Figure Five

25

Second speaker

-TROM-

Violin One

IV l.v.

*p* < *ff*

Violin Two

IV l.v.

*p* < *ff*

Viola 1

III l.v.

*p* < *ff*

Viola 2

III l.v.

*p* < *ff*

Cello 1

I l.v.

*p* < *ff*

Cello 2

I l.v.

*p* < *ff*

Contrabass

I l.v.

*p* < *ff*

One further example of this occurs in bar 302 (Kairos: 18'27"; ECM: 17'30"; see Figure Six). In the midst of a great deal of unpitched sound, the chord produced by the tuba, contrabassoon and cor anglais sets off a series of high attacks in piano, harp and guitar.

The chain of Bs produces a genuine moment of *klangfarbenmelodie*.

Figure Six

The musical score for Figure Six consists of six staves, all in 3/4 time. The instruments are: Cor anglais, Contrabassoon, Tuba, Piano, Harp, and Guitar. The score begins at measure 302. The Cor anglais, Contrabassoon, and Piano parts play a sequence of notes: a quarter rest, an eighth rest, a dotted quarter note B, and a quarter rest. The Tuba part plays a quarter rest, an eighth rest, a dotted quarter note B, and a quarter rest. The Harp part plays a quarter rest, an eighth rest, a dotted quarter note B, and a quarter rest. The Guitar part plays a quarter rest, an eighth rest, a dotted quarter note B, and a quarter rest. The dynamics are: Cor anglais (p), Contrabassoon (p), Tuba (p), Piano (p), Harp (p), and Guitar (f). The Tuba part has a '8vb' marking and the Piano part has an '8va' marking. The Harp and Guitar parts have triplets and a '3' marking.

All the attention paid to acoustical matters should not distract us from paying attention to other, more historically based associations. Charles L. Boilès is of the opinion that stylistically referential characteristics in music can be considered to have an indexical relationship to the periods in which they originate:

“An indexical sign is a sign or sign-object that indicates or announces the existence of the thing-object for which it functions as a sign. To give but one example, the Baroque period is a historical thing-object of Western European musical history, and those stylistic characteristics which indicate that a given composition belongs to the Baroque period should be considered indexical signs.” (Boilès 1982: 34)

This might seem an idiosyncratic definition of the indexical, given that an indexical sign is usually considered to have a direct *physical* connection to that of which it is the sign. However, if indicators of musical style are nothing other than those concrete musical features which together make up that style, then they do indeed have a direct connection to the music of their period, because such music is nothing other than the collection of such stylistic characteristics. That is, they do not have an indexical relationship with the period of history per se, but only with the music itself; and yet, via stylistic characteristics we can date the music and thus stylistic elements can be referential. Boilès seems only to consider

music which *actually does* originate from a given period, but it is clear that this feature of musical semiosis opens the door to the referential exploitation of particular stylistic signatures. Such exploitation need not be an untethered free play of signifiers. According to Albrecht Wellmer, Lachenmann ‘takes up *one* aspect of Adorno’s notion of material: the idea that material is “sedimented spirit”, which amounts to something loaded with significance, semantic contents and associations’ (Wellmer 2004: 116). Given the close relation between the indexical sign and metonymy, we can see how historical reference can be deployed in such a way as to be an example of a metonymic procedure, in a similar fashion to the citational practices I examined in Prynne’s *Unanswering Rational Shore*. Although not particularly prominent in „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ (apart from the deployment of the text) Lachenmann employs such procedures in a number of pieces, such as for example *Accanto* (where Mozart’s clarinet concerto is actually audibly present at times, though only on a recording), *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* (where apart from one distorted irruption of the German national anthem the citations are mainly rhythmic), *Mouvement (- vor der Erstarrung)* (for example in the use of the song ‘O du lieber Augustin’ as a rhythmic template, which was also used by Schoenberg in his Second String Quartet), and at places in his opera.

### 3.6 The guitar

The guitar writing in „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ has been considered to have something in common with Derek Bailey’s work. Philip Clark has referred to ‘Derek Bailey-like guitar figurations’ (Clark 2006: 76) in the piece, while Andy Hamilton referred to ‘a reminiscence of Derek Bailey’s deconstruction of acoustic guitar’ (Hamilton 2001: 86). In fact, at first glance, beyond a certain spidery sense of sonority, and some very fleeting technical parallels (such as the two B naturals at the same octave produced by different means mentioned above), there is not all that much in common between Bailey’s playing and Lachenmann’s writing for his instrument in „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“. The muted sounds with no clear pitch are not a device Bailey tended to use for extended periods, and the harmonic employment of the pitches of the six open strings of the instrument are something Bailey would never have used so nakedly, however much his pitch resources were derived from the structure of standard tuning.<sup>24</sup> Also, to the best of my knowledge

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24 See, for example, Bailey’s reference to ‘the sort of electric guitar open string sound I was at pains to avoid’ (Bailey 1992: 94). Even though Bailey did use open strings extensively in his later acoustic playing, he very rarely allowed them to sound as quasi-fundamental pitches in the way that John Russell, for example, sometimes does with his low E string.

Bailey never used a slide in his improvised work, something that is very prominent indeed in the guitar writing in „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“. There is, it is true, a quasi-improvised passage, reminiscent of techniques employed by Lutosławski, in „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ on pages 37 and 38, where the ensemble (mainly strings) make their own way unconducted through the material they are given. This, however, is much more a means to a certain ‘statistical’ soundworld (with roots in some earlier ‘open-form’ experiments by other composers) than any attempt to explore improvisation as Bailey understood it.<sup>25</sup> I think the links may actually be stronger when one considers the way that the guitar relates to the rest of the ensemble. Although Bailey was not prone to direct imitation of the musicians he was playing with, he did often aim for a timbral interweaving which blurred individual instrumental identities. Discussing the drawbacks of solo playing in his book, he refers to the absence of:

“... the kind of playing which produces music independent of the characteristics of instruments or even individual styles (‘...who played that?...’), unidentifiable passages which are the kind of magic only possible, perhaps, in group playing.” (Bailey 1992: 109)

The way that Lachenmann takes certain structural musical features of the guitar and distributes them across the ensemble in building his ‘meta-guitar’<sup>26</sup> can produce just such disorientating and intriguing effects. The composer analyses his sense of the way the ‘guitar section’ of the piece operates in his ‘Philosophy of Composition’ essay (Lachenmann 2004b: 65-66). His focus on timbral areas as continua is apparent here, and even more strongly in the analysis of Webern’s Op. 10/IV for orchestra in the same essay<sup>27</sup> (he refers for example to how ‘Melody, reduced to a single point in the viola’s entry on a harmonic, becomes at the same time the first link in a chain of increasingly irregularly perforated *tenuto*-gradations’ (Lachenmann 2004b: 59)), perhaps recalling Boulez’s thinking in another work with a prominent guitar part, *Le Marteau sans Maître*, about the instrumentation of which the composer wrote that ‘a number of features shared by these instruments [form] a continuous passage from voice to vibraphone’ (Boulez 1986: 340).

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25 Indeed, as with many composers with similar backgrounds, Lachenmann is rather dismissive of improvisational practice, seeing it too simply in terms of spontaneity and extended techniques without the support of compositional structures: ‘Anybody, after all, can scratch with the bow behind the bridge; on the other hand every sound or noise, defamiliarized or not, familiar or unusual, draws its significance from the constructional development of the context. ... If we take the example of the cello pizzicato again, it can become a transformation of a tympani-beat. Improvisation has no place here’ (Ryan 1999: 21). To which the simple but necessary response is: ‘why not?’

26 In Aumüller 1998, Lachenmann says that ‘Der ganze Mittelteil ist eigentlich ein “Wald” von Pseudo- oder von Meta-Gitarren.’

27 The same analysis is undertaken in more detail in Lachenmann 2004a: 121-123.



Rather than just working with the timbral qualities of the instruments at his disposal, however, he also takes as his material the pitch structures inherent in them. The way that he does this with the guitar really distinguishes his approach from that of Bailey. Whereas Bailey explores the instrument from a player's perspective, Lachenmann comes at it necessarily somewhat from the outside, as it were. So, the 'guitar' section of „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ really begins on page thirty-one of the score. The guitar plays an octave harmonic on the low E string (which is the first 'full' guitar sound that has been heard for a long time in the piece), while the two celli play a fourth between them (Db-F#) and the piano plays a chord directly derived from the tuning of the guitar's open strings, though transposed to a low C: C-F-Bb-Eb-G-C.

The problem with this is how audible as 'guitar-like' such harmony is, given that it is almost never heard as such in idiomatic guitar music. Although the listener might have familiarity with such a sound from their own experience of simply strumming the open strings of a guitar found lying around, when guitarists do produce chords by barring straight across the neck, as in some country or blues styles, especially when playing slide guitar (which of course links to the earlier parts of „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“) they will almost always tune their instruments to an open tuning, rather than to standard tuning. The tuning of an open E chord would have been much more audibly 'guitar-like', but consisting as it does of a six-note E major triad, it would presumably have been too musically referential to fit into the rest of Lachenmann's sound world.<sup>28</sup> So one could argue that he needed the abstraction of the open strings to enable him to pursue his intent without rupturing the coherence of the work, but one could also say that it thereby renders his design less audible.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, does one necessarily hear the middle sections as based on the guitar at all? A hypothetical listener unfamiliar with much symphonic music might find the harp to be the more unusual and thus prominent instrument in this section, and while recognizing the various play with open string sounds of different types, might relate them back to the harp rather than to the guitar. Of course, Lachenmann would probably acknowledge this; he admits before embarking on his analysis of this section that any description of this kind of musical thinking risks 'contributing to the reification' (Lachenmann 2004b: 65). The composer's intentions by no means necessarily translate directly to the experience of the

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28 It is *visually* referenced in *Salut für Caudwell*, where at one point one of the guitarists fingers such a chord, but only rubs the strings with the palm of the right hand, so that the pitch structure of such a fingering is not audible.

29 Certainly in the piano writing. The use of open fourths in the contrabass in bar 176 does create for me a certain 'naïve' sound which I can relate to the guitar's open strings, but then I am a bass player.

listener. Interpretation always has a role to play, and in keeping with the ambiguity we highlighted earlier, the critical listening that Lachenmann demands is itself more important than the specific conclusions about the music's structure that one reaches.

Lachenmann's treatment of the characteristics of stringed instruments is intimately tied up with his ideas of musical structure more generally. Here broader parallels with Bailey's attitude to sound can, I think, be drawn out, which might explain why the presence of the guitar in „... *zwei Gefühle ...*“ makes us think of Bailey, even if the actual guitar writing is not very similar to Bailey's playing. Derek Bailey was not particularly interested in foregrounding the 'immediately perceptible anatomy of sound-events' (Lachenmann 2004b: 58)<sup>30</sup> as a goal in itself, but in his playing it could frequently be a side effect of his more driving concern to withhold 'that which has become commonplace'. Bailey describes freeing himself from abstract musical systems (tonal, serial or any other), but not refusing responsibility for musical succession. Improvisation is not chance music, and thus although the musical sequence may be unsystematic in a serial sense, it is clearly shaped by physical properties of the instruments involved, and by the judgment and intuition of the improviser: just as the musical sequence in Lachenmann's work is conditioned by the physical properties of the instruments he writes for, and his judgment and intuition as composer.

We have seen, then, how in Lachenmann's music in general (and specifically „... *zwei Gefühle ...*“, *Musik mit Leonardo*) displays the characteristics I have identified of a musical metonymy: a deployment of linear dissimilarity and ambiguous middleground structures (which I discussed in relation to the effects such features have on audience expectations), as well as the use of material with contiguous relations either to historical devices or to each other, via relationships either of genuine or pseudo-causality. Through both sonic-gestural metonymies of cause and effect, and referential metonymies achieved via energetic structures, text or codified gestures, Lachenmann's deployment of structural determination employs metonymy as an important tool in generating the possibility of such an imaginative transcendence of constraint. It is to my own compositional deployment of musical structures informed by the varied uses of metonymy I discern in JH Prynne, Derek Bailey and Helmut Lachenmann that we shall turn in the next chapter.

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30 See also 'Vier Grundbestimmungen des Musikhörens' in Lachenmann 2004a: 54-62.

## Chapter Four: Presenting *Representations*

The seven tracks on the accompanying recording are realisations of a modular composition for improvisers entitled *Representations*, which were recorded by Graeme Shaw at Brunel University on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010. The numbering relates to the order in which the pieces were performed, but in keeping with the modular, mutable structure of the score itself (which is contained on single sheets of A4 which are rearranged and shuffled anew for every performance) I have not felt beholden to keep to this sequence in assembling the CD. The musicians involved were as follows:

- Paul Abbott (electronics)
- Javier Carmona (percussion)
- Angharad Davies (violin)
- Bruno Guastalla (violoncello & bandoneon)
- Alexander Hawkins (piano)
- Dominic Lash (contrabass)
- Pete McPhail (alto saxophone & flute)
- David Stent (electric guitar)

Different combinations of these musicians performed on each version of the piece. The titles and line-ups are:

1. *Representations 22* (Davies/Guastalla/Lash)
2. *Representations 19* (octet)
3. *Representations 21* (Abbott/Carmona)
4. *Representations 27* (Carmona/Guastalla/Hawkins/Lash/McPhail/Stent)
5. *Representations 28* (piano quartet: Hawkins overdubbed)
6. *Representations 24* (Guastalla/McPhail/Stent)
7. *Representations 23* (octet).

A list of all performances of *Representations* to date appears as Appendix Five, Appendix Six contains a selection of modules from the piece, while Appendix Seven gives the timings on the recording where these pages can be clearly identified. I shall not discuss these moments in detail: listening to them while following the scores might be the quickest way to gain an initial appreciation for the ways in which the piece operates.

## 4.1 Representation

The title of the piece refers both to the fact that the piece is “re-presented” in a different form in each performance as well as to the general antipathy towards representation in much Modernist art and theory (the thinking behind which I have referred to earlier in this thesis). While highly sympathetic to the impulse behind this idea, I wondered whether it would be possible to conceive of music which *was* in some sense representational, without resorting to pastiche. As Simon Jarvis has pointed out, there is a tradition of seeing representational elements present even in abstract music that goes back at least as far as Hegel:

“The modification becomes clearest at the point at which Hegel suggests that, in dissonance, music actually possesses the means of *representing* a battle of opposites.” (Jarvis 2005: 67)

Jarvis considers the ways in which, for Hegel, there might be a form of *thinking* it would be proper to call *musical*, and locates the possibility of this in representation:

“Music has served as a figure both for the failure of thinking to become fully explicit, and for an interiority which misrecognizes its imprisoned or sheltered innerness as a natural fate. It has been able to serve in this fashion because what is meant by thinking here is this excursion and return; because the subject, in other words, must objectify itself even in order to be a subject. It is nothing at all without recognition: no cognition without re-cognition! In so far as music begins to take on an implicit cognitive content, it can do so only to the extent that it too follows this pattern. There could be musical thinking which is thinking proper only in so far as music can in some way become representation.” (Jarvis 2005: 67)<sup>1</sup>

The question, then, is what it is that one is representing and in what ways. In a sense, what *Representations* represents is its own conditions of coming into being: in the first place this confronts the players themselves and engages their “musical thinking”. While playing the piece the mental state of the players is at all times comprised of a combination (sometimes a peaceful coexistence, at other times a difficult tension) between their improvisational sensibilities and the demands placed upon them by the instructions on paper that make up the piece in its abstract form. In this it develops from the ideas of limitation and exclusion that I explore elsewhere in this thesis, manifesting these ideas in the form of restriction of the musicians. The demands of the piece restrict different elements of their activity at different times, but always with the implication that anything unspecified is up to their own improvisational sensibilities to determine. John Russell’s comments on the way an improviser chooses the role of different musical parameters at a

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<sup>1</sup> I should note that Jarvis goes on to challenge Hegel by contesting whether ‘this is what thinking must mean’ (Jarvis 2005: 68).

given time are relevant here: my pages intervene in different parameters at different times but the others remain operative in the music – and hence their shaping is up to the players.

Each of the three artists I focus on elsewhere in my thesis is represented in the project in the first instance by basic – even banal – links. In the case of Derek Bailey the fundamental link is the reliance of the piece on the improvisational skills of the chosen performers. In addition, whereas – as George Lewis has observed – the spatially representational nature of the traditional score enables the composer ‘to treat his work as if he indeed “has it all at once”’ (Lewis 1974: 29) a different methodology is at work in *Representations*. The score itself, which is more concerned with the actions of the players than the sounding result as such, is deliberately *not* representational in that sense,<sup>2</sup> but operates with a sense of simultaneity more like that of Derek Bailey’s musical vocabulary. The way that any given module (that is, any page of the score) can follow or precede any other, and almost any ‘harmonic’ combination of pages for different players is possible, was inspired by the modularity of Bailey’s instrumental vocabulary in which, I have argued, any presented element stands in a metonymic relationship to his body of technique considered as an abstract whole.<sup>3</sup> Lachenmann enters the picture at times through an expanded conception of instrumental sound, but also through the questions that repeated performances ask of the audience’s perceptual and interpretive skills. The way that the composition is built out of submerged references to other musics and other art forms (the majority of which will go unperceived by the audience) has resonance with Prynne’s methods of poetic composition; also, the bald regularity of the underlying formal structure (every component save one being a single page of A4) was inspired by the structures Prynne employs in his late poetry, in particular in *Her Weasels Wild Returning*, *For the Monogram*, *Red D Gypsum*, *Unanswering Rational Shore*, *Blue Slides at Rest* and *To Pollen*.<sup>4</sup> I intended with *Representations* to explore various relationships, between different types of material, between performers, between music and audience, and between different versions of the piece; many of these relationships could be described in a sense as metonymic.

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2 “In general, prescriptive notation points to a shift in the function of notation from representation to mediation.” (Kanno 2007: 231)

3 There is, of course, no shortage of contemporary pieces with similarly flexible horizontal and vertical structuring, but Bailey’s music – rather than any such piece or pieces – was the specific inspiration in my case.

4 All contained in Prynne 2005, apart from *To Pollen* (London: Barque Press, 2006).

## 4.2 Mechanics

*Representations* is a modular work, written for specific instrumentalists known to the composer.<sup>5</sup> The physical structure of the score consists of individual single-sided pages of A4, which in a given performance are for the most part shuffled and played in a random order (the only exceptions being specific duo and ensemble pages, which are only shuffled in by one performer, so that the others can easily retrieve them when cued to commence). A clock governs the overall length of the performance as well as some specific durations and ensemble coordinations within it. Each page also contains possible conditions for cueing other ensemble members and for continuing to the next page. Ensembles can be of any size from duo upwards. So two players from a quintet could also do a duo performance using the same pages, although they would almost certainly be deployed in a different sequence (this is in fact what happened at the first two performances of the piece).

The instructions to performers, which spell out all this information, are as follows:

This piece is a **modular** work for improvisers and composers. Sets of single sheets of A4 are written, initially for specific instrumentalists (not just instruments), though pages written for a given player may be attempted by other players, preferably after consultation with the composer. Each page indicates some actions, or frameworks for action, the conditions by which the player may proceed to the next page (in black and red text in a box), and instructions relating to cues (in blue).

Any combination of the pages a particular player has may be used in a given performance; these should be **shuffled randomly**. The only exception are pages for multiple players (duos, trios etc). In these cases, the players involved should agree between them that one of their number shuffles the given page among their other pages, while the others keep it separate. Then, when the player who has shuffled the page in comes upon it during the course of performance, he will cue the other player(s) and they will begin the group page. After it, they move on to their next page or return to where they were in the previous page as appropriate.

For a given performance, an **overall timing** should be decided. There are no limits to the length of a performance, but as a rule of thumb every page a player has should require two to three minutes. The number of pages available can condition the length or vice versa. Thus, if a player has ten pages, a length of twenty to thirty minutes is preferable. Conversely, if a performance is allotted ten minutes, each player should use between three and five pages. Not all players in an ensemble need to have exactly the same amount of pages, but the number should not vary more than one more or less than the mode. E.g., in a quintet if three players have ten pages, the other two could have nine, ten, or eleven. When a player completes his last page he should remain

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5 'The idea of a composer sitting down and writing out instructions for a group of people whose playing he doesn't know strikes me as a bizarre activity' (John Butcher in Clark 2008: 31). I would not fully subscribe to this view, but certainly the type of compositional activity that Butcher describes is not one with which I have ever felt comfortable or had rewarding results.

silent for the remainder of the performance, even if there is substantial time remaining. If a player is in the middle of an action when the given time elapses, he should immediately stop what they are doing and cut off all sustain.

A **stopwatch** should be used for performance. Where clock timings are given, O'OO'' refers to the beginning of the minute at which the given page is turned to. For example, if one turns to a new page 13'45'' through a performance, O'OO'' on the new page refers to 13', for the duration of that page. Following that, the indications +1' 00'', +2' 00'' etc. refer to the subsequent minutes. So in the example above, +2' 34'' would indicate 15'34''. Unless specified, it is not required to wait until a new minute begins. If actions are indicated in the O'OO'' minute that have been missed because of the point at which the page was turned to, they may be ignored.

Every page is **categorised** at the top right (for example, [improvisational goad] or [determinate instruction]). It is not necessary to pay attention to these but they may help to guide one as to what to expect on a given page.

Every page also contains criteria for **moving on** to the next page. These are in black and red in a rectangle towards the foot of the page. **CONDITION** refers to the conditions that must be fulfilled before moving on, or that precipitate immediate progress to the next page. **METHOD** indicates how such progress is carried out. There are three methods (always written in red):

**SUDDEN**: begin your next page *immediately*

**OVERLAP**: depending on the material, either move to the next page gradually (introducing more and more of the new page and playing less and less of the old page) or begin the next page but with the material and conditions of the previous page still in force. In some circumstances this may be impossible; in any insoluble conflict the new page takes priority – but in merely very difficult situations a valiant effort is urged!

**GAP**: a period of silence before beginning the new page

Both **OVERLAP** and **GAP** methods should last one minute maximum. The player should decide their length at the outset of the transition, rather than ad. lib. during it.

Every page has, at the foot, **cue options** (in blue). At the outset of the performance, each player (individually, without sharing their decisions with the other performers) should create a number of **events**, one per ten minute section or part thereof of the overall performance. (So for example, for any performance up to ten minutes each player should create one event; for any performance longer than ten minutes up to twenty minutes they should create two, etc.) Each event should be a very brief (<5 second) musical statement, with a solid internal architecture.

The cue options are points at which one may cue another player (or players) to perform one of their events. These options are always 'maximums' – they indicate all the points at which the player may cue another, but the player may always choose to use only some, or none, of their possible cue options. Similarly, when cued it is entirely up to the player which of their events they decide to play at that point.

If a page instructs the performer to **number**, they should assign numbers to the other players in the ensemble (not including themselves), up to the number specified. If there are fewer performers than the total number indicated, instructions relating to higher numbers may be ignored. Similarly, if there are more performers than numbers, merely number as far as the page indicates and then proceed to follow its instructions.

The technique of randomly ordered pages is one I have used a number of times in the past – first in my piece *Von Hagen's Voicebox* which was performed by The Sixteen in Oxford in March 2005, and later in *Goad*, performed by myself as part of the Convergence Quartet on our UK tour in November 2006, the Oxford performance of which appears on the CD *Live in Oxford*. The combination of familiarity of material and procedure with freshness of linear structure worked well on these occasions, hence it seemed natural to continue exploring the idea; I am not interested in the work having a unique temporal structure, but I am concerned that over a longer time-span each performance should be recognisable as somehow part of the same larger project. Hence the clock was the most neutral method I could think of for organising the piece's temporality. The clock merely marks passing time rather than sectional divisions or tempo, but it also enables precise synchronisation if necessary.

### **4.3 Influences**

During a performance of *Representations* means and goals entangle, intertwine and even at times cancel each other out: the goal of the players' actions is of course the production of music, but via a sounding which is the result of a struggle with the piece, rather than the musicians aiming at producing a particular sound and subordinating methodological questions to this. In this the spirit of Christian Wolff's compositions such as *For 1, 2 or 3 People* was a major influence behind this project. One slightly more technical influence on the piece is the modular work of James Saunders. His ongoing #[unassigned] project combines tight focus on musical ideas with constant freshness in every performance. As my central goal for this project is, as far as possible, the seamless blending of composed and improvised elements, I thought that combining modularity (each single-sided A4 sheet being considered as a single module) with random sequencing of pages would enable me to achieve this. Other predecessors rather than (for the most part) technical influences to the work include the following: the Art Ensemble of Chicago; Anthony Braxton (in particular the flexibility of the combination of material displayed in his quartet with Marilyn Crispell, Mark Dresser, and Gerry Hemmingway and more recently in a larger



group context in the performances documented on *9 Compositions (Irridium) 2006*); John Zorn, mainly the early “game pieces” collected in the *Parachute Years* box set; Richard Barrett and Paul Obermeyer’s ensemble fORCH; and the John Butcher Group’s recording *Somethingtobesaid*.<sup>6</sup>

Language is an important element of the score itself, as there are often quite a few words on each score page. I decided to explain the ideas for each individual page on the page itself, the idea being that once a given page had been read and digested it would only have to be glanced at to remember the procedures in place, but that by having this information on the score itself I could avoid a vast repertoire of unusual symbols for which a key would have to be produced, and which would have to be expanded every time I wrote a new page. The general instructions for the performers fit on two sides of A4 and, as we have seen, only refer to those procedures and notations common to every page of the score. Influences in the use of text as a method of scoring included Stockhausen’s intuitive music, specifically *Aus den Sieben Tagen*; some Fluxus pieces; and Michael Pisaro’s *Harmony series* (which also relates to my other interests in that each piece in the series is prefaced by a poem, from various contemporary poets).<sup>7</sup>

*Representations* has of course developed in the course of the various performances. The only major overhaul of its practical structures, however, has occurred between *Representations 9* and *Representations 10*, where I restructured and simplified the cueing procedures and introduced the different methods of passing from one page to another. I did the latter to enrich the continuity; where previously players would move on in their own time (and often have a pause between pages based purely on pragmatic considerations), I now specify whether they must move on immediately from one page to the next, leave a period of silence, or attempt to overlap the end of one page with the beginning of the next. In terms of the cueing, previously each page had specified when a player could cue another, as well as some event specific to the given page to play if cued. This proved needlessly confusing in execution, and so I instead required that each player create a number of very short but coherent “events” at the start of every performance; if cued they were to play one of these. Thus audiences would have more chances to recognise a

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6 Although it consists of file cards which can be combined in any sequence and any ‘harmonic’ ordering, Mauricio Kagel’s *Acoustica* was not an influence on the composition of *Representations* for the simple reason that I did not discover it until after completing these recordings.

7 In fact, a number of the performances of *Representations* have been accompanied by the distribution of texts by David Stent among the audience; this aspect of the work did not, however, ultimately prove significant to my research.

continuity of response to the cueing taking place on stage. (Of course, this also has its own challenges: it is difficult not to make the events a little predictable, especially if a performer forgets to think properly about them before the performance; some of the performances of *Representations* on the April/May 2009 Convergence Quartet tour perhaps suffered a little from this.)

#### 4.4 The Relevance of Metonymy

My ideas on metonymy and my work on the composition developed in parallel. While not restricting the procedures I employed in composing *Representations*, ideas of metonymy inspired by my research into the work of JH Prynne, Derek Bailey and Helmut Lachenmann were crucial to the development of the piece, and increasingly so as my work on it developed. As a figurative procedure in language metonymy works, as we have seen, through association by contiguity rather than, as in metaphor, by similarity (that is, by comparison). Thus any contiguous relationship can serve as the basis of a metonymy. For example, effect and cause, as in ‘she is my pride and joy’; container and contained, as in ‘the kettle boiled’; or possessor and possessed, as in ‘the violinist broke a string’.<sup>8</sup> Each single page of *Representations* is in a sense metonymic of the work as a whole, as well as potentially having other metonymic or referential connections. The project explores the ways in which metonymy offers ways of understanding the relationship between part and whole in the artistic forms under discussion that enable strong coherence at the same time as polyvalent possibilities for perceiving that coherence.<sup>9</sup>

How else might such a process apply to music? It might involve an explicit recognition of the materiality of sound and sound production: we get past being trapped into seeing music as wholly abstract by introducing its actual materiality, the real cause and effect relations involved in the production of sound. In their different ways the musics of Derek Bailey and Helmut Lachenmann provide examples of this, as do some modules of *Representations*. There is also a metonymic side to my relationships with *other people* – specifically the other performers, in a similar fashion to the way Derek Bailey’s Company Weeks worked (see pp. 91-2 above). Every player has a different musical history, part of which (but always only a part) intersects with mine.

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8 All of these examples are taken from Bredin 1984: 48.

9 The substitution of part for whole is technically *synechdoche*, but following Roman Jakobson and JH Prynne, metaphor and metonymy can usefully be seen as two fundamental distinct procedures, in which taxonomy *synechdoche* becomes a subcategory of metonymy.

#### 4.4.1 “Arbitration”

John Corbett has attempted a reclamation of the concept of the arbitrary in relation to improvised music, precisely to deny that it is a process dominated by chance:

“One must see improvisation as being *arbitrary* in its full range of senses: (a) it necessarily has an *arbiter* in at least three forms: the body of the performer/instrument, the vocabulary of the performer, and the performance context ... and (b) on the whole it is given over to the *will* of the performer; it consists of nonrandom utterances – though randomness, passivity, and indecision can certainly be part of any improviser’s vocabulary.” (Corbett 1995: 225)

All the musicians involved in performing *Representations* are primarily improvisers, so the focus of the project is on shaping improvisation and giving it restrictions to force itself through (an idea in fact initially inspired by Brian Ferneyhough’s thoughts on matrices and grids through which creativity must pass). These pages (entitled ‘improvisational goads’) are mixed with specific instructions the outcome of which is somewhat indeterminate entitled ‘determinate instructions’ (the contradiction here is only apparent: the idea being that the player must follow the instructions strictly, and accept any sounds that result), and some completely notated modules. In fact, speaking of the ‘choice of musicians’ in relation to this piece has a double meaning: as composer I have chosen the players I wish to take part in it, but I have also chosen them because of my musical knowledge of playing with them in an improvisational context: the nature of the choices they make is the main reason behind my choice of participants. I always want players to improvise *with*, not *on* the material provided. In addition, as soon as any player embarks on their second realisation of the piece, they are confronted with the memory of previous versions, which might do anything from enriching the task at hand to distracting the performer from it. Something similar is also true of an audience: their judgments about the piece on a subsequent exposure to it take them directly into consideration of its mechanics and ontology in a very different way to the standard development of veridical expectations when re-hearing a fully notated composition; neither, however, can they shift their attention purely to the unfolding of decision-making within a variously restricted arena as they could were the performance fully improvised.

Metonymic relationships have, as I have outlined, been criticised for their arbitrariness. In fact, however, in poetry contiguous relations can be deployed to emphasise the textuality of history and society and hence to *undermine* facile conceptions of the “arbitrary”. While the improvisers are chosen because of their role as “arbiters”, in *Representations* I have – unlike the situation in free improvisation – confronted the

improvisers with instructions which at the moment of their intervention must necessarily seem arbitrary. When a performer playing a “JSB” page, for example, is instructed to stop playing, they must do so, regardless of the musical situation surrounding them. The random element that the shuffling of score pages introduces is not so much intended to introduce chance for its own sake as to create unpredictable continuities, the coherent negotiation of which becomes an improvisational challenge. I employ the abstractness of clock time (with respect to the experience of duration) to make *different* experiences out of the same timings – just as the players are responsible in the choices they make for the coherence of the structure (but also have to submit to its incoherence at times). The musical structure is dependent on the players but also operates via contingent occurrences beyond their control. The piece is difficult for the players because they have to be creative in the piece for it even to exist, but if it stops you, you are obliged to obey it. It could perhaps be considered as a kind of fatalistic or even stoical universe. It dramatises, in a way, the role of constraint in free improvisation – though that constraint is frequently obscured.

#### **4.4.2 Similarity**

In considering metonymic relationships, we have seen that it is crucial to distinguish similarity and contiguity – the former being generally considered as the site of metaphorical relationships. By concentrating on metonymy, however, I do not wish to exclude all relationships of similarity, which would be an arduous, and probably futile, undertaking. In poetry rhyme is the device of similarity *par excellence*. The same would be true for the recurrence of a melody in music. Dissonance and consonance also would represent a battle of opposites by analogy, or similarity. We could, however, turn things around: structuralism insists that there is *no* similarity between the signifier and signified, that we have a situation of pure contiguity. The introduction of other ways of constructing meaning (which need not be based on similarity on the surface – such as Prynne’s phonological poetics) can, paradoxically, be a means of reacknowledging similarity, or rather a response to similarity. For example, similar material may, or may not be, contiguously realised: the *Pol 1* page that Bruno Guastalla and I play together in *Representations 27*, David Stent plays on his own in *Representations 24* in a very different musical context.

#### **4.4.3 Referentiality**

Although I paid no attention to making these relationships audible in the piece, I conceived

of almost every module as having a metonymic relation to something outside the piece by generating my ideas through engagement with other artworks. The derivational procedures themselves are not rigid, and range from the extraction of pitch and rhythmic schemes from other music to quasi-mathematical schemes extracted from specific paintings, to more general procedural ideas. Specifically, *Representations* contains modules explicitly derived from ideas inspired by JS Bach; Antony Braxton; Cornelius Cardew's *Autumn '60*; the late fourteenth century song "Fumeux Fume" (which also appears as the epigram for JH Prynne's latest poetic sequence, *Streak~~~Willing~~~Entourage* Artesian, although in a pleasing instance of serendipity my interest in the piece precedes the publication of Prynne's text); the Japanese court music Gagaku; the painters Callum Innes and Cy Twombly; Hindustani classical music; Helmut Lachenmann's *musique concrète instrumentale*; the Austrian group Polwechsel; a workshop led by percussionist Orphy Robinson on using series of numbers to generate improvisationally productive restrictions for oneself; Matthias Spahlinger's composition *Ephémère* (specifically the vast number of repetitions of a single drum stroke in its second half) ; John Cage's "number pieces"; one previous version of the piece (*Representations 3*), which I put into a spectral analyser and then extracted pitches for the bandoneon/violin duo page; and finally the structure Michael Finnissy's second string quartet, as I remembered it after I heard performed at Kettle's Yard in Cambridge on February 19, 2010. The derivation of each page is coded in the abbreviations used as titles, which indicate who they were written for and from whence I derived them.

#### **4.4.4 Material and the Middleground**

Material is of crucial importance in the interaction of the performer with the score. Two possible strategies exist, broadly, and I have made use of both: either material is the focus of a given page, or it is not referred to at all, but rather methods of organising material supplied by the player are specified. An example of the former strategy are the H1(av) pages (derived from a specific North Indian raga); the latter approach can be seen in the JSB1 pages, where three different types of material – or, more specifically, improvising behaviours (whose nature is entirely up to the player) – must be employed at different times, with the stipulation that the player imagines that each material has been continuing and developing unheard between its appearances. The inspiration for this was the way that JS Bach's solo music for violin and cello can create a contrapuntal impression despite being largely monophonic.

Both these approaches draw the attention to material but in very different ways. The first approach (supplying material) is perhaps the most common method of composing for improvisers; here the interest is in what is done with identifiable material. The second approach is more structural and to my mind more interesting: here the importance of material is highlighted by the fact that the composition does not supply it. Both approaches are, however, necessary, and both have their dangers: in the first case the danger is that the music ossifies or becomes a caricature of itself, with players striving for accuracy in the audibly notated sections and settling for the “general effect” in the others (though some measure of this approach is, I decided, necessary for the composition to be identifiable as such in different performances). In the second case the openness of the strategy is of great interest, though here the opposite danger appears: it may be so abstract that even with repeated listenings the listener may be unable to discern the continuity of compositional input. Up to a point this is not a problem, but were it to be totally undiscernable the balance between composition and improvisation would, for me, be upset.

In constructing the piece, then, it was important to maintain a fairly level balance between the different components of the piece, so that the structural interpretations of the audience could be as wide-ranging as possible. For all its openness, the possibility of the inappropriate in performances of *Representations* reveals an underlying aesthetic. Falling down too much on any one device would reduce the sense of multiplicitous possibility, which I consider to be part of a metonymic way of operating. So, while audibly conventionally notated passages do occur in the score, they are relatively rare to avoid dominating the composition and to help prevent audiences from making a tripartite division in their minds between “composition” (that is, notation), “guidance” (or structured improvisation) and “free improvisation”. For example, I removed Pete McPhails’s H1(av) page (which asked for all pitched material to be melodic and derived from one particular Hindustani mode): if a section is too distinctive (motivic/gestural/referential) and carries on too long it disrupts the synchronic and diachronic balance of the composition. In a similar way, improvising rarely takes the form of cadenza-like structures. In a sense the restrictions of the piece ‘squash’ the improvisers by restricting their options, but this is the natural counterpart to the avoidance of making many modules too compositionally distinctive. On the other hand, the question is raised as to what it is to improvise “freely”. The kind of behaviour that improvisers engage in when given no explicit constraints can vary wildly depending on the musicians in question: this is most apparent on the

recordings comparing the sensibilities of Paul Abbott and Angharad Davies with those of Alexander Hawkins and Pete McPhail. *Representations* aims to challenge the interpretational activities of the audience in a way parallel to and inspired by, but distinct from, the structural and timbral elements in Helmut Lachenmann's music. While he always aims to make the audience aware of a dialectic between form and material, I intend to activate a dialectic between composition (in the sense of explicit written direction, of whatever form) and freedom of choice. At almost every point in any performance of *Representations*, both are in play, but their sonic characteristics can at times be reversed. Neither methodology should descend, as they too often do, to being the most straightforward means to a certain general sound-texture. The *willfulness* of the piece, however, is something which performers (including myself, as I have performed in almost all the realisations thus far) cannot fail to be aware of. As composer, I have deliberately made it so. The confrontation with the (apparently) arbitrary becomes *material* for the players to make something of. The arbitrary is to be found in any composition; for every composer there comes a point where a choice can only be justified in terms of personal preference. This is of course the case with the material I provide to the improvisers, but a fundamental dimension of the piece is also that I deliberately challenge their own structural sensibilities, as well as simply their choices of material, development and so forth.

In this, which to an extent I find the most interesting feature of the piece, I am exploring the ideas about the middleground that I discuss in the body of the thesis. Structurally, each module of *Representations* intervenes at the middleground level: I do not prescribe global structural characteristics of any given performance, but also for the most part the moment-to-moment microstructure of the piece is highly dependent on improvisational decision-making. By providing the middleground I as composer in a paradoxical sense also occlude it, in a sense analogous to the way it disappears in those late Prynne sequences where the stanzaic forms are simple and regular (and literally rectangular on the page, just like the A4 pages of *Representations*). This at least is the experience of the players: the rhythm of each player moving from page to page is not usually audible as such to a listener. The eclecticism by which the middleground is tested is itself part of the strategy: there is a constant tension between structure (requirements of pages) and the players' responsibility for filling in that structure: hence they also actually have a responsibility for the macrostructure.

As well as operating in a linear, structural sense, the middleground is also a shifting but charged site of activity in the sense of the more synchronic hierarchy of the piece. Foreground and background are never specified by the modules, so that any module, depending on circumstance, could occupy almost any position. Contingent relations (which other pages are in operation, for example) but also the active choice of the musicians will determine the place of each page in the ensemble sound at any given time. The players have to make almost orchestrational choices which are never entirely free, but limited in a way I consider related to the way that considering Prynne, Bailey or Lachenmann in terms of metonymy brings limitation to our attention

So the operation of metonymy in the piece is partly to do with the psychology of the players: there is a tension between specific instructions and the musicians' improvisational sensibility – not just similarity (development) or deliberate contrast. This perhaps most easily seen in small group versions where players are on a certain page meaning they *cannot* relate to the group in the way they would normally do, even though others may be doing so: players might *seem* to be playing together but their improvisational freedoms might lie in different parameters – or the piece affects their playing when they do have complete freedom; see for example how David Stent deals with his solo improvisation during his duo page with Pete McPhail in *Representations 27*.

#### **4.4.5 Memory**

Interpreting a metonymically organised work of art puts particular demands on the memory, as I have explored in my accounts of the way a reader or listener might engage formally with the structure of a JH Prynne sequence or a Derek Bailey improvisation. For the players in *Representations*, memory is important in comparing the role of their material with the differing situations created by each performance. Also important, however, is the possibility of the audience hearing different versions and remembering either specific materials or procedural/formal connections: the issues brought to the fore by the consideration of material above. In doing so the audience will not necessarily do so “accurately”, but the compositional design is such that this is the intention: they’re not “wrong” if they identify improvisational similarities as “compositional” decisions: this merely points out, as Evan Parker says, that ‘improvisation is one of the various ways of composing music’ (Parker 2006).

In the way I have ordered the performances on the recording, the different tracks do not always sound like separate pieces: see in particular for example the transitions



between *Representations 22*, *Representations 19* and *Representations 21*. At other times, divisions occur within a realisation which could seem to divide that performance in two (such as in *Representations 24*). It is important, however, that this is not achieved by making the material so homogeneous that one could not fail. As in Bailey's, Lachenmann's and Prynne's work, the idea of rupture is important in *Representations*, and is compositionally explored largely through the interventionist nature of the score, which I have already discussed. This generates a rather characteristic structural temporality to the piece, where sudden change is a regular feature of the musical landscape, but not always occurring in rapid succession or in all parts of the ensemble at once. For example, at 8'00" into *Representations 23* one might think that a new track has begun, whereas in fact this is not the case. On the other hand, when a new track does begin (especially in the order chosen), it often *doesn't* sound like a new track. Bruno Guastalla observed this to me on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010 – which he said surprised him because it didn't feel like that would be the case while playing the piece.

It is, perhaps, in the nature of metonymy not neatly to tie off all loose ends. *Representations* is an ongoing work; technical and musical developments will continue (the next major technical issue being to reexamine the role of the cueing system). The process of working on it has, however, been of crucial importance in my development as both improviser and composer. Through consideration of the literary concept of metonymy, I have developed musical ideas about contiguity, causality, intertextuality, the role of the middleground structure, limitation and exclusion which still seem to me avenues for fruitful exploration both in this project and in others yet to be developed.

## Conclusion: Rubbish, Purity and Truthfulness

In this thesis I have argued that metonymy provides Derek Bailey, Helmut Lachenmann and J.H. Prynne – in their very different ways – with means whereby they can declare their work’s embeddedness in the world without representing it in any conventional sense. Abstraction and embodiment prove not to be mutually exclusive. I have also, for my part, attempted to deploy such a way of thinking in the composition of *Representations*.

We saw in Chapter One that Prynne has written that ‘rubbish is / pertinent’.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that Lachenmann and Bailey are or were of the same opinion. Lachenmann has referred, somewhat more elegantly (or coyly) to the ‘rubble’ of the Classical and Romantic edifice, while Bailey expressed an interest in ‘indecipherable rubbish that scrabbles around’.<sup>2</sup> The concept of rubbish has affinities with the kind of metonymic structural principles that I have been discussing in this thesis. Returning to the four characteristics of the kind of metonymic practice I enumerated in my introduction, we can see that all of them resonate with the idea of rubbish. First, rubbish is ‘linearly dissimilar’: it is in the nature of rubbish not to exhibit an ordered progression of qualities, but rather to be a contingently organised jumble of different kinds of object. Second, we often focus our interest in rubbish on an investigation into its historical contiguities. This point shades into the third point which is that the examination of rubbish is very often an examination of causality and agency: we are interested in (certain items of) rubbish because of how, and by whose agency, it came to be that way. Fourthly and finally, the structure of rubbish (*qua* rubbish) exhibits an occluded middleground structure: we can move from the undifferentiated rubbish heap to the individual item, whose qualities decide whether we are or are not interested in it, but there is no middleground structure organising the whole into parts.

Simply extract the interesting items from a rubbish heap, however, and they cease to be rubbish. As percussionist (and collaborator with Derek Bailey) Jamie Muir put it, some people ‘would take a rubbish dump and turn it into an antique shop – that’s real alchemy, but it smacks of the gold rush and a kind of greed – of ‘staking out a claim’, taking from the earth but never putting back (who throws away antiques?)’.<sup>3</sup> The relationship with rubbish I am referring to must, as Muir says, ‘approach the rubbish with

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1 In ‘L’Extase de M. Poher’ (Prynne 2005a: 162).

2 Lachenmann 2004a: 402; Watson 2004: 420.

3 From the magazine *Microphone*, quoted in Bailey 1980: 113 and Bailey 1992: 96.

a total respect for its nature as rubbish' (Bailey 1980: 114 and Bailey 1992: 96). In their different ways Bailey, Lachenmann and Prynne all do this. We find such a respect in, for example, Bailey's openness to the various contingencies, felicities and infelicities of improvising with unfamiliar musicians; in Lachenmann's refusal to be bound by inherited standards of instrumental tonal quality, or to remove the messily physical aspects of producing sound from his compositional consideration; and in Prynne's insistence on not excluding any modes of language use, no matter how profane or compromised, from his poetic gamut.

Having a conception of history itself as rubbish or rubble – as Lachenmann appears to – does not mean, however, that everything is finished and that we can only rearrange the pieces, with one arrangement sufficing as well as any other. Indeed, though they might not explicitly espouse it, as well as sharing an interest in rubbish all three artists also – seemingly paradoxically – share a concept which we might risk calling purity. We saw George Lewis use the term in our previous chapter, for whom the 'unity of [improvised] music arises from its nature as continuum in its purity; this continuum is apprehended as a whole by the improviser, as a unit in which each part has equal significance' (Lewis 1974: 60). In a climate where to cross boundaries is seen as the defining feature of the supposedly radical artwork (the jazz saxophonist with the beatboxer with the symphony orchestra with the rock guitarist...) and is often a necessity to procure funding or other support, to refuse such strategies is itself a radical step. However, to attempt a return to a supposed age of autonomous art would be a regressive move, and hence there must be a purity composed of detritus: totality is not aimed at, but neither is miscellany thematised.

Nevertheless, an interest in rupture and fragmentation – in rubbish – need not imply *constant* disruption. There can still be time (in fact, it is crucial to make time) for reflection. Lachenmann has spoken of a special significance for what he terms 'reduced structures':

"In almost all of my compositions there is a moment of repose – in the manner of a fermata – in which the music glances around like a mountain-climber who only becomes aware of his new surroundings upon standing still, and only now experiences the characteristic stillness of the plateau he has reached." (Lachenmann 2004b: 63)

We might locate such a moment somewhere in the section of „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ preceding the return of the voice at bar 199 (Kairos: 11'07"; ECM: 10'09").<sup>4</sup> We find

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4 Note also that in the "Tokyo-fassung" of his opera, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*, Lachenmann reduces the instrumental part of the piece to 'five sound fermatas' (CD booklet to ECM recording, page 25).

similar moments in as well Prynne's poetry, though with increasing rarity.<sup>5</sup> Lachenmann's language also has interesting resonances with Prynne's book-length close analysis of 'The Solitary Reaper', a poem by William Wordsworth in which the poetic persona (specifically a poet-traveler) listens to a young Highland woman working in the field and singing in a language which he does not understand. Prynne writes that:

"... the sense of before and after within the outer world of events, as well as within the interior world of thought and consciousness, will likewise be held in abeyance; this is one of Wordsworth's earliest themes, reaching back to the final stanza of 'Remembrance of Collins', composed in 1789:

How calm! how still! the only sound,  
The dripping of the oar suspended! –  
The evening darkness gathers round  
By virtue's holiest Powers attended.

And compare again this very similar moment in 'Tintern Abbey':

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul. [...]

At its most radical and accomplished fullness, this listening requires a suspension of almost all internal mental activity, so that the poet-traveller's focus of awareness can be projected right out into the field, into the resonant open space which is intermediate between singer and hearer and which is the place of unobstructed confluence of recognition." (Prynne 2007: 88-89 (§20))

Both Lachenmann and Wordsworth employ the figure of the traveller, listening to the stillness that surrounds them. We should recall here the epoché, a word derived from the Greek ἐποχή or 'suspension'.<sup>6</sup> Just as Lewis's improvisational epoché is a way of being bound to the world in a particular way (interpreting it as entirely musical, rather than separating the musical from the worldly), Wordsworth, in Prynne's reading, emphasises the way that suspending the business of the mind does not imply any kind of retreat from the world. Rather, we find in 'The Solitary Reaper' a profound awareness of 'the field', of

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5 *The Oval Window* draws on the same mountainous image: 'deaf to the face // soundlessly matched to the summit' (Prynne 2005: 329). In the final poem of the sequence the subject is temporarily stable, no longer 'deaf' but able to trust their auditory faculties ('I heard it'), standing poised before the next disruption ('while waiting for the turn') (Prynne 2005: 339). It would not be true to say that the whole stanza is still ('The years / jostle') but the combination of stillness and listening with expectancy are reminiscent of Lachenmann's 'reduced structures'.

6 Prynne discusses the phonology of the word 'suspended' in the context of its deployment in 'Tintern Abbey': 'The word-medial stop in "sublime" is displaced in "suspend" by usual  $b > s$  before  $p$ , but the double-final stop in "suspend-ed" is then echoed in similar end-stopping to "almost," "laid," and "asleep"; thus, *almost* the soul is freed from the body, and this *almost* is the two-way threshold into the spiritual sublime, the uppermost dialectic of stop and release' (Prynne 2010: 136).

the ‘resonant open space which is intermediate between singer and hearer’: the external world which both separates and joins the two figures, and in ‘Tintern Abbey’ the dialectic between the constraints of the world and their transcendence.

Such a dialectic informs Lachenmann’s ultimately positive belief in the possibility of developing new ways of hearing, or more broadly, of perception:

“There is no such thing as totally free, unconditional perception. But in the transfer from the usual type of listening to this structurally newly determined perception there is a momentary, essentially incomprehensible flash of “liberated” perception which at the same time reminds us both of our externally determined lack of freedom (of which we are unaware) and also of our duty to overcome this lack of freedom – in other words our powers of imagination.” (Lachenmann 1995: 100)<sup>7</sup>

It is in such perceptive activity that Lachenmann claims for music the possibility of truthfulness, in contrast to Prynne’s view, cited at the end of Chapter One, though it should be noted that Prynne’s view is particularly precise and nuanced:

“There are no doubt forms of essential truthfulness proper to all artistic creation, but human language has a peculiar close relation with the power of language to be mendacious, that is to say false, corrupted, lying, depraved and distorted; and that is the normal condition, of course, of human language in most of its daily uses, most especially so now, in the condition of the planet at the present time. So poets essentially have to learn to stand outside the language which is their medium and understand its corruptions, and from its corruptions make some kind of temporary, working sense that a reader can share and understand.” (Prynne 2005b: 13)

Rather than disputing this, Lachenmann’s claim for a truthfulness (in music) – much closer to Prynne’s conception of truthfulness (in language) than the poet allows for – in fact accepts some of these premises. Lachenmann proceeds by first claiming that reified forms of musical expression exhibit a corruption not of course identical with, but certainly strongly analogical to, the corruption of language identified by Prynne. That is, just as it is mendaciousness in language that points the way to truthfulness, Lachenmann perceives an analogous mendacity in music. The possibility of truthfulness must proceed from an acceptance of the absence of purity, which can then be combatted with an aesthetic

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7 Lachenmann’s use of the word ‘imagination’ in this passage is distinct from the holding-on-to-the-real which we have shown (in the Introduction and Chapter One) to be understood by Prynne as part of the word’s remit. Lachenmann appears here to conceive of the imagination as signalling an escape from constraints (even though such an escape is achieved through a recognition of constraint), in contrast to Prynne’s insistence on the imagination’s important role in the very process of such recognition. Wordsworth, like Lachenmann, also understood imagination as connected to sudden moments of heightened consciousness but in Simon Jarvis’s reading of a fragment from ‘The Recluse’ Wordsworth’s view resonates much more strongly with Prynne’s: ‘here ‘imagination’ might stand precisely for what is *not* all your own work, for an experience of meaning which is undergone, and which is distinguished from fancy or fantasy by not being the voluntary assignment of meaning to a helpless vehicle’ (Jarvis 2007: 217).

practice that is pure in its integrity, rather than positing an alternative, escapist, “pure” world or merely representing the corruption of our wider situation.

It is the case that certain musical forms and gestures have become reified, permitting an apparent transparency which can make them seem as if they are directly expressive of emotion, for example, when in fact – as Adorno argued – in the products of the Culture Industry all we often hear are particular enculturated codes which necessarily conceal as much as they reveal. Bailey was sympathetic to such a stance; we have seen earlier his view that a guitarist bending notes – so often taken, particularly in blues and rock music as a direct index of emotion – was not ‘somehow telling you more about the state of his soul’ (quoted in Macnie 1989: 144). The more objective, realistic aspects of metonymy (while they fully admit the subjectivity of any given stance) that I have outlined in this thesis could be said to relate to a certain empiricism; in ethical terms, we could speak of honesty. Metonymy can assist a certain purity of intent. To make art that resists enculturated coding does not deny the affective power of art, but neither does it construct artworks with an explicit eye to their powers of emotional manipulation. As Bailey observed about the audience’s response to freely improvised music, ‘[i]t doesn’t make their arse shake and it doesn’t make your eye wet – necessarily. It might do, but it’s not about providing that kind of thing’ (Watson 2004: 418). It is my belief that metonymic structures can be valuable tools, both in poetic and musical activity, for creating artworks resistant to commodified forms of expression and at the same time deeply intertwined with the realities of the contemporary world; which embrace rubbish but do not eschew purity, and which aim at a form of truthfulness.

# Appendix One

(transcription of the first 2'45" of Derek Bailey's encore at the Downtown Music Gallery in New York on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2001, as documented on *Playing for Friends on 5<sup>th</sup> Street*, straw2gold pictures S2G-002 DVD, 2004)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for guitar, consisting of four systems of music. Each system includes a treble clef staff with notes and accidentals, and a bass clef staff with fret numbers. Performance instructions are written in the margins.

**System 1 (0'00" - 0'09"):**  
 Treble staff: Notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Includes "HARM." markings above the first two notes and the last note.  
 Bass staff: Fret numbers 7, 7, 7, 5, 6, 7, 5, 1, 0, 5, 7, 7.  
 Time signature: 4/4.

**System 2 (0'09" - 0'18"):**  
 Treble staff: Notes Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Includes "HARM." markings above the first, fourth, and eighth notes. Slurs with "(SLIDE)" are under the 10th and 12th notes.  
 Bass staff: Fret numbers 8, 5, 8, 6, 6, 5, 8, (6), (8), (6), (8), (6), 12, 12, 8, (6), (8), (6).  
 Time signature: 4/4.

**System 3 (0'18" - 0'27"):**  
 Treble staff: Notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Includes "HARM." markings above the first, fourth, and eighth notes. Slurs with "(SLIDE)" are under the 2nd and 4th notes. Performance notes: "[ONES NOT REALLY SPEAK]", "SLIGHT LH BEND UP" above the 6th note, "HARM." above the 8th note, and "SLIGHT MICROTONAL BENDS WITH LH" above the 10th note.  
 Bass staff: Fret numbers (8), 12, 8, (6), 12, 12, (7), 7, 12, 3.  
 Time signature: 4/4.

**System 4 (0'27" - 0'36"):**  
 Treble staff: Notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Includes "HARM." marking above the first note. Slurs with "SLIGHT LH BEND UP" are above the 6th and 10th notes.  
 Bass staff: Fret numbers 12, 7, 8, 6, 7, 12, 8, 7.  
 Time signature: 4/4.

NOVELLO ①

0'36"

Slight bend up with LH      Slight bend up with LH      HARM.      Slight bend up with LH

T 10      0      9      12      2

A

B

0'45"

HARM.      BEND BY PRESSING BEHIND BRIDGE      HARM.      BEND ② SLIGHTLY BY PRESSING BEHIND BRIDGE

T      9      5      0      7      5      10

A 7

B 7

0'54"

HARM.      BEND ③ BY PRESSING BEHIND BRIDGE (STRUM UP)      HARM.      HARM. - |      HARM.      HARM.

T 14      12      7      10      10      10

A 9      12      7      5      7      5

B 9

1'03"

HARM. - - - - |      HARM. - - - - |      HARM. - - - - |

T 10      10

A 5      7      9      7

B 5.8      5.8      9      9      9

NOVELLO

②



1'12"

HARM. HARM. -| HARM. -| STRUM UP

T  
A  
B

1'21"

STRUM UP STRUM DOWN STRUM DOWN STRUM DOWN BEND UP (2) & (3) AND GRADUALLY RELEASE

T  
A  
B

1'30"

STRUM DOWN BEND UP (3) & (4) AND GRADUALLY RELEASE HARM. -|

T  
A  
B

1'39"

HARM. BEHIND BRIDGE BEHIND BRIDGE HARM. -|

T  
A  
B

1'48"

BEING BEHIND BRIDGE  
HARM.-----|

BEING BEHIND BRIDGE

HARM.-----|

BEING BEHIND BRIDGE

T 7  
A 4  
B 5

T 4  
A 5  
B 7

T 12

1'57"

HARM.-----|

STRUM UP-----|

T 7  
A 12  
B 9

T 11  
A 11  
B 11

T 7

2'06"

T 11  
A 7  
B 6

T 6  
A 6  
B 6

T 8

2'15"

T 12  
A 7  
B 3

T 12

T 10  
A 6  
B 8

T 6

NOVELLO

Appendix Two

From the insert notes to the BBC LP Chinese Classical Music (REGL 1M), 1968.



SOME OF THE BASIC WAYS OF TOUCHING THE CH'IN (Chien-tzu)

The names of these *chien-tzu* are given according to the Mandarin (Pekin) dialect, but the occasional differences of pronunciation occur because Mme. Tsar Teh-yung, though born in Shanghai, announces them here in the Cantonese dialect. It was after reading van Gulik's book that I had the idea of asking Mme. Tsar Teh-yung to illustrate the examples of finger techniques that he gives. She did it in her own way, and some of the descriptions of techniques are taken from van Gulik, when they are in accordance with this learned and experienced musician, as they generally are, otherwise I have followed her indications. The explanations are nearly all taken from van Gulik, who quotes accepted authorities.

- 1. San: open strings, r.h. only.
- 2. Shih (here pronounced Tzə): stopped strings.
- 3. Fan ('light touch'): harmonics, produced by a light touch of the fingers of the l.h. opposite the stud (see description of the *ch'in*) and on the string indicated. 'White butterflies exploring flowers' or 'dragon-flies alighting on the water.'
- 4. P'i: r.h. thumb-nail plucks inward.
- 5. T'o: r.h. thumb outward. 'A crane dancing in the wind.'
- 6. Mo: r.h. index (hereafter 1st) inward. 'A crane singing in the shadow.'
- 7. T'iao: r.h. 1st outward. Same explanation as for No. 6.
- 8. Kou: r.h. middle finger (hereafter 2nd) inward. 'A lonely duck looks back to the flock.' The curve of the finger should be

- modelled on that of the neck of the wild duck.
- 9. T'i: r.h. 2nd outward. Explanation as for No. 8.
- 10. Ta: r.h. ring finger (hereafter 3rd) inward. 'The Shangyang bird hopping about.' This is a fabulous bird, said to have only one leg. The idea is that in contradistinction of the smooth movements of the 1st and 2nd, the touch of the 3rd should be short and crisp.
- 11. Chai: r.h. 4th outward. Same explanation as for No. 10.
- 12. Tieh-chuan: 1st, then 2nd, pluck inward quickly.
- 13. Pei-sou: r.h. 2nd outward, then 1st in and out. Three sounds on one string. 'A wild fowl flapping its wings.' This explanation applies equally to Nos. 14 and 15.
- 14. Tuan-sou: r.h. 1st inward, 2nd outward, then 1st in and out. Five sounds on one string.

- 15. Ch'ang-sou: r.h. 1st in and out, 2nd inward, followed by pei-sou (No. 13). Seven sounds on one string.
- 16. Lun ('a wheel'): three fingers of r.h. in quick succession (the little finger is never used). *Lun* occurs frequently in playing the *p'ipa*.
- 16a. Pan-lun: same as No. 16, but using only 2nd and 3rd. Not illustrated here.
- 17. Ju-i ('as-one'): r.h. 2nd outward across two strings. 'Female and male phoenix play in harmony.'
- 18. Shuang-t'an ('double-plucking'): one string produces two sounds in rapid succession. 'Cold ravens picking at the snow.'
- 19. Po-la (given wrongly as *P'o-tz'u* by van Gulik): 1st, 2nd and 3rd together pluck two strings inward; then outward across several strings. 'Sound a fish makes when leaping out of the water.'

- 20. Fu ('to brush'): to stop the vibrations of No. 19.
- 21. Ts'o and Ta-ts'o ('big' *ts'o*): a chord played by r.h. thumb and 2nd, a combination of Nos. 5 and 8. 'A flying dragon grasping the clouds.'
- 22. Fan-ts'o: the opposite of the above, same explanation.
- 23. Chia-ts'o-san-sheng: a combination of Nos. 40, 37 and 21 in succession and repeated, giving an impression of triple time. There are variations.
- 24. Ta-yuan: a movement consisting of seven sounds, played on two widely separated strings, consisting of Nos. 7, then 8, twice repeated, ending with 7, on original string. 'A holy tortoise emerges from the water.'
- 25. Li: r.h. 1st passes lightly over several strings, outward.
- 26. Kun-fu ('welling up'): r.h. finger passes over several strings, usually open, descending and then ascending. 'A heron bathing in a whirlpool.'
- 27. Kuei ('to kneel'): a string is stopped by the back of the first joint of l.h. 4th instead of by the tip. Not illustrated here. 'A panther grasping something.'
- 28. Ch'o (pronounced here *Tsa*): a finger of

- l.h. glides up the string, plucked by a finger of r.h., giving an ascending glissando. 'A wild pheasant ascending a tree.'
- 29. Chu (pronounced here *Tze*): the opposite of the above. Same explanation.
- 30. Yin: a finger of the l.h. quickly moves up and down over the spot indicated. 'A cold cicada bemoans the coming of autumn.' There are more than ten varieties of this kind of vibrato.
- 31. Jou (properly *noo*, a monkey, as pronounced here): a vibrato slower than No. 30. 'The cry of a monkey while climbing a tree.'
- 32. Tang: l.h. thumb is placed in position 9, and after the string has been plucked by a finger of r.h., glides slowly down the string to position 12.
- 33. Wang-lai: a combination of Nos. 34 and 30.
- 34. Chin-fu ('advance and retreat'): after r.h. has plucked the string, l.h. glides upward, then downward, either to where is started or elsewhere, as indicated in notation.
- 35. T'ui-fu ('retreat and advance'): the opposite of No. 34.
- 36. Fen-kai ('divide and open'): r.h. plucks a string while l.h. stops it at position 9, at once gliding up, staying a moment, r.h. plucking

- again, while l.h. glides down to where it started.
- 37. Chia-ch'i (van Gulik gives it as *T'ao-ch'i*—'pulling up and raising'): for l.h. only. A finger stops a string and the thumb plucks it. 'Two immortals transmitting [discussing?] the Way (*Tao*).' See van Gulik, *op.cit.*, p.127, No. 49—too long to quote here.
- 38. Chao-ch'i: open string is plucked by l.h. thumb-nail, giving a clear, light sound.
- 39. Tai-ch'i: same as No. 38, but produced by nail of l.h. 1st instead of thumb.
- 40. Yen ('to cover'): usually performed by stopping a string with l.h. finger and tapping it with l.h. thumb. 'The woodpecker taps a tree.'
- 41. T'ui-ch'u ('pushing outward'): two sounds, a combination of r.h. and l.h. 2nd, which produces the sound by pushing the string outward. 'A silver pheasant dancing.'
- 42. Tung-sheng: l.h. 1st stops string at the position indicated, then a r.h. finger plucks it, then l.h. 1st plays No. 39 and r.h. plucks another string to produce a chord.
- 43. Ying-ho: l.h. 1st or 2nd stops a string while a r.h. finger plucks it, then l.h. moves up or down producing a continuous sound; at the same time, r.h. plucks other open strings to produce notes corresponding to those produced by l.h. finger moving on stopped string.

### Appendix Three

The 'symbol' and 'note' pages used by Derek Bailey in his realisation of Stockhausen's *Plus Minus*.

In ⑤ - ⑥ or ②⑦ - ②⑧ or ④⑦ - ④⑧:  
 können ersetzt werden durch  
 may be replaced by

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I II III IV V VI VII

## Appendix Four

### part one

The full text of the German translation of the two excerpts from Leonardo da Vinci's *Codex Arundel* that Helmut Lachenmann sets in „... zwei Gefühle ...“:

*So donnernd brüllt nicht das stürmische Meer, wenn der scharfe Nordwind es mit seinen brausenden Wogen zwischen Scylla und Charybdis hin und her wirft, noch der Stromboli oder Aetna, wenn die Schwefelfeuer im gewaltsamen Durchbruch den großen Berg öffnen, um Steine und Erde samt den austretenden und herausgespieenen Flammen durch die Luft zu schleudern, noch auch die glühenden Höhlen von Mongibello, wenn sie beim Herausstoßen des schlecht verwahrten Elements rasend jedes Hindernis verjagen, das sich ihrem ungestümen Wüten entgegenstellt ...*

*Doch ich irre umher, getrieben von meiner brennenden Begierde, das große Durcheinander der verschiedenen und seltsamen Formen wahrzunehmen, die die sinnreiche Natur hervorgebracht hat. Ich wand mich eine Weile zwischen den schattigen Klippen hindurch, vor der ich betroffen im Gefühl der Unwissenheit eine lange Zeit verweilte. Ich hockte mit gekrümmtem Rücken. Die müde Hand aufs Knie gestützt, beschattete ich mit der Rechten die gesenkten und geschlossenen Wimpern. Und nun, da ich mich oftmals hin und her beugte, um in die Höhle hineinzublicken und dort etwas zu unterscheiden, verbot mir das die große Dunkelheit, die darin herrschte. Als ich aber geraume Zeit verharret hatte, erwachten plötzlich in mir zwei Gefühle: Furcht und Verlangen. Furcht vor der drohenden Dunkelheit der Höhle, Verlangen aber, mit eigenen Augen zu sehen, was darin Wunderbarem sein möchte.*

part two

The text of „... *zwei Gefühle* ...“ as it is spoken in the piece (as written in the score).

(Every page has a new line; speaker 1 in black, speaker 2 in green, other voices in red. I have not indicated the places where text overlaps or both speakers speak the same text together.)

p. 1 SO DO-NN-

p. 2 BR-ÜLL- -N-E-RND -T NI-CH- -T DA-S SCH- WENN TÜ- DE-R -(R)- MI- SCH-E MEE- R- (R)-

p. 3 -FE E-S NO-R MI-T-D-W-IN- T-SEI- -NEN-Z-WI- -N-BRAU- -SCH-E-N -SEN- DEN

p. 4 S-CY-WO--LLA -GEN HIN-UN- T CHA- HE – RR-YB WI-R-DI-S -F-T NO-CHDE-

p. 5 -RR SCH Ä- -TROM- -BOLI -T-NA WE-NN

p. 6 DIE SCHWE- IM DEN GE-WA--FEL--T-SA-MEN DU--FEUER R—CH-GRO-BRU- CH -SSE-N Ö-  
BER G -FF-NEN

p. 7 UM SCH--TEI- UN--NE-D E-R— -DE SAM- -T

p. 8 DEN HE-R- AU-S-UN -TRE- -N-D-GE- -TEN- DEN- -SCH- -PIE- -E-NEN F- -LA- DU MMEN-ZU-  
R-CH SCH-LEU- DIE LU--DE-R-N F— -T

p. 9 NOCH AU- -CH DIE

p. 10 GLÜ- HEN-DEN

p. 11 HÖH- LEN VON

p. 13 MON- WENN-GI BELLO

p. 14 BEIM M

p. 15 HERAU-S – SCH- -TO – SSEN DE-S SCH-

p. 16 -LE-CH-T VE-R- -WAH-R- E-LE-TEN MEN- TS RA- JE- SEND DE-S

p. 17 HIN- DE-RR- NI-S

p. 18 VER- DA-S JA- -GEN SI-CH



- p. 19 I-H- -REM
- p. 20 UN- -GE- -SCH- -TÜ-
- p. 21 -MEN WÜ- -TEN EN- -T-GE-
- p. 22 -GEN-SCH-TELL- -T
- p. 26 DOCH ICH “O”
- p. 27 IR-RE “MEN” UM-HER “-SCH— GI(B)”
- p. 28 “-B [ə] A-” H[f]- CH-T “WA-”
- p. 29 “-S— SCH-” GETRIEBEN “SCH—PRI-” VON MEINER “-CH- -T DIE” BRENNENDEN “TIE-”
- p. 30 BE-GIERDE “-FE MI(T)-” DA-S
- p. 31 “-TTE-R” “-NA-CH-T” GRO- -SSE
- p. 32 DU- DE-R -CH-EINANDER VE-R- UN-T -SCHIE-
- p. 33 SEL- -DE-NEN-TSA-FO-R- -MEN WAH-R-DIE -ZU-NEH-DIE -MEN SINN- REI- NA- -CHE -TUR HE-
- p. 34 -R – VO – R – GE – B – R – A – CH – T – HA- -T
- p. 41 I-CH -CH WA- -N-D MI-CH EI-NE Z-WI- WEI-LE -SCHEN
- p. 42 -N DEN SCHA- -TTI-GEN -N K-L-I -PEN -N—HIN-
- p. 43 -N-DU- -R-CH BI- -S I-CH ZU
- p. 45 EI- -NE-R— GRO-
- p. 46 -SSEN- -N HÖ- -HLE GE- VO- -R DE—LANG- -NG-TE -R ICH
- p. 47 BE- -T-RO- I- -FF-EN (i)M GE- -FÜH- L
- p. 48 DE-R UN – WISSEN- HEI-EINE-T ZEI- ICH -T- LANG HO- VE-R-WEIL- -CKTE MI
- p. 49 -T GE-K-RÜMM- DIE TEM MÜ- RÜ- DE -CKEN AU- HAN-D -F-S KNIE GE- SCH- TÜ- TZ-T BE-
- p. 50 SCHA- I- -TTE-TE -CH MI -T DE RE- DIE -CH-TEN GE-SEN(K)- UN- -K- -TEN -D GE-SCH--LO-  
WIM- -SSE-NEN -PE-RN
- p. 51 UN- -T NUN DA ICH MICH O-F-T -T-MAL-S HIN UN-DHER UM
- p. 52 BEU- IN DIE-G-TE HÖH-LE HINEIN- ZU- BLI- UN- -CKEN E--D DARIN -T-WA-S

p. 53 -S ZU UN- -TE-R-SCH-EI- DEN VE-R- -R- -BO-

p. 54 -T MI-R DA- S- DIE G-RO- -SSE DIE DUN(G)- -N-KEL-DARIN

p. 55 -HEI- -T HE- RR- -SCH- -TE

p. 63 AL-S ICH A-BER GE- -RAU- -ME ZEI- -T VER- HA-RR- -T HAT-TE E-R-

p. 64 WA- PLÖ- -CH-TEN -TZ -LI- -CH IN MIR Z-WEI GE- FU-R-CH-T -FÜH- (ICH A-BER) UN- -LE  
(IRRE) (UM-)

p. 65 (HER) -DVER- LA(NG)- FU- -HU- -NG-EN -RR-CH- -T VO(R)- -R DE-

p. 66 -R DRO- DUN(K)- -HEN-DEN -N- -KEL- -HEI- -T DE- -R HÖH-

p. 67 -LE VE-R- -LANG- -NGEN ABER MI- -T

p. 68 EI- -GE-NEN AU- -GEN ZU SE- WA- -HEN

p. 69 -S DARIN AN WUN-

p. 70 -DE-R- -BA- -REM SEIN

p. 71 MÖ- -CH— -TE

## Appendix Five

### Complete list of performances of *Representations*

*Representations One*: quintet (Lash/Carmona/Guastalla/Stent/McPhail) 26/11/07  
The Hub, Brunel University, Uxbridge

*Representations Two*: duo (Guastalla/Stent) 8/3/08  
St Mary's Church, Abingdon

*Representations Three, Four and Five*: recording project 14/4/08  
(Carmona/Guastalla/Hawkins/Lash/McPhail/Stent)  
Radley College, nr. Abingdon  
[recordings available at LastFM]

*Representations Six*: quartet (Guastalla/Hawkins/Lash/Stent) 14/5/08  
Port Mahon, St Clement's, Oxford  
A5 text (Distributed Dictate) was handed out

*Representations Seven*: trio (Lash/Stent/Stubbs) 6/6/08  
Science Oxford, St Clement's Oxford

*Representations Eight*: trio (Lash/Stent/Stubbs) 9/7/08  
Port Mahon, St Clement's, Oxford  
12' length  
same score pages as Rep Seven  
A5 two-sided text on chairs (Distributed Dictate on one side and Cue Mode on other)  
[this performance was not recorded]

*Representations Nine*: quartet (Carmona/Hawkins/Lash/Stent) 24/11/08  
Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival HCMF Shorts series  
20' length  
"9" text pamphlet on chairs  
[recording available at LastFM]

*Representations Ten*: Convergence Quartet 25/04/09  
Bristol Cube  
13' length

*Representations Eleven*: Convergence Quartet 26/04/09  
Rising Sun Arts Centre, Reading  
no clock (actual length: 13'11")  
[recording available at LastFM]

*Representations Twelve*: Convergence Quartet 27/04/09  
Vortex Jazz Club, London  
13' length  
[recording available at LastFM]

- Representations Thirteen*: Convergence Quartet 30/04/09  
Denis Arnold Hall, Department of Music, Oxford University  
no clock (c. 7 minutes?) [this performance was not recorded]
- Representations Fourteen*: Convergence Quartet 1/05/09  
Xposed Club, Cheltenham  
9' length
- Representations Fifteen*: Convergence Quartet 2/05/09  
Churchill College, Cambridge  
8' length
- Representations Sixteen*: Convergence Quartet 3/05/09  
Colchester Arts Centre  
8' length
- Representations Seventeen*: Convergence Quartet 4/05/09  
Red Gable Studios, Greenford, London (recording session)  
8' length  
[recording published on CD *Song/Dance*, CF187CD (2010)  
on Clean Feed Records]
- Representations Eighteen*: octet (Abbott/Carmona/Davies/Guastalla/Hawkins/Lash/McPhail/Stent)  
2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
8' length
- Representations Nineteen*: octet (Abbott/Carmona/Davies/Guastalla/Hawkins/Lash/McPhail/Stent)  
2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
8' length
- Representations Twenty*: (Hawkins/McPhail/Stent) 2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
8' length
- Representations Twenty-One*: duo (Abbott/Carmona) 2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
8' length
- Representations Twenty-Two*: trio (Davies/Guastalla/Lash) 2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
8' length
- Representations Twenty-Three*: octet  
(Abbott/Carmona/Davies/Guastalla/Hawkins/Lash/McPhail/Stent) 2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
15' length

*Representations Twenty-Four*: trio (Guastalla/McPhail/Stent) 2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
4' length

*Representations Twenty-Five*: trio (Carmona/Hawkins/Lash) 2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
4' length

*Representations Twenty-Six*: sextet (Carmona/Guastalla/Hawkins/Lash/McPhail/Stent) 2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
6' length

*Representations Twenty-Seven*: sextet (Carmona/Guastalla/Hawkins/Lash/McPhail/Stent) 2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
6' length

*Representations Twenty-Eight*: overdubbed quartet (Hawkins x 4) 2/03/10  
Brunel University (recording session)  
4' length

**Representations**

[duo]

Duo 7 - PA(CS)/DL

- \* short single sounds – a great deal of space
- \* attempt (without visual cues) to act as a unit (so all playing should be simultaneous)

CONDITION: directly ( cue : one  
player plays a long sound)

METHOD: **gap**

CUE OPTIONS:none

## Representations

[duo]

### Duo 14 - AD/BG

Nine Chords: Play in sequence. Sustain ad. lib.  
Pauses between chords ad. lib.

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Bandoneon					E	E			Db
Chords:	Ab	Db	Db	Db	Bb	Db	G	Db	Gb

Violin:



CONDITION: direct

METHOD: sudden or gap

CUE OPTIONS: none

## Trio 2

(drones)

'Cello:



Contrabass:



etc.

Violin



etc.

Build up *ad. lib.* in the sequence given ('cello; contrabass; violin).

The glissandi should be very slow and should look for and pause on particularly succulent chords / beating effects

**CONDITION:** 'cello **ad. lib.**; bass & violin **ad. lib.**

(but together) afterwards

**METHOD:** 'cello: **sudden**

bass & violin: **gap**

**CUE OPTIONS:** none



**Pol 1 - BG**

- 0'00'' tacet
- 0'03'' sustained open string – molto sul pont, with LH pizz trem
- 0'14'' gradually move to molto sul tasto
- 0'23'' short arco minor second, maximum bow pressure
- 0'36'' repeat one semitone higher
- 0'38'' quiet blunt sound: mute all strings, then grab all four  
(thumb and three fingers)
- 0'52'' blunt sound, more loudly then tacet
- +1'15'' sustain open string (the same pitch as chosen previously)
- +1'35'' short minor second as before, then tacet
- +2'10'' sustained open string molto sul tasto with LH pizz
- +2'20'' gradually move to molto sul pont; continue LH pizz
- +2'30'' stop LH pizz; continue sustaining open string
- +2'45'' tacet

CONDITION:	directly
METHOD:	sudden

**CUE OPTIONS:** start of any bowed open string

Duo 5 - AH/DL

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system consists of two measures. The piano part (treble clef) is mostly silent, with some notes in the second measure. The contrabass part (bass clef) starts with a rest, then plays a sequence of notes. Dynamics include *mp*, *f*, and *mf*. Performance instructions include *arco*, *(emerge from piano)*, *sim.*, and *pizz*. The second system also consists of two measures. The piano part has notes in the second measure. The contrabass part has notes in both measures. Dynamics include *mp* and *p*. The instruction *die away together* is present. Performance instructions include *arco*.

CONDITION:	directly
METHOD:	gap

CUE OPTIONS:none

## Representations

[partially determinate]

### FFT2 - AH

The image shows three staves of musical notation, each containing a sequence of chords. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The second staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb). The third staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab). Each staff contains seven measures of music, with each measure containing a single chord. The chords are represented by groups of notes on a five-line staff, with accidentals (sharps and flats) placed above or below the notes. The first staff has a key signature of one flat (Bb). The second staff has a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb). The third staff has a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab). The first measure of the first staff has a key signature change to one sharp (F#) for the second measure. The first measure of the second staff has a key signature change to two flats (Bb, Eb) for the second measure. The first measure of the third staff has a key signature change to three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab) for the second measure.

(accidentals apply only to the note they immediately precede)

any octave transpositions, varieties of arpeggiation, tempo, etc are permissible but each chord can only generate one musical event – and they must be in the correct sequence

CONDITION: directly  
METHOD: sudden

CUE OPTIONS: first chord on any line

### G1 – AH (piano)

00" 15" *mf* *ad. sempre* pluck strings directly throughout

+1' 00" 10" 47" *andante*

+2' 00" 30" 52" normale *8vb*

+3' 00" 45" *adagio* pluck

CONDITION:

directly

METHOD:

sudden or gap

CUE OPTIONS:none

Duo 3 - DL/DS

ebow

electric guitar

arco double bass

*mp*

sudden cut-off

17" 34"

56" +1' 00"

(Start – together -at any time during the minute you move to this page .

The repeat will, obviously,always take a full minute.)

CONDITION:directly

METHOD: gap

CUE OPTIONS:none

JSB1 - DL

- \* Create 3 distinct improvisational behaviours – A, B, C
- \* Play according to the chart – one behaviour at a time.
- \* Imagine that the other behaviours continue developing silently ' while one is not playing

0' 00''	tacet ----- 25''	A --- 35''	tacet -----
+1' 00''	tacet-- 20''	B -----	40'' tacet
+2' 00''	tacet----- 25''	C-----	45'' tacet
+3' 00''	A -- 15''	tacet 20''	B ----- 35''
		tacet 45''	C ----- 55''
			tacet

CONDITION:	directly
METHOD:	sudden

CUE OPTIONS:the beginning of any A section

CNP1 - PMcP

begin and end each event within the times specified, ad. lib.

<0'00" – 0'10">	sustain C	<0'20" – 0'30">
<0'40" – 0'50">	disrupt one other player	<1'00" – 1'10">
<1'15" – 1'20">	play (free)	<1'25" – 1'30">
<1'35" – 1'40">	play when (& only when) somebody else is	<1'45" – 1'50">
<2'00" – 2'05">	play when (& only when) nobody else is	<2'10" – 2'15">
<2'25" – 2'35">	play (free)	<2'40" – 2'50">
<3'00" – 3'10">	link what two other players are doing	<3'20" – 3'30">
<3'35" – 3'45">	sustain F#	<3'50" – 4'00">

CONDITION:direct  
METHOD:gap

CUE OPTIONS:the F #

G1 – PMcP (alto flute)

0' 00" 55" *mp* andante irregular vibrato

+1' 00" 30" *mf* adagio  
gliss as slow as possible

+2' 00" 10" 52" *mf* moderato (normale) (6th harm of low C#) *pp*

+3' 00" 35" *mp* andante

CONDITION:	directly
METHOD:	sudden or gap

CUE OPTIONS: the first note (F #) on the last line



## HL1 – PmcP (alto saxophone)

Percussion clef here represents a breath clef: no clear pitch, only breathy sounds with brighter timbre indicated by higher positions on the stave, and vice versa.

Vertical lines with no note heads indicate crotchets

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff begins with a percussion clef and a tempo marking of quarter note = 80. It features a series of vertical lines (crotchets) that rise in pitch from left to right, marked with dynamics *p*, *mp*, and *mf*. The staff concludes with a treble clef, a note, and a dynamic marking of *mf* with a wedge-shaped hairpin. The bottom staff starts with a percussion clef and a series of vertical lines, marked with *mp*. It then transitions to a treble clef with a note marked 'slap tongue' and a dynamic of *fff*. A hairpin indicates a crescendo leading to a 'sudden cut-off' at the end of the staff. Labels 'flutter-tongue (crotchet only)' and 'from nothing (quasi-echo)' are placed above the respective sections of the notation.

CONDITION: directly

METHOD: sudden or gap

CUE OPTIONS: the slap - tongue

Duo 1 - DS/PMcP

The image shows a musical score for a duo consisting of a flute and a guitar. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The flute part begins with a dynamic marking of *mp* and includes a breath mark (h) above the first measure. The guitar part begins with a dynamic marking of *mp* and includes a breath mark (h) above the first measure. Both parts feature a double bar line after the first measure, indicating a section change. The flute part is labeled "PM improv" and the guitar part is labeled "DS improv". The guitar part also includes a note "(PM cut-off)" above the second measure. The score concludes with a double bar line.

CONDITION:direct  
METHOD:sudden or gap

CUE OPTIONS:none

**Pol 1 - DS**

- 0'00" tacet
- 0'15" sustained ebow pitch – open string, hold ebow with left hand
- 0'30" add sporadic sul pont picking on same string
- 0'40" gradually move to molto sul tasto
- 0'50" tacet
- +1'10" sudden short minor second with distortion; then tacet
- +1'25" sustain same ebow pitch as before
- +1'45" tacet
- +1'58" mute all strings with left hand; blunt sound by grabbing strings with all right hand fingers and thumb
- +2'08" repeat blunt sound, more quietly
- +2'22" repeat minor second with distortion
- +2'24" repeat minor second with distortion, one semitone lower
- +2'37" ebow with sul tasto picking
- +2'46" gradually move to sul pont
- +2'57" tacet

CONDITION:	directly
METHOD:	sudden

**CUE OPTIONS:** start of any ebowed sound

## Representations

[determinate instruction]

### MS1 - tutti

\* repeat exactly the last unit you played before moving to this page  
(definition of a "unit" ad. lib.)

\* number of repetitions =

**point in minute** when page begun (in tens or fractions thereof)

[ie 0'01" to 0'10" = 1; 0'11" to 0'20" = 2, etc.]

multiplied by

**number of people playing** when page begun

[nobody playing means no repetitions – move on directly]

(So for example if the page is begun at 0'32" and 3 people are playing at that point, that results in  $4 \times 3 = 12$  repetitions.)

\* gaps between repetitions ad. lib.

CONDITION:direct

METHOD: **sudden**

CUE OPTIONS:none

## Representations

[quartet]

### Quartet Two


Every duo section is cued by the playing of a motif by a specified musician. They are free to play their motif when they wish but should attempt to make each duo section last approx. **one** minute. Players always play their original motif when required to join in after another musician's cue.

**DLcue:**  repeat and cue when ready (with nod)

Duos One: (for all duo sections, you **may not** play when your partner is playing)


JC & DL

AH & DS

**AHcue:**  play twice – the second time joined by DL; then continue to Duos Two

Duos Two: JC & AH

DL & DS

**DScue:**  play thrice – the second time joined by AH, the third by DL, then continue to Duos Three

Duos Three: JC & DL

AH & DS

**JCcue:**  (on tom)

Play once alone, once each joined by DS, AH & DL (in turn) and then JC continue and vary ad.lib while the other musicians move **SUDDEN** to their next page. Then JC can move on ad.lib. (**SUDDEN** or **GAP**)

**CUE OPTIONS:** none

Sextet one

The musical score for 'Sextet one' is arranged in six staves. The flute part features a melodic line with triplets and dynamics of *pp*. The cello part has a similar melodic line with triplets and *pp* dynamics. The guitar part includes a solo section marked *8va* and *pp*. The piano part is divided into sections: 'continue previous activity then move to IMPROV (non cadenza!)' and 'IMPROV', with dynamics of *pp*. The contrabass part features a rhythmic line with triplets, marked *pp arco*, and a *pizz* section. The percussion part includes a ride cymbal and bass drum.

CONDITION: Repeat final bar ad lib.

METHOD: **overlap** or **sudden**

CUE OPTIONS: none

# Representations

[octet]

## Octet 1

**Sound blocks** – Make a single, continuing, complex sound as a pair.

Internal movement but no lines or development per se

Attempt each time to make the sound more composite.

	PA & PMcP	AD & DL	AH & DS	JC & BG
0'00"	█			
0'05"				
0'10"		█		
0'15"				
0'20"	█		█	
0'25"	█			
0'30"		█		█
0'35"		█		
0'40"	█		█	
0'45"	█		█	
0'50"	█	█		█
0'55"		█		█
1'00"	█	█	█	
1'05"	█		█	
1'10"	█	█	█	█
1'15"	█	█		█
1'20"		█	█	█
1'25"	█	█	█	
1'30"	█		█	█
1'35"	█	█	█	█
1'40"		█		█
1'45"		█	█	█
1'50"	█		█	

1'55'				
2'00''				
2'05''				
2'10''				
2'15''				
2'20''	<b>MOVE ON</b>			
2'25''				
2'30''		<b>MOVE ON</b>		
2'35''				
2'40''			<b>MOVE ON</b>	
2'45''				
2'50''				<b>MOVE ON</b>

CONDITION: directly  
METHOD: sudden

CUE OPTIONS: none



## Appendix Seven

Notes as to in which realisations of *Representations* the pages included in Appendix Six can be heard clearly, in order of their appearance on the accompanying CD:

**Track One** (*Representations 22*): Trio 2 [p. 167]: 3'42" – 5'35"

MS1 – tutti [p. 179] (played by contrabass): 6'31" – 7'41"

**Track Two** (*Representations 19*): CNP1 - PMcP [p. 174]: 0'00" – 3'50"

Duo 3 DL/DS [p. 172]: 0'18" – 1'56"

and *Representations 23* [Track Seven]: 13'43" - 14'55"

Duo 5 AH/DL [p. 169]: 6'19" – 7'03"

**Track Four** (*Representations 27*): Pol1 – BG [p. 168]: 0'00" – 2'43"

[coupled with Pol1 – DL, which is identical]

G1 – AH [p. 171]: 0'00" – 2'56"

and *Representations 28* [Track Five]: 0'00" – 4'00"

G1 – PMcP [p. 175]: 0'00" – 4'00"

Quartet 2 [p. 180]: 2'53" – 4'25"

**Track Five** (*Representations 28*): FF2 – AH [p. 170]: 0'00" – 4'00"

**Track Six** (*Representations 24*): HL1 – PmcP [p. 176]: 0'00" – 0'57"

Pol1 – DS [p. 178]: 0'00" – 3'00"

**Track Seven** (*Representations 23*): JSB1 – DL [p. 173]: 0'00" – 4'00"

Sextet 1 [p. 181]: 5'40" – 6'45"

Duo 7 PA(CS)/DL [p. 165]: 6'53" – 8'40"

Octet 1 [pp. 182-3]: 9'05" – 11'45"

Duo 1 DS/PMcP [p. 177]: 11'59" – 13'30"

Duo 14 AD/BG [p. 166]: 12'33" – 15'00"

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