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Musical Experience in Fictional Narrative:

William T. Vollmann, William H. Gass, and Richard Powers

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Principal Supervisor:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of PhD at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not previously been included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma, or other qualifications.

I have read the University's current research ethics guidelines, and I accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures in accordance with the University's Committee on the Use of Human & Animal Subjects in Teaching and Research (HASC). I have attempted to identify all the risks related to this research that may arise in conducting this research, obtained the relevant ethical and/or safety approval (where applicable), and acknowledged my obligations and the rights of the participants.

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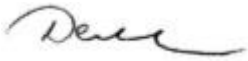

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation on literary representation of musical sounds, forms, and compositions. My close examination of the tangible presences of Western art music in the fiction of three contemporary American novelists relocates traditional foci of intermediality and word and music studies from referential precision and structural equivalence across the arts to the problem of readerly experience of music through fictional narrative. Exploring a variety of diegetic encounters with music in William T. Vollmann's *Europe Central* (2005), William H. Gass's *Middle C* (2013), and Richard Powers's *Orfeo* (2014), I draw from cognitive narratology and the philosophy of music, among others, to construct a concise model of musical experience and a system of its literary correlatives, which can provide for the reader's enactive response to music-related themes and means in fiction. I discuss the different strategies the writers apply to communicate the presumably elitist experience of Western "classical" music as suggestive and relevant to their 21st-century readerships, whether big or small.

I order my chapters dialectically, regarding the three authors' literary approaches to musical experience as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. In Chapter I, Vollmann's intermedial transpositions of Dmitri Shostakovich's fictionalized works are shown to be framed by a mimetic bias, under which diegetic music functions as a characterization means for the author's historical preoccupations. The thesis (i) I infer from Vollmann's approach is that music is part of the fictional reality representative/informative/definitive of what that reality is like. Chapter II is devoted to Gass's metafictional distrust of representation, whereupon his novelistic narrative discards diegetic music almost completely and points out ways of experiencing verbal textures musically. Gass's method is thus antithetical (ii) to Vollmann's: music is a metaphor for creativity, indifferent to the subject matter and/or plot, which at representation level may well be a parodic perversion of the very idea of creativity. Powers's balanced treatment of musicalized content and form and his generous supply of multivalent experiential cues are forged to appeal to a broader reading audience, as I argue in Chapter III. In what I see as a synthesis (iii) of Vollmann and Gass, Powers's storyworld contains abundant diegetic music that constructs narrative settings and drives the events of the plot, but is itself graspable through musical metaphors.

The findings of the thesis open new directions for research into musico-literary reception. Encouraging a revival of reader-response awareness in literary analysis, musicalized fiction is an untrivial subject for interactive theoretical scrutiny by psychologists and philosophers of music, transmedial narratologists, and cognitive scientists. Empirical studies of actual readers' experience of musicalized prose may prove particularly promising in further investigation of this intersectional phenomenon.

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Symbols

In Fig. 1:

|A|:BA:||	ABABA (a three-part song form with second and third parts repeated)
–|–	sub-divisions between sections of the musical form
–||	end of part of the movement
③	measure number
⌒	elision (the last measure of a section, which is also the first measure of the next section)
8 (4+4)	number of measures in a sub-section
a:	A minor (key)
G:	G major
b:	B minor
D:	D major
A♭:	A-flat major
G♭:	G-flat major

Abbreviations

aux. – auxiliary
EC – Europe Central
EFE – Expelled from Eden
FF – Finding a Form
FFL – Fiction and the Figures of Life
ICA – imaginary content analogy
Intro – introduction
LS – Life Sentences
m./mm. – measure/measures
mvt. – movement
MC – Middle C
ND – Narrative Discourse
NDR – Narrative Discourse Revisited
retr. – retransition
tr. – transition
WMS – word and music studies
WWW – The World within the Word

INTRODUCTION

ENDS AND MEANS

This thesis contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation on literary representation of musical sounds, forms, and compositions. My investigation into tangible presences of Western art music[1] in contemporary fiction focuses on recent novels by three American prose writers: William H. Gass (1924–2017), Richard Powers (b. 1957), and William T. Vollmann (b. 1959). By addressing their most overtly "musicalized"[2] novels—Vollmann's *Europe Central* (2005), Gass's *Middle C* (2013), and Powers's *Orfeo* (2014)—I seek to relocate the foci of word and music studies (hereinafter WMS)[3] from referential accuracy and structural equivalence across the arts to the problem of musical experience gained *in* and *through* fictional narrative. In analyzing the three novels, I design a theoretical framework that maps a new territory—that of music—onto the research area of narratology concerned with the phenomenon of the experientiality of fiction (cf. Caracciolo, *Experientiality*). The basic principles underlying this

[1] Following Stephen Benson (*Literary Music* 3), I prefer this term to the commonplace notion of "classical music" in order to exceed the limits of the 18th-century Classical Style (and) period of Western music, but not to extend my claims to the infinite variety of *world* and *pop* musics.
[2] The word is derived from a noun phrase in Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928), where "*musicalization of fiction*" is first coined (384). Both the noun and the participle are used terminologically to account for the recognizably music-related forms, devices, and subject matters in literary narratives, most famously by Werner Wolf (*Musicalization*). Overlapping terms include Benson's "literary music" focused on fiction's capacity to outline "the role of music in everyday life" (*Literary Music* 4) and Emily Petermann's "musical novel"—a sub-genre defined by musical presences "not primarily on the level of content, but rather on that of form" (3).
[3] Pre-launched under the auspices of comparative literature in Calvin S. Brown's seminal monograph, the field has been struggling to overcome its initial literary bias and provide an interdisciplinary platform for literary scholars and musicologists interested in each other's expertise. The name and acronym originate with the establishment of the International Association for Word and Music Studies in 1997, with regular conferences, an offspring Forum, and a book series with Rodopi/Brill. Since Brown, WMS has secured various theoretical approaches and many taxonomical updates: see Scher (*Literatur* 9-25), Neubauer ("Music"), Wolf ("Musicalized Fiction"; "Intermediality"), and Lodato et al. (vii-xii).

framework may account for a broad variety of literary and aesthetic phenomena, which are not confined to specific texts, authors, genres, or periods.

At the turn of the millennium, American literature completed its paradigmatic shift to an open canon through the "cultural wars" of the 1980s and 90s (Kernan 166). White male authors of experimentalist repute appear to have been drawn to the guilty margin of the literary scene. The early postmodern writers still active in the 21st century—Gass, John Barth (b. 1930), Thomas Pynchon (b. 1937)—are past their heydays. Their perceived lineal successors, such as Powers, Vollmann, and David Foster Wallace (1962–2008), do not often dominate literary agendas. The critical acclaim these latter receive may partly result from the social commitment of their fictional and/or journalistic endeavors.[1]

In this respect, those highbrow authors of demanding tomes, who enter the field in the mid- to late 80s and reject trendier temptations of Raymond Carver's minimalism and the "blank fiction" of the Brat Pack (Bret Easton Ellis, Tama Janowitz, Jay McInerney), are distinguishable from their arguably more refined predecessors. Vollmann and Powers are selected for *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, which omits Barth and only features Gass as an essayist.[2] Even so, the fact that three anthologized prose writers from two generations have recently sought inspiration in the elitist tradition of Western art music suggests

[1] Terrorism is addressed in Powers's *Plowing the Dark* (2000) and *Orfeo*, Wallace's "The View from Mrs. Thompson's" (2001), and Vollmann's "Life as a Terrorist" (2013). Racism is a crucial issue in Powers's *The Time of Our Singing* (2003). Environmental concerns are present in Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996) and "Consider the Lobster" (2004), and in Powers's *The Echo Maker* (2006). Vollmann's topical specialties include prostitution (*Whores for Gloria*, 1991; *Butterfly Stories*, 1993; *The Royal Family*, 2000), war (*Afghanistan Picture Show, or, How I Saved the World*, 1992), violence (*Rising Up and Rising Down*, 2003), poverty (*Poor People*, 2007), illegal immigration (*Imperial*, 2009), and gender (*The Book of Dolores*, 2013).

[2] See Baym, 7th ed. (2007). In the 8th and 9th editions published in 2012 and 2016 respectively (Baym and Levine; Levine), Gass's "The Medium of Fiction" (1970) is retained, Powers's short story is replaced with an extract from *The Echo Maker*, and Vollmann is out. Wallace is late to make his way into the anthology's 9th avatar—as a literary journalist.

that the diversity within the newly established literary *status quo* is no myth.[1] Some writers' and readers' "conservative" musical interests do get properly voiced, counter to Lawrence Kramer's 1995 lamentation:

> In its present constitutions as an object of knowledge and pleasure, classical music holds at best honorific place on the margins of high culture. No one today could write a book such as *The Song of the Lark*, Willa Cather's novel of 1915: a book that translates the traditional narrative of quest romance into a young woman's career as a diva, a book that climaxes at the Metropolitan Opera as the heroine sings Sieglinde in Act I of Wagner's *Die Walküre*. (*Classical Music* 4)

It is ironic how Kramer's description of a currently undesired novel fits Richard Powers's *The Time of Our Singing* published eight years later. Although "the lack, or rather the loss, of a viable public discourse about classical music" (4) is plausible, there might be some exaggeration in Kramer's statement that "by the mid-twentieth century, classical music had passed out of the public sphere" (5). As a follow-up to the massive propagandistic use of art music during World War II, cultural missions of the Cold War era—with its heavily publicized ambassadors like Leonard Bernstein or Dmitri Shostakovich, as well as "scandalous" innovations by John Cage and other avant-gardists—keep contemporary art music afloat. In the early 21st century, we encounter this tradition as a subject matter and pattern source for new novels: Shostakovich's music, for instance, is featured not only in Vollmann's *Europe Central* and Powers's *Orfeo*, but also in Donna Tartt's best-selling *The Goldfinch* (2013), Reif Larsen's encyclopedic *I Am Radar* (2015), and Julian Barnes's biographic *The Noise of Time* (2016)—to include just one British example.

[1] Beyond the mainstream of *The Norton Anthology*, there are more US authors recently noted for musicalization. William Gaddis (1922–1998) joins his friend William Gass in exemplifying the older generation's interest in musically-informed narratives: see the detailed analysis of Gaddis's last book, *Agapē, Agape* (2002), in Shockley (157-171). *This Is Not a Novel* (2001) by David Markson (1927–2010) is yet another sample of contrapuntal prose (Shockley 139-156).

Some of contemporary fiction's interest in music is sustained from the 1960s, when, as Eric Prieto reminds us, "literature, the art that has been most closely allied with representation over the entire course of history, is suddenly being explained as an art that is, like music, fundamentally non-representational in nature" ("Deleuze" 5). It is in the 60s that Gass weaves musical designs into what later becomes *The Tunnel* (1995) and *Cartesian Sonata and Other Novellas* (1998). The century turn sees a revival of more straightforwardly musical subject matters, when even the anti-mimetist Gass centers *Middle C* on an impostor musicologist figure *within* the storyworld. Powers most explicitly builds *The Gold Bug Variations* (1991), *The Time of Our Singing*, and *Orfeo* around music-related issues. Vollmann, whose concerns typically lie elsewhere, "re-translates" Shostakovich and Wagner in *Europe Central*, whereas non-linear layouts of his other books such as *The Atlas* (1996) or *Last Stories and Other Stories* (2014) might be seen as "contrapuntal."

This relative rise in music sensitivity among novelists—relative, because we need a music-biased lens to zoom on it—is limited to neither American nor recent fiction. Longer lists of authors and works exploring/exploiting the boundaries of literary musicality can be found, for instance, in Werner Wolf (*Musicalization* 123, 126, 185) and Emily Petermann (2-5, 8). There is also Kellie Brown's 2005 *Annotated Bibliography and Reference List of Musical Fiction*.

In Wolf's tripartite periodization of musico-literary intermediality,[1] postmodernism is considered "[t]he to date last stage of attempts at a musicalization of fiction" (183) after romanticism and modernism. Indeed, with its capacity to decenter and include rather than privilege and restrict,

[1] Wolf insistently prefers this term to such alternatives as "interart(s)," "melopoetic(s)," or "melophrasis" ("Musicalized Fiction" 39, *Musicalization* 55).

postmodernism reframes the "melocentric" sentiment (cf. Benson, "Modernism" 92-98), by which I refer to 19th-century proclamations of music as the supreme art for all others to "aspire towards" (Pater 86). "Postmodern musicalization" is not in *the* center; it is *a* center of contemporary fiction no more and no less entitled for recognition and studying than issues of race, class, and gender.

The "postmodern knowledge" of late 20th-century New Musicology—particularly of Kramer, but also Rose Subotnik, Susan McClary, and Gary Tomlinson—undermines old skepticisms about the incompatibility of music and language and provides a philosophical justification and encouragement for bolder musico-literary research. According to Kramer, "the opposition of music and language is untenable from a postmodernist perspective. Neither linguistic constatation nor musical immediacy can empower that opposition" (*Classical Music* 16). As "the resistance to signification once embodied by music now seems to be an inextricable part of signification itself" (xii), words become sufficiently equipped to capture and inflict certain aspects of musical experience.

Even if Kramer's affirmations may sound speculative with respect to language in general, they are quite commonsensical when related to fiction. Kramer's use of "constatation" summons J. L. Austin's famous distinction between "constatives" and "performatives" in *How to Do Things with Words?* (1962). By the end of that book, it turns out that constative statements, expected to account for facts of life, may also be regarded as performatives, whose "force" lies in the domain of the speaking subject's responsibility. Fiction, as shown in John Searle's "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse" (1975) and Gérard Genette's *Fiction & Diction* (1991), is performative by definition: in pretending to

narrate facts, the author actually creates a fictional reality and assembles a work of literature. Signification itself is performed rather than naturally granted.

Similarly, music can be regarded as performative and self-referential, which does not prohibit imaginary (pretended) signification ("constatation") to occur in the human subject's (composer's, player's, or listener's) performing mind. In this respect, fiction is capable of evoking music no less than evoking any other human experience, even though in doing so it needs to pretend, and thus appropriate/*fictionalize* the music, turning from a reporter of music into its actual source. Apparently for this reason, Steven Paul Scher does not discriminate between "existing" and "fictitious" music pieces fiction may verbally portray (*Verbal Music* 8; "Notes" 149). Just as it takes performers to actualize music, readers "perform" fictional statements—by doing things with words.

On the one hand, reading is a realization of the book's material and formal design, from subvocalizing verbal signifiers of textual graphemes and decoding their surface semantics to assembling narrative structures, so that parallelisms of characters and situations become considered and properly "intoned." On the other hand, understanding fiction in the mode of "suspension of disbelief" implies a certain degree of being *mentally*[1] immersed into the world of the narrated events.

As Richard Gerrig contends, both "performing" fictional narrative and being "transported" to its diegetic universe are nonarbitrary cognitive metaphors of reading (2). In *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson pioneer the study of metaphors as "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action" (3) and not only having an "experiential basis" (18), but structuring our embodied experience of the world around us.

[1] I.e. *bodily*, since, as recent cognitive studies suggest, the mind is always profoundly embodied. For a comprehensive statement of the embodied mind theory, see Varela et al.

Since music is part of this experience, metaphorical encounters with music mediated through reading fiction cannot be discarded as just "loose metaphors" of musical forms or compositions authors vainly aim at. Prieto, most straightforwardly, welcomes the use of such "loose metaphors" for provoking "cognitive dissonance" and "transcending both music and literature in a search for more general mediating principles" ("Metaphor" 58; cf. *Listening In* xi-xii, 1-57). Frédérique Arroyas points out "the reader's role in establishing a music-text interface" (88) in music-related fiction titles. She argues that the routinely assumed "fact that the musical theme is a specific set of notes, whereas the literary theme has no predetermined material but rather is gleaned from the narrative content, simply does not enter the analogical space" of a resulting musico-literary blend (90). In a 1989 article, Kramer suggests "tandem readings," whereupon "deep-structural convergences" may suffice even in lack of "manifest analogies" between musical and literary works ("Dangerous Liaisons" 161)—the idea resting on profoundly metaphorical assumptions.

Kramer's theoretical inspirations come from speech act theory and deconstruction. Arroyas cites Max Black's views on metaphor and Gilles Fauconier and Mark Turner's conceptual blending theory (a descendant of Lakoff and Johnson). Prieto draws from Nelson Goodman's aesthetics amended with Theodor Adorno, Paul Ricoeur, and Jean-Jacques Nattiez (cf. Prieto, *Listening In* 36-49). Yet all the three word and music scholars indicate the same reader-conscious direction first hinted in Scher's rudimentary insight that the "artistically organized words" of what he terms *verbal music* "relate to music only inasmuch as they strive to suggest the experience or effects of music" ("Notes" 149).

The performative nature of fictional discourse and of reading fiction becomes more tangible when elements of other media penetrate the novel. Petermann writes, "It is precisely by evoking musical form within the context of what remains a literary text that these novels are able to incite a metareferential reflection on the limits and strengths of the novel as such" (3). A literary work's "self-referentialization" is a key indicator of musicalization of fiction in Wolf (*Musicalization* 74). Not only do appearances of music in a novel signal its metafictional quality, but a musical presence is quite expected in metafiction.[1]

My **overall objective** in this thesis is twofold. First, in terms of American literature studies, I demonstrate how contemporary white male metafictionists' apparent nostalgia for high culture, as expressed in their articulate use of Western art music, is not as highbrow and elitist as one might expect. Last century's innovators—Schoenberg, Messiaen, or Cage—are made no less accessible for a fictionally-informed reception than (neo)classical composers of the broadest appeal, Beethoven and Shostakovich. Second, by scrutinizing the musicalized texts of Vollmann, Gass, and Powers in terms of their strategies of communicating musical experience to the reader, I supplement the WMS of Scher, Wolf, and Petermann with what the WMS of Kramer, Arroyas, and Prieto promise, but do not develop extensively: a reader-oriented approach to musicalized fiction.

For a **methodology** to serve both ends, I apply a constellation of approaches in contemporary narrative theory, which comprises a number of directions I find particularly helpful in handling the set of more specific research questions I discuss. Since my focus is on music in literature, I address the theory

[1] Coined by Gass (*FFL* 24-25) and applicable to both Powers and Vollmann, metafiction is "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 2; cf. Currie 21-70).

of intermediality (Wolf) and transmedial narratology (Ryan, Thon)[1] to explore the premises for the incorporation of one artistic system into another. My interest in readers and reading leads my discussion to touch upon phenomenological reader-response theories (Ingarden, Iser) and rhetorical approaches to narrative (Booth, Phelan, Rabinowitz, Walsh). Even more considerably, I draw from "natural" and cognitive narratologies, especially enactivist theories of experientiality and immersion informed by empirical research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience (Caracciolo, Fludernik, D. Herman, Kuzmičova, Popova, Zunshine). Aiming at a theoretical reconfiguration of musico-literary issues, I identify most closely with the emerging field of audionarratology, which generously accommodates not only the study of the literally aural aspects of narrative products such as audiobooks and radio plays, but also the imaginary sonic worlds on the silent reader's mind (cf. Mildorf and Kinzel).

There are several **research questions** to be answered in the chapters of this thesis:

- What are the *components of musical experience* that are subject to fictional use?
- What makes music special among any other subject matters of fiction in terms of *narrative experientiality*?
- How may configurations of narrative instances, strategies, and motifs affect the *reader's grasp of musical works, procedures, and devices*?
- How are the three authors' applications of music-related themes and/or techniques *different from one another*?

[1] There is no chapter on music in Jan-Noël Thon's *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture* (2016), but Ryan's approach does account for musical narrativity, as the essay collection she edited in 2004 demonstrates (*Narrative* 275-328). For a concise manifesto of transmedial narratology, see Ryan ("Theoretical Foundations").

- What is the *experiential impact* of intermedial referencing to existent musical compositions as opposed to fictitious music?
- Which aspects of actual composers' theories and practices get incorporated into novelistic textures to form *a meta-referential level*?
- What are the novelistic features that may be *empirically tested* to determine how musical experiences get across the reality/fiction divide?

There are several basic notions recurrent in my argument. Although my material prompts problematizing aspects of both fictionality and narrativity on several occasions, I do not seek to provide a new definition of fictional narrative. However, the other key phrase in my title—*musical experience*—is worth a few preliminary remarks, despite the detailed treatment it receives in Chapter II. In this thesis, my central conjecture that literary narrative can transmit musical experience to the reader originates in several theoretical premises.

First, the experience of actual music in real life becomes available to us largely due to *transmedial* rather than medium-specific properties of music.[1] Narrativity, "which cannot be restricted to verbal narratives alone but which also informs opera and film and which can moreover be found in ballet, the visual arts and . . . to some degree even in instrumental music," is one of Wolf's examples of transmediality ("Intermediality" 18-19). In my view, the paramount justification for that quality is not that music intrinsically possesses narrative features, but that "narrativizing music is a default strategy listeners draw upon to help them engage with what they are hearing . . . and make sense of it" (Toolan 131).

Second, like any other human experience, listening to music is not purely aural but multimodal (cf. Gibbons 8), since the recipient's other senses are not

[1] In Wolf, transmediality is a subcategory of intermedial relations encompassing properties different media share ("Intermediality" 18-19). Alternatively, transmediality is defined as "the lack of medium specificity" that transcends intermedial problematics (Petermann 18; cf. Thon 11-14).

blocked, only disciplined and/or suppressed. Among other things, instrumental music does not exclude a profound verbal component. In Prieto's inference from Adorno, "the primary task of the musical listener is to construct an appropriate verbal representation of the work" (*Listening In* 278-79). According to Kramer, the two modes of coming to terms with music are to "mimic the music and talk about it," the latter practice being "absolutely basic to musical experience" ("Signs" 39). Outlining the stage of musical experience prior to encountering an actual work, Peter J. Rabinowitz explains that "what you hear and experience [in music] is largely dependent upon the presuppositions with which you approach it, and . . . those presuppositions are to a generally unrecognized degree verbal in origin" ("Chord" 39; cf. *Before Reading* 1-2).

Third, fiction not only enters musical experience by "talking" and affecting the system of readerly "presuppositions" about music, but also constructs and models such experiences within the storyworld. The rendered sound of, or talk about, *diegetic music*—the term I reclaim from film studies, which once borrowed the diegetic/non-diegetic dichotomy from narratology—set up musical experiences within the fictional universe. Passages of verbal music, which I regard as the textual exponent of diegetic music communicated through *imaginary content analogies* (Wolf, *Musicalization* 58), are the reader's portal to diegetic music. Musical compositions—fictive or *fictionalized* on passing into the diegetic realm—are not radically different from other phenomena "referred to" among the storyworld objects and events. Therefore, their "direct presence" (Kuzmičova, "Words" 107-108) may be felt and mentally performed by the reader by virtue of the *experientiality* of narrative (Caracciolo)—the gradable capacity of fiction to engage and "transport" us. Reading a book, we may vicariously gain

experiences comparable to those perceptually given in the immediate presence of the actual stimuli. This preconceptual level of musical experience via mental simulation and sensorimotor resonance may not encompass the in-depth intellectual appreciation some aestheticians consider mandatory for the experience to count as musical. However, such appreciation is not granted in actual listening either: not all listeners excel in grasping formal intricacies and dissecting the musical from the non-musical in the complex event of reception. As David S. Miall remarks, "an ordinary reader picks up a literary text in order to gain the experience it offers, not to determine its meaning as a literary critic would" (5).[1]

With the question whether and how musical experience can be narratively transmitted, the category of *the reader*, which has bothered literary studies for over a half-century, is a core concept of this thesis. Like some other preoccupations of literary theory, it violently resists definitions. Of the multiplying chains of reader constructs—implied, super-, virtual, ideal, and abstract (cf. Nelles 9-11, 21-24; Schmid 49-57)—the real/actual/ordinary/flesh-and-blood reader has predictably gained the least attention, since it is impossible to theoretically construct something that itself is not a construct. Naturally, when distinctions are drawn among actual, authorial, and narrative audiences (Rabinowitz, *Before Reading* 20-29, 94-102;[2] cf. Phelan 4), the actual audience is the one to be almost entirely silenced, resisting the partial text-grounding the other two types of audience enjoy. There is no limit to an actual audience's diversity. It

[1] Ordinary rather than expert reading is the specialty of the empirical studies of literature: cf. Rolf Zwaan's interest in "spontaneous comprehension process and the cognitive representations that result from it" instead of close, hermeneutic, and deconstructionist readings (4).

[2] The actual audience "consists of the flesh-and-blood people who read the book" (20); each of its members "reads in his or her way" depending on an open list of variables. The authorial audience is "a more or less specific *hypothetical* audience" the author designs the book for, a set of authorial assumptions about the reader (21). The narrative audience is "an *imitation* audience," for which the narrated events are true and which "we must . . . pretend to be a member of"; it is distinguished from the narratee, who is a fictional character in the narrated world, and is rather another readerly function to maintain that disbelief "is both suspended and not suspended at the same time" (95).

is fairly impossible to make verifiable judgments about real readers, although by using the word "audience" we replace their individualities with an abstraction—an enigmatic construct again. Like Gayatri Spivak's subaltern, the real reader cannot "speak." Even the scientific data collected through empirical research locks real readers up in the generalization of the "statistical reader" (Bortolussi and Dixon 44)—a measurable "population," a construct nonetheless.

Agreeing with Rabinowitz, I maintain that "actual and authorial audience overlap" (*Before Reading* 21), since readers embark on determining an "authorial reading" all the time, although I would prefer the plural: there are different, although also overlapping, *audiences* for Vollmann, Gass, and Powers. Their real readers cannot completely fail to share some norms and conventions with the implied readers: otherwise, reading would be blocked, and the heuristic value of any reader-constructs nullified. I contend that the actual audiences of Vollmann, Gass, and Powers, despite the three writers' low mass appeal, approach their texts with trust rather than prejudice in search of reading experiences corresponding to authorial reputations and readerly tastes. I invest considerable energy into close reading, because many actual readers of Vollmann, Gass, and Powers may be sensible to the very issues I raise, either deliberately or preconceptually.

With musicalized novels, an extra "musical" competence might be expected to navigate the reader, on top of "literary competence" as "a set of conventions for reading literary texts" (Culler 118). For a musical experience of a musicalized text, "the individual reader, his decoding capabilities, his frames of reference and particularly his knowledge and conception of music play an important role" (Wolf, *Musicalization* 72). At the same time, flesh-and-blood readers—members of actual audiences—can be much more flexible and less

dependent on conventions than reader-theorists have proposed. It may be (and, anecdotally, is) the case that connoisseurs are allergic to fictional treatments of their areas of expertise, and that readers who have none are involved much more deeply.[1] The act of reading is not only reciprocal for Wolfgang Iser's implied reader, but also for Alva Noë's "embodied reader" theorized by Karin Kukkonen (369) as enactively experiencing preconceptual "cascades of cognition" due to nonarbitrary neural and somatic processes. For Kukkonen, Iser's notion is insufficiently embodied in being propositionally and temporally confined to emotionally detached "anticipation and retrospection" rather than the preconceptual real-time "here and now of the string of words" resulting in an immersed reading experience (372). Yet even if it takes us closer to real readers, the "embodied reader" is still a model, a theoretical construct no less than Iser's.

In my somewhat blank use of the term—the reader, readers—I aim towards actual audiences as well. In my attempt to capture their response, I address other "readers"—from the implied to the embodied—insofar as the experience theoretically ascribed to them is plausible to take place in actual readings. Without empirical research, my claims of either successful or hindered narrative transmission of musical experience are at best informed guesses, hence my "Codetta" standing out of Chapter III to outline some principles for such research. However, the "empirical reader" that may emerge therein is subject to so many massive constraints all too well known to the philosophy of science, that the

[1] None of a dozen music students I have talked to took any interest in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* (1947). Conversely, the piece of anecdotal evidence that was seminal to shaping the concept of this thesis was my conversation with a friend, who recalled his experience of reading Julio Cortazar's *Rayuela* (1963) having never listened to jazz and getting so "infected" with the book's accounts of it that, after picturing what this music must sound like, he got himself some jazz tapes, excited to hear something very similar to what he had imagined.

"true" reading is forever deferred behind yet another "empirical" construct.[1] The strength of the embodied reader construct is that our immersive predilections are proven to be hardwired. So too is the enactive mental response to text and music, which is not too different from our perceptual responses, as cognitive scientists show. But how intense the fictionally mediated musical enactment would be for a particular individual is forever a mystery, unless critics are determined to study their own readerly behaviors. If the "demand for sense" is as fundamental as Culler says, and "a difficult work later becomes intelligible . . . because new ways of reading have been developed" (123), actual readers will negotiate their proportionate configuration of musical experience while "performing" a musicalized passage.

It is worth bearing in mind that none of my conclusions about the reader's experience of music via fiction are normative, "finalized," and complete (cf. Bakhtin 18): there are always other ways of experiencing, and the fact is not depressing, but inspiring. There are authorial and textual invitations, and multiple ways of dealing with them, from neglect to overreaction. In hypothesizing some paths for experiential transfer of music in my three selected 21st-century novels, I do not forget that the reader's background and configuration of musical knowledge always interfere. The hypotheses I build (and do not formalize at this stage) may be valid as such—i.e. as hypotheses to be tested, proven or disconfirmed— empirically or otherwise.

All in all, (re)introducing WMS and reader-conscious cognitive narratology to one another is at stake in this thesis. I regard musicalized fictional narrative as apt to initiate a multi-sided cross-disciplinary dialogue involving

[1] Groups of participants in an experiment may be "representative," but never universal; details of the reading experience acquired in such experiments are necessarily very limited. Cf. Peter Kivy's objections to similar research into music perception in my section 2.6.

music theorists, historians and critics, psychologists, literature scholars, film theorists, and cognitive linguists. Paying attention to new developments in various fields may be transformative, even if there is no way to erect a Babel-tower theory of everything. Traditionally, disciplines poorly communicate. An intermedial subject, such as musicalized fiction, may interest several fields enough to make them respond and negotiate a common statement. Revisiting some core notions about music in literature, such as verbal music or imaginary content analogy, in terms of audionarratology, I palpate such an interdisciplinary possible future. In this sense, my apparently marginal subject—Western art music in novels by three living white male Americans—appears to be broadly appealing.

The rationale for my thesis structure is both chronological and conceptual. In my three chapters, I discuss the three novels central to my argument in order of their publication. At the same time, I present my three authors as forming a complementary dialectical unit: Vollmann as thesis, Gass as antithesis, and Powers as synthesis. I begin each chapter by discussing each author's narrative pace, general attitude to fictional representation, and the weight of music-related matters in their oeuvre, "growing" from Vollmann to Gass to Powers.

In Chapter I, Vollmann's intermedial transpositions of Dmitri Shostakovich's fictionalized works are shown as framed by a mimetic bias, under which diegetic music functions as a characterization means for the author's historical preoccupations. I demonstrate how some metaphors of musico-literary intermediality, such as narrative counterpoint, are realized in *Europe Central* along with the fictionality/factuality divide dramatized in Vollmann's use of unreliable narration. In my close readings of several passages of verbal music *vis-à-vis* Shostakovich's actual scores, I anchor Wolf's notion of imaginary content

analogy to the narratological category of focalization and propose that "faithfulness" to the score is neither a source of, nor a constraint to, the experientiality of narratively transposed music.

Chapter II sketches Gass's metafictional distrust of representation. A deceptive *Bildungsroman*, *Middle C* undermines the practice of "reading for the plot." By placing Gass between Vollmann and Powers, I seek to correct the stereotyped vision of his work as an abstract play of forms of intellect. The experientiality of Gass's narrative redirects the reader's empathy from the protagonist's life to a metaphorically embodied sentence, where most of Gass's "music of prose" is to be performed. Even if the music of the two Viennese schools represented by Beethoven and Schoenberg is diegetically mistreated, the reader gets compensated by the formal ("exegetic") musicality of Gass's techniques. In the chapter's closing section, I propose a Triangular Iceberg model of musical experience, theorizing how actual listening to instrumental music is never homogeneous, and how it is not reduceable to perception of physical sound, visual and narrative imagery, or the formal interplay of immanent music structures.

Powers's balanced treatment of musicalized content and his generous supply of multivalent experiential cues are forged to appeal to a broader reading audience, as I argue in Chapter III. I return to the issue of verbal music by showing Powers's transpositions of Messiaen and Cage—composers who trespass between music and non-music, which the protagonist of *Orfeo* does as well. I also deal with the diegetic music that has no real-life counterpart, written by a fictional composer and unhearable beyond the verbal domain. I recapitulate on Shostakovich, whom Powers uses more briefly and conventionally than Vollmann. I conjecture that this conventionality secures an easier pathway to

musical experience for Powers's actual audience. I append Chapter III with a *codetta* sharing some preliminary ideas for how my analysis of certain passages in Vollmann, Gass, and Powers may be subject to empirical testing.

Overall, I attempt to approach fiction's incorporation of music in a positive and reader-friendly way. Instead of looking at how the novel forever fails to steal, imitate, or substitute music's physical, structural, and/or affective powers, I focus on what fictional narrative *can* do—musicwise in particular.

CHAPTER I

TRANSPOSING REALITY:

WILLIAM VOLLMANN'S VERBAL MUSIC

1.1. Rushing Around: Vollmann's Musical Predispositions

Describing literature in musical terms is a practice stretching far beyond WMS, which tries its best to make intuitive "loose metaphors" (Prieto, "Metaphor" 51[1]) theoretically sensible. The "rhythm" and "tempo" of prose, for instance, may become very tangible aspects of the reading experiences in terms of both the prosodic qualities of narrative texture and the quantitative relations between story and discourse[2] under Genette's category of "duration" (*ND* 86-88, 94-95; *NDR* 37).

In this respect, Vollmann's writing evolves from the jerky-jazzy pace of his first novel, *You Bright and Risen Angels* (1987), to a much more reserved and structured complexity of the later works. As Larry McCaffery tells Vollmann while interviewing him in 1990, "In *Angels* you created a lot of long paragraphs that seem to have a kind of musical structure to them (improvisation); it's almost like the reader can physically see your imagination grappling with an idea or image and just going with it, pushing it on down the page in the paragraph" (Hemmingson 113). In a 1998 essay on "Writing," Vollmann describes his younger self as "an ecstatic vessel bubbling over with words" and confesses that it is no longer the case: "I labor where before I played" (*EFE* 306). All in all,

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[1] In this article Eric Prieto suggests some "methodological guidelines" for WMS and advocates the indispensable *metaphoricity* in interart scholarship, which he regards as its advantage rather than shame. Prieto favors bold analogies provoking "cognitive dissonance" and "transcending both music and literature in a search for more general mediating principles" (58) beyond the limits of iconic resemblances and one-to-one correspondences.

[2] For a discussion of various theorists' use and grouping of an entire family of terms ("fabula," "sujet," "story," "plot," "narrative," "discourse," "text," etc.), see Schmid (175-93).

narrative pace becomes a huge challenge in mastering the "jaw-dropping immensity" (*EFE* xx) of the Vollmann corpus. Would our sense of rhythm and intuitive grasp of musical structures assist us in following the gross designs of Vollmann's enormous tomes, which often approach, and sometimes exceed, a thousand pages?

Content-wise, music is a minor presence in Vollmann's oeuvre. His literary stature is explicitly and recurrently indebted to other subject matters, such as violence, poverty, and prostitution documented through risky searches for first-hand experience—Vollmann's trade mark among his literary peers (Coffmann and Lukes 10).[1] In Michael Hemmingson's idiom,

> Here we have a guy who goes out and does what many of his contemporaries . . . only daydream about: risking life and limb, courting misfortune in nations whose populaces hate Americans, exploring icy regions of the world not friendly to the human body, hanging out with whores, pimps, drug dealers, the dispossessed and delusional . . . and so on. As one reader on Amazon.com put it: "WTV is the revenge of the nerd." It's the Hemingway shtick, you know . . . (*EFE* xvi)

Even though his style and structural layouts are no less imposing, Vollmann is normally seen as primarily a moralist (Coffmann and Lukes 1),[2] who explicitly insists that "art is inherently and inescapably political" (*EFE* 143). "Sincerity" and "empathy" are central to Vollmann's writing (*EFE* xxxi, 63-66; Coffmann and Lukes xv, 7). His "empirical approach" (Coffmann and Lukes 12) maintains either a sociologist's "qualitative participative research" methods (73-92) or a historian's scrutiny of documentary sources, with which Vollmann appends his

[1] Cf. Daniel Grassian's labels for Vollmann: "a gifted hybrid journalist and fiction writer whose ambition and determination are impressive" (26) and "a muckracker" (27).

[2] The MLA 2011 Convention panel—the foundation stone of *William T. Vollmann: A Critical Companion* (Coffmann and Lukes)—was titled "William T. Vollmann: Methodologies and Morals," both conforming to and deepening the fairway of Vollmann studies. Cf. a tiny excerpt from "Moral Calculus"— a section in Vollmann's over-three-thousand-page treatise on violence, *Rising Up and Rising Down* (2003)—in *EFE* (155-57).

fiction and nonfiction. Thus his celebrated "realism and observational journalism" (Hemmingson 17) do not rest upon the "reality effect" of traditional fiction. Where referentiality is proclaimed to literally rely on denotation, not connotation, "referential illusion" (Barthes 148) is no longer a trick. However, to fully appreciate the factual and ethical background of Vollmann's books, one needs to not only struggle through their discouraging length, but also, as in the typical case of *Imperial* (2009), face "a structure that is fragmented and multiperspectival almost to the point of schizophrenia" (Coffmann and Lukes 55). Vollmann often appears to be megalomaniacally rushing around his multiple interrelated subplots, as if driven by the conceptual metaphor MORE IS BETTER.[1]

Supplying such fragmentation with bulky explanatory appendices is a problematic aid, given their Derridian function to mark out each work as virtually "endless" (Coffmann and Lukes 333-39),[2] or "open"—in Umberto Eco's terms.[3] A close look at the Contents pages of several Vollmann books only aggravates the state of affairs: although a thorough grand plan of each book is demonstrated,[4] systematization is maze- or web-like. Repetitions, cross-references, and overlaps characterize the topics, place names and dates all through Vollmann's section headings and chapter subtitles. To a musically-biased critic, this alone would

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[1] On conceptual metaphors, see Lakoff and Johnson.

[2] Since there will always be a quantitative disproportion favoring the unlisted but possible sources over the listed ones, an infinity of potential documentary data is the book's portal to the "true" reality—transcendental, in a Kantian sense—with an infinite number of properties (cf. Ingarden, *Literary Work* 248-51). Vollmann himself justifies his heavily appended narratives in a phenomenal rather than noumenal idea of multiple worlds he associates with individual human minds (Hemmingson 95).

[3] Cf. Eco's description of an audience that "expects to hear or see [what happens in the real world] in the shape of a well-constructed novel, since this is the way it chooses to perceive 'real' life—stripped of all chance elements and reconstructed as plot" (118). (Com)piling (cf. Coffmann and Lukes 54) his thoroughly researched facts the way he does, Vollmann creates unconventional narratives that are seldom characterized by the "well-constructedness" of their novelistic counterparts; hence the low "reality effect" accompanying a high degree of factuality.

[4] See *Poor People* (2007) and *Imperial* for nonfictional examples, *Europe Central* and *The Dying Grass* (2015) for fictional ones, and *The Atlas* (1996) for a hybrid case. *You Bright and Risen Angels* has a still more peculiar design: half of the fourteen chapters announced in its "Transcendental Contents" (xiii-xvi) are not in the novel at all.

suggest a "polyphonic" approach bringing the surface linearity of literary narrative to imitate simultaneously sounding "voices" or "parts," possibly of equal importance, and therefore "contrapuntally" organized. A reading experience shared by a non-academic—Carla Bolte, the graphic designer responsible for the fonts and page layouts in the Viking editions of *Europe Central* and *Argall* (2001)—supports this "loose" but highly habitualized metaphor:

> When I try to describe Bill's work, I often refer to music. I think he composes literary symphonies, voicing dozens of instruments, writing, blending, spooling out, and revisiting themes and counter-themes. In *Imperial* Bill wrote sections he quite literally titled "reprise." *Europe Central's* paired stories from the German and Soviet perspective could be construed, on the gross structural level, as dueling saxophones. (Coffmann and Lukes 119)

This effect may also be described in terms of painting, where different areas on the canvas are conceptually interlinked and simultaneously present, allowing the eye to opt for either an instantaneous overview or a sequential study of details. However, the reader's distinct sense of motion inflicted by both literature and music as temporal arts[1] justifies the choice of metaphor, otherwise unexpected from a graphic designer talking about "a visually oriented writer,"[2] as Vollmann's self-characterization goes (in Hemmingson 94). Literary polyphony and counterpoint have been a major concern for WMS since its inception in Calvin S. Brown's comparative research,[3] and they are still an important issue

[1] The eventfulness, somewhat more problematical in instrumental music, is in both literature and music actual, and not just "pregnant," in Lessing's terms (132), although Ingarden pronounces temporality of literature "false" (*Literary Work* 305) and only admits a "quasi-temporal structure" in music (*Work of Music* 16, 49).

[2] The visual and the auditory realms do not need to be opposed to each other. In terms of the theory of multimodality, for instance, "there is no such thing as a monomodal text" (Gibbons 8), and our perception of any one aspect of reality is multisensory. Describing a phenomenon as appealing to just one of the recipient's senses is always reductive, although one sense—normally, sight—tends to dominate. Most of Vollmann's work is certainly much less auditory than Gaddis's *JR*, with its invisible characters' dialogue, or Toni Morrison's "Recitatif," where the narrator's literal voice never gets stabilized in the reader's imaginary hearing (cf. Delazari, "Voicing").

[3] Literary attempts at imitating contrapuntal texture are most often related to the fugue genre: see C. S. Brown (149-60), Wolf (*Musicalization* 13-20, 223), and Shockley (21-28, 47-73, 131-33); cf. Grim (245-46) and Mosley (280-81).

whenever Scher's "music *in* literature" is discussed along the lines of his "structural analogies to music" (*Literatur* 9-25). In Petermann's *The Musical Novel*, attention to classical (more precisely, Baroque) music forms is counterbalanced with a discussion of jazz improvisation: half of Petermann's book is on the literary avatars of J. S. Bach, who is the gold standard of counterpoint,[1] the other half is on jazz novels. As I have shown, both metaphors figure in Vollmann criticism, even if only "loosely" applied. Considering the fact that they are rarely grounded in what Wolf calls "intermedial thematization" ("Musicalized Fiction" 47-48; "Intermediality" 24), none of Vollmann's books but one may qualify as "musicalized fiction" in the strict sense;[2] neither are they Petermann's "musical novels." Nevertheless, as the quote from the Viking designer shows, musical associations originate in genuine reading experiences and thus hold significant heuristic value. Vollmann's (or, for this matter, Powers's) books are like Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928), whose "structure is meant to convey, metaphorically, a sense of contrapuntal simultaneity" (Prieto, "Metaphor" 63). Removing "meant" to avoid intentional fallacy, we acquire an accurate description of a possible clue to Vollmann's literary designs.

1.2. Intermedialities of *Europe Central*: An Overview

The author dedicates *Europe Central* to the memory of Yugoslavian writer Danilo Kiš (1935–1989), whose 1976 collection, *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, Vollmann considers "a masterpiece" (*EC* xvii) and a major influence upon his own work (Coffmann and Lukes 123-40; Hemmingson 8, 156). The Shostakovich

[1] Although Petermann discusses the many novelistic recyclings of the *Goldberg-Variationen* (1741) primarily in terms of the theme and variation genre, the work itself certainly exemplifies Bach's polyphonic style.
[2] For criteria of musicalized fiction, see Wolf (*Musicalization* 79-92).

epigraph, "The majority of my symphonies are tombstones" (xix), immediately follows the dedication and marks a metaphorical knot suggestive of *Europe Central*'s authorial design: if stories and symphonies are envisioned as graves, a book may indeed be contemplated in terms of a symphony—a conceptual blend synthetically inferable from Vollmann's two opening paratexts.[1] Intermedial and/as metaphorical creativity has characterized Vollmann's work ever since the "video game-like narrative" of *You Bright and Risen Angels* (Hemmingson 17), whose genre subtitle is not "a novel" but "*A Cartoon*." Vollmann not only illustrates his books with pictures and maps (cf. *EC* xiv-xv), he also creates limited editions as "mixed-media"[2] artefacts (*EFE* xxix; cf. 459-72, Coffmann and Lukes 287-94), some of which actualize metaphors of the "book as a tomb" type.[3]

Speaking of his preoccupation with Ovid's signature work, Vollmann says, "Metamorphosis is one of the main activities of human-beings. . . . In a way, history is basically a description of metamorphosis" (Hemmingson 88). This "metamorphic" attitude[4] permeates *Europe Central* in both its handling of history and its several intermedialities, of which turning music into words is one kind among others. The narrative's repeated focus on visual works (etchings, sculptures, films) along with verbal transpositions of music would make *Europe Central* a fine sample of "ekphrastic fiction," if there were such a notion to parallel Claus Clüver's "ekphrastic poetry" ("*Musikgedicht*").[5]

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[1] In Genette, paratexts occupy the zone between the "off-text" and the "text" and encompass titles, prefaces, epigraphs, as well as the writer's interviews, letters, and other "epitextual" comments (*Paratexts* 3-5). If a musical intention on the author's part is essential for considering a work musicalized, Vollmann's paratexts justify it on top of what may otherwise be seen as a reader's idiosyncratic impression. On conceptual blending, see Fauconnier and Turner.
[2] Cases of "plurimediality," in Wolf's classification ("Intermediality" 21-22).
[3] Particularly, Vollmann's poem *The Convict Bird* encased in a steel box (*EFE* 462).
[4] On the Ovidian roots of contemporary metafiction, see Hutcheon (*Narcissistic Narrative* 13-16).
[5] For other examples of ekphrastic fiction, see Powers's *Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance* (1985) and Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000).

Unlike Anthony Burgess's *Napoleon Symphony* (1974), which embarks on a complete structural imitation of Beethoven's *Eroica* (1803)[1] and thus has four parts (movements), certain arrangement of "themes," and even, at the micro-level, recognizable onomatopoeic replacements for specific melodies (cf. Shockley 75-115), *Europe Central* is no symphony as far as its formal layout is concerned. The book manifests a binary design: the prologue,[2] "Steel in Motion," like an opera overture,[3] rather than an introduction or exposition from a symphony's first movement, is followed by 36 stories alternating between bits of Soviet and German history between 1914 and 1975. Although one Russian episode does not always follow a German one, the general proportion is equal, 18:18. Considering the continuous cross-reference among chapters and the diversity of their individual subjects, *Europe Central* exemplifies not the symphony genre but a vaguely "symphonic" approach. Describing *Europe Central* as "a jarring, haunting, absurdly ambitious symphony of a book," the back-flap blurb stretches the analogy. In such intuitive idioms, "symphony" and "polyphony"[4] seem to opt for being used interchangeably. *Europe Central* is "symphonic" in the sense that its multiple parts and subject matters, organized as linearly presented fragments, are brought together and coincide in a consistent stream of heterogeneous

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[1] See Burgess's authorial explanation, "Bonaparte in E Flat," in *That Man and Music* (180-92).

[2] Not explicitly marked as a prologue, "Steel in Motion" is distinguished from the rest of the book as the only chapter in its first section, "View from a Ruined Romanian Front (1945)": all other chapters are listed under "Pincer Movements (1914–1975)." In the Contents, the opening is also disassociated from the rest by being set neither in Germany nor the USSR, but in "Europe, 1939–1945." Places and dates of each chapter's setting are shown in brackets on the Contents page, mapping the alternating order of *Europe Central*'s stories, but they are removed from the chapter titles in the main text.

[3] The analogy is rooted in the fact that many "dramatic overtures" starting from the late 18th century (in some operas by Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, or Wagner) introduce the musical material that follows (Temperley n.p.). "Steel in Motion" touches upon *Europe Central*'s main themes and major characters, further reshuffled in the novel. It also features Vollmann's elusive first-person narrator, who has not yet been split into Russian and German diegetic entities (see Table 1).

[4] Etymologically, *symphony* is the concordance of voices, which is also suggested in the other two notions. In this respect, a "symphonic approach" is about "orchestration"—the metaphor Bakhtin uses in defining the genre of the novel (*Dialogic Imaginatin* 48, 292-417; cf. Mey 159)—of multiple instrumental parts for a symphony orchestra.

information, whose "consonance" a benevolent reader quickly begins to appreciate. Comparison with a Wagnerian music drama—*Gesamtkunstwerk*, a synthesis of the arts serving one central idea—is another intermedial option for *Europe Central*.[1] All in all, the analogies drawn to explain the book's formal design (a symphony, an opera, a collective grave for historical characters) show through each other, as in the photographic effect of double exposure, but none of them is ultimately "correct." *Europe Central* is simultaneously (not) a symphony and an opera; musical principles guide not its form but its texture,[2] as becomes clear from the opening Russian episode.

In "The Saviors: A Kabalistic Tale," the "protuberant-featured Social Revolutionary woman who sought to kill Lenin" (*EC* 15), Fanya Kaplan, is paired with Lenin's wife, N. K. Krupskaya. Their meeting, staged by Stalin after Kaplan is liquidated, features a doomed Jewish actress playing Kaplan's part to mislead Krupskaya. The scene is permeated with symbolic equivalences between random objects and Hebrew letters at every single move of the story.[3] Krupskaya and Kaplan's biographies are paralleled and synchronized, as the narrative alternates between the two, modeling the way *Europe Central* works on a larger scale. After

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[1] Unlike Shostakovich, the German composer does not appear in *Europe Central*'s storyworld, but his work is abundantly present: multiple intertextual references to *Der Ring* cycle frame the Nazi-related episodes (marked in Table 1 by Wagner's name given in brackets, since he is not a proper character of the book). The recurrent figure of "the amoral Colonel Hagen" alluding "to the *Niebelungenlied*, Wagner's *Ring* cycle, and Hitler's trips to Bayreuth" brings another "counterpoint to Shostakovich's humanism" (Christensen 106). Hagen is occasionally accompanied by "Sergeant Gunther" ("Operation Citadel"). There is also Captain Günther in "Clean Hands," which also recycles legendary motives of other Wagner operas—namely, *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) and *Parsifal* (1882). Wagner's "Magic Fire" music from *Die Walküre*, as well as *Der Ring* on the whole, are verbally traced in "Operation Magic Fire," with the bombing of Guernica pronounced "a contrapuntal masterpiece" (100). Vollmann also reuses his knowledge of Norse sagas, which he gained while writing his first *Seven Dreams* volume, *Ice-Shirt* (1990). Wagnerian and Norse motives are intertwined due to their shared Germanic roots.

[2] A classical symphony is a multi-movement sonata cycle formally identical to such chamber music genres as a sonata or a string quartet. Polyphony is neither a genre nor a form, but a type of texture—the category defining how many voices sound simultaneously and what their interrelationships are.

[3] Other chapters drawing on the Kabbalah are "The Palm Tree of Deborah" and "Opus 110."

the brief transition through Kaiser's Germany in "Mobilization," with references to Hitler and Wagner, we are taken into the first "ekphrastic" episode. "Woman with Dead Child" introduces artist Käthe Kollwitz and her work, including the chapter's eponymous 1903 etching. Taking Kollwitz to the Bolshevik Russia, Vollmann has her attend an early Shostakovich concert (*EC* 53) and be photographed by the future documentary filmmaker Roman Karmen (57-58; cf. 231), so that fragments of storylines from subsequent Russian chapters are interwoven into the narrative texture. The information stream is thus thickened to simultaneously contain parts of several characters' storylines—something the reader may appreciate either in retrospect or on second reading.

Metamorphic coupling is prompted between characters as well as between media. Kollwitz of "Woman with Dead Child" looks like Krupskaya (51) of "The Saviors," who identifies with Kaplan, when the latter is represented by a *theater* actress. As Shostakovich falls in love with Elena Konstantinovskaya in "Elena's Rockets," he visualizes her as a certain *sculpture* by Soviet avant-gardist Alexander Rodchenko (68), providing an ekphrastic framing for the musical metamorphosis of Elena into Shostakovich's "Opus 40" (see my section 1.4). Meanwhile, Vollmann's fictionalized Anna Akhmatova likens Konstantinovskaya "to a church—specifically, to one of the *forty times forty* churches in Marina Tsvetaeva's poems about Moscow" (69), which is a poet's visualization of Shostakovich's heroine via yet another poet's *verse*. Unlike Akhmatova's reference to Elena, the Tsvetaeva quotation is accurate and only "slightly 'retranslated' by WTV" (760). Vollmann's narrator, NKVD officer Comrade Alexandrov, rapidly denounces the "untrustworthiness" of "those three people—Shostakovich, Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva," ascribing this distrust to "the fact that

they couldn't stop comparing one thing with another" (69). This metafictional comment is illustrative of the overall tendency of *Europe Central* to turn everything into something else.[1] The simultaneous presence of many narrative streams prompts a regard of *Europe Central* as a "polyphonic novel" (cf. Benson, "For Want"), although this reading suppresses other intermedial analogies (e.g. a "collage").

When literary scholars—metaphorically—speak of narrative polyphony, they do not distinguish it from counterpoint, or contrapuntal polyphony, which in music theory constitutes the narrow sense of the term. The broader sense (retained in the English and French, but not German and Russian, usages) accounts for the "vertical" dimension of music in general and opposes polyphony as simultaneous "music in more than one part" to monophony—the sound of a single voice. The narrow sense, however, requires "several parts of equal importance," and although a melody accompanied by chords is not a monophonic texture, it is denied polyphonic status due to the dominance of one voice over the supportive harmony—the case termed "homophony." Therefore, "commonly, 'polyphony' has been used as a synonym to 'counterpoint'" (Cooke n.p.). In Heinrich Koch's classical theory, polyphony and homophony are the two stylistic approaches to musical texture, "one relying on counterpoint and the structural equality of voices, the other on a structural framework of melody supported by a bass line with inner parts to provide harmonic, rhythmic, and textural expression" (Dunsby n.p.).

[1] Cf. what might be called "intramedial" transposition of Akhmatova's poem, "At the Seashore," in "And I'd Dry My Salty Hair" (*EC* 118-19)—a paraphrase rather than an ekphrasis (from poetry to prose, but within the verbal medium), but definitely a translation/adaptation, which involves all the types listed by Roman Jakobson: intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic (114)—the latter if one sees prose and poetry as distinct semiotic systems. See also the summary of Tsvetaeva's "Poem of the End" as "program music" (*EC* 150-51).

When Mikhail Bakhtin coins the term "polyphonic novel" in the late 1920s, restrictively for Dostoevsky's work, he lays no claims on music terminology and speaks explicitly about the imprecise nature of the notion—"a graphic analogy, nothing more" (*Problems* 22). Opposing Dostoevsky's "new novelistic genre" (7) to the "fundamentally *monologic* (homophonic) European novel" (8), Bakhtin focuses on the polyphony of characters' voices understood as dialogue between their fragmented ethical truths, stances in life, and competing personal ideologies, which do not receive a conclusive authorial judgment to complete their ongoing argument with a "finalizing" moral resolution. In a polyphonic novel, Bakhtin finds a "*plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices*" (6), with no authoritative voice to subordinate them. Such equality is the core of Bakhtin's metaphor, which replaces the literal sound of characters' voices with the ideas expressed in their always "double-voiced" speeches and thoughts.

In Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928)—a habitual test case in WMS—fictional novelist Philip Quarles provides a different formula for polyphonic writing: "All you need is sufficiency of characters and parallel, contrapuntal plots. While *Jones* is murdering a wife, *Smith* is wheeling the perambulator in the park. You alternate the themes" (384). This method dates back to Flaubert's agricultural show scene in *Madame Bovary* (168-69), in which parsed phrases of Rodolph's hypocritical "confession" of his romantic passion for Emma are interspersed with loud announcements of farmers' record-breaking achievements with pigs and fertilizers. In Huxley, simultaneity of events matters less than parallelism of characters and situations from different segments on the fictional timeline. However, these segments, due to the device of alternation, approach each other in

the discourse-time (which is also reading-time) and thus get interestingly synchronized. Things that are *not actually simultaneous* are re-conceptualized *as simultaneous*. Their immediate succession makes them synchronically blended in the reader's mind. The purely justified musical analogy to such effects, as some word and music scholars would note, is "compound melody," best known from in J. S. Bach's pieces for solo instruments.[1]

In Flaubert, however, the effect is achieved due to speedy alternation in *words*, whereas concurrence of larger fictional segments of fictional *worlds* such as Huxley's or, for that matter, Vollmann's, is more difficult to maintain. The immediate readerly experience of alternated chapters depends much more on successional processing of textual information. The latter aspect, however, is indispensable from listening to *any* piece of music performed in real time. Observed relations of repetition and contrast in its horizontal arrangement, Lerdahl and Jackendoff's "groupings" and "prolongations" (8) are the core source for "*musical intuitions of a listener who is experienced in a musical idiom*" (1). In all cases, much depends on the recipient: in listening to compound melody, the problem is how voices are segregated by the listener to form parallel "auditory streams" (cf. Davis; Bregman and Campbell 224). In Robert Francès's approach, hearing *any* polyphonic texture involves "centrations" on one voice at a given moment and numerous attentional shifts during listening, so that "[t]he continuity of the two patterns perceived simultaneously thus occurs on the basis of a double

[1] Also termed "polyphonic melody" (Kurth 75-95; Katz 59), "implied polyphony" (Davis; Shockley 54), "implied counterpoint" (Grim 246), compound melody is typical of Baroque music: it is "a technique developed in Bach's lines such that *polyphony* is *latent* in the monophonic linear unfoldment" (Kurth 76). Listening to a Bach suite for flute solo, or a solo violin partita, we can "hear" two, or even more, distinct voices developing their own melodies. The linear (single-line) text of verbal narrative can literally seek a similar effect.

discontinuity affecting the perception of each of them" (201).[1] Experientially, the imitation of polyphony in compound melody may thus be as distinct from non-contrapuntal organization of monophonic and homophonic textures as the actual counterpoint of several voices. Some narratives, then, are less linear than others,[2] and there are different ways of actualizing the polyphony metaphor in literature.

Vollmann prefers to call *Europe Central* "these stories" (*EC* 73, 753), not a novel, which somewhat timidly suggests that the book is "Vollmann's collection of World War II stories" (*EFE* 125). However, as Hemmingson remarks,

> Vollmann's collections are not compilations of random short stories written over a certain period of time. . . . Each is compounded on a high concept, a grand metaphor; the volumes are cycles of related texts with recurring topics and motifs. . . . *Europe Central* almost functions as a novel, coupling related stories together, one set in Germany and the other in Russia; they share similar premises and moral inquiries about war, patriotism, love, and art. (22)

Other critics do not hesitate to consider *Europe Central* "a novel" (Christensen 98). To do so is to recognize the "polyphonic" unity of its parts, especially in light of the fact that Bakhtin, who initially applies the term narrowly to Dostoevsky, later proclaims its essential "dialogicality" as definitive of the entire genre (cf. *Dialogic Imagination* 259-422).

The arrangement of chapters in Vollmann is not hierarchical. Although most of them are focused on a central character or two, those central characters are regularly decentralized in other chapters by becoming background characters

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[1] In psychoacoustics, this corresponds to Sloboda and Edworthy's "figure-ground model" (Bigand et al. 272), which competes with the "divided attention" model and "integration model" (277-278). A more recent rethinking of the categories of "voices" and "auditory stream" suggests that the listener's perception can reduce the number of voices "via fusion of dependent parts" (Cambouropoulos 84). Competing models remind us that "there is no 'correct' way of perceiving musical structures: there exist many different levels and modes of perceiving" (79)—which holds true for literature.

[2] Lerdahl and Jackendoff's theory deliberately does not account for "the more contrapuntal varieties of tonal music" (37), where synchronous melodic lines are parsed differently and do not obey the "well-formed" rules of hierarchical groupings.

merely mentioned in passing (see Table 1). The binary chapter division as presented in the Contents is violated in the body of the novel. Most readily, the opposition between Germany and Russia is a false one: "The moral equation of Stalinism and Hitlerism is nothing new" (*EC* 754). Characters textually wander about chapters, times, and places where they do not obviously belong. Fragments of other stories are threads which the reader can either pull or follow in order to mentally "hear" the implied parallel narratives. Several options of pairing central characters from different chapters are hinted at, so that moral and ideological tensions do not get resolved and "finalized," in a Bakhtinian sense. Vollmann's "counterpoint" thus accommodates more than two voices at a time.

For example, the impression of "parallel motion"[1] of the treacherous Soviet General Vlasov, who surrenders and serves the Nazis, and German Field-Marshal Paulus, who surrenders his army at Stalingrad (Schweiger 238, 241), is facilitated by their respective chapters' adjustment to each other. The parallel is supplemented by the story of Kurt Gerstein, whose motivations are in many ways similar, and whose case is no less morally ambiguous. In addition, Vollmann's Shostakovich comes to explicitly associate himself with Vlasov (*EC* 733; cf. 307), after he finally joins the Party and betrays his "formalist" muse. Shostakovich is paired with Paulus via Elena, since the Field-Marshal's Romanian wife Coca's actual name is Elena, too (*EC* 353; cf. 539). Since German music is mediated by Hitler's generals as performers, and Hitler himself is announced to be its composer, it is he and not Wagner who, arbitrarily, becomes Shostakovich's musical opponent in the novel. As Vollmann quotes the famous wartime evaluation of Shostakovich by the poet Olga Berggolts as the man who "is

[1] In music, the type of contrapuntal organization when two melodies are built at the same interval from each other and "move" together in pitch.

Chapter title	*Central character(s)*	*Mentioned central characters of other chapters*
Steel in Motion	Diegetic narrator, Stalin, Hitler	Shostakovich, Akhmatova, Gerstein, Paulus, Vlasov, Zoya, Karmen
The Saviors	Nadezhda Krupskaya	Stalin
Mobilization	The Kaiser	Hitler, diegetic narrator, [Wagner]
Woman with Dead Child	Käthe Kollwitz	The Kaiser, Hitler, Shostakovich, Hagen, Krupskaya, Elena, Alexandrov, Stalin, Karmen
You Have Shut the Danube's Gates	Diegetic narrator (Alexandrov)	Hitler, Shostakovich, Akhmatova, Stalin
Elena's Rockets	Elena Konstantinovskaya	Shostakovich, Akhmatova, diegetic narrator (Alexandrov), Stalin, Hitler, Lina, Karmen
Maiden Voyage	Diegetic narrator (German)	Hitler, Stalin
When Parzival Killed the Red Knight	Hitler	Kollwitz, [Wagner], Stalin, Paulus, Shostakovich, Elena, Karmen
Opus 40	Shostakovich, Elena	Karmen, diegetic narrator (Alexandrov), Kollwitz, [Wagner], Akhmatova, Stalin
Operation Magic Fire	Hitler, [Wagner]	Diegetic narrator (German), Hagen
And I'd Dry My Salty Hair	Akhmatova	Diegetic narrator (Alexandrov), Shostakovich, Elena, Karmen
Case White	Diegetic narrator (Nazi)	Hitler, [Wagner]
Operation Barbarossa	Shostakovich	Elena, Stalin, Karmen
The Sleepwalker	Hitler	[Wagner], [Hagen (as the protowagnerian "Hogni")], Stalin
The Palm Tree of Deborah	Shostakovich	[Wagner], Elena, Akhmatova, Stalin, Hitler, Alexandrov, Vlasov
Untouched	Hitler	Diegetic narrator (German)
Far and Wide My Country Stretches	Roman Karmen	Shostakovich, Stalin, Elena, Kollwitz, Akhmatova, Zoya, diegetic narrator (Alexandrov), Hitler, Paulus, Alexandrov
Breakout	General Vlasov	Stalin, Shostakovich, Hitler, Zoya, diegetic narrator (German), Elena, Cliburn, [Wagner]
The Last Field-Marshal	Field-Marshal Paulus	Hitler, Zoya, Vlasov, Stalin, Karmen, Shostakovich, Benjamin
Zoya	Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya	Stalin, Vlasov, Hitler, Shostakovich
Clean Hands	Kurt Gerstein	Hitler, Vlasov, Shostakovich, Paulus, [Wagner], Karmen, Kollwitz, [Hagen]
The Second Front	Elena, Karmen	Paulus, Stalin, diegetic narrator (Alexandrov), Shostakovich, Stalin, Kollwitz
Operation Citadel	Diegetic narrator (German)	Hitler, Stalin, Shostakovich, [Wagner], Lina, Kollwitz, Hagen
The Telephone Rings	Shostakovich, Elena	Karmen, Stalin
Ecstasy	Shostakovich, Elena	Akhmatova
Operation Hagen	Colonel Hagen	Diegetic narrator (German), Hitler, [Wagner]
Into the Mountain	Hitler	-
Denazification	Diegetic narrator (German)	Stalin, Karmen, Hitler, Akhmatova, Shostakovich, Kollwitz, the Kaiser
Airlift Idylls	Diegetic narrator (German)	Shostakovich, Elena, Lina, Benjamin, Akhmatova, [Wagner], Alexandrov, Karmen, Stalin, Zoya, Vlasov, Hitler, Hagen, Benjamin, Kollwitz
The Red Guillotine	Hilde Benjamin	Krupskaya, Kollwitz, Karmen, diegetic narrator (Alexandrov), [Wagner], Stalin, Paulus, Hitler, Hagen, Shostakovich
We'll Never Mention It Again	Shostakovich, Elena	Karmen
Why We Don't Talk About Freya Any More	Lina	Elena, Shostakovich
Operation Wolund	Diegetic narrator (German)	Hagen
Opus 110	Shostakovich	Stalin, Karmen, Elena, Zoya, Akhmatova, Alexandrov, Vlasov, Hitler, Paulus, [Wagner], Cliburn, Krupskaya, Gerstein
A Pianist from Kilgore	Cliburn, Shostakovich	Hitler, Paulus, Vlasov, Alexandrov
Lost Victories	Diegetic narrator (German)	Hitler, Paulus, Vlasov
The White Nights of Leningrad	Shostakovich, Elena	Hitler, Stalin, Karmen

***Table 1*. Distribution of character storylines across chapters of *Europe Central*.**

stronger than Hitler" (*EC* 215, 769), it is really he, not Stalin, who fights "the Sleepwalker." Across the "imaginary love triangle" (*EC* 808-10), Shostakovich is linked to Elena's husband Roman Karmen: "The man's my Doppelgänger! Whatever I do, he copies in his golem-like way" (708).

Hemmingson may exaggerate the significance of one part in Vollmann's intermedially polyphonic texture when he argues that the character of Shostakovich turns "this collection into a quasi-novel," where "Shostakovich's symphonies operate as a soundtrack" (29). Yet Shostakovich's fictionalized music—no less than Karmen's films, Kollwitz's etchings, Rodchenko's sculptures, and Wagner's operas—may certainly be selected as a *mise-en-abyme* metaphor for the entire novel.

1.3. Fictionalizations of Shostakovich: History, Biography, and Music

Evaluating Vollmann's nonfictional output, sociologist Georg Bauer remarks that "fabrication in Vollmann's texts occurs on a stylistic level" (Coffmann and Lukes 96). This applies to the bulk of Vollmann's fiction, so deeply rooted in field and/or documentary research that its border with factuality is constantly fading. Vollmann's historical novels, unlike those by his early postmodern predecessors Barth and Pynchon, pursue "a poetically true interpretation of real events" for "recuperating the historicist imperative" dating back to Sir Walter Scott (Coffmann and Lukes 102). In *Europe Central*, Vollmann's narrator complicates this vision: "Most literary critics agree that fiction cannot be reduced to mere falsehood. Well-crafted protagonists come to life, pornography causes orgasms, and the pretense that life is what we want it to be may conceivably bring about the desired condition. Hence religious parables,

socialist realism, Nazi propaganda" (27). In a book that textually implements and/or comments on parables, realism, and propaganda, this statement is metafictional.

Vollmann's narrative both reproduces and fabricates facts, and the novel's paratextual "Sources," "An Imaginary Love Triangle: Shostakovich, Karmen, Konstantinovskaya," and "Acknowledgments" (*EC* 753-811) expose some of the author's methods for such reproduction-fabrication. The author explains his general predilection for appendices by expressing his desire to discourage the reader from an uncritical belief that what is told is what really happened—a habit acquired from mass media (Hemmingson 14). The reference apparatus is there to show how "you make things real by making them up" (148). Vollmann's appendices are "a post-postmodern commonality" relating him to Mark Danielewski and David Foster Wallace (Coffmann and Lukes 338), but also refining his "metahistorical approach" (Schweiger 238; cf. White, *passim*).[1]

In *Europe Central*, Shostakovich and his music are what Brian McHale calls "constrained realemes" (86-87). Vollmann's sources on the historical individual Shostakovich, which he attempts not to violate too much, are books (most of them in English, but some in Russian[2] and German), music scores, and CD recordings. Historical conditions framing Shostakovich's biography are presented as fundamentally related to his music, but the causal directedness of this relation is ambivalent and in a way circular: life determines art to signify life, but art makes life significant and thus determines it, in the Wildean fashion. For

[1] Cf. Linda Hutcheon's notion of "historiographic metafiction" in Currie (71-103).
[2] It can be deduced from Vollmann's orthography in Romanized Russian that his skills in the language are limited, although his interpreter in St. Petersburg has the impression that "apparently, he is fluent in Russian" (Coffman and Lukes 69). Peter Christensen testifies the more probable: "Vollmann cannot read Russian, as he can German, so he was unable to do original research [for *Europe Central*]" (102).

Vollmann, historical events and biographical circumstances explain Shostakovich's music, and the other way around: his music contains essential clues for understanding history and psychology, both social and personal—hence the pivotal role of music in the novel.

The course of Vollmann's fictionalization is in the mainstream of how Shostakovich is habitually treated by music critics. The actual composer's work is subject to predominantly political and/or biographical readings, which contradicts Benson's judgment that "[t]he putative inefficacy of music as a mode of cognition rather than sensuous feeling has led to its relative neglect as a resource in the reading of history" (*Literary Music* 13). Shostakovich's music is strongly conditioned to be heard as a chronicle. Vollmann's novelistic version of Shostakovich's biography, like the more straightforward treatment of the same subject in Barnes's *The Noise of Time*, highlights a certain stage in the history of Western reception of "the twentieth century's most mythologized composer" (Fairclough 452), whose music, in Aaron Copland's praise, is so powerfully "accessible to listeners everywhere" (Gibbs 59; cf. *EC* 215).

Publishing his novel in 2005, Vollmann is evidently aware of the "Shostakovich Wars," the debate in Shostakovich studies that followed the American publication of *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as Related and Edited by Solomon Volkov* (1979) and peaked in the 1990s.[1] In that book, whose authenticity is strongly questioned, the Russian composer's "own" postmortem voice promotes him from a "passively loyal Soviet servant" to the more flattering role of an "embittered dissident" (Fairclough 453). With later reprints and further publications of Volkov and his supporters, this one-

[1] See Mishra (ix-x) for a brief summary, and Fairclough for a detailed account of the debate. For the analysis of Shostakovich reception in the US, see Fairclough, Gibbs, and Rabinowitz ("Squandered").

dimensional view still dominates the popular perception of Shostakovich, although specialists seem to have become more considerate of the "uncontrollable play of subtexts" in and around his music (Taruskin 472; cf. Fairclough 453-54).

Unlike Barnes, who recycles the composer's biography along Volkovian lines, Vollmann treats Shostakovich complexly, fictionalizing not only the personality but also the music while critically investigating the relation between the two. Christensen oversimplifies the matter when he suggests that the author's personal sympathies are purely Volkovian, and that "Vollmann presents Shostakovich as an admirable lifelong anti-Communist and secret dissident whose musical works are filled with coded messages" (100). Vollmann extensively cites his "retranslations" of Volkov's Shostakovich,[1] weaving them into his narrative, but his authorial vision of the historical Shostakovich expressed in the paratext relies on Taruskin, not Volkov (*EC* 808).[2] This, however, does not mean that such a view is the "finalizing" authorial statement overarching the entire novel, once its polyphonic design is taken into account. The author's own judgments, even if they enter the dialogic relationships within the novel, in Bakhtinian terms, do not necessarily subordinate those voiced by his fictional others. The character and his music are filtered via certain narrative devices. Therefore, various "voices" in the novel must be considered, and who mediates ("focalizes")[3] Shostakovich at a

[1] See "Sources" (*EC* 755, 763, 764, 767, 768, 794, 801, 803). The pro-Volkov scholars Vollmann uses are, most notably, Elizabeth Wilson and Ian MacDonald. He balances them with Volkov's opponents Laurel Fay and Richard Taruskin. Vollmann's Russian sources beyond the debate are Isaak Glikman's correspondence with the composer and Khentova's *The Amazing Shostakovich*.

[2] See also Vollmann's statement to Clemens Setz's question about Shostakovich: "He was not a perfect person—who is? He collaborated a little bit with the regime when he had to in order to hold on [to] what was most important to him—you know, his so-called formalist music, his family, and occasionally his friends. . . . I really respect the fact that he survived as long as he did, wrote this brilliant music, and did a few good things to people" ("Gespräch").

[3] Genette objects to the verb "focalize" and particularly its agency-denoting derivative, "focalizer/-or" introduced by Mieke Bal (Bal 149). Genette's original understanding of focalization is character-centered, since modes of focalization depend on how much the narrator knows (i.e. says) in comparison with what the character knows ("sees"). In *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (72-73) he argues that only narrative can be "focalized," so the only possible "focalizer" is the narrator.

given moment of narration is crucial to what kind of musical output the reader confronts.

Considering that *Testimony*, problematic in a very Derridian way,[1] is a first-person account of Shostakovich's life and opinions, which presumably Volkov heard, wrote down, compiled, rearranged, edited, and, most probably, supplemented with what he believed (or strategically preferred to believe) Shostakovich had thought, Volkov's book itself appears to be what Vollmann explicitly declares *Europe Central* is—"a work of fiction" (*EC* 753). Vollmann's extension of Shostakovich's documented life—his lasting love for Elena Konstantinovskaya, who the composer in *Europe Central* never manages to "get over" (125; cf. 808)—is based on the translation of several dozen pages from Sof'ya Khentova's book Vollmann commissioned to a Sergi Mineyev and paid "a total cost of $2,846.82" for (762). In "Opus 40," this source is partly compromised: "Khentova, whom Shostakovich avoided like death, cannot always be trusted" (*EC* 90). In turn, the narrator's voice that questions Khentova's reliability is likewise problematic and does not itself possess high credentials. One option is to identify the narrator as the paratextual payer of $2,846.82. This non-diegetic authorial figure refuses to be responsible for the translator's errors, but

[1] In poststructuralist terms, *Testimony* is an example of how things are never "originary," but only phases of an "indefinite cycle," in which "the origin of the image can in turn represent its representers, replace its substitutes, supply its supplements" (Derrida 298). Apart from being accused of actually forging Shostakovich's monologue, Volkov has secured a fantastic publishing history for his best-selling Shostakovich memoir. The "original" Russian typescript with some pages signed by Shostakovich to express his approval of what Volkov had put down is proven to be severely manipulated (Fairclough 454), so that there is no access to what Shostakovich actually said. Volkov's resulting "original" manuscript is in Russian, the language of his conversations with Shostakovich, but the book first came out in English. There has never followed a Russian edition, and the Russian text now available online is an unauthorized anonymous back translation from English, prefaced by an appeal "to those of whom the Russian publication of the book depends" to publish the Russian "original," followed by the promise "to destroy this [online] resource" as soon as such book appears (Volkov, *Svidetel'stvo* n.p.). What *is* the original, then? The typewritten monologue of the embittered old man into which Volkov turned what was "related to" him, whose location is uncertain? Its irretrievable oral basis? The 1979 English publication? We face a chain of signifieds that circularly cross-defer and supplement each other.

violates "objectivity" by inserting a commercial interest into the matter. Alternatively, we may attribute the narrative voice to the disguised diegetic narrator Comrade Alexandrov—Stalin's secret police spy by trade.[1] As a result, Vollmann's Shostakovich and his music are always fictionalized in the second or even third degree, since the very biographical and musicological sources Vollmann uses are *already* fictionalizations. It is this, in lieu of simple interrogation of "the inner life of historical individuals in a realm of poetic possibility," that defines Vollmann's "metahistorical approach" (Schweiger 238). Vollmann reconfigures and "retranslates" Shostakovich biographies, letters, and memoirs by clashing them with each other. In doing so, Vollmann is not building a monolithically consistent "true" character. Conversely, his Shostakovich is a marked patchwork fabrication, and Vollmann needs his reader to get this right.

To illustrate this point, let me quote David Fanning, a prominent Shostakovich scholar, author of *The Breath of the Symphonist: Shostakovich's Tenth* (1988), editor of *Shostakovich Studies* (1995) and, with Pauline Fairclough, co-editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich* (2008). Fanning writes

[1] In Genette's classification, the dichotomy is between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrator (*ND* 245-48): the former is located outside the *diégèse*—i.e. the narrated universe, not to be confused with *diégésis*, Plato's "pure narration" (*NDR* 17-18)—while the latter belongs to the storyworld. Since Genette also speaks of intra- vs. extradiegetic narrative levels to describe the narrator's position in terms of narrative frames (*ND* 227), adding metadiegetic narrative as a character's narrative within a narrator's narrative (228), his terminology gets somewhat overloaded; hence my use of simpler diegetic vs. non-diegetic distinction for heterodiegetic and homodiegetic, and primary/secondary/tertiary for extra-, intra- and metadiegetic, as suggested by Schmid (67-70). Alexandrov's case, which is discussed in detail later in this section, is generally that of a primary diegetic narrator, who is paradoxically not subordinated to a primary non-diegetic narrator as a secondary-level storyteller, but interrupts non-diegetic narration at the same primary level. Appearing as a third-person character, however, Alexandrov is a secondary-level subject to the non-diegetic narrator. Were the shifts to his stepping into the narrator's shoes properly marked, he would be a "normal" secondary narrator. However, the latent possibility in Vollmann's narrative, with its totalitarian subjects, is that the non-diegetic narrator is Alexandrov in disguise, who from time to time speaks of himself in the third person. Cf. Genette's correction, in *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, related to secondary characters as narrators, whose "narrative function eclipses their diegetic function" (102): in such revised terms, Shostakovich is Vollmann's protagonist, and Alexandrov—a "deuteragonist," like Doyle's Dr. Watson or Mann's Zeitblom.

profound, at times Schenkerian[1] analyses of Shostakovich's music and promotes music- instead of ideology-centered approaches to the composer's heritage, counter "the tendency to trivialize Shostakovich's music by 'reading' it in the manner of a pop-up story-book" ("Untranslatable" 32; cf. *EC* 107). Fairclough, an active member of the anti-Volkov cohort who argues that "it is facts, not fictions, that will outlive us all" (460), is the editor of *Shostakovich Studies 2* (2010), where, discussing a passage in Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, Fanning asserts, "I also presume agreement that it is good irrespective of Shostakovich's allusions to Bizet's *Carmen* . . . and their likely symbolic connection to his love-life (via the translator Yelena Konstantinovskaya, who had married a Spaniard and thereby become Senora Carmen)" ("Structural" 80).

This metamorphosis of the Soviet cameraman into a romantic heroine's Spanish husband, who is neither in Bizet's opera nor in Mérimée's novella, is Fanning's unintentional echo of Vollmann's fiction. In the novel, after she breaks up with Shostakovich, Elena Konstantinovskaya marries filmmaker Roman Karmen, another prominent historical figure subject to Vollmann's fictionalization. Factually, this marriage was short and did not supply Vollmann with documentary evidence (*EC* 807-808), so that for building his "imaginary love triangle" the author had to depend on "what is likely to happen" instead of "what has happened" (Aristotle 32). Such erroneous slips on the part of serious scholars degrade none of their achievements (in fact, what Fanning puts in parenthesis makes sense in light of Shostakovich's multiple "subtexts"). The slips

[1] One of the most prominent 20th-century music theorists Heinrich Schenker (1865–1935) developed a method of music analysis determining the hierarchical relationships of pitches in the tonal space organized as "prolongations"/elaborations of the "ground structure" (*Ursatz*), which underlies the surface structure. The method itself is highly formalized and equipped with jargon and special notation. Schenker's contribution to music analysis might be compared with Saussure's or Chomsky's to language studies.

show that fictionalization is natural. To acknowledge Fanning's alibi, I must add that in an endnote he attributes the inaccurate fact he skeptically dismisses to an unpublished dissertation summarized in the second edition of Elizabeth Wilson's Shostakovich biography (2006), which influentially represents the Volkov camp.

With respect to facts, Hayden White is far from being the only theorist pointing out that "all narrative, fictional and nonfictional, is artifice" (Walsh, *Rhetoric* 14). What we take to be "factual," in Genette's terms (*Fiction* 55), is inescapably White's "emplotment" (*Metahistory* 7-11; *Tropics* 85, 121-22; *Fiction* 280-84).[1] Although "emphasis on sincerity" and "honesty" (*EFE* xxxii, 63-66) is the principle Vollmann appears to project from ethics onto aesthetics, his research-based fiction is bound to relate historical and biographical facts neither as they "truly" happened, nor even as they are documented. Vollmann's self-conscious paratextual alter-ego in *Europe Central*'s "Sources" section, WTV, informs the reader about how his preparatory materials have been doctored. Such a vindicatory disclaimer may be superfluous, since authors of fiction are immune to accusations of this sort: "In a fictional world, all the thematic elements of the narrated world are . . . fictive: people, places, times, actions, speeches, thoughts, conflicts and so on" (Schmid 32).[2] Even those who, in Richard Walsh's opinion, "disarm fictionality by literalizing fictional reference" (38)—namely, fictional worlds theorists Thomas Pavel and Marie-Laure Ryan—maintain that fiction never refers to the real but only to possible worlds "understood as abstract collections of states of affairs" (Pavel 50). Other theoretical models either discard fictionality as synonymous to narrativity, with the reader undertaking "an implicit

[1] For a relevant critique of White failing the Holocaust test and for a distinction between fictional and historical worlds in terms of logical semantics, see Doležel (*Possible Worlds* 24, 33-39).
[2] Illustrating this point with Tolstoy's Napoleon, Schmid is following a long-established routine: see Doležel (*Heterocosmica* 18), McHale (87), and Ryan (*Possible Worlds*, 15).

though incomplete homologization of the fictional and the real worlds" on the basis of "cognitive parameters gleaned from real-life experience" (Fludernik 36), or determine fictionality as "a rhetorical rather than ontological quality" (Walsh, *Rhetoric* 7) and end up valuing relevance over reference. By all means, both Vollmann's Shostakovich and his musical output are fictional, or fictionalized, considering how deliberately self-conscious the author is in taking full responsibility for his treatment of historical phenomena.

The important aspect of Vollmann's fictional biography writing is the use of Shostakovich's personalized voice, which dramatically shades his music. Unannounced transitions from third-person narrative to the character's own speech are marked stylistically by the recurrent elements such as the "Oh, me, oh, dear!" (151; cf. 189, 626) exclamations, when Shostakovich is "speaking in incomplete sentences" (252) like "We're, um, you know" (140; cf. 207) or in utter gibberish motivated by his love for Elena. Quotations from some other sources occasionally get reattributed to the composer and stylistically "Shostakovich-ized" (*EC* 762, 768, 800), often as intervening with the narrator's text in the mode of free indirect discourse: "Private English lessons, oh, me, oh, my! He couldn't stop!" (91). For Vollmann, who transcribes not only Shostakovich's life but also his music, a musician's stumbling helplessness with words[1] is a handy symptom. The tension between words and music rises particularly when the latter is made subject to the former and thus verbally rendered. At these times, Vollmann often prefers to mediate his sacrilegious stripping music of its ineffability by the device

[1] Elizabeth Wilson quotes painter Nikolai Sokolov's assertion that Shostakovich "spoke very quickly, but quietly, and he didn't open his mouth very often" (77), and journalist Daniil Zhitomirsky's memory of "Dmitri Dmitriyevich [Shostakovich]'s wonderful expressive manner of speech when conversing in private," with a "particular style, using short, almost aphoristic phrases, always direct and to the point" (329). Both memoirists are evidently the composer's strong admirers.

of diegetic narration—the ominous Comrade Alexandrov, whose voice either overtly embeds Shostakovich's or hovers right above it.

Alexandrov first appears in the storyworld as a secondary character: in "Woman with Dead Child," he is the nice young man ushering the Kollwitzes around Moscow. In the Contents, the chapter is marked as the first German episode of Vollmann's double design, but the bulk of the episode is set in Soviet Russia. The narrative perspective is Soviet, too: the non-diegetic narrator's "we" refers to the Russians (48), and his evaluative remarks marked by the "I" pronoun (40, 48) reflect a Soviet outlook. The narrator accompanies Käthe Kollwitz from Germany to the USSR like a spy, which, as we learn from later chapters, is also Alexandrov's job. It is here that the technique of shifting narratorial standpoint is introduced: the narrator floats, or lapses, into the paratextual author when in section 12 he speaks highly of *Europe Central*'s dedicatee Kiš, whom he reports to now be "in the same place as [Käthe Kollwitz's son] Peter"—i.e. dead (56). Here the narrator occupies Vollmann's own temporal, aesthetical, and political stance,[1] and does not bother to be consistent with an earlier pronominal and deictic identity. On the next page, he points at Alexandrov, to whom he is "very close" (57), thus forming the unstable narrative voice of the whole novel. Alexandrov reappears as a third-person character on several other occasions (*EC* 192, 251, 553, 651, 658, 672-73, 677, 686, 736), but from "You Have Shut the Danube's Gates" on, his status as diegetic narrator oscillates between arrogant self-proclamations ("this is Comrade Alexandrov speaking," 69; cf. 475) and vague inferential presences—a spectrum that makes us wonder if "Woman with

[1] Kiš, whose *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* is fairly anti-Soviet in exposing Bolshevik crimes, died in 1989—beyond the diegetic timeline of *Europe Central*.

Dead Hair," and, more radically, all the stories we read, come off his vicious tongue.

Alexandrov is textually difficult to trace, as if he was hiding from the reader, whom he strives to impress, oppress, and/or depress with his narrative and cognitive powers. It would certainly feel safer to hierarchize differently, expecting the author, or his paratextual self WTV, to disguise himself as Alexandrov, so that Vollmannian morals we know from outside the text or deduce from other narrative standpoints inside it, could overrule and negate Alexandrov's hateful judgments. The way Alexandrov amalgamates with WTV[1] or sounds almost indistinguishable from his anonymous counterpart[2] in the German episodes (see Table 1) suggests a narratorial fusion similar to a contrapuntal auditory stream, which the recipient has to both form and segregate.

Alexandrov is the reader's main source on Shostakovich. His boasted expertise embraces everything, from sex life to inner thoughts and musical meanings. When Alexandrov apologizes and announces that he "will get out of the story" (69), we soon learn to disbelieve him. In "Elena's Rockets," the tension between Alexandrov and a more humane Vollmannian figure culminates:

> I repeat: What did Elena *really* look like? Not like a Rodchenko angel at all . . . In her own interest, I freely confess to altering certain details of her appearance throughout this book. For instance, Elena Konstantinovskaya was blonde, and it was as a blonde that Shostakovich, the protagonist of these stories, would certainly have thought of her, but to me, and what I say goes, she

[1] See the drifting narratorial self in "Far and Wide My Country Stretches": in section 8, Alexandrov reports a dialogue between Karmen and himself in the first person (*EC* 241-42), whereas section 18 features another conversation between them, with "[a] certain Comrade Alexandrov" figuring in the third person (251). This makes fairly impossible to determine whether, in section 3, the narrator's empathy to Shostakovich ("No doubt he wasted many nights wondering how it must have been for Elena Konstantinovskaya and Roman Karmen in Spain. I know I have," 235) is WTV's or Alexandrov's.

[2] E.g. Alexandrov: "I felt as an SS-doctor must when he broods over his collection of Jewish skulls" (116). The German narrator's claims on rocket engineering in "Maiden Voyages," in which he assures us that he "invented the quintuplicator" (77), are paralleled with Alexandrov's "astrophysicist" ambitions (74); see also "Operation Wolund."

> will always be *the darkhaired woman*, or, if you prefer, *the woman with the dark, dark hair*. (*EC* 73; Vollmann's emphasis).

The above passage corresponds almost *verbatim* to the authorial paratext at the end of the novel (808) and contains such cues of authorship as "throughout this book" and "the protagonist of these stories," which unmistakably suggest WTV instead of Alexandrov.[1] Either of them claims, "No exegesis of her exists but mine. No matter what they say, she wasn't blonde; she had dark hair" (228) at the beginning of "Far and Wide My Country Stretches," where Alexandrov also moves between statuses. Is there a similar shift away from Alexandrov when the narrator discusses program notes to and performance of Shostakovich's Cello Sonata on the 1988 CD (Shostakovich, *Trio*) by "Y. Y. Ma and Emmanuel Ax" (*EC* 87)?[2] Or when the narrator informs the reader that "[i]n the year 2002" he "telephoned the University of Chicago film expert Yuri Tsivian" (229) to enquire on Roman Karmen's artistic significance, which is what WTV actually did (810)? By virtue of what Mieke Bal calls "text interference," when "narrator's text and actor's text are so closely related that a distinction into narrative levels can no longer be made" (156), the narratorial voice in *Europe Central* crosses boundaries and becomes metaleptic[3] so rapidly that it breaks into several simultaneous parts, as in the compound melody/implied polyphony analogy (see my section 1.2). A telling theoretical coincidence is that, when Brian Richardson explores

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[1] In the very next section of "Elena's Rockets," Alexandrov's voice unmistakably returns: "In proof of my deservingness, let me remind you that I never touched Elena Konstantinovskaya. I never even introduced myself, not even when I arrested her" (*EC*, 74). For the most explicit interference of the authorial narrative voice in a "German" chapter, see section 1 of "Denazification," which parenthetically refers to "the blueprints as I study them in 2001" (533). In section 2, WTV is succeeded by a German narrator (533-34), and in section 4—a Soviet one (535). In the closing chapter, "The White Nights of Leningrad," the narrator suddenly reveals his American parents (749).

[2] "Emanuel Ax plays the piano part better than Shostakovich" (*EC* 86). Ax's program notes are quoted on p. 93, as acknowledged in "Sources" (763).

[3] Genette's metalepsis is a "transition from one narrative level to another," such as "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into metadiegetic universe, etc.) or the inverse" (*ND* 234-35).

“multipersonal narration” in *Unnatural Voices* (2006), he applies the same metaphor: “a polyphony of competing narrative voices” (63) and “meticulous, contrapuntal braiding of distinct voices” (71). In Richardson’s terms, Alexandrov’s merging with other narrative instances would qualify the floating narrator of the entire *Europe Central* as both “permeable” and “dis-framed” (79, 102, 104-105). In Ryan’s nomenclature, this would fit the category of “narratorial morphings” (“Cyberage” 134).

Every time an infiltration of a different narrative voice occurs, the reader faces a potential “voice exchange,” as in the case when functions are handed over between parts of a musical texture. The most obvious voice exchange is from Alexandrov the character in “Woman with Dead Hair” to Alexandrov the narrator in “You Have Shut the Danube’s Gates” identifying himself in “Elena’s Rockets,” unless we retrospectively take him to be the narrator of all three episodes. In the latter as well as in subtler cases “the voice attribution is different from the one we at first had assumed as proper to the character’s perspective” (Mey 151). What theoretical accounts of such fluid narratorial forms often overlook is their crucial dependence on the reader, who may either register and endorse the voice exchange, reject, or fail to notice and ignore it (cf. Delazari, “Voicing” 209). In this sense, permeable/dis-framed narration creates “places of indeterminacy,” “blanks” and “vacancies” as theorized in the phenomenological approach to literature and reading (Iser 170-202; cf. Bernaerts et al. 1-5). How actual readers experience such phenomena is subject to empirical research. In Vollmann’s case, hypothetically, readers are more likely to pay less attention to such “postmodern” devices in his prose, being more immersed in its “realist” dimensions.

Unlike habitual diegetic narrators of mimetically-oriented fiction, whose knowledge is limited to a character's, Alexandrov overtly declares his omniscience: "I know everything, I really do" (74). Not only is he omnipresent in witnessing everybody else's actions and movements, but he also accesses other characters' thoughts and even dreams (75). Alexandrov directly addresses the reader ("I promise you that," 91) in trying to convince us that his first-person account is accurate ("oh, the things I've seen!" 106), and justifies his omniscience by the resources of his trade: his job is to "listen in at Akhmatova's" (65) and know her poem "'Requiem' by heart before she'd even finished it" (116), read Elena Konstantinovskaya's diary "in our archives" (75), and have "a blueprint" of Shostakovich's inner world "right here" (109), in order to "expose these people" (106).[1]

At the same time, the realistic explanation for this arrogantly boasted omniscience—Alexandrov's belonging to the powerful NKVD—is what makes his narration particularly unreliable. Although the institution is known to have historically maintained a huge network of agents, recruited informers and common people ratting on each other to the "organs of state security," it is also reputed for provocations, libels, cooked evidence, and torture to obtain false confessions. The total fear was based on the suppressed knowledge among Soviet subjects that even full-hearted loyalty was no guarantee against arrest. Therefore,

[1] Alexandrov's narrative is thus nonfocalized, as in Genette's "zero focalization," being at the same time internally focalized on his own character's self, as in "internal focalization." Normally, in zero focalization the narrator provides the reader with unlimited access to diegetic information; internal focalization is restricted to a character's perception; external focalization works behavioristically, with doors to characters' thoughts and inner motivations shut (Genette, *ND* 189-90). Vollmann molds a paradoxical double focalization by making his diegetic narrator an NKVD agent. What Alexandrov knows as narrator is not due to the natural time gap between the narrated events and the moment of narration. Alexandrov claims to have known "everything" right when things occurred: he "was there" (*EC* 111, 112, 141), so that his internal focalization is objectified as zero focalization. The next problem is, of course, whether such claims sound plausible to the reader. Genette's passing insight on "pseudo-focalization" (*NDR* 35, n. 3; cf. 74-75) may shed light on what is going on in Vollmann.

unlike classical unreliable narrators, who do not speak "in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms)" (Booth 158) and whose authority "is undermined by internal contradictions" (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 27), Alexandrov's faultiness originates from an extratextual realm—the reputation of the very organization that legitimizes his "omniscience."[1] While in "natural" narrative environments[2] narratorial omniscience "affords the reader the comforting illusion of reliability, objectivity and absolute knowledge" (Fludernik 167-68), Vollmann's narrator keeps us tense and alert: permeating *Europe Central*, diegetic voices such as Alexandrov's infect the non-diegetic narrator, thus troubling the notion that "third-person narrators never lie" (Palmer 33). With Vollmann, we can be certain that they do.

Comrade Alexandrov is responsible not only for "exposing" Shostakovich's life, but also for "translating program music into pictures" (*EC* 65). Due to its historical subject matter, Vollmann's novel inherits some narrative devices from dystopian fiction, as the diegetic narrator excels in Orwellian doublethink:[3] "Although it was the program music of the Seventh Symphony which would make him famous, the course of the war is better symbolized by the first three movements of his incomparably greater Eighth Symphony in C Minor (the unwholesome work, to be sure, for its pessimism deviates from the Party

[1] Cf. Walsh's view that omniscience "is not a faculty possessed by a certain class of narrators but, precisely, a quality of authorial imagination" (*Rhetoric* 73). Since, in Walsh's terms, "the narrator is always either a character who narrates, or the author" (78), the use of imagination can be a character's prerogative. Alexandrov's unreliability, though, is not in that he imagines things, but in that his ideological hatred justifies lying; it is thus "motivated in terms of the psychology of a narrating character," as Walsh demands (79).

[2] Fludernik's notion of "natural" narrative originally describes stories told in ordinary conversation, which various kinds of (pseudo-)oral narrative, historical writing, medieval verse epic, *skaz*, and even postmodern experimentation go back to (xi-xii).

[3] Vollmann himself uses the word "doublespeak" to characterize Shostakovich's manner of speaking (e.g. to Party officials) in the note to p. 641 in the "Sources" section (800); Alexandrov uses "doubletalk" to characterize Akhmatova's poetry (112). Orwellian intertext must be deliberate, considering the importance, among Vollmann's sources, of Ian MacDonald's *The New Shostakovich*, which has a special appendix on Stalinism and Orwell (265-270), as well as another one on Akhmatova and Shostakovich (271-75).

line)" (179-80). At the same time, Shostakovich himself, as a representative of the Russian intelligentsia par excellence, is shown to master "doublespeak"—the language of overt submissiveness and covert resistance—in both his words and music, to be read between the lines. In a sense, Shostakovich and his spying shadow, Comrade Alexandrov, are also *Doppelgängers* (literally, "double goers") marking the novel's polyphonic design:[1] Shostakovich experiences love and war, Alexandrov follows him; Shostakovich writes music, Alexandrov translates it "back" to love or war. A reader who chooses to proceed with the book is doomed to keep track of these shifts of focus and narratorial blends, adding his/her judgmental and emotional responses to the text's polyphony. *Europe Central* thus functions in accordance with Taruskin's maxim: "It is never just Shostakovich. It is always Shostakovich and us" (477).

1.4. The Cello Sonata: [Dis]Narrating a Score

Shostakovich's Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor (1934) is compactly accommodated in Vollmann's chapter bearing the Sonata's own alternative designation, its ordinal number among Shostakovich's works: "Opus 40." However, like many other thematic elements in *Europe Central*, the piece travels across other chapters, both proleptically ("Elena's Rockets") and analeptically ("The Palm Tree of Deborah," section 6).[2] Everything else in the book that is related to the "imaginary love triangle" of Shostakovich—Konstantinovskaya—Karmen can be associated with some "leitmotivically" used

[1] Spying on Shostakovich, i.e. presumably following all his movements, Alexandrov duplicates his actions, like the riposte of imitative counterpoint (canon). See Delazari ("'The Man of the Crowd'") for a theoretical elaboration.

[2] In *Narrative Discourse*, prolepsis and analepsis are Genette's categories of narrative order describing anticipation and retrospection among other anachronies (40), assuming a hypothetical existence of "perfect temporal correspondences between narrative and story" (36).

dimensions of the verbal "Opus 40," so that the sonata is summoned every time "the Konstantinovskaya theme" (*EC* 94) is evoked elsewhere in "these stories."[1]

Vollmann's main source for emplotting the piece as a romance is a chapter in Khentova's *The Amazing Shostakovich*, "Women in His Life" (89-170). The sonata's biographical overtones are occasionally noted in the literature on Shostakovich (M. MacDonald 117; Lee 7; McCreless 134), but Konstantinovskaya is only dramatized as "the muse of his Cello Sonata in D Minor" (*EC* 72) in Vollmann. The author "distinguishes himself from the musicologists by creating a Shostakovich whom he imagines as a more rounded character, a tormented lover" (Christensen 107), and distances his intermedial project from the two trends in critical readings of the Cello Sonata. One, exemplified by Ian MacDonald, strives to politicize the music, showing how even in his most romantic piece that opens in "a mood of delicate, even genteel nostalgia" the composer expresses contempt for the communist rule (96-97). The other trend is found in Michael Mishra: like MacDonald, Mishra includes a brief discussion of the Sonata into his account of Shostakovich's life and work, but his analysis focuses entirely on the neoclassicist dimensions of the piece, so that it is neither Konstantinovskaya nor Stalin but Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Shostakovich's other works that the sonata evokes (83-85). Unlike MacDonald, Mishra does mention Konstantinovskaya (77), but in no connection to music.[2]

In *Europe Central*, Elena is treated as if she were *the* referent of the sonata, which dramatizes her affair with the composer and grants an eternity to

[1] See "The Second Front" (480), "Ecstasy" (523), and other sections featuring Elena (Table 1). In Wagner, "leitmotif" is a recurrent musical segment associated with a particular character or setting in a music drama. At one point, Vollmann embarks on a quasi-musicological explanation of how "leitmotif" is different from "theme" (94), which he attributes to a professional (763, 809), but channels through Comrade Alexandrov, who drives them quite absurd.

[2] The middle ground is found in Malcolm MacDonald, who even recognizes Shostakovich's love affair, but concludes: "While these circumstances hardly explain the work's form, they may have something to do with its emotional directness and unashamedly lyrical stance" (117).

what in reality was only a brief episode in 1934 (cf. Khentova 115-32). This thematic construction *per se* has very little to do with Vollmann's "sources," including the original piece of music; it is not the actual Cello Sonata, but the "Opus 40" in Vollmann's novel that stands for Shostakovich's love.

The chapter title's unambiguous reference to a specific work suggests what Scher dubs "verbal music"—"any literary presentation (whether in poetry or prose) of existing or fictitious musical compositions: any poetic texture which has a piece of music as its 'theme'" (*Verbal Music* 8). Wolf, for whom Scher's term is unfortunate in its attempt to cover too many heterogeneous concepts at once (*Musicalization* 59-60), would probably regard Vollmann's chapter as a case of "intermedial thematization" and "specific reference to a musical genre or composition" (70), with specks of "intermedial imitation" relying on "imaginary content analogies" (58; hereinafter ICAs).[1] "K. 550 (1788)," a section in Burgess's *Mozart and the Wolf Gang* (81-87), is separated from the rest of the novel as Wolf's example of ICA-based intermedial imitation (*Musicalization* 64-68). Meanwhile, "K. 550 (1788)" is modeled on Mozart's Symphony No. 40 with such scrupulous precision that it could also pass as an "intermedial transposition" (Wolf, "Intermediality" 19-21), which partly covers the range of subjects in adaptation studies (cf. Hutcheon, *Theory* 7-9, 33-38),[2] such as books made into films, operas based on novels, and cases of ekphrasis, broadly understood as "*the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign-*

[1] The concept of ICAs is Wolf's terminological remedy for Scher's classificatory inconsistency. The inborn flaw of "verbal music" is that it confuses "referential" aspects of literature with its "technical" ones. To mend it, Wolf finely dissects verbal music into referential forms of "covert/indirect" intermediality—literature's "specific reference" to music—and several technical options such reference may employ. As for these options, he supplements Scher's categories of onomatopoeic "word music" and "formal and structural analogies" with the ICA as the third type of intermedial imitation (63-70). Wolf is somewhat suspicious of his own solution, but allows ICAs to participate in "transpositions of a particular piece of music into a literary text" (64).
[2] Cf. Hutcheon's discussion of a chapter in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) as an adaptation of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (*Theory* 24-25).

system" (Clüver, "Ekphrasis" 26). Such "intersemiotic translations" (R. Jakobson 114) from music into literature are at the core of Scher's notion of verbal music, which, even if it drives a musico-literary typology asymmetric, is still a handy term to denote particular textual matter of "musicalized" fiction and poetry.

The structure of Vollmann's "Opus 40," which only episodically follows the formal procedures of its eponymous Shostakovich piece, is a tapestry of textual fragments, falling at times very far from its Shostakovich "source." Passages of verbal music occur in sections 3, 15, 19, and 21 of "Opus 40." The order of the Shostakovich sonata's movements is jumbled up. In section 3, we find a quick take on the opening cello melody of the first movement to be dropped in favor of characterization of the piano-to-cello relationship in the sonata's second movement. A more detailed description of the second movement is given in the single paragraph of section 21, after the third and fourth movements have become subjects of sections 19 and 15, respectively. Unlike Burgess's concentrated intermedial transposition in *Mozart and the Wolf Gang*, Vollmann's is dispersed in a quasi-biographical narrative. Bearing in mind that actual music, like historical characters and real-life topography, is lost in fictionalization,[1] the verbal sonata is Vollmann's, not Shostakovich's.

In section 3, the narrator of "Opus 40," by now fairly recognizable as Comrade Alexandrov, claims that Elena Konstantinovskaya's "electric clitoris and the phrase *electric clitoris* were the first two aspects of her to be translated musically" (*EC* 86). Knowing "the entire case file" of Shostakovich and Konstantinovskaya, Alexandrov sees the composer as just "the translator" from empirical facts: even in his "formalist" period, Shostakovich, against his own will,

[1] Hence both Scher's and Clüver's indiscriminative treatment of "real" and "fictitious" pieces supposedly underlying verbal music/ekphrasis.

writes program music.[1] The narrator is no less certain that, by establishing what underlies a particular passage in that musical "translation," he can utterly grasp the music's meaning. According to a Marxist-Leninist dogma, art and language are firmly grounded in the material base of reality, to which everything refers and along which aesthetic merit is to be measured. Alexandrov's attitude explains the brevity, fragmentariness, and the casual tone of how the sonata is "re-translated"—that is, simply brought back to its materialistic origins. Essentially, the narrator's back translation makes the music superficial: once we know what the music expresses, there is no need to hear it. Hence the cynically laconic reproduction of the whole first movement in one clause of a single sentence, affirming "that Elena Konstantinovskaya's clitoris was electric and that its sweet vibrations sing forever in the cello melody which opens the first movement."

Character roles in the score are strictly assigned to Elena, metaphorically, as the cello, and the pianist-composer Shostakovich, metonymically, as the piano. The longest first movement of the sonata shrinks to the opening melody in the cello, whose vibrating sonority is pinned up by one "phrase." In the Shostakovich score, this clause is most likely to stand for the first subject of the movement's sonata-allegro form (mm. 1-53), which is first played by the cello (mm. 1-15) and shortly echoed in the piano part, instruments thus swapping the melody and accompaniment functions (mm. 16-20). An inversion of the same role shift will

[1] Starting from the 1930s and throughout his life, Shostakovich was regularly accused of "formalism," which according to the Party aesthetics was the opposite of righteous socialist realism. Program music with a clear subject that common people can understand is the desirable ideal, whereas all obscure non-referential formalist experimentation is degenerate and hostile to the proletarian ideology. In Vollmann, the formalism vs. program music conflict is central for Shostakovich's art. Alexandrov does not conceal that his insistent programming of Shostakovich is an act of violence against the composer's own intentions: in section 14, he threatens Shostakovich with "the cellars" and "screaming" for having "the impudence to deny [Elena's] long, dark hair" as part of the Cello Sonata's content (*EC* 91; cf. 191). Vollmann's reader is thus given a choice between Shostakovich's and Alexandrov's musical authority; Alexandrov's unreliability as the narrator of verbal music can be established through such readerly choices.

occur in the second group of the exposition, where, after the transition section takes us from the "modally-ambiguous D minor" (Lee 10) to the key of B major, the "radiantly lyrical" theme (I. MacDonald 96) is introduced by the piano (mm. 55-70), to be restated and taken further by the cello (mm. 71-107)—no less vibrating and even more erotically charged, one might add, than that of the "opening melody." In fact, there is much more to occur in Shostakovich's longest first movement: a repeat of the whole long exposition, a dynamic development gaining in tempo and expressivity to take us into the second subject's theme recapitulating in the parallel D major, and the return of the first subject in the tonally and melodically altered disguise of a slow funeral march back to D minor. All these events are simply ignored by Vollmann's narrator, in whose fictionalization of Shostakovich's music formal and tonal complexities have already been sufficiently labeled, reduced to pre-coital play. In the very next sentence we are taken straight to copulation:

> The phrase or alias which derives from the clitoris gets expressed in the happy, comic, rocking-horse sexuality of the piano in the second movement, when our young Shostakovich looks self-deprecatingly down between his own shoulders (if you've ever drunk absinthe, you'll understand what it's like to be weighed down by the drug almost to paralysis, and at the same time to exist within an invisible ball of consciousness which hovers precisely halfway between your body and the ceiling); from an eminence which sparkles with dust-motes in the bedroom of the dacha in Luga, the second movement (*allegro*) gazes irreverently down upon its pale and awkwardly ecstatic father, whom I'd rather call a child; groaning for joy, the child is riding his hobby-horse, Elena. His shoulderblades rise and fall as elaborately as the mechanical arms of a player piano; he's copulating in a frenzy! This brief theme expresses a typical lover's sentiment: Look how ridiculous I am compared to you! (*EC* 86)

What is often described as a stylized "Russian folk dance" of the Sonata's scherzo movement (Lee 11; cf. I. MacDonald 96, M. MacDonald 118) is in Vollmann derived from the same noun "phrase" as the first movement and its

"male" cello "alias." The self-reflexive distance communicated to us by the absinthe reference invites us to occupy Shostakovich's position in the movement as both an outer *voyeur* of the scene and its participant. The *voyeur* is Shostakovich the creator of the musically reproduced sex act, objectifying his experience as its participant (now the cello part). The reader is invited to grasp the music by occupying the same observational stance (problematic in the sense that it is clearly Alexandrov's). The paragraph is heavily charged with puns and transformations (electric to mechanical, creator to character, father to child, piano player to player piano, woman to hobby-horse, cello strings to player piano strings) and literary allusions (to the "hobby-horse" theme in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and the title of Kurt Vonnegut's dystopian first novel). Vivid imagery and the rushingly rapid narrative presentation of the ICAs dissociate this narrative passage from any descriptive exegesis of the movement's form in program notes or analysis. The narrator only cares about music insofar as it documents Shostakovich's life.

After another addition in section 13 that "her delightfully puffy lips were the next parts of her to get translated" during Shostakovich's private English lessons with Elena, and that the same "lips kiss us all forever in the second movement" (91), Vollmann revisits the second movement in section 21, where musical vocabulary supplements its sensual correlations established in section 3: the "haunting Russian melody in a minor key"[1] at the beginning through "passageways of Rodchenko-like golden scaffolding" leads to "a merry melody which after a very particular, never to be replicated cello-caress becomes buttery-sweet and brief" (97). It is only after a few lines of female-dominated love-

[1] In Shostakovich, *A* minor.

making with multiple orgasms on Elena's part that the "rocking-horse sequence" of section 3 finds its place in the verbal movement's structure of section 21. Next, the music is reported to go "into another sweet eternity of melting butter" after the protagonist's ejaculation; the heroine is "back on top of him again" until she climaxes "with the sound of a honeybee, the bow passing smoothly and shrilly across the sounding board" (97). The Russian melody "then gives the piano another turn at pleasuring itself, so that a second rocking-horse copulation gallops to a happy ejaculation, at which point the piano sparkles and glows": all-too evidently, Vollmann's section 21 claims iconically to transcribe the musical procedures of the Sonata's second movement pictured as sexual intercourse, completing the partial intermedial transposition of section 3. If that is the case, we may expect to find the narrative structure of the verbal music passage based upon the compound form of the movement—scherzo with trio. However, a close comparison between Vollmann's text and Shostakovich score reveals that the narrator is interested in the biographical event, not the musical idiom he adopts as his means of expression (with the side-effect of ruining the music as "pure" art).

Represented in quasi-musical terms, the form of Vollmann's section 21 (*EC* 97) would look like this:

1. the "Russian melody in a minor key," with "Rodchenko-like scaffolding" as a linking device (A);
2. "a merry melody" becoming "buttery-sweet" after the "never-to-be replicated cello caress" and Elena on top "taking orgasm after orgasm" (B);
3. the "rocking-horse sequence" with ejaculation (C);
4. "another sweet eternity of melting butter" (B´), Elena "back on top of him again" until her climax;

5. return of the Russian melody (A´);

6. “second rocking-horse copulation” (C´) and a very visual codetta: “the sounds of morning began as the sun sparkled and glared most busily upon an upturned water-glass, transforming it into an improbable spider-jewel whose legs were beams of white light.”

What reveals itself here as a peculiar ABCB´A´C´ structure fails to be understood in terms of the song form with trio in the actual Shostakovich’s score (see Fig. 1) and only corresponds to it in some arbitrary ways, as a distorted fragmentary *recollection*. *All* of the verbal score’s elements appear to recur, whereas in the three-part song form pattern in both the scherzo and the trio, which make up the compound form of the Shostakovich movement, the material of the second part is not to be repeated. As far as the scherzo is concerned, which in Shostakovich is a three-part song-form of the ABABA type, both its A and B sections are repeated.[1] Moreover, the whole scherzo is repeated as part I of the overall tripartite layout of the entire movement, with only such minor modifications as changes of register (both the cello accompaniment and the melody in the piano’s right hand of the two-bar introduction and the first idea in mm. 1-17 are played an octave higher in mm. 123-139). And still the trio, which is also a three-part song form (CDC), with part III repeating part I, contains a unique section: its part II (D) in mm. 96-111 is never repeated, which is perfectly standard of trios. The eight-bar-long codetta closing the movement is derived from the trio, but not from its second but first/third repeated part, which leaves no chance to squeeze Vollmann’s text into the scored shape of Shostakovich’s

[1] In mm. 42-53 there is a varied repeat of the scherzo’s Part II, followed by a transitional section using the melodic idea from part I modulating to B minor in mm. 54-57 and taking it back to A minor through a retransition of mm. 58-63, upon which part I comes again, treated canonically in mm. 62-75. See Fig. 1.

movement, whose parts do include an unrepeated section in the middle: ABABA-C*D*C-ABABA. A relative equivalence may only be established if we allow that the codetta is the "rocking-horse sequence"; that it is a partial repeat of the trio (even though of its wrong part); that the whole complex ABABA scherzo is reduced to the idea of the Russian melody; and that Shostakovich's short trio is asymmetrically inflated to occupy disproportionally gigantic textual size in Vollmann (the trio's outer parts identified with the repeated "butter" idea, and its second part as "the rocking-horse").

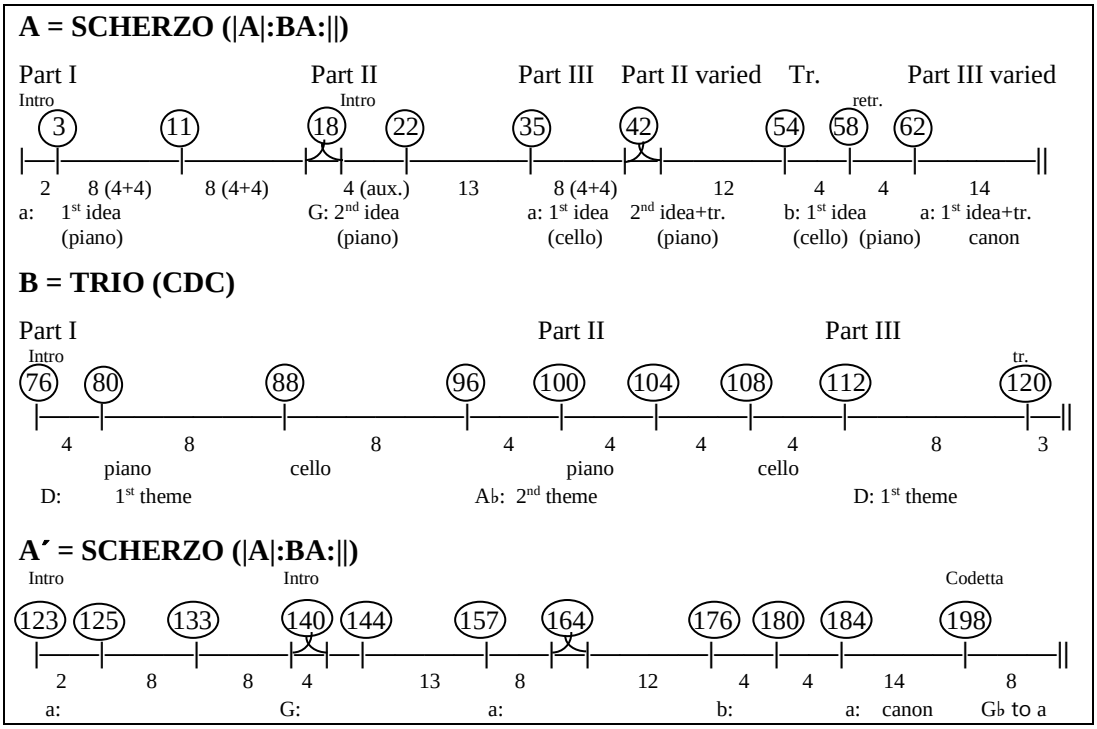

***Fig. 1*. Line diagram of Shostakovich's Cello Sonata, 2nd mvt.**

It is tortuous to make the narrative fit the music score proportionally without suppressing some textual segments and stretching others. In Table 2, I sketch two more versions of how equivalence may be configured, neither of which is even roughly satisfactory. Apart from intuitive suitability of certain ICAs in Vollmann to certain turns of Shostakovich's music, the comparison is always quantitatively disproportional, and such mysterious allusions as the "never to be replicated cello-caress" in the narrative can either be paired with something

***Europe Central*, "Opus 40," section 21**	**Correspondences in the Shostakovich score, Version 1**	**Correspondences in the Shostakovich score, Version 2**
Between the two of them they'd long since determined the way that the second movement begins, with its haunting Russian melody in a minor key, passageways of Rodchenko-like golden scaffolding subsequently connecting it to	**Part A**, scherzo, 1st idea (A minor), mm. 1-17/18 (elision)	**Part A**, scherzo, 1st idea *and* the G major cello introduction of the second idea (mm. 18-21)
a merry melody which after a very particular, never to be replicated cello-caress becomes buttery-sweet and brief, because he was on his back and she was astride him, teasing him with the succulent inner lips of her cunt and slowly possessing him, taking orgasm after orgasm, forbidding him to move, pausing whenever she liked, as long as she liked; and all the while he had to keep lying perfectly still like a good boy!	– *(same Russian melody reinterpreted?)* Transition, mm. 18-21 introducing 2nd idea (G major) – *(overlap with what comes after the "rocking-horse" episode as the passage until the end of the scherzo in m. 75?)*	Scherzo, 2nd idea and development with modulations and restatements of 1st idea (mm. 22-75), followed by the cello introduction to trio, mm. 76-79
Then comes that rocking-horse sequence I've mentioned, which transforms itself into	Scherzo, 2nd idea (G major), mm. 22-34	**Part B**, trio, part I (D major), mm. 76-95
another sweet eternity of melting butter: he'd finished, and Elena was back on top of him again, riding him in just the way she liked until she climaxed with the sound of a honeybee, the bow passing smoothly and shrilly across the sounding board.	– *Development/restatements of 1st idea starting from the A minor melody in the cello (mm. 35-42): all musical events incl. role changes, modulation to B minor and return to A minor (mm. 54-61), canon and transition to the trio (mm. 62-75)?* The whole **Part B**, trio (mm. 76-119) with its tonal scheme D – A flat – D	Trio, parts II and III, mm. 96-122 (the cello's final E flat lingering through measures 120-122 to rise to E natural in the last beat of m. 122 as a possible prototype for the "honeybee" sound)
Returning to the Russian melody, Opus 40 then gives the piano another turn at pleasuring itself, so that	**Part A´**, return of scherzo, 1st idea, mm. 123-140	**Part A´**, mm. 123-127
a second rocking-horse copulation gallops to a happy ejaculation,	Scherzo, 2nd idea, mm. 140/144-156	**Codetta**, mm. 198-205, *based on the material of the **trio's part I***
at which point the piano sparkles and glows; I have it on good authority that at that point they were making love at dawn, and right before they finished, the sounds of morning began as the sun sparkled and glared most busily upon an upturned water-glass, transforming it into an improbable spider-jewel whose legs were beams of white light.	Development of scherzo up to m. 197 and **Codetta** in G flat major and final cadence in A minor (mm. 198-205)	– *(extramusical aftertones and immediate memories of the piece in the silence that follows a performance?)*

Table 2. **Correspondences between section 21 of Vollmann's "Opus 40" and the score of Shostakovich's Cello Sonata, 2nd mvt.**

"never to be replicated"—i.e. the whole part II of the trio—or with a "cello-caress" of, say, the harmonic glissandos in bars 76-79, which establish the D major key for the trio's part I, but—alas!—do return in m. 112.

The fact that, unlike music, literature almost excludes *verbatim* repetition, which "opposes narrative" (Shockley 38), would explain Vollmann's economy in the verbal return of the scherzo, condensing/summarizing all its events introduced in detail earlier; the layout would look more proportional. Yet plenty of inconsistencies can still be found, and other versions can be constructed for how Vollmann's second movement relates to Shostakovich's.

The long slow third movement of the Shostakovich sonata (*Largo*) is rendered by Vollmann's narrator most briefly in section 19. The "melancholy" movement is characterized by a spatial image, as the composer's "secret bunker, the deepest of his heart's four chambers, whose roof is timbered with regular bass notes on the piano" (*EC* 95),[1] where the two lovers end up "fall[ing] asleep in each other's arms, her head on his chest, his ankles locked around hers" (95), in parallel to Shostakovich's fade-out of the movement's closing bars marked as *ppp* (*pianississimo,* "as soft as possible"). Vollmann's movement is a static picture encompassing the whole Shostakovich's "highly irregular rondo combined with a theme and variations" (M. Wilson 53; qtd. in Lee 12) without differentiating

[1] Notice the word play on "chamber" and "timber/timbre," Vollmann's economic means of inserting the generic and acoustic parameters of the music-as-sound into the predominantly visual imagery of his verbal expression. In "Opus 110" (*EC* 622-727)—Vollmann's long epilogue to the Shostakovich theme in *Europe Central*, which exhaustively recycles much of its previous material and narratively takes the composer to his deathbed in 1975—the "bunker" is "sealed" by the Eighth String Quartet (1960). The sonata and the quartet are linked by the common metaphor: cf. "Each of Shostakovich's symphonies I consider to be a multiply broken bridge, an archipelago of steel trailing off into the river. Opus 40, however, is a house with four rooms" (85) and "Best listened to in a windowless room, better than best an airless room—correctly speaking, a bunker sealed forever and enwrapped in tree-roots—the Eighth String Quartet of Shostakovich (Opus 110) is the living corpse of music, perfect in its horror" (622). Recurrence of imagery from earlier verbal music pieces in Vollmann's "Opus 110" corresponds to Shostakovich's extensive self-quoting in the quartet's score, so that the chapter builds a structural analogy to it by similar "intratextuality."

between its parts. Shostakovich's form is quite complex and difficult to decipher, so, as in a layperson's listening, what is registered in Vollmann is the emotional appeal, the "graveyard" mood, and the beautiful stature of the music, not its internal structural boundaries.

The sonata's final movement, "*allegro* again" in Vollmann's verbal score,[1] is rendered earlier, in the last paragraph of section 15: after a brief verbal exchange between Shostakovich and his beloved, she "pounce[s] on him" to engage them both in "stalking each other like cats!" (*EC* 93). Once again narrativizing the Cello Sonata in terms of "the young couple's bright, brisk, expert lovemaking" followed by "postcoital variations," the narrator turns Shostakovich's rondo form into a three-part song form, only noting down the third and final varied repeat of the rondo's principal theme ("Back to the opening song, the richly Russian tune"), which in Shostakovich returns twice before. Shostakovich's fourth and last presentation of the rondo principal theme (mm. 242-331) is an extended, and therefore most noticeable, version of the opening part, whose short codetta is now developed into a full-scale coda for the entire movement (mm. 290-331). It is easy to either miss or forget about the repeats of the principal theme, standardly cut down from the initial 40 to 27 or 23 measures, but not the final return of the theme with the codetta growing into a coda of 70 bars, which to Malcolm MacDonald "feels like the true point of recapitulation" (84). All in all, one thing seems obvious: close reading and music analysis tend to fail at a consistent and comprehensive interpretation of Vollmann and

[1] Shostakovich's 1934 manuscript as well as the Sonata's first publication in 1935 have *Moderato, Moderato con moto, Largo* and *Allegretto*. Only the third movement retains its original tempo title in later editions (1960 and 1971). Vollmann, who does not explicitly refer to a published score, apparently uses the listing of movements for the Yo-Yo Ma/Emanuel Ax 1988 CD. What was originally *Moderato* is *Allegro non troppo*, and both fast movements are marked *Allegro* (cf. Lee 22-42). Vollmann's Shostakovich composes, and Alexandrov reports, the revised tempi straightaway.

Shostakovich as fitting one another. Certain elements are always identifiable, but the overall form is problematic.

"Comrade Academician Alexandrov" (*EC* 87-88), who arrogantly imposes pseudo-biographical (arguably pornographic)[1] content on the Cello Sonata, passes as a know-it-all and a music connoisseur only in the society in which he belongs, where Comrade Stalin is the leading expert on everything, from opera to linguistics, and "[t]he most infallible source on this period is of course our *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*" (154).[2] Vollmann's readers from outside the reach of his diegetic NKVD powers are invited to perceive Alexandrov's violent account of the music as sheer *irony*, which in Vollmann's polyphonic complexity is also closely related to the image of Shostakovich. Leningrad Philharmonic conductor Evgeny Mravinsky, amalgamated with the narrator's first-person pronoun shifting to Shostakovich himself, is (mis)quoted so that irony is projected throughout the continuum of Vollmann's dis-framed narrator(s) and character(s):

> Now for a cautionary note from E. Mravinsky: Shostakovich's music is *self-ironic*, which to me implies insincerity. *This masquerade imparts the spurious impression that Shostakovich is being emotional. In reality, his music conceals extremely deep lyric feelings which are carefully protected from the outside world*. In other words, is Shostakovich emotional or not? Feelings conceal—feelings! Could it be that this languishing longing I hear in Opus 40 actually masks something else? But didn't he promise Elena that she was the one for him? And how can love be self-ironic? All right, I do remember the rocking horse sequence, but isn't that self-mockery simply self-abnegation, the old lover's trick? Elena believes in me, I know she does! (*EC* 92)

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[1] Vollmann and pornography is one of the key issues in Vollmann studies, considering his habitual interest in the theme of prostitution; cf. the author's own views in "List of What Porn Is (and Isn't)" (*EFE* 215-17). Many textual features in Vollmann may well appall even those readers who are *not* the Russian *intelligentsia* and thus do not necessarily idolize Shostakovich and Akhmatova. "Our yes-man Shostakovich" (114-15), alias "the bastard" (105) and "that cocksucker" (107) is as much verbally abused as his music. The fictional Akhmatova is treated pornographically too. Alexandrov proclaims, ". . .you can't imagine all the filthy things I've seen her do!" (106; cf. 220).

[2] Along with numerous references to this notoriously biased encyclopedia, Vollmann uses other compromised sources, such as the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* (ironically, Russian for *truth*)—the powerful platform for official Party propaganda.

The Russian original cited in Khentova is Mravinsky's contribution to a 1967 collection of essays on Shostakovich published by *Sovetsky Kompozitor* (Soviet Composer), the centralized music publisher of the USSR. Mravinsky originally speaks "about a-emotionality"—"*ob aemotsionalnosti*" (Khentova 114), which is the exact opposite of how Vollmann has it in "*Shostakovich is being emotional*." In Mravinsky's view, Shostakovich is wrongly reputed as *non-emotional* by the public. No matter whether the error originates with Vollmann's hired translator or WTV's deliberate "re-translation," his Shostakovich masks one emotion with another. Questioning Shostakovich's self-irony, the narrator, simultaneously merging with the historical figures of Shostakovich, Khentova, Mravinsky, Elena, and Vollmann, is similarly becoming self-ironic. Even if Alexandrov's violently primitive interpretation of the Cello Sonata as a translation of a piece of reality sounds preposterous, the music still has to be fully re-composed in the reader's mind along the textual guidance of the chapter, which, read ironically, includes implicit instructions *not* to treat it as the actual piece of music it supposedly portrays. It would be difficult for the reader to identify with the occasional explicit addressee of Alexandrov's narrative—his "good colleague Pyotr Alexeev,"[1] another NKVD agent, "who's a musical illiterate" (*EC* 94). Alexandrov's musical exegesis is backed by three other authorities on Shostakovich: "Beria, Yagoda and T. N. Khrennikov" (94).[2] In this sense, the implicit irony permeating Vollmann's verbal Cello Sonata almost cancels the Shostakovich piece and "disnarrates" it, to extend Gerald Prince's term. In Prince, "all the events that do not happen but, nonetheless, are referred to (in a negative or

[1] To accomplish a full NKVD trinity, Alexandrov and Alexeev are joined by "Comrade Petrov" (192)—all the three surnames facelessly average in Russia.
[2] Beria and Yagoda were heads of NKVD. Khrennikov was chairman of the Composers' Union, Shostakovich's prosecutor among his peers.

hypothetical mode) by the narrative text" (2) are "disnarrated."[1] With Alexandrov himself virtually in love with Konstantinovskaya,[2] even the "facts" of her sexual involvement with Shostakovich may be questioned as jealousy-driven fantasy. Once the distrust of Vollmann's unreliable diegetic narrator is established, his account of Shostakovich's music is undermined, so that the reader is left with choices: re-compose the sonata as a fictional piece, read it as a trace of narratorial unreliability, or ignore the music's altogether.

1.5. The War Symphonies: An Imaginary Content Relocation

The narrator's identity in the next substantial chapter of *Europe Central* focused on Shostakovich, "The Palm Tree of Deborah," is even more ambiguously "dis-framed." On the one hand, like in "Woman with Dead Child," Alexandrov materializes as an acting character paying a visit to Shostakovich on the Leningrad Conservatory's rooftop (*EC* 192), and most of the chapter's narration sounds non-diegetic. On the other hand, the narrator keeps using first-person pronouns "we"/ "I," loaded with a distinctly Soviet background: "In the USSR we practice two kinds of criticism" (142). The option that "this is [still] Comrade Alexandrov speaking" is never fully cancelled,[3] not even by such introductory starters: "Meanwhile, a certain Comrade Alexandrov has assured

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[1] Richardson's "denarration, in which a narrator negates or erases aspects of the world created by the narration" (79) is modeled on Prince's concept (88), for which the prefix dis- or de- is a matter of language: in parenthesis, Prince explains that his "disnarrated" is "in French: *dénarré*" (2), hence my preference for Prince's earlier coinage. See also McHale (99-111).

[2] To contribute to the novel's pairings and parallelisms, the German diegetic narrator of "Operation Citadel" refers to Konstantinovskaya's German lesbian lover from "Elena's Rockets," Lina (*EC* 70-71), as his beloved who makes him suffer (491). In "Airlift Idylls," he has "fallen for Elena Konstantinovskaya" himself (561).

[3] Alexandrov's control of the written narrative we read is once made explicit: "The Shostakoviches now lived in Moscow. Too many of their friends had perished in Leningrad; they couldn't bear to go back. (Comrade Alexandrov notes here: *Shostakovich exaggerates. Only five percent of Leningrad's housing was destroyed*.)" (631). In what now turns out to be the Shostakovich NKVD file, Alexandrov attributes the third-person narration to Shostakovich, reading it as free indirect discourse and drawing no distinction between narration and focalization.

me" (185). Compared to "Opus 40," the narrator of "The Palm Tree of Deborah" is less outrageous in treating Shostakovich along the now serious subject matter (the chapter encompasses Shostakovich's biography from the 1920s up through the World War II years, which mark an emphatic upturn in the composer's career). Shostakovich's voice is more distinct, as both protagonist and focalizer, but it is mixed into an unparsed and fluid continuum from diegetic narratorial to non-diegetic authorial instances.[1] One cue of this narrative layout is that the important aesthetic controversy of program music vs. formalism, which in "Opus 40" was rudely and unambiguously resolved by Alexandrov in favor of the former, is now infiltrated into the composer's own thinking about music, which inaugurates the chapter's passages of verbal music: "How could I somehow *possibly*, wondered the near-sighted fire-warden on the Conservatory roof, let alone *passably* represent us *pianissimo*, before the snare drum creeps in? Because we're not *pianissimo* at all" (140). Counter to Party aesthetics, Shostakovich still holds that, in music, "Red Army men were *not* brass instruments" (182; cf. 91, 142, 152), but now "he'd compel brass to howl defiance, woodwinds to sob in despair. Why not? Nothing couldn't be turned into music!" (187). He almost betrays his cause by thinking that "if they wanted program music they'd get program music" (212). The narrative's closer alignment, by glimpses of internal focalization, with the composer's contradictory, ironic, and profoundly double-voiced mind makes the verbal music of "The Palm Tree of Deborah" much more difficult to dismiss than the diegetic narrator's voyeurism in "Opus 40."

[1] Promoting the 2013 translation of *Europe Central* in Germany, Vollmann says, "[Shostakovich] in many ways is like me. Perhaps, more clever and more creative, and maybe more courageous than I could be, but someone to whom I gave some of my own flaws" ("Gespräch"). Indeed, Shostakovich as a "[g]awky, pale, weary-eyed" boy bullied by other children (*EC* 141) is reminiscent of Vollmann's autobiographic character in *Butterfly Stories* (cf. *EFE* 11-23).

Two symphonies Shostakovich composed during the war are fictionalized in "The Palm Tree of Deborah": the Seventh (*Leningrad*) Symphony in C major (1941) and Symphony No. 8 in C minor (1943). The former was dedicated to the City of Leningrad by the composer, hence its semi-official title and programmatic content (cf. I. MacDonald 155; Gibbs 61) accepted ever since. Conversely, the Eighth, historically less widely recognized (cf. Mishra 145, Hurwitz 96) and dedicated to Mravinsky, resisted an attempt of the Soviet cultural authorities to label it as *Stalingrad* Symphony and thus escaped any official program. The tag did not stick because it was not pushed too hard: the Party was disappointed with the music and suspected it was another fit of formalism on Shostakovich's part (cf. E. Wilson 174-77). As a result, the Eighth Symphony's reputational credit is for "absolute" (in Vollmann, formalist) music.[1] This contrastive relationship between the two symphonies is creatively inverted in the ICAs Vollmann employs in his narrativizations of symphony movements in sections 1, 19, 20, 28, 31, and 40 of "The Palm Tree of Deborah" read in light of some theoretical points of Wolf's *The Musicalization of Fiction*.

For Wolf, ICAs are "a literary exploitation of the general capacity of music […] to trigger visual images" (63). That is to say, ICAs are not confined to the realm of verbal music; initially, they occur in response to actual music as part of real-life listening experiences. The "videotrack" is played in the listener's head, to which verbal music's ICAs provide a *fictional* counterpart. This suggests that the fictionalized musical source of the ICAs in verbal music (as opposed to the ICAs generated in real listening) is filtered through a presumably fictitious mind.

[1] "Shostakovich's Eighth—like Beethoven's Fifth—is a symphony without subtitles, without Red and Black army markers for its themes. And the many passages of apparent expressive intent—the multiple onslaughts of searing violence, the straining lyrical lines, the chaotic textures that clear away into soft, shimmering azure skies—depend for their coherence on abstract musical schemas traceable to the nineteenth century" (Haas 123). On absolute music, see Dahlhaus (*Idea* 2-17).

ICAs are not only a technical vehicle for verbal music, as Wolf defines them, nor do they simply prompt "the experience of effects of music" to the reader, as Scher somewhat inarticulately hints ("Notes" 149). ICAs *already are* such effects upon a recognized, inferred or at least hypothetically assumed consciousness—the author's, narrator's, or character's. Therefore, the ICAs of verbal music must be regarded as a functional output of focalization. Wolf is certainly right that "these imaginary 'pictures' are on the one hand culturally conditioned[1] but on the other hand also highly idiosyncratic and difficult to decipher as the transposition of **music**" (63; Wolf's emphasis), but primary visualization of *diegetic music* can only itself be diegetic. It occurs within the fictional universe prior to our success or failure, as readers, to relate it to a musical piece. These unfilmed stories are not just the form but also the substance of diegetic musical experience, so that, like verbal music on the whole, they have "referential" as well as "technical" aspects.

In listening experiences, mental imagery accompanying music may supersede the aural experience *per se*, and therefore may be seen as an undesirable by-product of musical perception, not its integral part—a parallel flow unrelated to musical events, when someone has simply stopped attending to musical sounds. However, in fiction, which verbally constitutes the musical object, only diegetically "pre-existent" within the definitely fictive storyworld, with few, if any, obligations to actual scores, we cannot help assuming, with suspension of disbelief, that the music is there, and that the listening (explicit or implied) which gave birth to the ICAs was sufficiently focused on the music, with not much mind-wandering involved. In *Europe Central*, Shostakovich's music is historically situated and biographically contextualized, so that the distinction

[1] Cf. Rabinowitz's notion of "attributive screens" as distinguished from the "technical" strand of the listener's interaction with music ("Squandered" 74-75; cf. "Chord" 40-45), particularly their "mythological" side—the "cultural paraphernalia that surrounds the music" ("Squandered" 75).

between “culturally conditioned” and “idiosyncratic” imagery may be inferred from the substantial background information explicit in the novel’s text. Importantly, Vollmann’s handling of ICAs in “The Palm Tree of Deborah” rely on factual material (documented interpretations of the music, as well as a symphony score and/or the author’s own hearing of the piece). The author is self-conscious:

> Shostakovich would not be happy with my portrayal of his music, because he claimed to hate program music, and, in fact, what I did was to attach all the specific horrors from his life, and from the war, to his music. Because, when I listened to his music, I felt that it expressed the spirit of his time so much, and the best way I could represent that in the book—since the book is words and not music—was to say: okay, and when this instrument makes this noise, it reminds me of this scream, or the sound from the shells, and so forth. . . . So why not attach these images to some of Shostakovich’s music and perform some kind of equivalence? (“Gespräch”)

Wolf’s reluctance to see ICAs as musically authentic is thus Vollmann’s and Vollmann’s Shostakovich’s. The reputational relationship between the Seventh and Eighth symphonies as, in Vollmann’s terms, program music vs. formalism must be convenient for deepening the contrast between them, by using ICAs as conceptual tools. The fact that ICAs—in Vollmann and elsewhere—are predominantly visual rather than auditory, even though they are stimulated by music, is related to the ratio of senses in the fundamental multimodality of human perception: even though “multimodality is an everyday reality” (Gibbons 8), sight is, arguably, what makes people primarily aware that the world around them exists, and is generally the dominant sense for a vast majority of subjects (Schiffman 177). Visual mental imagery naturally compensates/complements the auditory flow.

In light of Antonio Damasio's explanation of the neuroscientific distinction between perceptual and recalled/possible future imagery (96-97),[1] both music and literature invoke internal imagery of the recalled/possible future type, whereas film presents perceptual images as its explicit content, pre-packed and coming from the outside. Some visual images associated with Shostakovich's music are "culturally conditioned" to the point of being inerasable. Coincidentally, the climax of the cinematic programming of the Seventh Symphony falls on 2005, when *Europe Central* was first published. That year, a full-scale film version of the work, *Cinemaphony of the Seventh Symphony* scripted by Tonino Guerra and directed by Georgy Paradzhanov (*Sinemafoniya*) with extensive use of archival footage, was premiered in St. Petersburg and in London. The composer's son Maxim Shostakovich conducted the live orchestra performance synchronized with the screening. The film re-establishes the official content of the *Leningrad* Symphony as representation of Russia's Great Patriotic War against Fascism, enabling the listener now to *see* the whole movie *perceptually*, outside of the head, as an external entity reified on cinema screen.[2]

Like in "Opus 40," passages of verbal music in "The Palm Tree of Deborah" vary in size from a single sentence to slightly over two pages. Compared to the Shostakovich scores, there are, again, considerable omissions: only the first three of the Eighth Symphony's five movements are found in Vollmann, with the second almost dismissed as "movie filler music," no details of

[1] Perceptual images are formed upon direct sensory contact with objects, whereas recalled ones are conjured up as memories of what has already happened. In addition, images "of a possible future"—"of something that has not yet happened," such as our plans—"are no different in nature from images you hold of something that already has happened." Furthermore, *all* imagery is "concocted by a complex neural machinery of perception, memory, and reasoning" (97), so that "explicit recalled mental images arise […] largely in the same early sensory cortices where the firing patterns corresponding to perceptual representations once occurred" (101).

[2] For two other cinematic applications of Shostakovich featured in *Europe Central*, see Delazari ("Acousmatic" 5-6).

its musical procedures provided (*EC* 182).[1] The promise of the "first two movements of his Seventh Symphony, played on the piano" (195) in section 28 is not fulfilled: there is no second movement, while Vollmann's first movement is dominated by the development section at the expense of exposition and recapitulation. Both symphonies are thus represented synecdochally, parts standing for wholes.

Closer comparison between Shostakovich's scores and Vollmann's verbal music reveals what might be condemned as technical errors on the writer's part, unless we are dealing with fiction. Though in "Sources" the author declares that his "[d]escription of the Eighth Symphony" is "[b]ased in part on [his] hearing of it, and in part on the score itself" (767-68), even his listing of instruments is "wrong." "[F]our trumpets" (181) are cited instead of Shostakovich's "3 Trombe (B)" [three trumpets in B-flat] (*Collected* 200); there is no mention of the horns, of which Shostakovich requires four. Presumably, horns are among the "twenty-two other instruments," whereas the correct number of those "other instruments" in Shostakovich would be twenty-three, not twenty-two, if "4 Corni (F)" [four horns in F] were counted. Although the suggestion that Vollmann mistakes horns for trumpets sounds wild enough, it is confirmed by certain passages of the text as it outlines the musical procedures of the first and third movements of the Eighth Symphony in section 20 of "The Palm Tree of Deborah."

With the Seventh Symphony, for which Vollmann apparently relied on his hearing only, the violation of the score illustrates transgression of fictional boundaries, similar to the metaleptic phenomena noted above in connection with

[1] As late as "Opus 110," there is the sole short glimpse of the Eighth Symphony's "resolute call to arms of the fourth movement, that tense, sweet thrumming of all-sacrificing sincerity" (*EC* 624-25). "D-flat-C-D-flat […] in the allegretto of the Eighth Symphony" at the bottom of the same page refers to the second, not fifth *allegretto* movement.

the permeable narrator device. In Vollmann, its best recognized "invasion theme" is featured as "the infamous Rat Theme, the marionette in eleven variations" (185), which is a miscalculation of the *ostinato* returns in the original Shostakovich. My explanation for this "blunder" is the conjecture that the author was listening to a Leonard Bernstein CD (Delazari, "Acousmatic" 8-9): in 1962, Bernstein cut out the entire fourth presentation of the theme in mm. 214-253, where the "bassoon's idiotic copycat repetitions of the oboe's every phrase drag out the theme to twice its actual length" (Mishra 136; see Table 3).[1] In terms of autonomous fictional worlds, no charges of anachronistic correction can be brought to Vollmann; but tracing the tiny difference between the ICAs in *Europe Central* and the actual score right back to the author's living-room[2] works well for the argument of inevitable fictionalization of actual works in verbal music.

Although the Eighth Symphony was composed two years later, its first and third movements precede the Seventh in "The Palm Tree of Deborah." In its section 1, bits of Shostakovich's inner speech make it clear that the program of the Seventh is prompted by circumstances. The "snare drum," which unmistakably alludes to the Seventh, originates in the composer's preoccupation with how to represent life musically. The audio-visual contour of reality itself is verbally presented to the reader (and, presumably, perceived by the character) in synesthetic terms of "[b]arbed wire like music-lines," "bass command kettledrum melodies of artillery" and "piccolo music of screams" (140). In addition, these musical metaphors are "performed by Army Group North" with "Field-Marshal Wilhelm von Leeb conducting," which affirms the narrator's belief that music's origin is in reality, so that Shostakovich's superficial and humble role is to extract

[1] Cf. Gunther Schuller's characterization of Bernstein: "Lenny's ego is such that he feels the need to revise and recompose other composer's music in his own terms" (qtd. in Peyser 259).
[2] Or his studio, where he listens to "Scarlatti, a lot. Shostakovich, of course" (Hemmingson 178).

The theme's appearances, #	Shostakovich's "invasion" theme: instrument(s) in charge of the melody, mm.	Vollmann's "Rat Theme," "The Palm Tree of Deborah" section 28, *EC* 196-97
1	Tutti arco col legno/pizzicato, snare drum *ostinato* starting from 144, melody plus the codetta 149-169	. . . then came what in the orchestral version would be the faint snare drums, and the Rat Theme commenced. At this juncture it could have been the motif of a lover or a muse—a light, flirtatious knocking . . . .When he stroked this first go-round . . . he employed all the artifices of his trademark sarcasm. . . . How gently he plucked it!
2	Flute, 171-191	And the Rat Theme's second iteration was still more open, sweet and beautiful.
3	Piccolo, + flute 193-213	But when it came around again, a woodwind lurked dissonantly beneath the high sweetness.
4	Oboe + Bassoon (in turns), 215-253	–
5	Trumpet + trombones (at interval), 255-275	The Rat Theme now assumed a brassy life, shrugging off its former tentativeness, with celli, horns, piccolos, clarinets, brasses and xylophone creeping in en route to the *ostinato*.
6	Clarinets, 277-297	. . . And now the snare drum stiffened the Rat Theme into martialness. The fifth repetition was like the second but much louder, more confident. The Pied Piper had entered his stride . . . .
7	Violins, 299-319	Now in came the orchestra's processional drums, the Rat Theme going national-patriotic,
8	Violins/violas + oboe/clarinet, 321-341	and in the seventh go-round it was positively stern with the snare drum sounding like a rattlesnake.
9	Bass clarinet/bassoon + viola/cello/double basses, 343-363	Next it was childishly inane with loud xylophones,
10	Horns/trumpets/trombones/tuba 365-385	then cunningly impressionistic, aping Debussy with vague wavish loudness;
11	Woodwinds + violins/violas 387-407	but in the tenth incarnation it grew creepy and horrid, with the moaning dissonance of air raid sirens and U-boat alarms;
12	Trumpets/trombones/tuba 409-429	and in the eleventh it marched and bayed in a full throated major key which might have seemed no worse than pompous in another context . . . .
13	Exit variation/development proper, 430-497, with modulation to A and other keys, up to the next part's C minor	. . . the twelfth round changed key . . . .

***Table 3*. Correspondences between Vollmann and Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, fragment of 1st mvt.**

and write it down. In section 19, this military reality happens to be pre-scored as "Thirteenth Symphony: Skizze B: Heeresgruppe Nord. Eigene Lage am 22.6.1941 abds. Operation 'BARBAROSSA'" by "that other composer, Adolf Hitler" (180).

Thus Shostakovich is paradoxically framed to recompose Hitler's war symphony (which, in turn, is a military re-enactment of the Germanic myths underlying the Führer's favorite *Der Ring* operas of Wagner, to make the chain endless, as a possible evocation of both Wagner's "endless melody" principle and Jacques Derrida's infinite deferral in *différance*).[1]

The NKVD's suspicion later in the chapter that Shostakovich is "a Hitlerite" because his "Fascist theme" in the Seventh Symphony is too long, and starts "too melodiously" (192), is grounded here, and it is a matter of skillful doublethink to both praise and condemn the composer for such program music. Vollmann's next paradoxical reset of that "culturally conditioned," even culturally doomed program of the Nazi "invasion" is its deliberate relocation from the Seventh Symphony to the Eighth. Musical events of the latter's most memorable first and third movements are represented in Vollmann's text to "symbolize" the course of Hitler's early success in ceasing vast territories of the Soviet Union in 1941. In this way, the Eighth Symphony in "The Palm Tree of Deborah" gets embedded in the story traditionally heard in the Seventh, while the verbally constructed Seventh escapes that destiny.

A fairly postmodern aspect of Vollmann's prose is its fluidity organized along a horizontal axis, where distinctions such as author/primary non-diegetic narrator/primary diegetic narrator/secondary diegetic narrator are shattered in the manner of Beckett/Foucault: "What matter who's speaking?" (Foucault 138). Similarly, the causal relationships in history, music, and fiction are undermined: as one narrative level floats into another, an event's cause turns into its own effect, and no structural hierarchies matter. Paradoxical juxtapositions such as

[1] Wagner coined "endless melody" in his essay "Music of the Future" (1860), as a break-away from the formulaic system of classical melodic organization and phrase-structure; for a brief explication of the term, see Dahlhaus (*Idea* 120-23). On the infinite chain, see Derrida (157, 298).

permeable narration, in terms of narrative levels, are mirrored in the plot configurations, such as the relationship between Shostakovich's war symphonies established in the chapter. What matter if Shostakovich, Hitler, Wagner, or Vollmann is their "originary" source (cf. Derrida 298)?

The unfolding metaphor of Hitler's Thirteenth at the end of section 19 meets no obstacles on its way to fuse into the verbal music passage to render the first movement of the Eighth in Section 20: "So came the night of 21-22 June 1941, when the stern, dignified melancholy of the Eighth Symphony's opening rapidly shrills into outright alarm . . . . Barbarossa begins: ten contrabasses, twelve violoncelli, twelve violas" (181). Vollmann's musical procedures—some of which are traceable in the Shostakovich score, others not—are thus strictly paired with the German offensive *Blitzkrieg*, with some suspicion on the narrator's part about Shostakovich's hidden "excoriation of Stalin himself" (182). Skipping any detailed description of Shostakovich's "trademark ambiguity" in the second movement ending in "the snake-rattle of death," narration proceeds straight into the third movement, whose literary arrangement achieves the closest parallel to Shostakovich's musical form, with only the division of parts apparently distorted: Vollmann's Part II begins earlier than Shostakovich's.

The verbal *Allegro non troppo* movement consists of a bright series of cinematic images transcending the pages of the music score, to the effect of superimposition of images at double exposure. A metaphorical link is established between the physical space of "the score itself, that pale flat sheet of endlessness" and the "Ukrainian steppes, being half obscured by burning fields and towns whose doom has been translated musically into low strings" (182). This metaphor is recurrent in Vollmann, mostly related to the image of the "BARBAROSSA"

deployment expressed in terms of score-writing, Hitler's General Staff officers punned as "all staves and knaves stacked one above another in parallels on the music paper" (180-181) and the score having "no end" (181)—possibly, a deliberate hint at Wagner's "endless melody."

The ternary structure of this *toccata* movement (Hurwitz 100; Mishra 148) is schematically rendered in Vollmann's paragraph by means of switching the internal point of view held by the narrator, who imagines military events to parallel the tonal ones, by means of focalization switches. First, the pronoun "we" refers to the Russians waiting for the Panzers to arrive, "imprisoned by Shostakovich's genius within the fear-poisoned heart-thumps of bass viols"—clearly, those played in mm. 17, 21, 23, and 25. As "I hear us running over the plain," this being the way the focalizer interprets Part I, "[o]ur footfalls are violas and violins" (*EC* 182), and "[h]orns proclaim *here they are*" (183): now the strings become associated with the retreating Russians, and some brass instruments[1] represent the Germans. Second, in the course of fleeing, "[v]ery suddenly, *we're them*, and it's all so cheery like a grin of a corpse" (183), which must importantly mark the beginning of the form's middle section. In Shostakovich, instruments swap roles in bar 146, when the "footfalls" *arpeggio* goes from the strings over to the winds, after which "[c]hildren scream[ing] like piccolos" (182) in mm. 34-36 and 38-41 are reinterpreted first as the "horn" (actually, trumpet) proclamation (mm. 158-160, 163-167), and later as the "woodwind/violin flourishes" (mm. 241-243, 248-251), still within the lengthy first part of the form.

[1] Vollmann's horn/trumpet confusion may well apply here. Although "horns scream like air raid sirens" is in the same paragraph, the sirens effect is not easily identified in Shostakovich. In the Shostakovich movement, horns first appear in m. 160 to play the interval of a fourth marking the downbeat of the recurrent motive started by the trumpets in m. 158. Next, horns are used together with the woodwinds in mm. 171-197.

In Vollmann's middle part of the movement, the picture of how "[w]e Nazis are rolling forward and shooting" is provided with an alternative interpretation: "a Slavic dance" and "Stalin in peacetime, murdering Ukrainian peasants by the millions" (183). This double interpretation, apart from illustrating the doublethink phenomenon, coincides with a routine in Shostakovich Studies. Coming next is citing a score direction "*Sempre cresc. sin'al*" (mm. 199-200), which confirms the simultaneous centration on the score. Hence the way Shostakovich's part II (m. 283-366) is finally caught up with: "We're on the frictionless flatness of the score sheet now; with oompapahs and oompapahs our tanks cavort across this dance floor of gratified ambition, driving toward Moscow and Leningrad as easily as if we were skating" (183).

The trumpet solo principally liable for this romping cheeriness in Shostakovich is omitted in Vollmann's verbal score, which also changes the rhythm (triple "oompapahs" instead of Shostakovich's duple "oompah-oompah"). There are no "*pianissimo* violins" in the source music to account for the moment in Vollmann "[w]hen the Russians do form their troops at last," since in Shostakovich the solo trumpet bravura is responded to by the divided violins and violas playing *fortissimo*, not *pianissimo* (mm. 311-322 and 333-338). The "defensive drumbeats," which the tanks are "hardly noticing," are there, though, in mm. 300-301, 308-310, 323-326, 340-341, and 352-366. The familiar viola riff from Part I, which clearly marks the beginning of Part III (m. 367), coincides in Shostakovich and Vollmann: "Now the music tilts again like the upswung heads of hanged Ukranians and again *we're us*, running, running before the brassy horns" (183), except that it is trumpets, not horns, that chase "us" down in bar 404. Vollmann's narrator returns to the metaphor of Wagnerian endlessness: "It's

not that we've run out of room on the page; we could flee eastward forever, the Soviet Union being infinite, but the Panzers overtake us in less than three dozen measures" (183). The last three sentences in Vollmann actually correspond to Shostakovich's fourth movement, which starts non-stop when in Vollmann "gong, snare drum and cymbals sound a triumph fanfare of evil, they crush us under tank treads; they toast themselves by upraising our decapitated heads . . ."

This nightmarish identity swap, with switched focalization (internal in all cases, but imagined to be so: the focalizer enactively *becomes* somebody on either side of the German-Soviet front line), is dreamlike rather than filmic, as the viewpoint of the listener is so much more internalized than a cinema viewer's: "Sight isolates, hearing incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer" (Ong 71). An experiential authenticity of the Vollmann passage as music report is largely due to its mapping of internalized spatial parameters that is profoundly embodied by the narrator's imagination. Yet the concrete historical events the anonymous narrator-listener is shown to identify with are purely cinematic. Shostakovich's *toccata* would not necessitate a war story, but it is strongly suggestive of both running and an identity swap.[1]

All in all, Vollmann's Shostakovich does not write the same symphony his historical prototype did; rather, he composes something his author heard while listening to Shostakovich's Eighth, with the score in his lap. The authorial non-diegetic narrator of the passage follows the symphony score and simultaneously

[1] Although no proper scientific experiments were run in the course of my study, I once tried to test the suggestiveness in question by having a fellow PhD candidate, who has no special music training, listen to Shostakovich's movement and describe the course of his mental imagery. I was impressed by how precisely the tripartite plot structure he came up with in telling about what he had imagined coincided with Shostakovich's form. But for the war motive, it structurally repeats Vollmann's narrativization of music as chase, including the focalization change (Liang n.p.).

projects an imaginary film about the retreat of the Soviet army at the early stages of the German invasion onto the score "screen." In this imaginary movie, the camera-eye is identified with the first-person plural pronoun, which is capable of shifting focalization between "us" and "them."

Although the video-track arising to account for the Shostakovich symphony movement is "idiosyncratic" in that it inscribes it with a plot that is not as commonly accepted as the "invasion theme"—alias "Fascist march" (Gibbs 74)[1]—of Shostakovich's Seventh, its source of cultural conditioning is on the surface. Vollmann takes the program for the Eighth Symphony from the Seventh. The ICAs the Eighth Symphony has thus gained are all metonymically inherited from its next-door neighbor. If German troops are now storming the absolute music, what is left for the "invasion theme"?

In "The Palm Tree of Deborah," the first movement of the Seventh Symphony is played by Shostakovich twice: first, in section 26, when "three well-fed NKVD men in tall shiny boots came to his rooftop to visit" (190) and "invited him to play for them downstairs on one of the Conservatory pianos" (191); and second, in section 28, in Shostakovich's "fifth floor flat on Bolshaya Pushkarskaya Street" (195; cf. Mishra 132; I. MacDonald 152). On the former occasion, the composer performs "the first five hundred measures of his Seventh Symphony," which corresponds to the end of the "invasion theme" variations succeeded by the *Moderato* section in bar 498 of Shostakovich's score (*Collected* 64). There is no focalization on the NKVD men as listeners, and no verbal music at all, so we are not told what imagery Alexandrov—one of the three visitors—has

[1] The idiosyncrasy is not quite unique. Cf. David Hurwitz: "This movement surely is *not* about marching Nazis. I am quite amazed that anyone could ever have thought so, even during wartime, even after a superficial first hearing. The very idea is nonsense" (82). Hurwitz goes on to demonstrate that "the so-called Nazi march" is entirely derived from the movement's first subject (86), and that it portrays not Fascism, but "devastating vulgarity" (88).

made of the music. The main subject of the discussion or, rather, interrogation of Shostakovich is his "so-called Rat Theme or Fascist Theme or whatever it is" (192).

The insistent use of the "Rat Theme" tag, which is not at all a conventional way of referring to Shostakovich's long *ostinato* passage, and seems to have been suggested only once, by Soviet writer Alexey Tolstoy (Gibbs 74), is unpacked by an allusion to the Pied Piper (*EC* 196) from the German legend of the rat-catcher leading away the children of Hamelin.[1] Renaming the "invasion theme" into "Rat Theme" is the first step towards releasing it from culturally conditioned programmatic analogies.

The imagery Vollmann's text attaches to the tonal events of the first movement of the Seventh is not centered on the composer playing the piano: not the performance *per se*, but rather on an anonymous hearing. The perceptual experience of seeing the performer and hearing the piano is largely overshadowed by the imaginary events the performance invokes. Vollmann's technique in verbalizing the Seventh Symphony is that the imaginary content generated by the focalizer, whoever that might be, does not consist of pictured military or any other external action; it does not feature people and/or physical objects participating in any life-like events. A reference to an imaginary landscape is exceptional in the passage and occurs at its very beginning: "a theme like a tall flowery grass in which consciousness and premonition browsed together like wild deer" (196) is Vollmann's ultimate equivalent of Shostakovich's exposition, as the passage hurries to take us into the "Rat Theme." Further on, Vollmann's verbal music mainly reproduces structural grouping of the movement's tonal events and

[1] Vollmann may be aware of Tsvetaeva's version of the Hamelin legend, the long poem *Krysolov* (*The Ratcatcher*, 1925). Cf. the important presence of the same legend at two narrative levels of Powers's *Operation Wandering Soul* (214-53).

modifications of orchestral instrumentation. Such images resist cinematographic representation, since they are initially placed in the abstract mental time and space of musical relations. As a result, the first movement of the *Leningrad* Symphony and even its most cinematically loaded *ostinato* development section are denied any extra-musical content. In Vollmann's verbal version, this portion of the Seventh is turned into absolute music.

The metaphorical mode Vollmann chooses for his verbal music indicates a strong conviction that music is non-representational. Vollmann has a performance of the piano reduction stand for the sound of a symphony orchestra, when the narrator assures the listener that "even though [Shostakovich] had no orchestra on that day, only an out-of-tune piano whose cover had been nicked by shell fragments, he played in such a way that it was all there; this was the true premiere even though hardly anybody was there to hear it" (196). The conceptual metaphor applied here is not "MUSIC IS WAR" but "PIANO IS ORCHESTRA," music-to-music relationship instead of music-to-reality/reality-to-music. The ICAs are not shaped into a film of troops marching on Leningrad, but into a musical succession of orchestral sonorities and formal interactions. It was not the Panzer tanks, but the Rat Theme itself that "assumed a brassy life, shrugging off its former tentativeness, with celli, horns, piccolos, clarinets, brasses and xylophone creeping en route to the *ostinato*" (196). The pictures are of how "a slow Sibelius-like dirge returned, mirroring the opening theme of the movement," and "the Rat Theme, already very far from what it had been before, scuttled back into anti-programmatic formalism" (197). In the seventeen sentences and substantially more grammatical clauses that describe the Rat Theme's unfolding, the majority of the subjects of action verbs are either generic musical instruments, sounds, or

abstract entities such as music parts: “motif,” “knocking,” “the Rat Theme’s second iteration,” “a woodwind,” “The Rat Theme” (used six times), “the snare drum,” “the fifth repetition,” “the orchestra’s processional drums,” “the twelfth round,” “fragments,” “dirge,” “cymbals,” “silent contemplation,” “mournful woodwinds,” and “a reprise.” Thus the visuality of the text is limited, since it is hardly isolated from music, except the five sentences referring to Shostakovich as the diegetic performer. Apart from his moves at the piano, there is nothing to be feature-filmed; the visual domain is internalized as a set of musical entities interacting within an ideal listener’s mental space. The passage is not just metaphorical (piano as orchestra) but allegorical (abstract notions behaving as characters), which paradoxically dehumanizes and anthropomorphizes music at the same time. Its extramusical yet hardly cinematic referential content is confined to adjectives (“coaxing,” “sadistic,” “sweet and beautiful,” “confident,” “national-patriotic,” “stern,” “impressionistic,” “creepy and horrid,” etc.).

In contrast to a ***cinematic*** treatment of ICAs in his fictional Eighth Symphony, Vollmann’s verbalization of the first movement of Shostakovich’s Seventh may be described as ***acousmatic***, to apply Roger Scruton’s theorization of Pierre Schaeffer’s extension of Pythagoras’s idea. In *The Aesthetics of Music* (1997), Scruton stretches the notion of the acousmatic to philosophize musical experience as such. When we listen to music “as music,” Scruton argues, “a sound is separated entirely from its cause, and heard acousmatically, as a pure process” (12). Attending to music, we do not listen to physical *sounds*—air vibrations caused by situated concrete sources and waving through real acoustic space, but to *tones*, whose interrelationships “are both spatial and causal; but they have nothing to do with physical space, or physical causality” (74). Music exists in “no *real*

space of sounds; but there is a phenomenal space of tones" (75).[1] For Scruton, the deep experientiality of this metaphorical tonal movement through acousmatic space is somewhat a mystery (cf. "the mysterious movement that flows through music," 161).

Most ICAs in section 28 of "The Palm Tree of Deborah" are *acousmatic* ones, as opposed to the *cinematic ICAs* of section 20 (cf. Delazari, "Acousmatic" 14-15). Listening to what I detect as the Bernstein recording, the author imagines Shostakovich at the piano. Listening to the fictional Shostakovich playing, the focalizer is fictitiously able to hear it as orchestra. The source of the fictional sound causing the fictional ICAs is not at hand. Focalization in question is presumably internal, since the acousmatic space is not physical but mental, yet it is extremely depersonalized. As one of the diegetic listeners in section 28 reveals, the audience in the episode is not listening "acousmatically": "Thanks to the war, Dmitri Dmitriyevich, and thanks also to you, for the first time we can cry openly. Not one of us here hasn't lost somebody, somebody killed by the Fascists or else before—" (197). People cry over the extramusical horrors of their time and hear the movement telling their own stories. Shostakovich himself could provide a better vehicle for such a hearing, most capable of hearing his own piano as orchestra. However, this capacity is formally delegated to an unspecified external listener (omniscient narrator? Alexandrov? one of his informers among Shostakovich's friends?) to undermine the composer, performer, and his instrument as the actual cause of the music, whose acousmatic causality is tonal, abstract, immanent, and almost transcendental, beyond the reach of its creator.

[1] Cf. Peter Kivy's insistence that there is no literal motion in music, only figurative motion, which does not even account for an impression/illusion of motion (*Antithetical Arts* 96).

1.6. Intermedial Transposition as a Readerly Challenge

Explaining Vollmann's "dedication to emotive musical description," Peter Christensen cites philosopher Peter Kivy's observation that such paraphrase is "no more defective than our emotive depictions of each other and the world around us" ("Corded Shell" 149). Christensen infers that, for both Kivy and Vollmann, emotive description is "as valid as 'technical' description" (106). This might be a misreading of Kivy, who is quite intolerant of narrative images and "garden-variety emotions" supplied to music by its listeners at various levels of expertise (cf. *Music* 100-103, 173-201; *Antithetical Arts* 102-107). However, Vollmann's intermedial transpositions may indeed manifest the author's "romantic approach to Shostakovich's life" (Christensen 106). In *Europe Central*, music is intermingled with and isomorphous to *reality*, so its "depictions" and reinventions are similar to a fictional treatment of any other familiar experience.

Considering that such narrative theorists as Monika Fludernik and Richard Walsh are skeptical about the solidity of the walls between authorial, narratorial, and actorial narrative levels,[1] Vollmann's metaleptic transgressions and distortions of factual scores are literary *norms*, not *deviations*. Solid distinctions of classical narratology, including that of the real vs. implied authors and readers, may matter less in a fictional universe deeply engaged in Ovidian transfigurations—metaphorical, metonymical, intermedial—all based on the mind's ability to conceptualize and experience things in terms of other things, and thus "live by" metaphors (cf. Lakoff and Johnson). Vollmann does not seem to care much about his reader, and the paratextual aids in his enormous volumes are

[1] For Fludernik, narrative levels in general are of little importance, provided there is "a human (anthropomorphic) experience of some sort at some narrative level" (13). For Walsh, "there is nothing about the internal logic of fictional representation that demands a qualitative distinction between narrators and characters" (*Rhetoric* 72).

hardly there to attract broader readerships on top of his fandom of "nerds." At the same time, this apparent neglect can be seen as no sign of disrespect, but rather that of trust, an inherent metafictional point: the real reader/actual audience, like the implied reader/authorial audience, is *assumed* to follow and share the author's industrious encyclopedic scope and his *empathetic* capacities in *creating and experiencing* fictional subject matters. Coming to terms with Vollmann's verbal music is, in this sense, a crucial challenge for his flesh-and-blood readers.

If by "technical" description of music Christensen means verbal exegeses of music in non-fictional written genres, such as music criticism, analysis, and program notes, Vollmann's intermedial references and imitations are doomed to fail.[1] As I have demonstrated, abundant errors are revealed in comparing Vollmann's fictional (re)presentations of Shostakovich's music with the original scores. However, by virtue of fictionality, literary transpositions of music are *not* "technical." Of the three modes stipulated in Scher's definition of verbal music—passages (i) "approximating in words an actual or fictitious score" and those, "[i]n addition," suggesting (ii) "characterization of a musical performance" and/or (iii) "subjective response to music" (*Verbal* 8)—the (i) score approximation type may stylistically approach actual program notes/analysis genre quite closely. However, my Vollmann examples show that Scher is wise not to draw that threefold distinction explicitly, since actual cases of verbal music are always of mixed nature. Both the erotic and military narrative "scores" of Vollmann's Shostakovich Cello Sonata and Eighth Symphony, respectively, are impossible to dissociate from the narrator's/focalizer's "subjective response" to music, while the

[1] Kramer sees such failure as features of interpretation: "Interpretations, whether of music or anything else, can be invalidated, but it is impossible to validate them. More than anything else, they are like Austinian performatives: they either succeed or fail, and sometimes they succeed best by failing" ("Signs" 43).

most "technical" description of the *ostinato* procedures of the Seventh Symphony in a succession of acousmatic ICAs is highly idiosyncratic.

The question of how to distinguish between fictional (i.e. verbal music) and factual (e.g. program notes) score descriptions is as treacherous as the general fiction vs. non-fiction distinction, which resists formalization (cf. Genette, *Fiction* 61-70). Scher's preliminary solution is that "the music critic merely provides indirect communication of the music through verbal approximation," whereas "the poet supplements his ordinary source (i.e. poetic imagination) with direct musical experience and/or a score . . . he thus assumes the role of transmitter, rendering (suggesting, describing, or creating) music in words" ("Notes" 152).

Scher's use of "approximation" and "supplement" is misleading. He appears to suggest that music criticism is *approximately* the same as the piece it describes, while a passage of verbal music is meant to *add* something to that piece. However, the reverse is also true. Program notes never claim to substitute the music for a potential listener. Although music is their end, not means, program notes are not only *extra*-musical, but also *optional*. By contrast, verbal music, as art, relishes the ambition to create the musical object anew and *become* music, by playing with possibilities of linguistic reference[1] and the human mind's predominantly verbal tools for conscious cognition, including those used for music processing.[2] In verbal music, the literary text enters its musical source, sticks to the piece in the reader's imagination as lyrics do to a song,[3] and eventually substitutes and dismisses the source as redundant. This is certainly

[1] See Lotman's distinction between the linguistic system of "natural" language and art as a "secondary language," which uses signifieds of natural language as signifiers (20-21).
[2] According to Kramer, "music has the capacity to exert both semantic and social force by becoming talked about: not by signifying, but by becoming signified" ("Signs" 40).
[3] If "[e]mplotting instrumental music is the inverse of the musical setting of a text" (Neubauer, "Tales" 118), the notion of "composed reading" in classical songwriting, when a poem is interpreted by being set to music, may explain what verbal music is in relation to its "source." For a theorization of composed reading, see Scher ("Comparing").

more evident with fictitious pieces of music, whose existence is limited to their verbal expression; yet fictionalization is ever more powerful to fully appropriate actual pieces. Fictionalization of music is achieved by reassigning the transmitter's function (which in Scher is the author's prerogative) further to fictional entities: narrators, characters, and, eventually, readers. The readers' task is not merely to collect what is given and retrieve the "source" music from its verbal score, but to *experience* music. Since the subject of verbal music is diegetic music, and only diegetic listeners access the Shostakovich pieces from within Vollmann's storyworld, the reader can only re-compose and experience music *metaphorically*, which does not mean they cannot experience anything at all. Considering that metaphors in everyday life are perceived as reality rather than as figures of language, and how deeply embodied these metaphors are (cf. Lakoff and Johnson; Johnson), lack of music as direct physical stimulation is not necessarily fatal for fiction as a potential source of musical experience.

Through fictionalization, intermedial transposition of existing pieces is analogous to *playing* rather than *speaking* them. A fictional utterance is performative,[1] as its referent is verbally created. Of the "two ways to use words" in the theoretical dichotomy going back to early structuralist notions, "one is explanatory, and the other resembles music in its refusal to explain" (Dayan 267). Program notes are explanatory, whereas verbal music is not, hence its iconicity.[2]

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[1] For the notion of performativity, see Austin. For a discussion of fictional utterances in terms of speech act theory, see Searle. For a corrective development of Searle, see Genette (*Fiction* 30-53). For an understanding of music in terms of performativity, see Kramer (*Classical Music* 65-69; "Signs" 42-44). For reading as "performing," see Gerrig (2, 17-24).

[2] Iconicity, as intermedial imitation's "showing" instead of intermedial thematization's "telling," is one of Wolf's requirements for musicalization: a passage can follow "descriptively, in the evocation of different moods and in the imagery used, the movements of the musical work referred to" ("Musicalized Fiction" 49). Meanwhile, it is not the music itself but its verbalized outcomes that are shown in intermedial transposition. Verbal music *shows by telling*, and its iconicity is derived not from an unmediated take at music, but from the fact that music, once it is heard, is processed into some kind(s) of mental imagery, which can then be verbally expressed.

Program notes are a source *on* real music; verbal music is a source *of* fictional music.[1] Consequently, the highbrow priority of expert over layperson (cf. Adorno, *Introduction* 4-17) is reversed by verbal music. For instance, when Vollmann's narrator disagrees with pianist Emanuel Ax's program notes to the Cello Sonata (*EC* 83) and corrects the professional's characterization, he is fully entitled to do so (even though we have other reasons to distrust him). Since Vollmann himself, like most of his readers, is not in the position to analyze and keep a detailed "technical" account of music, his musicological "inaccuracies" do not prevent the reader from building connections between the verbal and the newly constructed image of the actual. As Ingarden writes, "[t]he literary work does not necessarily need to be 'consistent' or to be contained within the bounds of what is possible in the actually known world" (*Literary Work* 253). It is neither the score nor program notes, but readers' "experiential background" (Caracciolo, *Experientiality* 5) of listening to music that affects the course of reading. This background is comprised of resonant "memory traces" (46), images recalled by the brain as "momentary constructions," which are "often innacurate and incomplete," but "corresponding to perceptual representations once occurred" (Damasio 101). Verbal music passages, as literary "approximations" of music compositions, are isomorphous to this type of mental imagery—"not accurate" and "less vivid than the [perceptual] images they are meant to reproduce" (100). They are chunks of vicarious experiential backgrounds made accessible for communication with the reader's own. It is here that the "effects of music" and its "intellectual and emotional implications" (Scher, "Notes" 149, 152) are mapped.

[1] Not in Rabinowitz's terminological sense of the music embedded in diegetic settings, which their characters perceive as music ("Fictional Music" 198-200; "Music" 307-18). Here, by fictional music I simply mean any music composed and/or heard within a book's fictional universe—in other words, *diegetic music*.

Wolf's skepticism regarding affective powers of verbal music is grounded in his observation that "readerly factors . . . are to a large extent subjective, perhaps idiosyncratic and at any rate difficult to identify," and that "no empirical research has been done so far in the field of musical associations in reader response" (*Musicalization* 72). Vollmann's Shostakovich passages amply excite these doubts. How, on the one hand, are we to infer, predict, or measure reader-response parameters of particular passages without (or even with) empirical testing? How, on the other hand, if such parameters are set, can the readerly experience be identified as musical, rather than otherwise (coital, military, cinematic)?

Fludernik's "redefinition of narrativity *qua* experientiality *without* the necessity of any actantial groundwork" (13) gave rise not only to ongoing debates among narratologists but also, sometimes indirectly, to impressive research by such "second generation" cognitive[1] literary theorists as Marco Caracciolo, Karin Kukkonen, Anežka Kuzmičová, and Yanna Popova. Equipped with transdisciplinary tools from cognitive science, philosophy of mind, and/or empirical data from neuroscience and psychology, these scholars implement the reader-centered approach that Fludernik's seminal 1996 book marked out. Theories of experientiality, presence, and immersion depending on textual cues and boosted by the embodied reader's experiential background help to enrich and reformulate some essential views on the nature of aesthetic illusion.[2] As the "embodied reader" turns out to be drawing "on the overall kinesic [*sic*] shape of

[1] For an overview of second-generation cognitive studies, see Caracciolo (*Experientiality* 16-23), and Kukkonen and Carraciolo (261-65).

[2] For example, Fludernik's view that the narrative is made not by sequential dispositions of events, so that it is possible for a "plotless" narrative to be experiential (20-30), supplements Wolf's observation that "[a]esthetic illusion is typically centered on . . . characters and action" ("Aesthetic Illusion" 332) without contradicting it. Noting the predominance of visual imagery in what the recipient primarily develops in the course of literary perception, Wolf admits that "particular aural 'imaginings' of voices, noises and music can also play a role" (331).

the motions described [in the text] and the import of the environment on the mind of the hero" (Kukkonen 371), the effect of presence is related to affordances[1] of familiar objects mentioned in the text in passing to trigger motor resonance and pre-verbial readerly responses to literature's "perceptual mimesis" (Kuzmičová, "Fidelity" 274).[2] Kuzmičová's distinctions between verbal and direct presence ("Words" 106-107), "description-imagery" and "enactment-imagery" ("Literary Narrative" 282-84), and her studies of the auditory parameters of reading experience ("Outer"; "Audiobooks") suggest that narrativity-as-experientiality does not need to be opposed to eventfulness as a dynamic property of narrative, as Fludernik initially suggested. Caracciolo importantly indicates at least two possibilities of readerly engagement: in relation to the storyworld, we may take either a "third-person" or "first-person" stance (*Experientiality* 8, 41, 50). The respective choice between sympathy and empathy (66) in either treating fiction as representation or enacting it (93) is regulated by the possible shift from "consciousness-attribution" to "consciousness-enactment," which may be textually inflicted in larger narrative segments (115-32).[3] Popova contributes to this reader-centered conversation by insisting that the anthropomorphic teller in the narrative is fashioned "as a substitute for a conversational participant" (7), so that the reader's position is second- and never third-person. Not only do we enact a character's consciousness available to us via internal focalization,[4] but, more

[1] An object's capacity for being manipulated by a human, its "interaction potential" attracting our "volition and intentionality of transitive bodily movement" (Kuzmičová, "Presence" 30). Cf. Sloboda's application of the term to music (195) and his attribution of the term to James Gibson, in whose "eyes, human response can often be explained, not so much by reference to inner states, but by reference to characteristics of the environment which constrain and direct that response. So, for instance, a chair *affords* sitting" (Sloboda 347).
[2] "Insofar as a piece of fiction succeeds in eliciting sensorimotor (especially visual) images of its content, it is regarded as perceptually mimetic."
[3] Caracciolo's binaries correlate with Kuzmičová's "outer" and "inner" modes of processing story-driven mental imagery ("Outer" 127-32; "Literary Narrative" 281).
[4] See her polemic with Caracciolo on this issue (Popova 84-85).

immediately, we deal with the consciousness "construed as a narratorial voice" (9), so that, fundamentally, "we enact a narrator's point of view" (42). Identifying with the teller's "mediating consciousness" gives us "the assumption of the presence" (62) of the reported events, just like listening to a boy's story of how a wolf frightened him makes Leo Tolstoy, by means of "somatic transfer," "infected" with fear (Robinson 21-23).

Second-generation cognitive literary theorists attribute at least partial role in readerly immersion to mental simulation of the storyworld phenomena due to the system of mirror neurons (Kukkonen 369; Caracciolo, *Experientiality* 21; Popova 72-73). Hypothesized and theorized in the 1990s, this group of neurons in cortical areas of the brain fire irrespective of whether we perform an action ourselves or see it performed in front of us (cf. Gallese, "Mirror" 520-21). To comprehend the world around us from the isolated inside of our body, we mentally mimic all things we confront; as neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese generalizes in 2003, the "matching mechanism, constituted by mirror neurons originally discovered and described in the domain of action, could well be a basic organizational feature of our brain, enabling our rich and diversified intersubjective experiences" ("Roots" 271). Perceiving a movement, we respond with a sensorimotor activity simulating it, which is normally suppressed, but detectable in the body. Similar "motor resonance" is discovered in readers (Gerrig and Egidi 36-37; Kukkonen and Caracciolo 264-65). In addition, due to the "as-if loop" (Damasio 156; Robinson 24) in our neural topography (analogous to the body-loop in charge of communication between the brain and the rest of the body), "the brain learns to concoct the fainter image of an 'emotional' body state, without having to reenact in the body proper" (Damasio 155). These mimetic

neural devices work in virtually all human experiences, including those of reading narratives (Clay and Iacoboni 318-21) and listening to music (Molnar-Szakasc and Overy 238-39, Overy and Molnar-Szakasc 492, Hauer 190, Meelberg 275).

As both literature and music get bodily and emotionally enacted by the recipient, the gap between them might appear less gashing than is usually pictured. The effect of presence, including that of a performed piece of music, relies on virtually the same mechanisms. The reader can have a vicarious musical experience by identifying with and enacting the narrator (Popova) and/or character (Caracciolo) to whom, as our suspension of disbelief allows us to imagine, the music in question is directly available. Verbal music—embedded in a work of fiction, relayed by an anthropomorphic narrator and/or perceived by a focalizing character—is much more experiential than program notes or analysis.[1]

Vollmann's intermedial transpositions of the fictionalized Shostakovich provide substantial set of examples to be theorized, and perhaps experimentally tested, in terms of their experientiality. They approach musical experience from several sides. The vividly sensual dynamic portrayal of the Cello Sonata would be of relatively high affordance, unless it channeled the musical experience via a very disagreeable and unreliable consciousness of a dirty-minded narrator, who cares less about music than about sex. Here, what Caracciolo calls "consciousness-enactment" is clogged, so that accessibility of music transposed by such a narrative device is less probable.

In Caracciolo, consciousness-enactment (unlike "consciousness-attribution," which is our mere agreement that a character has a consciousness of

[1] Fludernik points out the lack of experientiality—i.e. narrativity—in historical texts: full of events and actants, they provide limited chances for the reader's personal involvement (24). Analogously, musicological descriptions must be less experiential than fictional ones, provided verbal music is anchored in some sort of immersive diegetic environment.

some sort) is conducted by readers "when the text helps them to an experience that they see as their own, and someone else's, at the same time" ("Fictional Consciousnesses" 57). Prerequisites for consciousness-enactment are internal focalization and "larger portions of text" in order for it to "finely adjust the reader's consciousness until it becomes, to some extent, the consciousness of another person—a fictional character's" (57). Unannounced shifts of focalization types and narratorial standpoints in Vollmann must then hinder consciousness-attribution no less than the moral image of his diegetic narrator(s): according to James Phelan, "[t]he judgments we readers of narrative make about characters and tellers (both narrators and authors) are crucial to our experience—and understanding—of narrative form" (3). As Willie van Peer and H. Pander Maat argue, "effects of point of view are *not* independent of the story's subject matter" (Kreuz and MacNealy 152), so that there must be more factors determining readerly engagement than internal focalization and sufficient length, as Caracciolo has suggested. For example, we are not supposed to trust narrators "with questionable value systems" (Bortolussi and Dixon 83), although Lisa Zunshine demonstrates that, due to certain limitations in "mind-reading" skills, we do (100-103). It would be wrong to exclude, but quite difficult to imagine, a Stalinist reader empathetically (from a first-person stance), or even sympathetically (from the second-/third-person stance) responding to Alexandrov's personality and opinions.

Tracing the score back to its empirical origin—this time war, not love—is Vollmann's technique for the Eighth Symphony, whose rudely straightforward cinematic imagery radically invites the reader to follow the narrator's shifts of imaginary internal focalization. Since the first-person stance suggested to the

reader is either Nazi or Bolshevik, it may not be adopted without certain reservations, either. Shostakovich's own performance of the Seventh is rendered acousmatically: there is nobody in the scene to empathize with, and the affordance of abstractly musical terms of tonal instead of spatial movement is too low for many readers to enact. Even if internal focalization does not matter, as Popova argues, Vollmann's permeable narratorial strategies in *Europe Central* disperse the reader's immersive inclinations.

Vollmann's goal as a moralist is to force the reader's identification with unpleasant characters and travel to the most "evil" topoi of 20th-century history.[1] As this is how he deals with not only the life circumstances of the era—his principal subject matter—but also with Shostakovich's music, the novel's overall aesthetics is rather Alexandrovian. For Vollmann, it is modern life that is confusing and perverted, which determines the parameters of modern music. In Vollmann, Shostakovich is predominantly a programmatic realist, because Vollmann is one himself. One aspect, however, seems to be experientially promising about Vollmann's verbal music. As Kramer writes,

> It is true, of course, and obvious, that the words cannot substitute for the experience of hearing or playing the music; but it is equally true, and should be equally obvious, that they are not meant to. It is also true that the words don't say everything that could be said about this music, but they are not meant to do that, either. . . . It isn't even necessary for us to hear what the words say in our immediate experience of the music, though we may find such a resonance upon later reflection or in our imaginations. All that is necessary is for us to hear or play the music as one would do when oriented, predisposed, by those particular words. Once we do that, meaning will emerge in full force and make itself available to our understanding. ("Music" 9)

In Kramer's logic, Vollmann's prose does transmit a musical experience of Shostakovich. The fact that Shostakovich and his music are strongly

[1] *Europe Central*'s significant predecessor in this manner of frustrating the reader's moral attitudes is Gass's *The Tunnel*. See my Chapter 2 below, particularly sections 2.1 and 2.6.

compromised, perhaps perverted, by Vollmann's narratorial filter(s), must alert and arrest our uncritical immersive predilections. Shostakovich and his music are not (re)presented as genuine, but "they are not meant to."

Verbal music is not a finalized closure, in Bakhtin's sense, but an invitation for dialogue. Unlike the implied reader or any other reader-construct (including the "embodied reader"), real readers are free to ignore the theoretical constraints of narratology and intermediality studies and take Vollmann's "fabrication" for the "real" Shostakovich. Listening to the original pieces "transposed" in *Europe Central* will then certainly be influenced by the reading experience, so that fiction blends with actual music. Vollmann's passages will not work as hyperlinks to that music; but they can still encourage the reader to go wherever the music is performed. To anybody who has coped with Vollmann's challenging book, the experience of reading the Shostakovich passages could be contagious enough to motivate a powerful urge to hear as well. The act of reading is thus retroactive—much more literally than Iser thought (111).

CHAPTER II

RECOMPOSING LANGUAGE:

THE METAMUSIC OF WILLIAM GASS

2.1. Slowing Down: Gass's Music of Prose

William Gass precedes William Vollmann by a literary generation or two. He belongs to the cohort of the early American postmoderns, whose work is a formative influence on Vollmann. The early 1970s were marked by the release of Gass's first collection of essays, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1970)—"a kind of Bible for contemporary innovative writers" (McCaffery 153). At the end of the same decade, another of his numerous nonfictions, *The World Within the Word* (1979), was widely read by the US literary academia as a formalist antidote to John Gardner's traditionalist manifesto, *On Moral Fiction* (1979). The 1978 on-campus debate between Gardner and Gass at University of Cincinnati (Ammon 46-55) provided a comprehensive account of American white authors' main preoccupations on the eve of the multicultural re-ordering of the canon in the twenty following years.[1]

Gass and Vollmann's shared interests include Kiš—particularly, *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* (cf. *FF* 104-15), Wittgenstein (cf. Hemmingson 8; Fan 7; Holloway 7-8), and Rainer Maria Rilke, whom Vollmann quotes and, like Gass, dares re-translate[2] (*EC* 312, 777). History and/or fascism are thematized in Gass's magnum opus, *The Tunnel* (1995), whose primary diegetic narration, in a sense,

[1] The debate is a recurrent one: cf. the 1986 "Silko-Erdrich controversy" between prominent Native American authors, in which Lesli Marmon Silko accused Louise Erdrich of valuing postmodern self-referential play over moral, historical, and social causes, and the 2001 "Franzen-Oprah drama" (Coffmann and Lukes 2, 6).

[2] In *Reading Rilke* (1999), Gass provides dozens of other translators' English versions of Rilke's *Duineser Elegien* (1923), supplementing them with his own translation(s) and line-by-line commentaries.

foreruns the disagreeable narratorial voice(s) of *Europe Central*. Both authors cross the fictional/nonfictional divide with natural ease, although for dramatically opposed reasons: Vollmann does so because reality permeates both modes of writing, whereas Gass is a "stylist" in his essays no less than in his narratives (Ammon 38).

In that respect, Gass is more of an antipode to Vollmann, despite their many similarities. Where Vollmann's first priority is reference and relevance, Gass concentrates on language and form. Where Vollmann is prolific and verbose, Gass is slow and concise. Where Vollmann treats his sentence "like a kernel of popcorn" and packs it with words "until it explodes" (Hemmingson 120), Gass relishes "the music of prose" defined in his eponymous essay (*FF* 312-26). Vollmann's most verse-like novel to date, *The Dying Grass* (2015), is 1,350 pages long, which may in itself discourage readers from reading slowly, if not from reading at all. Grumping against contemporary readers' tendency to "race like a motorcar across the page, taking turns on two wheels, the head as silent as an empty house," Gass deliberately places himself among the fossils from before the advance of the radio, who mean to be read "in the old-fashioned, hesitant, lip-moving way—by listening rather than by looking" (*FF* 330). In 1979, Gass laments the habits of beginning a book "at the rear," repeating, and or/skipping pages "[a]s in an atlas" (*WWW* 123), as though he prophetically attacks Vollmann's 1996 book of that name, which instructs the reader to do exactly that (*Atlas* xv). Gass illustrates contrasted reading paces with his own generation's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and *JR* (1975), by Pynchon and Gaddis,[1] respectively (Ammon 22). He sees the narrative tempo less as subject to readerly choice than

[1] His preference for the latter author is manifest in his 1993 introduction to Gaddis's *The Recognitions* (1955).

as a musical property of texts, even though realized "in the hall of the head," once we "take any prose or poetry seriously enough to perform it, to listen with our brain"; unlike Vollmann, Gass writes "by the mouth for the ear" (*FF* 331).

As Arthur Saltzman observes in his pioneering monograph, *The Fiction of William Gass* (1986), "Gass's prose . . . is thick with alliteration, allusion, parallel patterns, imagery, assonance, and strong rhythms. When they are waylaid from the world and then submerged into a language like this, characters who might thrive in a more traditionally realistic story dissolve like sugar cubes" (18). Plot, too, is attacked in Gass's essays (cf. *FF* 45; *LS* 305-308) and undermined in his fiction, where he strives to redirect the reader's attention from the events behind his words to the multimodal nature of the words themselves. With the auditory aspect of literature at stake, reading (as well as writing) slows down, frustrated by the sheer lack of eventfulness and forced to focus on the medium instead of "references and gists": "There is no gist, no simple translation, no key concept which will unlock these works; actually, there is no lock, no door, no wall, no room, no house, no world" (*Habitations* 223).

Vollmann's musical presences are thematic and auxiliary; for Gass, who is "obsessed with language" (*FFL* 4) and prose prosody, "music is the dominant art" (Ammon 75). The two authors' work is differently vectored: Vollmann's towards life, Gass's away from it. Predominantly, Vollmann's most significant contribution to musico-literary intermediality is his verbal music—a phenomenon of intermedial thematization, in Wolf's terms; Gass tends to prefer Scher's "word music" and "structural analogies"—techniques of intermedial imitation, which in Gass's case are of transmedial nature. Vollmann is intermedial; Gass is "transliterate": "And after all, if alliteration is important, why not the relation of

closed spaces to open ones in a type face? Why shouldn't the long sound in short words astonish? Why should the implications of one materiality lie idle while another is worked and worn out?" (*Habitations* 150).

Gass's transliteracy is not hierarchical. He favors the visuality of the various typefaces and pictures he experiments with in *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (1968) and *The Tunnel* over neither the potentiality of sound in these visuals, nor their philosophical reverberations. Unfixing narrative plot supremacy, he is after a certain harmony of elements, a "harmonica" that he tries to maintain in his own writing (*FF* 43). Transliteracy is literacy beyond the confinements of contemporary reading style. It aims at emancipating some habitually ignored aspects of prose narrative, of which sound is the most systematically neglected. There is more to fiction than is usually noticed: many things always happen at once. Gass addresses the problem of literary polyphony in trying to determine how "to get the sense (in print) of different lines of language being sounded at the same time, or alternately, or at different speeds or pitch, as in music" (Ammon 23),[1] seeking to make palpable what, for him, is literature's integral property.

Critics' myopia to the insistent evocation of music-related concepts in Gass's texts may be explained by a common distrust of metaphors. However, considering the importance of metaphor in Gass,[2] the research gap longs to be filled in. That Gass's notorious storytelling has been discussed mostly in terms of content—moral as well as metafictional, but always grounded in referential matters—is a stereotype worth shaking. The author's thinking in terms of music must be taken seriously.

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[1] Gass's polyphony is more Ingarden's than Bakhtin's: cf. Ingarden's notion of the "polyphonic harmony" of the literary work's aesthetic whole (*Literary Work* 57-58, 369-72).
[2] At Cornell, Gass completed his PhD dissertation, *A Philosophical Investigation of Metaphor* (1954), under one of the time's greatest authorities on metaphor, Max Black.

At most, Gass's prose is discussed in terms of what Wolf Schmid calls "ornamental"/"poetic"/"poetized" prose (122-28). Gass perfectly fits the label of "post-realist modernism," which, in Schmid's phrasing, "has a tendency towards the generalization of the principle constitutive of poetry" (123). Even though "*co-occurrence* or *isotopism* between the orders of discourse and story" and iconic "reification of all signs" (125) are just one logical step away from the musical, critics avoid the subject, as if humbled by Prieto's warning: "Close analysis shows that even expert comparisons between literary texts and their musical references are often founded on analogies that simply cannot justify the need for a specifically musical intertext" (*Listening In* 18). The problem with Gass is that no one has yet applied that kind of "close analysis" to his works.

When Watson Holloway writes of the "ringing musicality" of *Omensetter's Luck* (1966), he connects Gass to the "long chain of symbolist movement" from Poe "to the present-day poststructuralists and metafictionists" of "nonlinear style" (20). Subsequently, Holloway deals with Gass's parodic use of American folk yarn, western, limerick, and children's song, as well as alliterations and rhythmic patterns, but his discussion of Gass's first novel does not push its "verbal musicality" too far (20; cf. 21-34).

In 1981, Gass describes "The Pedersen Kid"—his earliest short story collected in the celebrated *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country* (1968)—as "a fugue, literally," which "is, of course, a question of constructing a round" (in Ammon 76).[1] This metaphor gives a structural justification for why the storyline "frays into uncertainty" (Saltzman 68) and "relies on syzygy or axial tension between apparent opposites—counterpoised characters and images" (Holloway

[1] See an embryonic discussion of the story in these terms in Stawiarski (84-85).

48). Gass's trademark story, "In the Heart of the Heart of the Country," is a perfect sample of nonlinearity and low narrativity in the form of descriptive sketches, or "notes," which Gass eagerly rethinks as musical notes, since "word resemblance leads you on, not form," and posits "a musical problem" of "arranging" those one-paragraph sketches and "orchestrating the flow of feelings from one thing to another" (in Ammon 31). Such authorial accounts of the text's genesis and its resulting layout may be instructive, if the metaphor is suggestive enough in terms of readerly output—a research prospect habitually ignored by Gass critics, even when they choose not to silence the author's comment that his longest novel, *The Tunnel*, is built in accordance with Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone composition principles (cf. Ammon 135; Neighbors 619; Hix 91).

The reluctance to investigate the metaphor deeper than simply reporting it prevents the critics from asking whether the author's hints mean much more than the plain fact that *The Tunnel* contains twelve parts. It remains a mystery what this fact has to do with Schoenberg's serialism, in which a "row" is to contain a combination of all the twelve pitches of the Western chromatic scale treated equally, without privileging any as the tonic, before the same tones can be heard again in the next configuration of the row. Susan Stuart, in "An American Faust," regards a section from *The Tunnel* titled "A Fugue" as "a cross between Paul Celan's 'Totenfugue' and Gertrude Stein's 'Stanzas in Meditation'" (in Kellman and Malin 46), but provides no clue for the musical parallel. Overall, most of the critical attention *The Tunnel* attracts is aimed at the book's moral ambiguity in addressing fascism. Even when Stuart summons such a strongly musicalized work as Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* for comparative insights (Kellman and Malin 50-51), stylistic and thematic "crosses" are preferred to looking into how Adrian

Leverkühn's twelve-tone composition practices might shed light on Gass's mystifying claim.

Stuart's comparative perspective—addressing Celan or Mann in order to explain Gass—could, nonetheless, be a promising hermeneutical device for unpacking the author's music-related paratexts, such as authorial comments (*The Tunnel*) or titles ("Cartesian Sonata"). As someone who "live[d] in a library" (*LS* 10), Gass may have his musical inspirations mediated by other writers' texts. Of *Cartesian Sonata and Other Novellas* (1998), "Cartesian Sonata," which is a re-shuffled and re-titled conglomeration of much earlier material—three metafictional sketches previously published in the 1960s and 70s (*Cartesian Sonata* ix; McCaffery 171; Unsworth 82)—joins the list of literary "sonatas" and may well be rooted no less in one of them than in the author's own thinking "in terms of recursiveness, of repetitive patterns, of sonata forms" (Ammon 76). As "Cartesian Sonata" could once have been intended as a part of either *The Tunnel* or *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (Unsworth 83), the latter's peculiar musicality is also worth considering, though its aggressively pictorial interface eclipses its auditory dimension. In H. L. Hix's *Understanding William H. Gass*, there is a passage on how printing technologies connote contrapuntal voiceleading in *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (66-67),[1] and music-related terms are sporadically used in the discussion of *Cartesian Sonata and Other Novellas* (140-45). However, Hix goes into neither musical counterpoint nor why "Cartesian Sonata" is a sonata.

The early 2010s see an important shift in Gass's fictional treatment of music. None of Gass's works discussed above—not even "Cartesian Sonata"—features musicians as characters. For several decades, Gass speaks of music as a

[1] For a discussion of the concrete spatial dimensions of a book as a material entity mentioning *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* along with such boldly contrapuntal texts as Derrida's *Glas* (1974), see McHale (179-93).

structural analogy to and aural inspiration for his prose, but he only thematizes it in his last two books—*Middle C* and *Eyes* (2015). As the epigraph to the latter explains, "THE POINT WHERE AN UNDERGROUND SPRING SUDDENLY BURSTS TO THE SURFACE IS KNOWN AS AN EYE. IT IS A PLACE OF MYSTERY, WHERE DRY GROUND BECOMES SOAKED WITH WATER, AND NATURE GIVES US A GLIMPSE OF ALL THAT HAPPENS OUT OF THE REALM OF HUMAN NATURE" (*Eyes* vii). Gass's musical undercurrent finally comes up: "Don't Even Try, Sam" is extravagantly narrated by the piano from Michael Curtiz's celebrated 1942 film, *Casablanca*. The story was first published in *Conjunctions* in 2004, when Gass was manufacturing *Middle C*—a novel "about someone who has musical abilities" (Ammon 170) that took twelve years to write.[1] Music "suddenly bursts to the surface" of Gass's subject matter, so that his "music of prose," which generally meets Wolf's criteria "of acoustic foregrounding, of self-referentialization and of the departure from referential or grammatical consistency and (narrative) plausibility" (*Musicalization* 74), is supplemented with diegetic musical substance.

2.2. Faking and Failing Musical Education in *Middle C*

Launching *The Tunnel* in the late 1960s, Gass would then publish finalized bits of that "works-in-progress," thus contributing to the tradition codified by Joyce[2] and definitive of certain modes of postmodern writing (Unsworth 63-65). Episodes from *Middle C* appear in *Conjunctions* between 2001 and 2009, after the

[1] This is not record-breaking: Gass worked as long on *Omensetter's Luck*, and *The Tunnel* remained unfinished for over a quarter-century.
[2] While its fragments appeared in *Transatlantic Review* and other Parisian magazines in the 1920s, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* was known as *Work in Progress*, which "remained the title until the book was published in 1939" (Ellmann 574). Major studies of Gass are published prior to *The Tunnel*'s eventual publication in 1995, but they have sections devoted to the novel nonetheless (Saltzman 116-34; Holloway 92-111).

author declares in 2000 that "the piece threatens to be a novel" (in Ammon 170; cf. Neighbors 642-3). The patchwork principle of the novel's assemblage does not only result in such "lapses" as a literal repeat of the same diegetic event at two points in the story time.[1] Rather, it connotes the author's general contempt for mimetic conventions and his neglect of the ban for literal repeats observed in traditional realistic fiction, his taste for fragmentation and "departure from referential or grammatical consistency and (narrative) plausibility," which, along with the "acoustic foregrounding" (Wolf, *Musicalization* 74), musicalizes his prose. In (re)arranging smaller sections of the novel and finding the same diegetic detail equally fit for two textual segments, the author turns a contradiction at the level of signifieds into their consonance—an identical rhyme. The resulting narrative, which is seemingly chronological in its almost non-conflicting abidance to a traditional *Bildungsroman* pattern, subtly deconstructs that genre's normative linearity.

On the surface, *Middle C* is the least plotless of all Gass's narratives. It tells an essentially straightforward life story of Joseph Skizzen, alias Yussel Fixel, going from his Austrian parents' engagement in Graz and his birth in the bombed London of World War II up to his "present" status as a music professor at Whittlebauer College, a Gass invention planted into his fictive Woodbine, Ohio. Several anachronies "interrupting" the story of young Joey's education (see Table 4) are of either proleptic or even atemporal nature: distinctly put into separate chapters, they report Skizzen's routines during his Whittlebauer period, whose iterativity refers to no particular moment on the timeline (cf. Genette, *ND* 113-14, 154-55). Alternating between Joey's progressing life and digressions into

[1] The main character discovers and starts using the same self-study music manual, *Theory and Technic for the Young Beginner*, twice (*MC* 72, 219). Such amnesia on the protagonist's and/or the narrator's part may not necessarily be the author's.

<table>
<tr><td>→</td><td>beginning</td><td colspan="6">middle</td><td>end</td></tr>
<tr><td>Chapter</td><td>1930-40s[1]</td><td>1940-50s</td><td>1950-60s</td><td colspan="3">1960-70s</td><td colspan="2">1970-s-2000s</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td rowspan="2">Family past: Graz – London – N.Y.</td><td colspan="8" rowspan="2">→</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td colspan="6">←</td><td colspan="2">THE SENTENCE</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td rowspan="2"></td><td rowspan="2">Early education, Woodbine</td><td colspan="7" rowspan="2">→</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td colspan="6">←</td><td colspan="2">THE SENTENCE, feat. the Inhumanity Museum</td></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td><td rowspan="2">At High Note shop</td><td colspan="6" rowspan="2">→</td></tr>
<tr><td>8</td></tr>
<tr><td>9</td><td colspan="6">←</td><td colspan="2">THE SENTENCE, feat. fear of exposure</td></tr>
<tr><td>10</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="5"></td><td>Augsburg</td><td colspan="3">→</td></tr>
<tr><td>11</td><td>←</td><td colspan="3">Conversation with Mother about Father</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>12</td><td>Augsburg</td><td colspan="4">→</td></tr>
<tr><td>13</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="3">Augsburg – Urichstown</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="3"></td></tr>
<tr><td>14</td></tr>
<tr><td>15</td></tr>
<tr><td>16</td><td colspan="6">←</td><td colspan="2">THE SENTENCE, feat. Mother’s garden</td></tr>
<tr><td>17</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="5"></td><td rowspan="2">Urichstown library</td><td rowspan="5">→</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>18</td></tr>
<tr><td>19</td><td></td><td>Whittlebauer</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>20</td><td rowspan="2">Urichstown library</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>21</td></tr>
<tr><td>22</td><td colspan="6">←</td><td colspan="2">THE SENTENCE, feat. the Webern/Schulz lecture</td></tr>
<tr><td>23</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="6"></td><td rowspan="2">Urichstown library</td><td rowspan="6">→</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>24</td></tr>
<tr><td>25</td><td></td><td>Whittlebauer</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>26</td><td>The library</td><td rowspan="2">→</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>27</td><td>Family visit</td></tr>
<tr><td>28</td><td></td><td colspan="2">Mother’s garden</td></tr>
<tr><td>29</td><td colspan="6">←</td><td>Women’s voices</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>30</td><td colspan="6">←</td><td colspan="2">THE SENTENCE and/as the Inhumanity Museum</td></tr>
<tr><td>31</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Urichstown – Whittlebauer</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>32</td></tr>
<tr><td>33</td><td colspan="6" rowspan="5"></td><td>Whittlebauer</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>34</td><td colspan="2">Mother’s garden</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>35</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Whittlebauer</td></tr>
<tr><td>36</td></tr>
<tr><td>37</td><td>Mother</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>38</td><td colspan="6">←</td><td colspan="2">Skizzen’s poem</td></tr>
<tr><td>39</td><td colspan="6" rowspan="5"></td><td>Farewell to the past (disposing of car)</td><td>→</td></tr>
<tr><td>40</td><td></td><td>Skizzen’s imaginary self-defense for the Ethics Committee meeting, feat. THE SENTENCE (reprise)</td></tr>
<tr><td>41</td><td colspan="6">←</td><td colspan="2">The Inhumanity Museum cards</td></tr>
<tr><td>42</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td>Lecture on Bartók</td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>43</td><td>In fear of</td></tr>
<tr><td>44</td><td rowspan="2">→</td><td>the meeting</td></tr>
<tr><td>45</td><td>Happy end</td></tr>
</table>

***<u>Table 4</u>*. Chronology of *Middle C*.**

[1] The dates of the events are highly provisional. Unlike Vollmann, Gass cares little for historical accuracy, and isolated cues for determining how his fictional events might correspond to real ones, such as a mention of The Beatles records stocked in the High Note music shop (73), are of little significance.

his indefinite present bookmarked among chapters of a conventional storyline development, the novel moves from the beginning to the end in a plainly Aristotelian fashion. What divorces *Middle C* from such classical narrative models is suggested in the novel's title: it is the *middle* that absorbs all conflict at the narrative's opening and drives the resolution to be perfectly unclimactic. The middle—that "little discussed space between the narrative beginning and end" (Newcomb 132)—dominates the novel. The story of the trickster father (who escapes the Nazis by organizing the family's flight to London under cover of his pretended Jewishness, switches identities again to English when the war is over, and all of a sudden tracelessly abandons the family altogether) is reflected in Joey Skizzen's own series of self-transformations in America. Having forged his academic credentials to get a teaching post at Whittlebauer and faked a fancy CV as a Viennese musician émigré, Joseph Skizzen is scared more of public exposure as a fraud than of the end of humanity. The exposure never happens, his fear relieved by the formal denunciation of another colleague. A *Bildungsroman* masterplot of *becoming an artist*[1] is trivialized, and it fails. The elating narrow escape and the novel's happy ending are anti-cathartic and non-didactic.

The protagonist's journey in time does not take him very far, and no developmental change that generically defines the novel of education befalls his personality. Transplanted from London to Ohio by his mother, who will soon retire to her obsessive gardening, Joey is caught between two localities, where most chapters are set (roughly, chapters 3-39, but stretching on to embrace and replace the ending): Woodbine, with its Augsburg and Whittlebauer colleges, and Urichstown, with its public library. Gass's fictional province is extracted from

[1] Linda Hutcheon regards the *Bildungsroman* and "the Romantic tradition of the *Künstlerroman*" (*Narcissistic Narrative* 26) as direct predecessors of metafiction with its "more introverted literary level of mimesis" (12) exemplified, among others, by Huxley's *Point Counter Point*.

history. It builds up a temporality of its own, a stable and stale stagnation in the middle of everything: the Midwest of the United States, the middle octave on the piano keyboard where the middle C-note belongs, the preserved mid-20th century, the mediocre C mark at school. Once Skizzen is hired to teach at Whittlebauer after "the Vietnam protests of the sixties," which do *not* affect this college campus at all (*MC* 184), signals from outer events and places cease, so it is hard to determine the last few episodes on the timeline. We are just informed that "it took them four decades" (95) to *not* crack Skizzen's "slightly squinked credentials" (90) at Whittlebauer, but on the whole—measured against the history of mankind—"there was no beginning. No end. No middle. No knowing where you were" (161-62).

The novel's polysemous title[1] is thus both "thematic" and "rhematic," in Genette's terminology (*Paratexts* 78). On the one hand, it compresses the idea of the middle ground on which the central character's mediocre C-graded performances in life and music take place. On the other hand, the title connotes the novel's anti-climactic plot structure dominated by the middle, which shows how musical education is impossible, unless falsified.

Even if all the twelve components of James Phelan's "narrative progression" (16-23) are shown to be present in *Middle C*, some of them are broken by Gass, for whom "fiction is all foreplay" (*Tests* 12). The "global

[1] Arroyas maintains that a music-related title "opens up a metaphorical space. It functions as a cue or generator to set up two input mental spaces" (89) for a conceptual blend. In Gass, the blending is of more than two, since "middle" and "C" repeat all through the text and obtain still further meanings: cf. "His frowns could silence her in midsentence" (3); "Play C. Joey struck a key. There were several Cs, but Joey knew which was meant, a key that would sound a certain way" (48); "The choir claimed him as an alto, so he sang from his seat, in the middle of the music" (80); "Mr. Mallory was at least a Climber deserving a middle C, especially at the moment he stood on triumph on top of Everest" (89); "a grade of C on any exam" further associated with "middle-class comfort" (258), and so forth. Another dialectic concept to decipher Gass's title would be the grammatical notion of "middle voice"—neither active nor passive—that Hayden White discusses with respect to Barthes, Foucault, Freud, and Benveniste (White, *Fiction* 255-62).

instabilities or tensions," which normally characterize the "Launch" phase of the beginning (Phelan 18), are made of Gass's protagonist's faked identity gradually revealed to the reader starting from Chapter 6. But the "Voyage" of the middle section, which, according to Phelan, must develop those instabilities (19), is in Gass dysfunctional: Joey's situations are merely repeated. He counterfeits his driver's license—himself at first, then obtaining a more skillfully made artefact from the library's book-repair wizard and Urichstown "witch" Miss Moss. Then he forges his academic certificates. He expels himself from his first job at Mr. Kazan's music shop. He drops out of Augsburg and flees his library job—on both occasions after a threat of sexual assault from older women, Madame Mieux and Marjorie Bruss—French teacher and head librarian, respectively.[1] Skizzen endlessly undertakes essentially the same self-protective ritual that sustains his middle grounds. The tension of his fear of being exposed during the Whittlebauer Ethics Committee meeting is of a phantom nature: in the final chapters, Skizzen *thinks* he is being exposed, whereas in fact someone else is. This, however, also compromises the release of tension: catharsis is false, the doom is still ahead. The novel's "happy" ending contains no "Arrival," in Phelan's terms (20).

The protagonist's name alludes to this covert incompletion in Gass's narrative structure. As Joey tells the committee members at his college job interview, "Skizzen" literally means "sketches" in German (*MC* 283). Viewed from music history, the term is ambivalent: it may denote both a complete work and an unfinished one. As David Urrows writes in his discussion of "authentic performances" of early music, "[s]ketches ("Skizzen") must be here understood to

[1] Joey's habit of running away from women is anticipated in Gass's epigraph to the novel, the celebrated operatic aria closing Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1688), sung by the grieving heroine after the hero abandons her. Rejecting and fleeing Madame Mieux (the French for *better*) must be a narrative pun alluding to the protagonist's determination to rest in the middle—including his C's in French, of course.

mean the standard Baroque two-line score of melody and figured bass, not actual sketches for a composition. In the 19th century these two-line scores seemed to be only the outline, or sketch of the composition, and as such, incomplete" (26). What seems unfinished from the perspective of the later Common Practice Period is quite finished in terms of a preceding musical idiom. Baroque "sketches" look like sketches, whereas in fact they are complete works. On the surface, Gass signals that his narrative is completed, but *Middle C* simply finds a pretext to cease in the middle of its story, which is potentially as infinite as a fugue—or as a picaresque novel, where any number of structurally similar adventures can be stringed one after another.

Joey's education as fraud and musician/fraudulent musician is anticipated in his father's story he belatedly learns when his mother decides to reveal it (*MC* 3). Rudi Skizzen, a.k.a. Yankel Fixel, a.k.a. Raymond Scofield, is originally a fiddle-playing rural Austrian youth. In a sense, as he comes to realize it, Joseph is his absent father's replica: "My father's son! After all . . . after all . . . I *could* be proud" (322). In his Whittlebauer job interview, he lists a "Raymond Scofield" as his eminent London-based teacher (297) on top of the fictitious "great Gerhardt Rolfe" of Vienna (294). Mother Miriam, née Nita, reproaches him bitterly, "You're doing what your father did, you know that?" (144).

This hereditary taste for music and self-reinvention is developed in Joey's piano lessons with Mr. Hirk, whose age, poverty, and arthritis prevent him from playing anything himself to set an example—but who knows if he could ever really perform? While the naturally musical youth rambles the keyboard with tunes played by ear, Mr. Hirk either philosophizes about music or treats it anecdotally—the two formats Joseph picks for his own career. Hirk introduces his

pupil to the acousmatic nature of music[1] by means of metaphors, dusty Caruso records, and narrative accounts of the Polish pianist Ignace Jan Paderewski's early life (36-49). Building his argument around the idea of the harmonic series and glorifying the interval of "the major third, the notes of praise" (48), Hirk blunders into putting forward the CDE trichord—built of major seconds not thirds—as *the* example of "a trinity—a single sound": "C is the Son. D is God the Father, the sacred root, and E is the Holy Ghost. Now, Joey, can you do this? play all at once a loud C, a soft D, and an ordinary E. . . . There! You can hear them! They are everywhere yet in different places! They are one, but they are three" (49-50). With the dissonant CDE instead of the most obviously consonant C-major triad CEG (cf. Rosen, *Schoenberg* 27), it is either Mr. Hirk or Mr. Gass who simulates musical competence here, for Prof. Skizzen to follow in his footsteps.

With Mr. Hirk's lessons discontinued by Miriam, Joey's "progression to the higher stations of appreciation" as a "snob in motion" (69) falls into the self-study mode. Working as a shop assistant at High Note grants him free access to instruments, vinyl records, and even some printed materials, including "a copy of an instructional book called *Theory and Technic for the Young Beginner*" (72) he later discovers anew in the Urichstown public library (219). Passing "the inevitable but notorious Schoenberg phase," Joey's musical snobbery sidesteps Bartók, Liszt, Bach, Beethoven and "Aleksandr Skryabin (especially when so spelled)" (69), his piano skills insufficient for the *Moonlight* Sonata (see my section 2.3). His playing of the organ at the local Catholic church turns out to be heretical in the eyes of Augsburg's Lutheran Rector Luthardt (120-24). In his

[1] Hirk's explanation closely resonates with Scruton's ideas: "Then he used his groan for instruction. You hear it, my ache, emerge from my mouth. It has a location. Because it is in ordinary space. It is there, fastened to its cause. My grunt, I mean, not my pain. . . . But when we listen to music we enter a singular space, Joey, a space not of this room or any road" (*MC* 49).

library job, he gets a chance to practice on the piano—mostly by playing popular tunes from "a quaint book called *Songs That Never Grow Old* by Anonymous," which Gass mentions in his own "Acknowledgments"—"mostly a volume of 'Polly-Wolly-Doodle's and 'When the Corn Is Waving's" (*MC* 230). Skizzen inherits this printed artefact straight from across the fiction/fact divide, together with a passion for writing, reading, and silly songs in possession of the biographical author —an "omnivorous reader," a "dedicated dilettante," and "an opera nut when young" (Ammon 9).

Skizzen's early and genuine fascination with music is best illustrated with the episode of his engaged listening to a radio broadcast of Puccini's *Tosca*—not explicitly identified in the text—in Chapter 5. Accidentally tuning into "the Metropolitan Opera's matinee during a moment when all its throats were rapturous" and having no idea what it is, Joey is hypnotized by voices "of gold," whose singing in an unfamiliar language becomes another instrument in the full orchestra sound—"not a fiddle and a drum or faint hinky-tink [*sic*] piano" (*MC* 40). With the operatic storyline announced between the acts, "Joey heard everything happen as it had been foretold," experiencing the performance from the first-person stance, feeling "his own throat ache" as a result (40). This internally focalized mode of the character's perception, in symbiosis with the non-diegetic narrator's ironically distanced yet sympathetic voice, provides the reader with a model for experiencing diegetic music enactively, via Joey as portal.

Like the reader, the protagonist is exposed to music in predominantly verbal settings. Joey picks much of his music in the absence of actual sound, by *reading about it*. Similarly, as someone "driving a car without knowing how to drive and playing the piano without knowing how to play" (216), he compensates

his limited possibilities for direct encounters with music and his lack of performing skills with reading, writing, and talking about music.

Getting from High Note to Augsburg, Joey begins to read "like a rodent" (80) and acquires a "new enthusiasm for the word" (84), which flourishes further in his capacity as a Urichstown librarian. On top of simple songs and opera tunes he absorbs naturally, Joey's musical sophistication comes from books: he reads everything he can find, including Schenker and Schoenberg (163).[1] In the lack of systematic instruction, he cannot gain a professional grasp of their theories, but he embraces them by imaginative gap-filling, not unlike that involved in reading fiction. For Skizzen, literature turns out to be experientially akin to music: "In this way, though, he discovered that there was something unsafe about books. You began one; you were suitably entranced; the style, the subject, the arrangement—the noble sentiments, the brilliant thoughts, the charming creatures therein portrayed, such exciting situations: each seemed so satisfying that the eye could scarcely wait for the page to turn. It was, he remembered, how his fingers felt when they were playing well and music was majestically flowing from them as if by magic" (85).[2] Joey's disposition to enactive reading manifests itself with non-

[1] Schoenberg's theoretical treatise, *Harmonielehre* (1922), is a study of the very traditional harmony, which his own practice developed so radically that Schenker was appalled to hear even his First String Quartet premiered in Vienna (Simms 135). For an outline of the theoretical polemics between the two, see Dahlhaus (*Schoenberg* 134-40).

[2] Skizzen is certainly not the first fictional entity suspicious of art's immersive influence. Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, whose central character fictionally annexes Schoenberg's invention of the twelve-tone system, dramatizes the word vs. music clash: its primary diegetic biographer of his late composer friend expropriates the latter's now-lost music, subjecting its Dionysian powers to the Apollonian texture of organized past-tense narrative, so that his own classical philology thus wins over the devilish musical gift. In Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924)—one of Gass's "fifty literary pillars" (*Temple* 29-60)—a character formulates this clash and declares music "inarticulate," "dubious," "irresponsible," "dangerous," "equivocal," and "politically suspect" (Mann 113-14). Even though Gass is mostly skeptical about Tolstoy (*Temple* 195; Ammon 100), Mann was not, and the fear of music's taking hold of human emotions and actions, most notoriously articulated by the main character in Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), is discussed in terms of Tolstoy's "infection theory" from his treatise *What Is Art?* (1897), which associates the danger with literary infection (see Emerson 437-40; Robinson 16-19). Gass sometimes echoes Tolstoy (cf. Ammon 5, 14-15).

fiction no less than with fiction: picking "a book about a musician named Boulez," Joey is completely carried away. For him, the most speculative issues in new music theory are literally breathtaking and alarming. Reading about modern composers' "quarrels" with tonality and other highly technical abstractions expressed in a jargon he only vaguely understands, Joey ultimately identifies with Pierre Boulez—because of his "search for a father," or Anton von Webern—because he is "an Austrian" (222), and loses "all the sense of time" (223). Skizzen vividly pictures musicology's abstract terms and becomes excited over the entire music-related vocabulary, of which he needs to make sense through sheer guessing. For Gass's protagonist, there is no borderline between the actual and the verbal, the music and the words. Unlike Vollmann, Gass writes little verbal music, for his "music of prose" project is no less metamusical than metafictional. With words *as* music, we learn about both. Skizzen's reading and listening experiences lead to a common denominator and are crafted of the same material: "combination[s] of words" (222) as *tones* organized into larger patterns—figures and cadencing phrases—notated for the reader's embodied performance.

At Whittlebauer, Skizzen strategically secures himself a publication record by actually sending out several journal articles on Schoenberg, while his natural enthusiasm for music is replaced with a new hobby-horse—collecting newspaper clips on violence for the Inhumanity Museum in his home's cellar. In this guise, Joseph Skizzen is a(n in)version of the first-person narrator of *The Tunnel*, history professor William Frederick Kohler, the basement-based author of *Guilt and Innocence in Hitler's Germany*. However, two features distinguish Skizzen from such characters as Kohler or Comrade Alexandrov in Vollmann's *Europe Central*.

First, Skizzen holds neither Hitlerite nor Stalinist sympathies. His own ethical faults are moderate. As the narrative account of Joey's life progresses, and we learn more about his Whittlebauer period, our expectations for the hero's success in musicianship are frustrated. The sad picture accumulates in the chapters marked with back arrows in Table 4: it gradually becomes clear that Skizzen's musical aspirations fail, although he is now a tenured music professor. In Chapter 3, he is still referred to "as a music critic—a musicologist—as a philosopher of music" (27), who "heard the music ahead of what he read" (29). In Chapter 6 we find him labelled as a "faux doctor and musician" in passing (52). In Chapter 9, his academic dishonesty is revealed in detail (86-89). The information is thus presented in two counter-directed streams, one fashioned as a traditional narrative of personal growth, the other indicating that there is no growth. Both the plot and the protagonist are stuck forever midway. With his "preference for mediocrity" (103), Gass's protagonist is an antipode to his academic hero Schoenberg, who "was incapable of the middle-C mind" (303).[1] But neither is Joey an antihero. Unlike Paul de Man—a model for the main character in John Banville's *Shroud* (2002)— Skizzen does not teach at Cornell, Johns Hopkins, and Yale; he is too young to have published anti-Semitic articles in Belgian collaborationist newspapers, although, like de Man, he lies about his past and doctors his doctoral degree.[2] Skizzen measures his own guilt against the atrocities testified by his Inhumanity Museum, so that he can "rightly say to his accusers (and accused he would be): When you were destroying yourselves and your cities, I was not there

[1] Cf. Schoenberg's paratextual "Foreword" in the score of *Three Satires for Mixed Chorus*: "The middle road is the only one which does not lead to Rome" (qtd. in Adorno, *Philosophy* 1).
[2] For details of the de Man case, see Menand. In *The Tunnel*, Kohler, who would be a professor of Hitler Studies had Gass adopted this fictional academic subject from DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985), participates in the 1938 Kristallnacht (*Tunnel* 317-54), which tentatively suggests that de Man's case might be inspirational for Gass. Although he mentions de Man in a book review, mocking Yale deconstructionists' ideas (Gass, "Learning" n.p.), Gass does not seem to have openly commented on the scandalous case.

. . . I've done nothing brave but nothing squalid, nothing farsighted but nothing blind, nothing to make me proud, yet never have I had to be ashamed" (*MC* 321; cf. 350-56). Yes, Skizzen confuses his East with his West when he enlightens his "ignorant" students about the Second World War's outset (217), but his professional incompetence is comic, harmless, and quite ordinary next to his fellow faculty profiles.[1] In a sense, all institutions he gets affiliated with—the music shop, Augsburg, the library, and Whittlebauer—are more hypocritical in their pretense of high moral standards than he is in his artful mimicry, so too with other characters.[2]

Second, unlike Kohler and Alexandrov, Skizzen never becomes a primary narrator. His secondary diegetic narration—in the chapters reproducing his lectures on modern composers—is always properly embedded within non-diegetic narration. His inadequacy as a transmitter of anything objectively genuine, whether in terms of history or music, is made explicit from the start. At first, it is presented as a lonely youth's mythologizing instinct, a natural aberration: "In his memory Mr. Hirk had already become a magnificent teacher—his one and only—quickly as the great tutors had to be" (84). As Joey deliberately builds up his false identity of a foreigner, he starts treating his own disguise in Shakespearean terms.[3]

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[1] Skizzen's geography may be no worse than the part-time geography professor's, whose fake PhD is exposed instead of Skizzen's at the Whittlebauer Ethics Committee meeting (*MC* 381-87).

[2] The storyworld swarms with impostors, forgers, and liars. Apart from Skizzen Sr., the fake geography PhD, and, possibly, Mr. Hirk, there is Castle Cairfill—Joey's workmate at High Note who frames him as a thief; Professor Ludens, who rats on Joey to Augsburg Rector Luthardt; Madame Mieux, who shams a passion for French composers and perhaps even her expertise in French; Miss Moss, who upgrades Joey's counterfeited driver's license "from an F to a gentleman's C" (198); and Marjorie Bruss, who libelously attributes her own outrageous scream to the library's Beckettian client, bum Portho. Even Miriam, who claims Austrian integrity, cannot truly maintain it, coming to feel perfectly at home in Midwestern culture.

[3] "But if the world were a stage, what was backstage . . . and where were the actors and the actresses when they weren't on . . . and why were only some shows sold out to an audience more often than not anxiously fanning their faces and drinking booze, because wouldn't they be participants, too? . . . Every performance would have to be a play about a play within a play. It was a daze-inducing thought" (*MC* 254). Cf. "The satisfaction he felt at being to the world an artifice was the deepest he knew. All the world was a stage" (323).

He is not a petty conman, but a *verbal* composer and performer: "While he drove he rehearsed his story, divided nicely into edifying anecdotes: prestos with adagios after them, bright panels companioned by pastels more suitable on pajamas" (197; cf. 322).

Even so, the non-diegetic narratorial function in *Middle C*, stable and solid compared to what we find in Vollmann, is not completely reliable. Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon, who maintain that readers perceive the narrators as conversation participants (16; cf. Fludernik xi-xii, 12-13; Popova 7), speak of the "narrator–character association" when "the properties of one may be presumed to be true of the other" (Bortolussi and Dixon 82). In *Middle C*, Joseph Skizzen is privileged to be the only internally focalized character. While the narrative follows him closely, he becomes alloyed with the narrator, whose voice we often hear as Skizzen's own (due to Gass's extensive use of free indirect discourse), and who is thereby charged with a degree of the protagonist's unreliability. Furthermore, to a "statistical reader" of Gass,[1] both the character's and the narrator's alignment with the author is tangible. Gass's narrators are always unreliable in mimetic terms, since the author prioritizes form over plausibility and consistency, hence such contradictions as the twice-told tale of *Theory and Technic for the Young Beginner*, or a repeated statement of Miriam's poor English (*MC* 10, 14, 157) alongside her idiomatic speech in Chapter 11 (105-12).[2]

[1] The term is introduced by Bortolussi and Dixon (44) as a departure from literary theory's long row of abstract reader-constructs. Although there are no sociological studies of Gass's actual audience, an informed guess would be that many of his readers are experts in experimental fiction, who read analytically rather than for the plot.

[2] A "realistic motivation" (cf. Tomashevsky 80-84) for Miriam's fluent English arrives later, when we find her deeply engaged with gardening and "the girls of Woodbine" who share her passion for it: "her English, though in an odd corner of its world, greatly improved" (*MC* 159), and she even becomes "well spoken" (307), with occasional remnants of German syntax: "A cultivar is a new plant from an old plant taken" (309). Cf. Rabinowitz on "the rule of realism" (*Before Reading* 99, 155-56).

The narratorial voice of *Middle C*, typically of Gass, exploits the capacity of language to generate multiple contextual meanings up to a point where words are treated as musical notes,[1] which have no meaning in isolation. The common belief that words have fixed meanings outside context is undermined in both poetry and prose by assemblages of word configurations determined by sonic, not semantic, needs—hence Gass's trademark alliterations, rhymes, and rhythms. Through simple polysemy, the same words are used in different contexts actualizing their different meanings. With fictional events and characters emancipated from their mimetic functions, these principles are recognizably formalist—and so is Gass, in his self-declaration (Bumas 99).

Apart from the diversification of the novel's title—the "middles" and the "C's" scattered across the text—there are many other recurrent words and themes re-contextualized and semantically modified, forming a parallel flow to the straight narrative of Skizzen's life. For example, in Chapter 9 our attention is drawn to the polysemous and homophonic noun/verb "spell," the pun immediately realized in Skizzen's typo: a spell "put upon mankind" is misspelled as "spelll" (86). The entire next paragraph has tripled *l* wherever it must be doubled (87). Another "spell" is preferred to its synonyms (*period*, *span*) in the next chapter's "[f]or a brief spell [of time]" (98); in Chapter 11, "the Lord's will is spelled out by the church" (111); among other appearances of the word, its initially used sense returns in connection with women's witchcraft—Miss Moss's "concocting spells," and Miss Spiky's casting them (279). In Chapter 33, Skizzen's sudden weakness is ascribed to "a magic spell suddenly cast upon him," which Miriam first identifies as "metaphorical": she thinks it stands for being "tired of it all,"

[1] I have no intention of investing such simplistic analogies with any theoretical significance, as was sometimes negotiated between musicology and Chomskian linguistics—most popularly, by Leonard Bernstein (53-77), more elaborately—in Lerdahl and Jackendoff.

especially of “filling out forms,” but it turns out “both Joseph and Joey were equally ill”: note the persistent double *l*’s in combination with the protagonist’s schizophrenic (Skizzo-phrenic?) duplication (305). *Middle C*’s repeated themes—the Sentence and the Inhumanity Museum, Miriam’s garden, women’s malice, music, and teaching—come differently worded, i.e. *varied* every time. Gass redirects our attention from what happens to the surface of words. Mimesis as imitation of reality is replaced with imitative counterpoint: Chapter 29 is a canon of four women’s voices in Joseph’s head, presented as a sequence of paragraphed utterances, speakers numbered with dots, overlapping, and echoing one another (275-81).

Some of Gass’s auditory and structural effects are produced within, others without the reach of diegetic consciousnesses. A promising theoretical distinction in this respect is the one between diegetic and non-diegetic music usually applied to film sound. In the cinematic medium, the spectators are perceptually exposed to *all* music in the soundtrack. Some of it, however, is unavailable to screened characters, but rather serves as an extra expressive device to highlight their feelings or point out certain aspects of the setting. Dubbed non-diegetic for this reason, such music is opposed to diegetic music, which the characters hear and/or perform. According to James Buhler, the pair of terms was first applied to film music by Claudia Gorbman for “making the informal industry distinction between source and background music more systematic” (Buhler 40).

In *Unheard Melodies* (1987), Gorbman places film music into a narratological framework (11-30). After drawing the distinction in question (3), she defines diegetic music as “music that (apparently) issues from a source within the narrative” (22), and demonstrates how the distinction is often blurred in film

(20-24; cf. Buhler 39-44; Buhler et al. 66-75). The distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic music is not drawn in literary studies, since literary musical presences are, routinely, not literal.[1] However, if Scher's verbal music can be viewed as the primary exponent of diegetic music—the music bound to exist and be audible within the storyworld—his "word music" and literary imitation of musical forms and structures may be interpreted as non-diegetic. The problem is, of course, that this term (as well as its equivalent in Genette—*heterodiegetic*) is reserved to indicate narrative entities'—primarily, narrators'—position outside of the storyworld. For this reason, it would not be clear how Gass's acoustically foregrounded ("poetized," in Schmid) textual fragment such as this is non-diegetic: "He altered, yet **he** remained **he**. Austrian to a T. Mustached. Goateed" (*MC* 23; author's emphasis). With the close link between the diegetic character and the non-diegetic narrator of *Middle C*, the rhyming may be attributed to Skizzen himself, thinking or even saying it, so that the effect is quite (homo)diegetic. The pair of *diegesis* and *exegesis* that Schmid uses (6) to distinguish between Genette's *diégèse* (the narrated world, the "what" represented) and discourse (the "how," the manner of presenting), may come to the rescue. A whole thicket of terminologically loose dichotomies may intuitively stand for the pair: content and form, matter and manner, subject and style, the

[1] Nevertheless, the oral roots of literature are well-known. As summarized by Neubauer, "[b]efore the spread of printed books, all three literary genres—poetry and prose as well as theater—were usually performed, often in conjunction with some form of music. The silent reading of print gradually replaced reciting and communal reading . . . . Recent literary criticism has recognized, however, that readers have a constructive role in making a text" ("Music" 8). In narratology, the category of "voice" is generally stripped of its literally oral/aural origins (e.g. Walsh, *Rhetoric* 87). Even Ong's polemics with Derrida on orality and writing (Ong 75-77, 127, 162-166), or Mey's recognition of language's indispensable "vocality" (112) suppress the auditory dimensions of silent reading. The emergent field of audionarratology (cf. Mildorf and Kinzel) primarily focuses on such tangible "interfaces of sound" as audiobook and radio drama, although it generously hosts discussions of auditory aspects of silent reading (Delazari, "Voicing"). A notable exception is Kuzmičová's work on the reader's auditory mental imagery ("Outer"; "Literary Narrative"), which recognizes the importance of diegetic sound, but mainly deals with diegetic speech rather than noise or music. See also De Bruyn, who introduces diegetic animal sound to literary soundscapes.

narrated and the narration, fiction and diction (Genette), even theme and rheme (Genette again, with his thematic and rhematic paratexts). What is dubbed as referential vs. technical forms in Wolf's typology of musico-literary intermediality (*Musicalization* 70) making use of the telling/showing binary[1] may thus also be seen in terms of *diegetic* and *exegetic*. In contrast to ***diegetic music***, which belongs in the fictional universe, ***exegetic music*** is self-referentially created by the verbal means itself. As my last example from Gass shows, it can also be diegetic,[2] if the verbal means is applied by diegetic entities—in a character's or diegetic narrator's speech and a non-diegetic narrator's free indirect discourse that reproduces a character's wording. However, in section 2.4, I argue that Gass finds a non-diegetic use for musical sound, turning it from a signified into a signifier without the protagonist's awareness of the alteration. Like a film viewer hearing non-diegetic music, the reader may receive something the character does not. First, however, I deal with Gass's almost exceptional case of verbal music.

2.3. The *Moonlight* Sonata and the Experientiality of Diegetic Music

Beethoven's Op. 27 no. 2 (1801) is originally titled *Sonata quasi una fantasia* ("almost a fantasy," "sonata in the manner of a fantasy"). It had little to do with *Moonlight* until five years after the composer's death, when the "poet-critic Ludwig Rellstab named it so in 1832, saying that the opening movement made him think of moonlight rippling the waves of Lake Lucerne" (Marek 318).[3]

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[1] Cf. Caracciolo's triple distinction between thematic narrative devices, on the one hand, and discursive and structural ones, on the other (*Experientiality* 42-44).

[2] Schmid, who uses the term "exegetic" in the same sense, notices that it cannot provide the strict opposite for "diegetic" with respect to narrators, either: "The diegetic narrators appear . . . in both the exegesis, the narration, and the diegesis, the narrated story" (68).

[3] Since Beethoven identically paratexts both piano sonatas of Op. 27 to highlight their formal irregularities, and Piano Sonata in E-flat major Op. 27, No. 1 is also *Quasi una fantasia*, the *Moonlight* label is widely used in Beethoven criticism despite its lack of authenticity, to ease reference and avoid confusion.

Joseph Skizzen, the young shop assistant at Mr. Emil Kazan's High Note music store, is vaguely aware of this fact, since the album notes on the Claudio Arrau recording—"the only one they had" of the piece—inform him "that Beethoven hated the popular sentimental description of the *adagio sostenuto*—the latter word one Joey had adored long before he knew what it meant or how something *sostenuto* sounded: in this case, a dreamy drifting calm before the storm" (*MC* 72). Joey's semi-accurate knowledge about the inauthenticity of the universally familiar tag for one of Beethoven's trademark pieces, a classic *par excellence*, does not prevent him from picturing how, "[d]espite Beethoven's disapproval, the streetlamps made moonlight when they came on" (72-73).

Even though music decisively enters Gass's fictional world in *Middle C*, there are hardly any detailed accounts of its diegetic presence. Instances of when and how the protagonist plays and listens to music are limited to simple references to numerous classical and popular works (including some popular classics and classical pop, as well as folk tunes) by their titles, and still more of those are mentioned as subjects of Skizzen's thought or talk. In his lectures, Professor Skizzen neither plays much music nor analyzes its form (not that he is quite able to), so when he speaks of a piece such as Béla Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943) in Chapter 42 (*MC* 366-74), he covers its biographical context and philosophical implications, but gives his students and Gass's readers little chance to catch any glimpse of what the piece actually sounds like. The narrative treatment given to Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor is thus an exceptional passage of Gass's verbal music, one page and a half long, which is separated from the explicit reference to the sonata by two pages and does not name it directly, yet leaves the reader with no doubt about which piece the

character occupies himself with one night, staying in High Note after working hours.

Chapter 8, where the passage occurs, opens with the narrator's report of High Note being robbed, upon which "most of the things that were missing . . . came from the classical box, the 'Moonlight Sonata' for one" (74). If Gass's sensitivity with the use and distribution of words is to be taken seriously, we should notice that "moonlight" is notated six times in the previous chapter: twice in relation to the Beethoven sonata, but another two times as part of the title of "Moonlight in Vermont" (68, 70)—the song from 1944, which Joey likes, but whose lyrics he cannot remember, giving preference to the sweet and foreign Italian sounds of his favorite aria "about a furtive tear," "*un ah furr teev ah la gree ma*" (i.e. Donizetti's "Una Furtiva Lagrima") (68)—and twice in lines from other songs, "On Moonlight Bay" and "Moonlight Becomes You" (72). Placed in such a company of popular vocal music hits and announced to be "missing," the sonata comes back to Joey in the entranced state imposed on him by being falsely accused of theft:

> He rocked the chair a bit forward to the right, a bit backward to the left, and a bit forward to the right again, in a rhythm that imitated the opening of the missing sonata, although at first he was unaware of the connection, rocking only as the grieving do, back and forth, as if their grief were crying baby: *dum doh dee dum doh dee dum doh dee dum*. Then above it, as he rocked, he heard the treble. First, the heartbeat of the quiet world, steady, indifferent, calm, and then higher incry of consciousness—Joey's—fluttering, hovering, over it. He sat up then, stood up then, and went to the piano where he played the three-note base just as slowly as it was given—again and again—just as it was given. The initial *dum* became the final not the first note of the triplet, while in the treble another triplet was performing as though without net. (*MC* 76)

The C-sharp minor *arpeggio* of Beethoven's opening bars is mentally rehearsed by Gass's character as an immediate correlative to his own emotional

state. Functionally, the diegetic music Joey plays in his head is similar to a non-diegetic fragment of soundtrack in a film, an aid for the viewer to determine a character's inner feelings, a musical metaphor for something that is concealed by the external focus of the camera-eye.[1] The habit of hearing music as emotional landscape, which Joey's hackneyed moonlight associations have previously conformed with, is certainly as common as so many other phenomena on and beyond *Middle C*'s fictional orbit. The step from reality (the protagonist's actual "grief" over his bad luck and loss, not least the loss of the *Moonlight* Sonata record) to an acousmatic experience of music (hearing the notes of a particular minor chord moving inescapably towards the melody played in the right hand, with no actual sound available from any physical source) is made metonymically rather than metaphorically. Skizzen's mind lands on the piece most closely at hand, under the circumstances, and does so by rocking the chair to the rhythm of the Beethoven (cf. Vollmann's "rocking-horse" image in the transposition of Shostakovich's cello sonata). It is the music's own "quiet world, steady, indifferent, calm" that Joey's consciousness enters, and he intuitively finds himself immersed in it. Gradually, he departs from his preconditioned ICAs of grieving moonlight. As soon as music gains the status of a recognizable mental event, Joey is determined to externalize it.

Alan Palmer writes in *Fictional Minds*, relying on behaviorism and Damasio's neurological findings, that "mental events are logical constructions out of dispositions to behave in certain ways. This is a very strong claim that amounts, in non-philosophical language, to saying that, when we talk about mental events, we are talking only about dispositions to behave" (108). Skizzen's next physical

[1] By default, non-diegetic film music "grants insight into what must otherwise remain unseen and unsaid: psychology, mood, motivation. This symbolic function would become the principal justification for the non-diegetic score" (Buhler 47).

move is towards the instrument, meant to realize the previously acquired intentional disposition. Equipped with his ability to play by ear, he manages to achieve and temporarily sustain Beethoven's rhythmic and harmonic pattern "as it was given" (*MC* 76).

Gass's verbal score fully depends on Joey's performance, as there is no other entity to channel the sonata—the non-diegetic narrator is bound by internal focalization, and otherwise ironically unhelpful.[1] Joey's performance is rooted in his general gift for playing "by hunt-and-peck, by instinct, by guess and by gosh" (138) and in his experiential background of previous listenings to the sonata—a background so many readers would share. Cinematic ICAs (such as Rellstab's moonlight) are immediately suppressed in Gass's passage, since Joey's intentionality is truly directed at the musical object itself, escaping the concrete outer images, emotions, and events of his own life.

The use of onomatopoeic word music—the "*doh dee dum*"[2] sequence graphically placed with extra blanks to parse Beethoven's triplets—connects the passage to how the sound of the *Moonlight*'s opening is subjectively heard, not to how Beethoven wrote it. In fact, Gass's word notation contradicts the original score, where the very first downbeat eighth note in measure 1 is *not* separated from the other two, so the triplet goes *dum doh dee dum doh dee dum doh dee dum doh dee*, and not the way Joey hears it further:

> Next he worked on deepening the thrum as Beethoven darkened it—there was pedal—damn—there was pedal—but he couldn't get the treble to go where he wanted it to go. That first *dum* was in a sense never the first *dum* again. Rather it was an end, so the music repeated, not its departure, but its return, again and again—*doh dee*

[1] Gass's narratorial voice, tightly stuck to the protagonist's, may neither possess a higher level of musical expertise, nor be considered in any way less deceitful than Skizzen's.
[2] Cf. the "*la dee dah dee dah dee dah dee dah, la dee dah, lah dee dah*" standing for another Beethoven classic, Minuet in G, which Joseph means but forgets to play at the beginning of his debut lecture at Whittlebauer (*MC* 183), skipping it accidentally for Chopin and Bartók.

> *dum*—as if a series of numbers that began 1 23 became 1 231 231 231 . . . eventually 312 312 312 . . . then 1 23 once more. It was all so simply managed yet not with the same sort of simplicity that governed "Indian Love Call" or "You're a Grand Old Flag." And while working, Joey lost the music's mood, felt it leave him, because his perch in such a beautiful space was so precarious. The line of consciousness that the treble drew . . . he couldn't continue to make it his. (76-77)

In Beethoven, the accent on each triplet's first note (and particularly the very first triplet's first note serving as the downbeat for the entire bar) does not re-attach the remaining two notes to the next triplet's first note. Joey's initial mistake of hearing the opening note as isolated from the others is explained by the fact that Beethoven's first G-sharp is reinforced by the double-octave C-sharp in the bass, which makes it dynamically (and in some performances, rhythmically) stand out. Further regroupings of the numbered notes of the accompaniment and the freedom with which Joey reinterprets the pattern indicate subjective play of the mind, which does not cease when he approaches the piano.

Until a certain moment, Joey's hands are in perfect coordination with his inner ear, as in the "thought-action continuum" of the "extended mind" (Palmer 120)[1] by which music is so "simply managed." In concordance, the narrator weaves a verbal web of word music to be related to verbal music's subject matter: we may note how Gass's alliterations and assonances embed and mimic the distribution of the same tones in different positions ("deepening"/"darkened"/ "departure," "thrum"/"damn"/"*dum*," "pedal"/"treble", "again"/"began"/ "became"). Significantly, it is from being distracted by popular tunes ("Indian Love Call" and "You're a Grand Old Flag") that Joey's loss of "the music's

[1] It is quite trivial to observe that a pianist and piano form a unified system, with the instrument being an extension of the musician's body in relation to the respectively extended mind—the phenomenon that proponents of the extended mind thesis" Andy Clark and David Chalmers illustrate by the now more universally available experience of using a computer (7) and "creating a coupled system that can be seen as a cognitive system in its own right" (8).

mood" results, while verse-like effects of Gass's prose cease at the same point. The protagonist's musical concentration does not exceed the sonata's first few measures. Lack of training prevents him from playing any further. Joey's thought returns to his current environment and bodily position, as he finds himself "sitting at his fourth piano," and after a flashback to his previous pianos, "the decently tuned instrument he had just fingered [ends up] betraying Beethoven in a manufactured moonlight" (77).

The three notes Skizzen strikes again to "let them resonate in the room" now correspond to the twilight on High Street he sees through the window, and although those notes contain "all the dimensions, most of the elements, some of the dynamics, the shadings, of the musical world," they are gone with it:

> Of course he knew where these three notes belonged in the rest of the piece, yet, after all, they were an announcement. At the opening of the sonata, these tones were what there was, and nothing else was . . . nothing else was; though soon, Joey heard, they were gone . . . instead of being there, they were gone . . . immediately . . . in an instant they were gone; and nothing else could have been in the place they made but them . . . those three . . . just them; they were the entire past; and if they came again, they came at a different time, took up a different part of musical space; and if they appeared at another time and space, they were like an actor in another role, a cherry melting in a pie and not atop a sundae, a person in another country. (77)

Skizzen's train of thought, rendered in the mode of free indirect discourse, goes naturally to daily routines: "Tomorrow, there'd be a replay." Once this transition is complete, he forgets the music altogether and moves on along his life. Joey packs his things and exits the shop for good.

The instant when music takes its full effect is brief, due to the character's limitations. Joey cannot really go through Beethoven's masterpiece any further than most people, even though his emotional and intellectual response to its celebrated opening measures is quite profound, and he discovers (or rediscovers,

considering his lessons with Mr. Hirk) a way to acousmatic listening, appreciating the music's own time and space as divorced from ordinary space and sound. This brief narrative "pause," in Genette's sense, is also taken for the character's decision to get crystallized, so it has a plain narrative function on top of its descriptive one. At the same time, Gass's *Moonlight* Sonata demonstrates that grasping certain aspects of musical experience requires substantial preparation and deep concentration. In the Beethoven episode, Skizzen is everyman, reaching the limits of musical experience most of us—even those with some knowledge of the piano and a lot of enthusiasm for classical music—can expect.

On the whole, Gass's intermedial transposition of Beethoven fails in the absence of a narrative instance to make a more profound story of the score, so that the sonata is not even dis-narrated (see section 1.4 above) but instead almost not narrated at all. Even so, the passage could be considered much more successful in terms of musical experientiality than the more detailed and score-centered Shostakoviches of Vollmann's—for two main reasons.

First, the Beethoven episode in *Middle C* comes relatively early in the book. The inertia of our *Bildungsroman* expectation to find the protagonist properly educated is strong, and the character at this stage is much less compromised by his dishonestly acquired position of a music professor than in the later chapters, when the reader accumulates more straightforward evidence of Joey's faked musicianship. In terms of what Phelan calls "narrative judgments" (3), Joey's musical aspirations at High Note entrust rather than discredit him, and the unfair attitude he has just received from his employer, who holds him guilty of the stealing he did not commit, pulls extra moral righteousness on his side. Therefore, what is an important factor in the context of the entire Gass novel, and

probably a disclaimer for re-readers of *Middle C*—Professor Skizzen's low music profile—may not overshadow consciousness-enactment, in Caracciolo's sense, as a prerequisite for our experiencing verbal music musically. Kuzmičova's requirement for familiar objects of high affordance linked to action verbs and mentioned in the text in passing to foster the effect of presence ("Presence" 30-32) is met by the protagonist's rocking of the chair: unlike pianos, chairs[1] appear almost universal. Such experiential cues, and the internal focalization on a character still amiable enough to empathize/identify with, are at the least promising for triggering the reader's enactive response.

Second, Gass's Beethoven must be a perfect choice in terms of how it overlaps with a reader's experiential background. The opening chords of the *Moonlight* Sonata, and neither its first movement's further development nor its second and third movements,[2] are precisely what a vast majority of readers would easily recognize. Moreover, most of us would be able to mentally rehearse those chords for approximately as long as Joey Skizzen does, i.e. until only a few measures into the "treble" (mm. 1-8). Paradoxically, the protagonist's abortion of the piece does not hinder but encourages us to remember and hear the music in the mind's ear. Those of us who are better at that do not have to stop where Joey does. As some structuralists suggested long ago by relying on cybernetic models (Lotman 25-31), and as Bortolussi and Dixon experimentally justify by testing actual readers (91-95), more explicit data does not mean more information gained,

[1] As a philosophy professor fond of Plato and Descartes, Gass may have used chairs and tables as a handy illustrative tool for teaching *eidos*, *mimesis*, and *matter*. In "The Ontology of the Sentence," Gass writes at length about chairs (*WWW* 324-25). It must be easy for him to see a metaphorical rapport between chairs and musical phrases. Interestingly, a rocking chair comes up in an experiment to define music as a "technology of emotion construction" (Juslin and Sloboda 170).
[2] Beethoven's finale, *Presto agitato*, would certainly sound familiar to many people, but few of them would connect the movement to the *Moonlight*. The middle movement, *Allegretto*, which "Liszt finely described as '*une fleur entre deux abîmes*'" ("a flower between abysses"), is not as memorable in itself as is "dramatic by position" (Tovey 80), encircled by the intense outer movements.

as richer "narratorial implicature" makes the text both more informative and more engaging.[1] With this in mind, the following passage in Gass, which is easy to read as social satire, may sound more affirmative: "Joey found that, in America, at least, if you turned out a tune when you played the piano, then you played the piano; the skill was given you as easily as a second cup; appearances were better than reality; and the sight of someone slightly inept was immensely reassuring to those woefully without ability" (65). Lay audiences are certainly mocked in *Middle C*, and Skizzen could qualify as the champion of middle-brow taste, skills, and standards. Yet apart from his hypocritical praise of Schoenberg, his uncultivated musicality and his "inner talent" (138) are genuine. Since Gass's literarily highbrow readership may be musically quite middle-brow, activating its musical intuitions to the familiar "candidate for the most famous piece of serious art music ever written" (Rosen, *Piano* 156) is the most positive vision of musicality Gass can spare. Demonstrating a negative case by Skizzen's caricatured expertise in twelve-tone music at the level of diegetic reality, but implementing some simple structural equivalents to serial techniques in his narrative texture, Gass is still on democratically comprehensible middle terrain—with no radical experimentation of his earlier cryptic musicalizations.

2.4. The Second Viennese School: A Non-Diegetic Turn

In a 1997 interview, Gass respectfully refers to Theodor Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music*, the book dramatizing the Schoenberg vs. Stravinsky

[1] Kuzmičova shows that detailed description is less perceptually mimetic and immersive at the pre-conceptual level than brief descriptive references in passing ("Fidelity" 275, 281, 311). If that is the case, the short allusion to Brahms's First Piano Quartet playing in Joey's head must be more experientially suggestive than a lengthy description in musicological terms, even though either Gass or Skizzen blunders to "recompose" Brahms's original G minor into the major: "Joseph stepped off a block from the Point and whistled his way home, rehearsing the piano opening of a Brahms quartet, the first one in G major [*sic*], with Rubinstein and the Guarneri, pretending to be the piano as it tiptoes down a short flight of stairs into the strings" (138).

clash as definitive of the 20th-century music—and unconditionally in favor of the former composer. Gass shares Adorno's vision of true art's objective to be radically innovative, "demolish old forms and constitute new ones" (Ammon 139). In Chapter 9 of *Middle C*, Adorno's name stands next to Brecht's and [Thomas] Mann's, the "other exiles" whom Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) joins in California after he flees Europe from the rising Nazi (*MC* 96). This suggests that Adorno's book is both Gass's and Skizzen's source on "Uncle Arnold."[1]

Encouraging her son to seek a teaching appointment at Whittlebauer, Miriam lays the core argument for his professorial strategies: "You are a Schoenbuggy man, and who knows he but you?" (96). Indeed, as Skizzen realizes, "at Whittlebauer, Schoenberg's fearful name would be known, but not his music, the techniques of his teaching, or the import of his ideas" (96). There is therefore room for pretended expertise in the Second Viennese School,[2] or, in Skizzen's deliberately nonchalant references to the three major composers of the Schoenberg circle, "the smarty-pants atonalists" of "the Viennese crowd—Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern" (372).

Under the circumstances, Skizzen's evasive treatment of their music, which is forever deferred from Gass's storyworld, takes a "realistic motivation" (Tomashevsky 80-84) in the protagonist's musicological ignorance. At the same time, some inarticulate attempts of applying Schoenberg's twelve-tone method in

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[1] Cf. "Skizzen was also overly fond of the cute, riddling, or trick question. Do you know what the letters *SS* stand for? They stand for the Schoenberg/Stravinsky polarity. They stand for the opposition of the German musical tradition to Frenchified Russki danceatune music. Grinning, the professor would leave it at that—for the nonce" (*MC* 216).

[2] For a comprehensive treatment of the School as a unity, see Simms, who discusses the problematic nature of the group tag (2-6) and lists the innovative compositional techniques associated with the music of Schoenberg and his pupils (17). For a concise technical description of the twelve-tone method, also known as twelve-tone serialism or dodecaphonic composition, see Adorno (*Philosophy* 45-46) and Simms (170-80).

the verbal domain grants the music a certain degree of exegetic presence. The music of Schoenberg and his pupils Anton von Webern (1883–1945) and Alban Berg (1885–1935) is never performed, and is hardly ever described. Instead, while its principles are explained most approximately by the unqualified protagonist, the music is imperfectly mimicked, even caricatured, by the narrator's and the character's exercises in word juggling.

Introducing the list of composers covered in his Trends in Modern Music course, Skizzen assures the students that "Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern would not be easy" (183). He ends up efficiently protecting the class from the uneasiness by his own ignorance. Skizzen's lecture on Webern in Chapter 22 well illustrates his teaching strategy: the composer's biography, which Skizzen once accidentally discovered while rummaging Urichstown library shelves (221-22), is counterpoised with the story of the fate of Polish prose writer and artist Bruno Schulz (1892–1942). Together, the two biographical narratives substitute any in-depth discussion of Webern's music. Mentioning the palindromic structure of Webern's Symphony (1928), Skizzen instantaneously supplements it with a word analogy of "evE," by free association, and some Biblical references (212-213). Webern's song "Gleich und gleich" (1917) is only briefly brought up to demonstrate how twelve-tone composition works. In Chapter 25, Skizzen's "little history of modern music" (*MC* 246) culminates in Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern as "the chosen few, chosen by God, by *Geist*, by the muse of music" (244), but the account of their drop of the tonal idiom is supplied with literary allusions to Stendhal and Flaubert instead (243).

Skizzen prefers to explicate the twelve-tone series by substituting notes with onomatopoeic interjections: "ding dong bang bong cling clang ring rang chit

chat toot hoot" (244) and "hoot toot chat chit rang ring clang cling bong bang dong ding" (245). He would conform to students' tastes and refrain from lecturing on the Second Viennese School's musical heritage altogether: "Today, it seems, we shall study the passacaglia from the first act of Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck*. Instead Professor Skizzen would proceed with a lecture on Mendelssohn's symphonies . . . as the students expected" (314). As for Skizzen's musicological research, at his Whittlebauer job interview he is "about to publish a piece on *Style and Idea*" (298)—Schoenberg's essays collected in 1950. In the other "two papers that Joseph Skizzen believed were responsible for . . . retaining him his job," he analyzes the libretto and instrumentation of Schoenberg's light one-act opera *Von Heute auf Morgen* (1929), focusing on its use of the saxophone—Schoenberg's surrender to the day's jazziness (301-303). Otherwise, Skizzen studies Schoenberg's paintings (306). All in all, unlike *Songs That Never Grow Old* or the *Moonlight* Sonata, modern music, particularly that of the Second Viennese School, is forever deferred in *Middle C*. As a musicologist, Skizzen handles it metonymically: Webern's music is a product of Webern the man; therefore, Webern's life circumstances, by contiguity, can stand for his music. Schoenberg's twelve-tone method is the foundation of much of his and his disciples' music; therefore, sporadic reference to the theory takes us to the practice. The music *per se* is diegetically muted, as if it was subject to the famous dictum: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (Wittgenstein 74).

An apparent reason for this attitude is the reverse of what we find in Joey's experience with Beethoven's *Moonlight*: how many Schoenberg tunes can Skizzen, his students, or the reader mentally rehearse? No memorable few bars of

serial music come readily to mind. Whistling Schoenberg is quite extraordinary,[1] in light of the critical consensus that "it is only through the detailed understanding of compositional technique that one can appreciate the music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern" (Simms 19).

The novel's major use of internal focalization on someone "who, when the maestro's atonal music washed over him, felt as if his head was being held in a toilet" (*MC* 304),[2] excludes the possibility of Schoenberg-based verbal music passages. The "language" of Schoenberg's "musical prose,"[3] with its "intense counterpoint, freedom of surface harmonies from underlying tonal progressions, and irregularity of beat and meter" (Simms 155), is too complicated to be understood through "*the musical intuitions of a listener who is experienced in a musical idiom*" (Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1). As an early Schoenberg critic puts it, "[t]here is a degree of compliance beyond which the ear refuses to go" (qtd. in Simms 21). Even when Schoenberg, Berg, or Webern build their compositions around classical forms,[4] such as sonata or variations, their "vocabulary" and "syntax" act *contra* narrativization, since it may be difficult to recognize even a literal, unvaried repeat of a melody. Whether non-tonal or serial, such a melody is not anchored in diatonic relations, so its motivic structure—unlike Brahms's, which Schoenberg studied closely and which was seminal to his own method (cf. Zbikowski 25-27)—resists intuitive grasp. Charles Rosen writes of Schoenberg's "emancipation of the dissonance" and "breakdown of tonality": "It seemed as if

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[1] That Schoenberg's music cannot be whistled is denied by Rosen, who attributes the stereotype of Schoenberg's incomprehensibility to Adorno's wrongs (*Schoenberg* viii). Either way, Rosen holds that "[i]t obviously takes a certain amount of experience of Schoenberg's music to realize its intensely expressive quality, its frequent lyricism, and its occasional charm" (ix).
[2] Skizzen's euphemistic way of putting it is "music that must pass through the mind before it reaches the ear" (244).
[3] The composer's own term; see Dahlhaus (*Schoenberg* 103-19). Schoenberg, whose idiom is "prose" to diatonic music's "poetry," and Gass, whose "music of prose" is in fact poetization of prose, can be seen as situated in different parts of the same spectrum.
[4] See Simms (161), Rosen (*Schoenberg* 38, 87).

music now had to be written note by note; only chains of chromatic or whole-tone scales were possible, and these only sparingly. The renunciation of the symmetrical use of blocks of elements in working out musical proportions placed the weight on the smallest units, single intervals, short motifs" (*Schoenberg* 21). The traditional melody's "mnemonic powers comes [*sic*] from the adherence of its line to tonal functions" (100), and once devoid of those, "memorable" melody disintegrates.[1] Thus Skizzen's "head . . . held in a toilet" affect is a realistic narrative plan for hearing a Schoenberg piece, replacing musical events with the listener's frustration.

Yet no matter how poorly Skizzen may perform as a focalizer for the music of the Second Viennese School, he is also, like Gass, a practitioner of verbal metaphors. His nutshell representation of atonality and twelve-tone composition technique is performative and exegetic. He performs Schoenberg by partially identifying with him:

> . . . not only was Skizzen now an Austrian, his life's loyalties, if musically inverted, matched the strategies Joey's father had set for his son, inasmuch as Schoenberg was a chameleon who had been born a Jew yet brought up a Catholic in Vienna crowded with folks devoted to their beads. At eighteen, out of typical teenage rebelliousness, Skizzen supposed, Schoenberg turned himself into a Protestant . . . . Many years later, when Hitler came to power and Schoenberg was dismissed from his post in Berlin, he reclaimed the Jew the Nazis knew he was and fled to the United States—to teach in LA . . . . (*MC* 96)

The connection with the composer is not only in Skizzen's capacity as a "Schoenbuggy man"—a metonymic substitution of Schoenberg based on contiguity. He deliberately shapes himself as a similarity-based metaphor for Schoenberg.

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[1] However, Rosen observes that "understanding and appreciating [Schoenberg's mono-opera *Erwartung*] does not require recognizing the motifs from one part of the work to another as all music from Bach to Stravinksy demands," since a thirty-second immediate recall limit is sufficient for emotional response (41).

Skizzen's lecture in Chapter 25 elaborates on the metaphorical cliché of the tonic as home (a classical movement's "home key"), inviting his students to experience diatonic pieces in the familiar terms of Odysseyan return journeys (237-40). Skizzen then charts the "atonal music"[1] of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern on a teleological plot timeline of Western music history, as a climactic target of its evolution vector. Contextualizing Schoenberg's innovations in a sequential narrative of tonal emancipation ("Notes had traditional relations? they untied them"), he eventually demonstrates how metonymy merges with metaphor: "Arts that had been about this or that *became* this or that" (244).[2]

In the diegetic absence of music referents, Skizzen's verbal references to the Second Viennese School composers and phenomena related to their music only by metonymic contiguity begin to *create* those referents in metaphorically resembling them. If Schoenberg's music rejects the idea of the tonal "home," there is no way to narrate it but speak of what it is not; yet the tonal idiom remains its backstage frame of reference, which is narrative in nature.[3] Gass's habitual abuse of mimetic conventions is less apparent in *Middle C* than in *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* or "Cartesian Sonata," yet his formalistic belief that "[t]here are no descriptions in fiction, there are only constructions" (*FFL* 17) applies to all fiction, not just experimental "metafictions." Similarly, in terms of music formalism, all music, not just Schoenberg's atonality and serialism, is self-

[1] For why Schoenberg himself did not use the term, see Simms (165).
[2] In Gass's essay "Carrots, Noses, Snow, Rose, Roses," a similar "ontological transformation" is theorized and tangibly illustrated: "The snow that makes up the snowman remains snow, though it has also become body . . . . Because of its natural shape and the new relations it has entered, the carrot does not simply resemble a nose, *it literally is a nose now*—the nose of a specific snowman" (*WWW* 288). By changing its position in a contiguity of things (metonymy), the carrot acquires similarity that secures its self-sufficient status (metaphor).
[3] Invited to submit a response to a collection of essays on music and text, Hayden White was naturally inclined to try his theory on music: "Figures like prolepsis, metalepsis, metonymy, repetition, produce the narrative effect (or diegesis) without utilizing discursive [i.e. exegetic] or descriptive (mimetic) procedures" ("Form" 294).

referential. Elements of twelve-tone composition begin to regulate Gass's text. I conclude this section by illustrating Gass's exegetic and *non-diegetic* use of a "twelve-tone row" breaking the conventional course of his narrative.

Although Gass's twelve "pitches" discussed below could be supplied by the character's (inner) ear as a matter of "accompaniment" to his thinking and acting, the ironic dissonance they bring into the text and their structural rather than auditory polyphonic effect is the narrator's, not the character's. The resulting irony is Flaubertian (cf. my section 1.2). The passage in question is not an internal monologue expressing the protagonist's anxieties and rendered in the third person, but rather a narratorial "summary" of such, in Genette's sense (*ND* 94-95).

Two paragraphs of Chapter 33, which summarize Joseph Skizzen's genuine and simulated attitudes to and anxieties over the composers of the Second Viennese School, get infected with nonsense-words either taken or derived from the refrain of "Polly-Wolly-Doodle," a 19th-century folk song from the American South:

> [Joey—] who, when the maestro's atonal music washed over him, felt as if his head was being held in a toilet Polly who found these serenades and songs beyond him Wolly quite over his head, his hair, his head of hair like a sudden shower Doodle who recoiled as the land does in front of distant mountains Polly-Wolly for whom Liszt's *Transcendental Études* were about as adventuresome as Skizzen could bring himself to be Doodle as he could bring himself Polly-Wolly-Doodle yes, so the real Skizzen might fade like a figure a flower in the wallpaper a wall of paper flowers a pattern whom familiarity ignores, paint obscures, or the sun fades Polly-Wolly-Doodle all the day. (*MC* 304)

Gass uses the *sound* of the song—its actual tones metonymically signified by its words—***non-diegetically***, when he randomly inserts its scraps into his text.

In the next paragraph, the stream of contrapuntal non-denotative sounds contaminates the otherwise conventional narrative even more glaringly: they

multiply like weeds in Miriam's garden. The trashy tune provides contrast to the high-brow thematic focus of the paragraph: "Alban Berg Polly Anton von Webern Wolly with the twelve tones they had to work with Doodle the twelve disciples that Schoenberg (Skizzen, too) had to seem to teach Polly-Wolly-Doodle even to prefer, Joseph had now to embrace as well" (304). As the paragraph reaches a whole-page length, it becomes apparent that the initial three nonsense-words and their derivatives form a distinct collection, and the abandonment of punctuation adds another string of James Joyce to this passage, which is recognizably Joycean anyway.[1] Once we count individual "pitches" in this collection, which repeat themselves in slightly varied spelling, we discover there are twelve of them, if words of general semantics ("all the day") are extracted (see Table 5). For a reader familiar with the tune, the counterpoint may result in distinct "auditory reverberations" (cf. Kuzmičová "Outer").

The "twelve-tone" analogy and Gass's apparent attempt of using the word-"notes" contrapuntally—as the nonsense-word insertions form a separate parallel stream—bring together the content and form of the narrative fragment. "Polly-Wolly-Doodle" is collected in *Songs That Never Grow Old*, which Joey takes hold of in Chapter 24 (230), when he even sings it (232-33), so that the music is first diegetic. In Chapter 33, it returns non-diegetically: the reader can "hear" and make sense of its "serialized" fragments submitted by the non-diegetic narrator's voice,[2] but no one is performing the song in the storyworld.

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[1] For a brief and entertaining summary of the Joycean feel of word music, see Burgess's "Re Joyce" (*That Man* 134-49).

[2] For another non-diegetic use of music, see Chapter 3, where the dissonant tritone—the diminished fifth interval labeled "*Diabolus in musica*" and literally banned from medieval and Renaissance music—is introduced with references to its uses in Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821), Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787), Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* (1846), and Wagner's *Das Rheingold* (1869), and then is tied to the word "*L'homme*"—"the man" (*MC* 29). The dissonant tritone-word "*L'homme*" is repeated several times in different contexts (29, 31) as a non-diegetic sound effect to accompany and emphasize the "inhumanities" Skizzen is saving for his Museum.

Elements	Combinations
1. Polly	Polly-Wolly
2. Wolly	Polly-Wolly-Doodle/Polly Wolly Doodle
3. Doodle	Jolly Polly
4. Jolly	Jolly Polly Wolly Doodle
5. Pilly	Jolly Polly Wolly
6. Dillie/Dilly	Polly-Jolly Jolly-Wolly Wolly-Doodle
7. Dollie	Jolly-Polly Polly-Wolly Wolly-Doodle
8. Woolly	Doodle Wolly
9. Doo	Doodle Wolly Polly
10. Oodle	Polly Doodle Wolly
11. Doody	Pilly-Dilly-Dollie
12. Doolie/dooly	Pilly-Dillie-Doodle-Dollie
	Pilly-Dillie Doodle-Dollie Woolly-Wolly
	Doodle-Dillie Doodle-Doodle-Doo
	Doodle-Oodle
	Doolie-Doodle Doodle-Doody Doolie-Dilly
	Dollie-Doo-Dollie Doo-Dilly-Doo
	[all-the-]dooly-dilly[-day]

***Table 5*. Gass's narratorial "twelve-tone" insertions (*MC* 304-305).**

In film theory, a similar use of music is described by Gorbman, when she seeks for a musico-cinematic equivalent for Genette's "metadiegetic" narration—that is, secondary diegetic, in Schmid's nomenclature. In Fellini, a previously diegetic piece of music is played non-diegetically, for symbolic indication of a character's past memory, so that the borders between diegetic and non-diegetic music are blurred. Fellini's character cannot hear the music—instead he recollects a scene from the past, but for the viewer, the offscreen replay of the familiar tune functions as a pass into the character's inner world (Gorbman 22).

Gass's fragmentation of "Polly-Wolly-Doodle" works in a similar way, which I consider both metafictional and metamusical. It impregnates the verbal

text with distinct and intrusive musical sound alien to it, and thus indicates the border of literature (the metafictional aspect). The "Polly-Wolly-Doodle" insertion also comments on the character's agonizing over how a particular kind of music—Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg's—is incomprehensible for him, which he can only compensate with, and contemplate in terms of, another, much more primitive kind—a song that he does not respect or care for (the metamusical function). Finally, the device is a metaphorical representation of twelve-tone music, even though an extremely inadequate one, which thus points at its intra-musical properties.

"In Joseph's own mind, music, like Orpheus, looked back, then looked back again, just as every composer wrote his ancestral harmonies in his head" (*MC* 186): Skizzen's thoughts of music's self-reflexivity lead him to consider the history of music as emancipation from, but also analogy to, the word. He sees the "invention of musical notation" as a "revolution" that is pre-conditional for contemporary instrumental music, and finds electronic music "stagnant" due to its failure to get properly written down. This "secondary orality" (cf. Ong 168) pushes music back. In an essay on Schoenberg, Adorno expresses dissatisfaction with how twelve-tone music is performed and suggests that "[s]ilent imaginary reading of music could make loud playing as superfluous as reading a text by speaking it, and such practice could, at the same time, rescue music from the mischief to which the compositional content is subjected by almost every performance today" (qtd. in Englund 140).[1] Since there is no way for Skizzen to obtain the degree of music literacy Adorno proposes, he aims to realize a similar project of reinventing music with written words—the project of writing a

[1] Cf. "'My music is not modern,' Schoenberg once said; 'it is only badly played'" (Rosen, *Schoenberg* 50).

sentence. The sentence is emphatically his own, not the narrator's, way of composing twelve-tone "music" non-diegetically.

2.5. Sketching the Sentence: Joseph Skizzen's Composition Lesson

"To read a text as music would . . . amount to switching from a firmly established 'natural' to an 'unnatural' frame of reference, and this would never be done spontaneously," Werner Wolf contends (*Musicalization* 92). It requires at least some referential aids in the text and/or paratext to channel reading "through" music and set up the reader's thinking about a literary text in musical terms. In light of some transmedial qualities music and literature share, a generalized quasi-narrative scenario associated with certain musical forms (primarily the sonata-allegro form and the fugue, but also theme and variations) is also a core property of literary narrative (cf. Shockley 10, 15; Petermann 3). In order to turn the transmedial into the intermedial, a text should *explicitly* signal its aspiration "towards the condition of music" (Pater 86) rather than of anything else, even though, for Wolf, "the mode of 'telling' is only of secondary importance" (*Musicalization* 63; cf. 80-82). When the attempt to build a structural equivalent of a music piece or genre is not openly declared in the text, it needs to be deciphered by a critic with a special "ear" for "literary music" (Benson), and some extra-textual sources should support the shaky grounds upon which the analogy stands.[1]

Structural parallels to musical procedures are not plain to see, unless they are deliberately sought and/or overtly prompted in the text. Not every reader will

[1] Cf. Boris Katz's discovery of the precise and theoretically informed literary imitation of fugal motion in Boris Pasternak's poem "The Snowstorm" (*Metel'*), which the critic thoroughly accompanies with biographical data: Pasternak's background as aspiring young composer and pianist, his study of a particular approach to imitative counterpoint, and the challenges to poetic form raised by authors of his circle (Katz 107-18).

bother to count the twelve Polly-Wolly-Doodle elements as I do above, although Gass is generally suspect for such textual trickery. Looking at the sentence (hereinafter "the Sentence") that Professor Joseph Skizzen keeps rewriting for nearly as long as the middle of *Middle C* lasts (see Table 4) as a musical endeavor can be justified by the novel's overall thematization of music, by the protagonist's failure as a musician that motivates his switch to words for building up a musicological persona, by the structural relation of the sentence to the rest of Gass's text, and by the explicit analogy Skizzen draws between his final version of the Sentence and a twelve-tone row. Having characterized the former two conditions in my previous sections, I focus on the latter two: the role of the Sentence in the narrative progression of *Middle C* and its loose origins in serial composition.

Skizzen's exercises in creative writing make up the subject matter of several chapters, which interrupt the linear course of the protagonist's life story in a narrative counterpoint.[1] The iterative nature of this parallel subplot importantly modifies the pseudo-*Bildungsroman* design of *Middle C*.

Each narrated instance of Skizzen's Sentence-composition is hard to place temporally. It approximates a belonging to the forty years of his Whittlebauer employment, which would approach a "narrative NOW" (Chatman 63) as blurry as Proust's (cf. Genette, *ND* 41-47), were Joey, like Marcel, the narrator of his story. With even that ephemeral comfort denied, it is not easy to determine whether the specific versions of the Sentence that the text cites selectively are

[1] Perceiving the respective episodes as (varied) repeats is essential for the contrapuntal effect. In psychoacoustic studies on auditory streams, "segregation effects increased with the number of repetitions of the pattern," so that "the obstinate repetition of the same melodic unit . . . clearly contributes to the perceptual segregation of simultaneous tones in polyphony," as if repetition "captured" the repeated notes "from vertical integration" (Wright and Bregman 80).

written at an early or late stage.[1] Furthermore, Skizzen himself is not sure when or how the Sentence dawned on him, as if it had been indefinitely there even before he took up the commitment of writing it out:

> The sentence had begun forming—as if it were going to be significant—during breakfast on a mild May morning many years ago. He could not remember the fruit or how it lay in the bowl of his spoon or how it tasted when it became mush in his mouth. As a music critic—a musicologist—as a philosopher of music he was used to working with words; they held no special terrors for him; he thought of them simply as tools; they were not instruments like those in the orchestra, because he did not think of his books and essays as performances. His ideas, of course, needed them, but he didn't dress up his thoughts like toffs or tarts and parade them about on the avenues. He could not remember the bread or roll either or whether they had a plate for themselves. He could not remember the nature of the day. (*MC* 26-27)

By denying that the Sentence has anything to do with music, the narrator plants a strong associative link between the two.

The passage, alluding to Proust's trademark madeleine-inflicted involuntary memory, presents the Sentence as having no specific beginning in time. Even if its first version we read in Chapter 3 is actually Skizzen's earliest draft (which the text does not certify), it is already a variation rather than the original theme or "aria." It is merely another imperfect incarnation of an eidos, in Platonic terms,[2] a surface realization of the propositional "deep structure" of Chomskian linguistics, the actual score version of the musical *Ursatz* revealed by Schenkerian analysis. The origin of Skizzen's Sentence is veiled and forever deferred, and his obsessive elaborations and expansions of the Sentence, as well as reductions of and deletions from it—all the analysis and commentary his self-reflexivity provides in the attempt to "finally [get] it right" (*MC* 352)—do not lead him closer to that eidos/proposition/*Ursatz*. Instead, they merely pile up

[1] By the end of Chapter 6, we learn that Joseph "obsessively rewrote his sentence—now in its seven hundredth version" (*MC* 62).
[2] Cf. Gass's essay "Form: Eidos" (*LS* 223-45).

Derridian *supplements* in an infinite chain of *différance* (Derrida 156-59; cf. 72, 85-86).

Affixed with a math-like progression of chapters dramatizing the writing of the Sentence (Chapters 3, 6, 9, 16, 22, 30, and 40),[1] the linear motion of biographical narrative in the rest of the novel frames and surrounds them, gradually catching up with, and perhaps overtaking, the indefinite period of Skizzen's work on the Sentence. Although in practice Skizzen manages to complete his enterprise, as Achilles would certainly win the race against the Tortoise in a reality outside the Zeno paradox, the result does not shatter the pattern of infinite regression Gass's text suggests. When Skizzen thinks of the mission as fulfilled in Chapter 40, it is another aspect of his incompetence, a practical joke of "a master of contemporary irony," Gass's "darkly amusing reflection on both the formal organization of *The Tunnel* and its elaborate wisdom presented in 642 large small-print pages boiled down here to a sentence" (O'Hara 217).

Skizzen's final achievement is itself a repetition: the "twelve-tone row" version of Chapter 40 and one of the earlier variations in Chapter 22 are identical: "**First Skizzen felt mankind must perish, then he feared it might survive**" (*MC* 213, 352). In Chapter 22, Skizzen is in doubt. He does not feel the goal is reached: "But were the 'he' and 'Skizzen' tones sufficiently distinct? As far as that goes, were 'mankind' and 'it'? Pronouns were mere pseudonyms trying to be names. He had gotten close, but the sentence's purity was not complete. It was not pure enough for Webern" (213-14). Then comes yet another incarnation of the

[1] The number of explicit variations of the Sentence in each chapter varies, too, encouraging an encrypted numerology: there are 9 versions in Chapter 3, 6 in Chapter 6, 4 in 9, another 5 in 16, 4 in 22 (one of them thrice repeated), approximately 12 in Chapter 30, which consists of them exclusively without showing clear borders, and, finally, the repeated sentence from 22 comes back in 40.

Sentence in the same chapter (218), and a whole Chapter 30—a mass of far more verbose elaborations (282-86), as if Gass does not want the reader to recall in Chapter 40 that its "twelve-tone row" is *not* Skizzen's new insight. Unlike other variations of the Sentence, though, this one is repeated five times—twice and in two layouts in Chapter 22, and thrice in Chapter 40. The whole series of editing and rewriting the Sentence does not apparently lead to the version from Chapter 22 (the exact middle of *Middle C*) that is to be championed as final. There is no reason why the "twelve-tone" wording is ideal, or why it is "deeper," more "originary," or more concise than the one we first confront in Chapter 3: "**The fear that the human race might not survive has been replaced by the fear that it will endure**" (22). Skizzen's triumph over the Sentence is as temporary and non-climactic as his relief from the fear of being exposed as an impostor. Motion is no less illusory in his manic juggling with words than in his life story on the whole. Gass leaves us in the middle slightly retouched to imitate a happy ending. Like the novel itself, Sentence-writing ceases at a loose pretext.

Sketching the Sentence is Skizzen's repeated routine over an indefinite time span, so the chapters that dramatize it are static. Nothing really happens while the protagonist sits at his professorial desk, rewriting the Sentence in multiple varied repeats. This kind of repetition within repetition is a tool for poetization (Schmid)/musicalization (Wolf) of Gass's narrative:

> The iterativity of the mythical world view corresponds in ornamental prose to the repetition of sound as well as thematic motifs. As the iteration of entire motifs, it produces the system of leitmotifs; as the repetition of single features, it produces equivalence. Where a story is no longer being told, as is the case in purely ornamental prose . . . the techniques of iteration remain the only factors of the text's cohesion, the decisive bearers of thematic coherence and the crucial semantic operators. (Schmid 126)

In turn, "poetization of prose inevitably leads to weakening of its narrativity" (126) in favor of descriptivity.[1]

Within the sequence of the Sentence-centered chapters of *Middle C*, the novel loses its dynamic eventfulness, which even otherwise scores medium at best. At the same time, variations in the Sentence's wording, different sizes in which it is tailored, and syntactic permutations it is taken through altogether form a music-like quasi-narrative to entertain an empirical reader of Gass, who is likely to sympathize with the author's passion for beautiful sentence-crafting. The chapters propositionally based on Skizzen's Sentence differ in how much extra material they contain.[2] They break out from the story time, as if they could be painlessly subtracted from it. In this sense, the chapters in question are *functionally analogous* to passages of verbal music:

> A definite retarding effect on the narrative movement in a given work emerges as a characteristic feature of prose passages of verbal music. In context the result of such retardation consists in the creation of a literally static moment which tends to arrest and suspend the narrative flow for the duration of the verbal evocation. This moment effects a temporary rest in the progressing, horizontal sequence of the narrated events. In fact, within the confines of the particular instance, the horizontal narrative sequence tends to slow down to a vertical standstill and assume spatial dimensions, suggesting a semblance of "literary" and "musical" space combined. (Scher, "Notes" 156)

This conceptually-blended "semblance of 'literary' and 'musical' space combined" is achieved in Gass without intermedial thematization of music: in the

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[1] In "Narrative Sentences" Gass writes: "Prose cannot describe without beginning to narrate" (*LS* 303). For an articulate statement of the narrativity/descriptivity binary, see Schmid (2-9). Cf. Genette (*NDR* 35-36), Bal (35-38), Herman (171), and Wolf ("Narratology" 170).

[2] Chapter 30 is printed entirely in bold, marking each of its paragraphs as a variation of the Sentence. Chapter 3 focuses on the Sentence entirely, but provides background information on how Skizzen writes, and what motivates his own editorial decisions. Chapter 9 alternates the Sentence with stages of Skizzen's career at Whittlebauer. In addition, accounts of Miriam's gardening in Chapters 16, 28, and 34, Skizzen's poem in Chapter 38, and his Inhumanity Museum cards in Chapters 30 and 41 are functionally akin to the Sentence chapters, as in modulated developments of the same musical material. Skizzen's other fits of creativity thematically overlap the Sentence's message of the end of mankind, so the monotonous reappearance of the Sentence is further varied by these other interruptions of the pretended *Bildungsroman*'s linear course.

end, Skizzen thinks that the Sentence is in fact a twelve-tone row, and that its previous versions were permutations of that row, but certainly no specific row in Schoenberg, Berg, or Webern is implied. The use of the twelve-tone series "in four ways: as the basic row; as the inversion thereof . . . as a 'crab' . . . and as the inversion of the crab" (Adorno, *Philosophy* 45) is difficult to retroactively infer in all the previous modifications of the Sentence for the simple reason that word-to-note correlation does not apply to Skizzen's earlier tries—and what would be the verbal equivalents of inverted intervals and reverse ordering, anyway? Skizzen makes his "discovery" accidentally, and we can expect him to amend his Sentence variations in that direction beyond the book's back cover—another argument supporting the idea of *Middle C*'s incompletion. The Sentence episodes are verbal music's replacements, musical surrogates, and "vertical standstills" in "the movement of a narrative from beginning to middle through ending" (Phelan xii).

Scher's idea that verbal music is a "static moment" of narrative is paradoxical, since music itself, even in its formalist definitions, comprises "tonally moving forms" (Hanslick 29). The "spatial dimensions" literary narrative assumes with a passage of verbal music, according to Scher, are those of the acousmatic space—metaphorical and abstract, but highly experiential and shaped by the very tones that move through it. Ingarden makes a similar point when he argues that, despite the stereotyped vision of music as temporal art, the musical work itself exists in no real time:

> While the movements of a performed work of music succeed each other in specific, successive, temporal phases, all the movements of the musical work itself exist together in a completed whole. . . . [E]ven if . . . a certain quasi-temporal structure is immanent in every musical work . . . it does not follow at all that a musical work does not possess all its parts simultaneously or that some of these parts are temporally earlier than others. (*Music* 16)

An empirical consequence of this quasi-temporality is the common experience of a listener who is completely carried away by the sounds of music and returns to reality when the performance is over, as if the actual time it took was subtracted from life. Since such lengthy escapes to alternative time are even more familiar to readers of immersive fiction, quasi-temporality may well be a transmedial property. Our natural ability to transfigure space into time for painting or sculpture and supply spatial dimensions to narrative and music is an exponent of how we "live by," and not only speak in, metaphors, as Lakoff and Johnson suggest.

Early on, we find Skizzen "looking at the sentence as if he were seeing his face in his shaving glass" (*MC* 22) and feeling the immediate urge to rewrite it. The rapport is pushed forward: for someone whose entire life was given to refashioning himself, the product of his writing is a mirror-image—a portrait, a double.[1] The Sentence gets aestheticized, reified, and independent. Skizzen converses with the Sentence, which is an extension and externalization of his own self: "Professor Skizzen spoke harshly to himself—to his 'you'—as he was frequently forced to do, since his objectified 'other' often required correction" (22). Although "he did not think of his books and essays as performances" (27), Skizzen experiences the Sentence's retroactive performative effect, when alterations in its wording change his memories and feeling of the Sentence itself. As Caracciolo remarks, "stories can also *trigger* emotional reactions in their recipients. In some cases such responses are directed at discourse-level phenomena such as style and narrative structure: for instance, a story's aesthetic qualities can create a certain mood in recipients" (*Experientiality* 65). Skizzen

[1] R. L. Stevenson's Mr. Hyde is mentioned in the same chapter (*MC* 23).

manipulates the Sentence to explore how changing its form, structure, narratorial voice, and style affects the reader, who, in his circular mode of self-communication, is looped to be himself. It is thus the form of the Sentence that is in motion, not its propositional meaning, and these "moving forms" cause Skizzen's excitement. If "neither story (which can be told in many media and in many ways) nor meaning (which can be expressed with similar flexibility) are active elements in literary work" (*LS* 313), the Sentence is Skizzen's music, and its perpetual change corresponds to his own multiple identifications, none of which can be "originary," in Derrida's sense, or "finalized," in Bakhtin's.

Outside the diegetic loop of Skizzen addressing Skizzen, the reader of Gass is drawn to observe the same "discourse-level phenomena such as style and narrative structure" (Caracciolo, *Experientiality* 65). In dealing with words, both the protagonist and the author of *Middle C* share a composer's instinct for rearranging sound patterns and the urge to see content as consequent to form. Skizzen finds such little joys outside the Sentence-centered chapters: "Suppose Skizzen were the one who remained; suppose he were the aftermath, the *i v e* of 'survive.' He had finally unlocked the word! Properly rearranged, it read 'I've served.' The laugh that fled his throat left it sore. He sat for some time in a silence scoured by that passage of amusement" (321). Metafictionally, Skizzen's Sentence is our user manual for how we should "listen to" and "perform" Gass's "music of prose." Gass himself was known to rewrite his sentences many times "tunneling out from a center" (Holloway 14) in search of perfect balance, the right pace, and distinctly expressive sound. A well-written sentence, according to Gass,

> must have a deep and satisfying movement. And it has to be excellent in the combination of concepts. Let's say your imaginative side is in the allegorical element of the sentence. Then there's the conceptual structure, next the musical element, and so

> on. All of these elements combine to create a linguistic consciousness. So when I listen to Bach, for example, my mind moves as those notes move, and when reading a great poet, my mind moves as those words do. (Ammon 140)

Not only in Gass's metaphorical thinking, but also in his reported first-person experience as a recipient, processing of notes and words is identical.

Explaining how he came to examine and revise the existing English translations of his idol Rilke—and ended up writing a whole book about that—Gass theorizes "re-translation" so that, unlike Vollmann's retranslations in *Europe Central*, it is not an adaptation of a translated documentary source that meets the novelist's stylistic needs. Gass's re-translation does not have to be interlingual: any translation is "transreading," i.e. reading *par excellence* (*Reading Rilke* 50). As Gass discovers, the Austrian poet's "*Elegies* were the ultimate expression of ideas that Rilke had worked and reworked in poem after poem over his entire career. That is: he had already re-translated them himself" ("Re-Translation" 75). Contrary to the tenets of New Criticism, paraphrase is not heretical, but essential. Re-translation is what Skizzen does, when through numerous alterations he arrives at the idea of arranging words of the Sentence as if it was a twelve-tone row.

The analogy is exhausted by the number of words that do not get repeated until the series is over. There is no way to measure the intervals between the words of the Sentence. Each version by itself has little attempt at "word music": the sonic effects of the Sentence (or several sentences, since variations sometimes break the initial proposition into several sentences) are on average lower than in its companion paragraphs:

> **The thought that mankind might not endure has been replaced by the fear it may make it through another age of ice.**

> In spite of death and desolation, music, Professor Joseph Skizzen assured himself, would still be made. Toms would be tom'd, the earth beaten by bones born to a rhythm if not a rhyme, a ground swept by sweet dancing feet. (*MC* 53)

Rhythms are phonetically invoked in the last sentence, but there is no such onomatopoeic effect in the passage printed in bold. The Sentence becomes musical only by being varied—by the contrasts and similarities its phrasing and structural complexity accumulate in the course of the novel. The semantic and syntactic distance from the implied proposition—the message shared by all those variations—is what triggers its "musical" movement.

That the Sentence is not about music but the fate of humanity is not important: any narrative content can be "heard" in musical movement. Once the Sentence is estranged from the course of diegetic events and its own common semantics, which in Gass is done by multiple repetition in varied wording, it exists in a separate abstract reality analogous to the acousmatic space and time of music, where a journey of various transformations takes place. The reader of *Middle C* is returned to the Sentence regularly, so that it is not its propositional content, but the Sentence itself that becomes recognized as a recurrent theme, no matter how far away each new version goes from its previous guises, or how many additional side-motifs and *ad hoc* embellishments it incorporates.

Grammatically, the Sentence comprises two logical parts disjunctively connected and counterpoised to each other on the "first"/"then" axis; each part consists of two clauses. The main clauses (e.g. "First Skizzen felt" and "then he feared") signal that the statements about the future expressed in the subordinate clauses ("mankind must perish" and "it might survive") are their subject's (i.e. Skizzen's) emotionally charged judgment.

One variable is how explicitly the presence of the judging subject in the main clause is expressed, and what distance there is between this subject and the speaker (writer) of the Sentence. Indicators of his presence can be omitted, as in "**Each one of us shall perish**" (212), or implied, as in "**The fear that the human race might not survive**. . . ." (50). Skizzen himself takes a variety of positions in relation to the holder of the opinion: compare his variedly anonymous "the fear" (22, 50), "the thought" (28, 51, 53), "the woeful hope" (29), "one's concern/worry" (23, 24, 151), "any misgivings one might have had about" (88), "[a]mong professional students of the earth there has been a growing concern" (162), "Cassandras have been misunderstood" (218), "our concern" (26, 51), "some of us used to wonder" (282) with cases when Skizzen attributes the thoughts to his own third person in "(Professor) Joseph Skizzen's (initial) concern/surmise" (26, 55, 63, 152) or "(Professor Joseph) Skizzen had been apprehensive about/had a number of worries/thought/had been tormented by the thought/felt" (88, 96, 97, 157, 213, 352). Once, he even uses the first-person "I felt" (213).

Quite evidently, the reader of Gass witnesses a whole range of pronominal/narratorial possibilities, with the writer (i.e. the Skizzen who writes) narrating a certain hypothetical event (extinction/survival of mankind) by means of different narrators (non-diegetic and diegetic, impersonal and autobiographical, first- and third-person). Moreover, we are informed that the "actual" Skizzen is not the referent of the grammatical subject in his Sentence, but his fictional construct: "Joseph Skizzen had neither concern nor conviction himself. He was confident that the matter would not be settled in his lifetime" (151). The dynamic event in Skizzen's mini-narrative is not what happens to the human race:

Armaggedon has not happened yet, and even the possibility that it will is in the end denied. The event is the change in the narrator's expectations. The true subject matter in each incarnation of the Sentence is narration itself, which is confirmed by the cycle of its varied recurrences.

Another variable in the Sentence is its length, or, rather, the degree of expansion of its syntactic members or groups. For example, in both of what I suggest to regard as the main and subordinate clauses, their subject groups ("Skizzen" and "mankind") can be extended, as in the longest Sentence variation in Chapter 16 beginning "**When young and full of fellow feeling, Professor Joseph Skizzen had been tormented by the thought that the human race**" (157) followed by Homeric lists specifying the human race as victim of self-inflicted disasters: "an ennobled species" of "great composers, a few harmlessly lecherous painters, maybe a mathematician or a scientist, a salon of writers" threatened by its own "politicians who could not even spell 'scruple,'" "commercial types who adored only American money," "religious stupefiers, mountebanks, charlatans, obfuscators, and other dedicated misleaders, as well as corrupt professionals of all kinds" and many more (157-58). The evergrowing catalogue of such parenthetic extras runs misanthropic and obscene. It consists largely of opposites used as positional synonyms, supplementing but not displacing one another. Apparently, they are meant to occupy the same space, as if sounding altogether in a polyphonic manner, but instead are stretched into a burlesque linear sequence, whose elements contradict and interrupt each other. In its still more extravagant transfigurations, the Sentence is split into multiple sentences and/or different paragraphs, as in its "PRO/CON" versions (285-86), or gets cryptic: there is no apparent connection to Skizzen's proposition in what we

may read as its thirteenth presentation closing Chapter 30: "**THE WORLD comes in 1,500 pieces. Of this puzzle we have 1,250 in stock. A few of the boxes have nothing missing. At cost: $2.73. At retail: $9.99**" (286).

All in all, there is little evidence that the twelve-tone analogy Skizzen arrives at in Chapter 22 can be literally applied to all the prior and posterior versions of the Sentence. The word-to-tone equation cannot be strictly maintained, since the relation between the lexico-grammatical units comprising the "row" is not intervallic, and no inverted and retrograded sequences or simultaneously played chords of these word-note members can be "played." However, music on the whole, and serial music in particular, are relevant to what is going on in Gass.

The Sentence is not a rendition of a piece of music, nor is it an exercise in word music in Scher's original sense, although some of its versions have auditory merits and build up musical reverberations by poetic means of alliterations, rhymes, and rhythmic patterns notated in punctuation. Gass deliberately has Skizzen intuitively build up an exegetic (but diegetic) piece of music with purely verbal means—not a full system of direct equivalents to all features of a musical piece, possibly a twelve-tone one, but a suggestive pattern of recurrences, which the reader is prompted to associate with, and read partially in terms of, a work of music, possibly a serial composition, most likely—an inept beginner's sketching of such. I conclude this section by outlining a few lines of possibilities, along which such associations could be organized, informed by some general features of Schoenberg's method. I do not insist that this way of reading the Sentence chapters as a musical whole is *the* correct one, since there is no such insistence in Gass, who does everything to highlight the failure of Skizzen's project. Skizzen's composition lesson is Gass's lesson in the "music of prose," which may be to the

reader's benefit: we may well learn something about both music *and* prose from how the novel *fails* to happily marry them.

By saying approximately the same in many different ways, Skizzen explores Western music's range of possibilities with the twelve notes of the tempered chromatic octave, which evolved from modality and polyphony of medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque music to the diatonic rigors of the Classical style, which gradually grew more chromatic in 19th-century Romantic composers and, for many 20th-century modernists, exhausted the diatonic possibilities badly enough to require an alternative new ordering outside the tonal idiom. Skizzen's Sentence grows tired of repeating its constituents, and he goes further in multiplying synonyms, in the broad sense, thus adding other words and patterns (contrapuntal "voices" and chord-like combinations of syntactic units) on top of the same repeated motivic structure (cf. Adorno, *Philosophy* 42). Like a serial composer, he subjects the row (which he is quite late to "discover") to various permutations, building its components "vertically," by piling replaced elements of this "puzzle" on top of each other (in lists of lexical equivalents I refrain from charting), and horizontally, by maintaining reshuffled sequences of functionally the same elements. Of tonal music, Gass cannot help retaining the language-inflicted principle of still *having* "tonal" centers in most of Skizzen's sentences—namely, the varied "dominant" subjects of his clauses "resolving" into the same "cadential" verbs of his predicates, in the function of the tonic, at least in the simpler variations of the Sentence. From free atonal/non-tonal composition, Gass realizes the opposite tendency to avoid consonant cadences and leave the dissonances continuously unresolved, since neither Skizzen's pretended thinking about and fearing for the human race, nor the race itself are reported to ever cease,

as if there is always a question mark and no cadence at the end of the phrase, which urges it to try again. Laws of rigorous twelve-tone composition, which "elevated the principle of variation to the level of a totality, of an absolute" (Adorno, *Philosophy* 75) are not claimed by Skizzen, since he stops soon after the analogy occurs to him. Hints at the spirit of Schoenberg's serial method, with its puzzle-like ordering, complex polyphony, and "perpetual variation of a single idea" (*MC* 213) manifest themselves more distinctly, once the reader embarks on drawing such parallels. In dealing with the Sentence, Skizzen clumsily repeats Schoenberg's development from radical chromaticism to free atonality to the new dodecaphonic order. In addition, as "all the shapes appearing in a piece of music are *foreseen* in the 'theme'" (Schoenberg 290), the Sentence is isomorphous to Skizzen's life, and to *Middle C* on the whole. After all, they communicate a frustrated expectation, a broken promise of a conflict's resolution (mankind's extinction/Skizzen's exposure) that is fabricated and is not actually there, since there are no resolutions of dissonances out there in nature—only coincidences. Finally, by constructing a recurrence of chapters that run almost independently from the rest of the narrative, Gass brings his reader to think of his narrative acousmatically—as if it was a self-propelling, self-contained movement of words as non-referential entities disassociated from their external causes and possible referents.

2.6. Sound, Representation, Metaphor: Tracing Musical Experience

Introducing one of Gass's favorite philosophical works, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Bertrand Russell summarizes its "most fundamental thesis" as follows: "In order that a certain sentence should assert a

certain fact there must . . . be something in common between the structure of the sentence and the structure of the fact" (in Wittgenstein x). The correlation between the content and the form underlies the way Skizzen's Sentence functions in *Middle C*: music is not played in the fictional *world*, it is played by fiction's *words*. Verbal constellations themselves are narrative events—what Schmid calls "discourse happenings" of the "discourse story" (211). Gass's concept of narrative suits both fiction and music, in that narrative does not need to comprise diegetic occurrences: exegetic ones suffice. Like music, narrative can progress by the causal, temporal, or spatial relationships among signifiers, not signifieds: "The only tier accessible to observation is the text of the narrative work. All other tiers are abstractions and constructs" (Schmid 212). The "referential reduction of fictional texts" in Henry James, when "meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but it is an effect to be experienced" (Iser 10), is Gass's credo as well.

Middle C disguises itself as a traditional plot-driven novel of education thematically centered on music, but demonstrates suspicious scarcity and rarity of diegetic musical experiences. Gass's old wisdom is that in order to be musical, fiction does not have to be *about* music. Unlike Vollmann, who hits his readers with passages of verbal music to affectively involve them with multimodality of his historical storyworld, Gass invests his hopes for stimulating the reader's musical sensitivity elsewhere. It is the vehicle not tenure that gives credit to Gass's "music of prose." His is a different mode of experientiality, analogous to a *different kind* of musical experience. While Vollmann's verbal music relies on cinematic ICAs to emplot musical procedures as a narrative progression featuring characters, objects, and imaginary diegetic events, Gass restricts visualization and

concentrates on the exegetic, seeking literature's equivalent of the *acousmatic* domain of music.

In Gass's "formalist" approach to fiction, the reader's attention is to be drawn to the letter of the text—the lens, and not to what is to be seen through it. The diegetic reality is deliberately undermined, since the author believes fiction to be larger than "story" or "plot," due to the word's own materiality and the richness of concepts and their configurations prior to a diegetic picturing of characters and actions. Using Ortega's (and Henry James's) metaphor of fiction as *window*, Gass insists that its glass is opaque, not transparent (*FFL* 48), echoing Shklovsky's "protracted perception" (Iser 187-88; cf. Shklovsky 12-13). "Normally, we do not listen to the music the syllables sing" (*Reading Rilke* 146), but dealing with literature on Gass's terms, we absolutely must. Experiencing it in this manner makes fiction compatible to music, so that the "abstractions and constructs" of diegetic plot and characters behind the textual "glass" are no less products of the reader's imaginative mind, and are no more "real," than music's loose cinematic ICAs. In a narratological consensus, "[i]nstrumental music creates and populates a world only through the imaginative acts of listeners who create, for example, from music that indicates a way of moving, an anthropomorphic character who moves—and who may bear no resemblance to characters that other listeners create in response to the same music" (Kafalenos 279). For Gass, the same is true for fiction. The analogy between literature and music Gass draws further is that both "can drive you out and take your place," capture your consciousness, "and though at first it might seem as if the richness of life has been replaced by something less so—senseless noises, abstract meanings, mere shadows of worldly employment—yet the new self with which fine fiction and

good poetry should provide you is as wide as the mind is, and musicked deep with feeling" (33).

Gass's insistence on the experientiality of fiction's medium—the language deliberately made opaque to protract and prolong perception—is somewhat paradoxical: as Kuzmičova shows, defamiliarization *hinders* readerly immersion into the fictional reality (cf. "Presence" 32). That is exactly what Gass is after: he wants our perception to be hindered and stop at the glass. Gass assaults the reader's habit to rush through it to witness, participate in, and respond to the storyworld's fictitious circumstances. Literature's materiality is that of the sounding word, whose "adventitious music is the only sensory quality our books can have" (*FFL* 28), and picturing characters means reducing the rich verbal pallet to a bleak and flat shadow-copy of reality, to Plato's old dissatisfaction. The pleasure of literature, like that of music, is more contemplative, since the abstract structural moves of linguistic (or tonal) essences are the true objects for the recipient to observe and emote upon. The semantic and diegetic levels are certainly not fully denied, but their meanings are formalized to contribute to that pure narrative or/as musical movement.

Even compromising to maintain the reader's illusion of a familiar immersive *Bildungsroman* pattern in *Middle C*, Gass subtly discredits all the representational parameters he initially invokes in the novel. The empathy-inflicting protagonist is drawn less, instead of more, attractive and reliable; the non-diegetic narrator merges with the protagonist to adopt his voice and vices; the master plot of education and growth fails; an intellectual/moral transfiguration of the protagonist at the end of his educational trajectory does not happen. We are deceived in everything we diegetically expect—including "actual" presence of

serious music. What the "careful reader (bless his moving lips)" (*WWW* 329) is not deceived about is the novel's faithful celebration of language itself: Gass's sentences, as ever, are much more exciting than his plot. These, however, we need to perform:[1] the text wants to be either read aloud or mentally rehearsed in our own voice, which requires extra effort (cf. Kuzmičova, "Outer" 22), as of a performer implementing a music score. The narrator's insertions of the Polly-Wolly-Doodle scratches are meant to redirect our attention to music, while there is no musical presence described. We are made to stop and listen, and only then make sense of the utterance in relation to whatever is happening in the diegetic universe.

This type of readerly enactment, unlike the one Caracciolo is interested in, is not about our living through diegetic experiences. The experience in question is non-diegetic: the reader takes the narrator's compositional functions, more in accordance with Popova's model. With such reading method imposed on us by the text, we identify with the character only when his/her functions are narratorial—as is the case with Skizzen's Sentence, written in his own voice. Certainly, nothing about this identification is mandatory. In fact, much depends on the reader's experiential background, reading competence, and literary taste. Responding to the experiential summon of Gass's "music of prose" requires a certain predilection to form and style. Readers may resist this type of narrative organization. Nevertheless, presuming that actual readers of Gass *like* reading Gass—otherwise they would not read him—we may infer that they tend to accept his invitation to experience narrative as instrumental music.

[1] Answering a question about Austin and Searle's speech act theory in 1976, Gass understands performativity as related to actual performance, focusing on his own "writing performatively" and "for voice" (Ammon 22). On performance in Gass, see Fogel (7). For Gass's thoughts on the performative role of the reader, see Ammon (5, 23, 39) and Gass (*FFL* 27; *LS* 246-47, 303, 309).

The analogy, as I have shown, is not only suggested multiple times in Gass's essays and interviews, but also realized in *Middle C*, when we confront the twelve Polly-Wolly-Dolly elements contaminating a passage about the Second Viennese School, or when Skizzen decides that the right way to lay out the Sentence is in two "hexachords" of a twelve-tone row. Gass claims his narrative to be *modeled* on music; the reader is thereby invited to perceive the text *in terms of* musical experience. The text is thus a *metaphor* for music: when a novel fails to *portray* music as a storyworld phenomenon, its text attempts to *be* music.

Echoing his dissertation director at Cornell, Max Black, whose germane book is titled *Models and Metaphors*,[1] Gass holds that metaphor's essential function is to "make a model" (*LS* 282), which "would embody the Forms but would not resemble them" (283). Thus for fictional narrative to be modeled on music it need not resemble or imitate it, once the reader's associative thinking is oriented towards music—the very condition satisfied by my *Middle C* examples. Although Black's philosophy of language rests primarily on formal logic and therefore is incompatible with Lakoff and Johnson's succeeding cognitive theory of metaphor,[2] Gass's views on metaphor seem to incorporate the broad concept of the embodied metaphor. According to Gass, metaphors "exhibit those qualities of perception, emotion, thought, energy, and imagination that every consciousness enjoys when it is fully functioning. They will sense something; they will feel something; they will think something; they will want something; and they may imagine almost anything" (*LS* 287-88). This metaphorical description of

[1] Black (25-47) denies resemblance, similarity, and comparison as existing explanations of metaphor and contends that it "*organizes* our view" of its subject (41) in that it "selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes" its features (44). For Black's influence on Gass, see Gass's essay "The Ontology of the Sentence, or How to Make a World of Words (For Max Black)" (*WWW* 308-18); Fan 50; McCaffery 165-68; Hix 4; Kellman and Malin 67, Holloway 7-8.
[2] For a critique of Black from this view set, see Johnson (69-70).

metaphors as anthropomorphic beings implies that the reader of fiction would not even need characters in the story to identify with, but that language itself—the metaphorical means of expression, due to its embodied source in another human's mind—provides us with sufficient base for Caracciolo's "consciousness-enactment."

Similarly, the acousmatic movement of tones in the abstract mental space is highly experiential, as it is rooted in, and provides a metaphor for, human consciousness: "we hear music as life" (Scruton 339), and "music works as a metaphor for mind" (Prieto, *Listening In* 61). Since "metaphor can serve as a vehicle for understanding a concept only by virtue of its experiential basis" (Lakoff and Johnson 18), what Lakoff and Johnson call "orientational metaphor" applies perfectly not only to sentences, but also to music's acousmatic parameters, which we experience in spatial terms:[1]

> We conceptualize sentences metaphorically in spatial terms, with elements of linguistic form bearing spatial properties (like length) and relations (like closeness). Therefore, the spatial metaphors inherent in our conceptual system . . . will automatically structure relationships between form and content. While some aspects of the meaning of a sentence are consequences of certain relatively arbitrary conventions of the language, other aspects of meaning arise by virtue of our natural attempt to make what we say coherent with our conceptual system. This includes the form that we say things in, since that *form* is conceptualized in spatial terms. (136)

Musical and narrative forms are understood through orientational metaphors.

Gass places music into "the hall of the head, where, if at all, prose (and poetry, too, now) is given its little oral due" (*FF* 315). Divorcing prose from referential links, Gass means to rival music's acousmatic properties, so that the words of his discourse/*sujet* are as far dissociated from their apparent "sources" in

[1] Discussing Adorno's ideas, Prieto reminds us that "the interpretation of music is an inherently metaphorical process. We know, of course, that even the most neutrally technical descriptions of music are metaphorical in nature" (*Listening In* 278).

the story/*fabula* as tones, in Scruton's acousmatic terms, are segregated from the physical causes of their sound. In a 1972 interview, Gass is very explicit about how the "electrifying experience" of fictional narrative is not induced by its diegetic signifieds, but by its inherent musical properties: ". . . a work of fiction is a construction of a verbal world through which the reader passes, in which he becomes immersed in the way that he does when he's listening to a piece of music" (Ammon 15).

The most vulnerable point of Gass's "music of prose" thesis is that the thereby advocated relation between literature and music is "merely" metaphorical. However, it is only a problem if metaphors are believed to be "loose" and ephemeral. Once we see that there is little "literal" about both literature and music, since *neither* refers to real objects, and both are experienced "in the hall of our head" (*FF* 331), Gass's theory will make more sense. For determining whether such prose as Gass's transmits musical experience to the reader, I need to sum up what musical experience as such comprises (cf. Sloboda 97-101).

For a brief outline of how such a definition may be handled, I address a polemic knot among philosophers of music, musicologists, and narrative theorists. The debate between Peter Kivy and Noël Carroll, initiated by Kivy's 2006 response ("Mood") to Carroll's 2003 article and generating the Discussion section in a 2007 issue of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (Sizer et al.), is illustrative of the clash between opposing theoretical concepts of musical experience. Kivy's stance of "enhanced formalism" is later developed in his *Antithetical Arts* (2009), where his attacks on "moodophilia" are retargeted to the narrativizing and psychologizing approaches to instrumental music, from Edward T. Cone and Jerrold Levinson to Jenefer Robinson, Fred Maus, and Anthony

Newcomb (89–150). Carroll's stance in the debate is strengthened by those who, like Laura Sizer, rely on data from cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Although the narrow subject for dispute is whether music can inflict moods and emotions, and the dividing line goes between "formalist" and "arousal theories" (Sizer et al. 307),[1] Kivy's dissatisfaction would most probably embrace advocates of musical narrativity (e.g. Almén; Kafalenos; Klein and Reyland; Nattiez; Tarasti; Toolan), whose various arguments Fludernik's notion of "narrativity *qua* experientiality" (13) importantly supplements. Music's narrative properties arise once our "subjective response completes the realization of the music by assimilating its temporal unfolding of formal conflict and hierarchy in terms of a particularized negotiation of values" (Walsh, "Common" 52). As Christian Hauer demonstrates, Fludernik's concept of experientiality can be linked to neurologically backed accounts of musical response (189-92), thus setting musical narrativity loose from the theoretically vulnerable musical "agencies" and "personas."

The arousalist construct of musical experience is presently built around the notion of the embodied mind, which in music listening is exposed to various organized physical stimuli. We decode and internally simulate those dynamically changing sound patterns as an experience of motion, which we rhyme with our experiential backgrounds to come up with e-motions, as well as whole narratives. Carroll provides an evolutionary explanation for this process related to our innate ability for "motion detection": potential moving dangers around us are aurally registered by our alert system, and essential information about the internal states and intentions of our peers can be inferred from the way they move, so our

[1] A.k.a. "cognitivists" vs. "emotivists" at earlier stages (cf. Juslin and Sloboda 105, 361)—paradoxically so, since cognitive neuroscience now informs the "arousalist" approach.

musical responses are a refined and aestheticized application of these primordial sensitivities (549-50; cf. Walsh, "Common" 53-54). In Arnie Cox's hypothesis, music comprehension is based on "physical empathy that involves imagining making the sounds we are listening to," which is "a special case of the general human proclivity to understand one another via imitation" (qtd. in Hauer 203). Overall, musical experience is bound with "first-person" enactment of kinesthetic experience, the proprioceptively and interoceptively embodied actions we unmistakably hear in musical sounds. Our mirror neurons fire in imitation of what comes from out there, hence our emotional and somatic involvement with music (Bharucha et al. 157-58; Meelberg 275; Overy and Molnar-Szakasc 489; Sizer et al. 309-10; cf. Juslin and Sloboda 37-40, 106-15).

Kivy's line of counter-argument expresses his fundamental distrust of empirical evidence gained from experiments with anonymous subjects, who are unlikely to listen formalistically (cf. Sizer et al. 313-14). The implication is that, were the same tests taken by more musically advanced listeners like himself, who are "concentrating," as Kivy puts it, "on the structural, phenomenological, and expressive properties *of the music*" (Sizer et al. 312), no primordial bodily reflexes indicating "garden-variety emotions" would be detected. Different neural and sensorimotor resonances might correspond to higher levels of aesthetic appreciation of the work's formal design; they have nothing to do with imaginary characters and their actions, feelings, and settings. Kivy is thus determined to overlook what Vincent Meelberg (273-74) calls "sonic strokes" and the overall pre-conceptual and unconscious nature of embodied responses. Kivy denies both that emoting over imaginary musical narratives has anything to do with music as such, and that an enhanced formalist's body and brain share a primitive neural

topography with an average human being. Essentually, John Sloboda's reproach to Chomskian music grammars applies to Kivy, who also appears to "miss out the core of what makes a musical experience musical" (Sloboda 166)—its emotional and physical dynamics.[1]

There is little doubt that musical experience can be reduced to neither uncontrolled neural firing patterns nor mental motion pictures of character-swarming episodes. The bodily and emotional involvement of an expert listener seems to be detached from one level of sensitivity in favor of another, where the database of experiential traces held in memory supplies vivid recalled images of music structures. Such images may operate in music's physical absence, and their internalized traces may come into effect without being anchored in extra-musical narratives—or, rather, ignoring the fact that they once relied on such anchoring.[2] Kivy's professionally accumulated cognitive kit for formalistic listening is *built upon* numerous experiences of physical sounds, "garden-variety moods" they initially induced, and simplistic narratives from *before* the musical idiom was learnt and reformulated in abstract terms. In Scruton, the same type of experience is pronounced acousmatic, since the mental map of music on an enhanced formalist's mind is certainly detached from the physical causes of the sound of its performance in the acoustic space.[3]

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[1] Cf. Sloboda's compromise: "Music (at least the 'pure' instrumental music which has dominated high art for the last 200 years) is of its nature impoverished in cues. Music does not directly describe or depict agents with purposes who enact behaviours with social consequences. . . . It does, however, suggest or evoke varying degrees of energy, tension, and arousal. It can suggest or resemble certain types of human gestures and actions. . . . [I]t is easy to see how a group of people might be able to extrapolate specific emotions from such cues. It is equally easy to see how there is room for ambiguity and imprecision" (226-27).

[2] As Prieto remarks, "even knowledgeable listeners, when faced with a new piece of music, may find themselves forced to depend on associative procedures, to interpret by reasoning from the audible resemblances between passages to the musical logic that governs them" (*Listening In* 56).

[3] This type of musical experience also correlates with the phenomenon of "structural listening" Rose Subotnik deconstructs in Schoenberg and Adorno, concluding that the musical medium is "stubbornly resistant to strategies of abstract reduction" (122).

The debate leaves the opponents unreconciled, but even so they reluctantly admit that they talk of different modes of listening by different listeners.[1] As Sizer puts it, "[e]ngaging in formalist listening practices may result in a musical experience that is influenced by music-induced mood, but is dominated by conscious attention to aspects of musical structure. Perhaps this explains why Kivy insists that the emotions or moods expressed in music are cognized, not felt, whereas Carroll is convinced that music has the power to move us affectively; they are simply hearing—and feeling—different things" (Sizer et al. 311; cf. 316-17, 321, 327). Such an outcome suggests that the opposing approaches indicate a whole range of actual listening experiences between the extremes of purely formalist acousmatic listening and the arousalist/narrativizing responses to music. Instead of a binary, there is a cline (Fig. 2), along which the degrees of acousmatic abstraction and embodied narrativization are negotiated as overlaps of both tendencies, in different proportions. Marking an experience closer to the left end of the scale would imply that the listener attends more to "stories," moods, and emotions than tonal relationships, and simply ignores acousmatic parameters; but that does not mean the acousmatic component is not there at all. Instead, the cognitive capacities for contemplating an abstract tonal space are suspended at the conscious level.

PHYSICAL STIMULATION/ MENTAL SIMULATION			**DISEMBODIMENT/ MENTAL CONTEMPLATION**
PRE-CONCEPTUAL BODILY RESPONSES	"GARDEN-VARIETY" MOODS AND EMOTIONS	EMPLOTMENTS/ NARRATIVIZATIONS	ABSTRACT FORMALIZATION

***Fig. 2*. Cline of musical experience.**

[1] In *Music Alone*, where Kivy's subject is "the purely musical experience" (28), he illustrates several "impure" types of music listening with fictional examples (!) from E. M. Forster. In *Antithetical Arts*, he admits that there are different ways of "canonical listening": the one described in Carroll, which Kivy refuses to regard as a case of musical experience, and the formalist way of hearing music as pure movement in the domain of intellect (94).

To grant this model of musical experience a less abstract dimension, the physical stimuli themselves should be placed on top, as in the tip of the iceberg, since it is the auricular experience of hearing musical sound that triggers the whole range of perceptional options and, through multiple and regular practice, shapes individual listeners' ways of hearing music. The resultant model is a triangle (Fig. 3). Its base is the cline in Fig. 2. Both ends of the scale at the bottom of the Iceberg are connected to its tip, where the area of purely auricular experience of musical sound is located. The black zones in each of the three corners are dead ends, experiential impossibilities: actual listening cannot be that pure, and what is repressed shall return. Sound cannot be divorced from acousmatic properties: we parse music even without knowing that we do (Lerdahl and Jackendoff; cf. Sloboda 100-101, 119-20, 169-70). Whether we perceive or recall some music, we cannot completely dismiss the cinematic "mind-wandering" of mental pictures transposing sonic signals into a spatial-visual narrative of some sort. An enhanced formalist's consciousness manages to purge these reptilian brain's idiosyncrasies, but a fleshless story could always come through the back door as the formalist's own analysis, full of body-related metaphors and narrative overtones.[1] Individual listening experiences should be mapped on the surface inside the triangle as situated at variable distances from the black corners, in overlaps and fusions marked by projections upon the three axes. "Communication" between the Iceberg's apices is reciprocal, since its dead ends can be regarded as neither the origin nor the main seat of musical experience.

[1] What makes Byron Almén's story version of Chopin's Prelude in G (5-9) different from many other musicological accounts of the piece is not a professional incompetence or randomness of the narrative agencies and events it infers in the musical form. It is Almén's sheer explicitness about his treatment of music as narrative. It appears that any formalist music analysis, no matter how mathematized and abstract its formulations, only conceals/suppresses/represses its narrative nature.

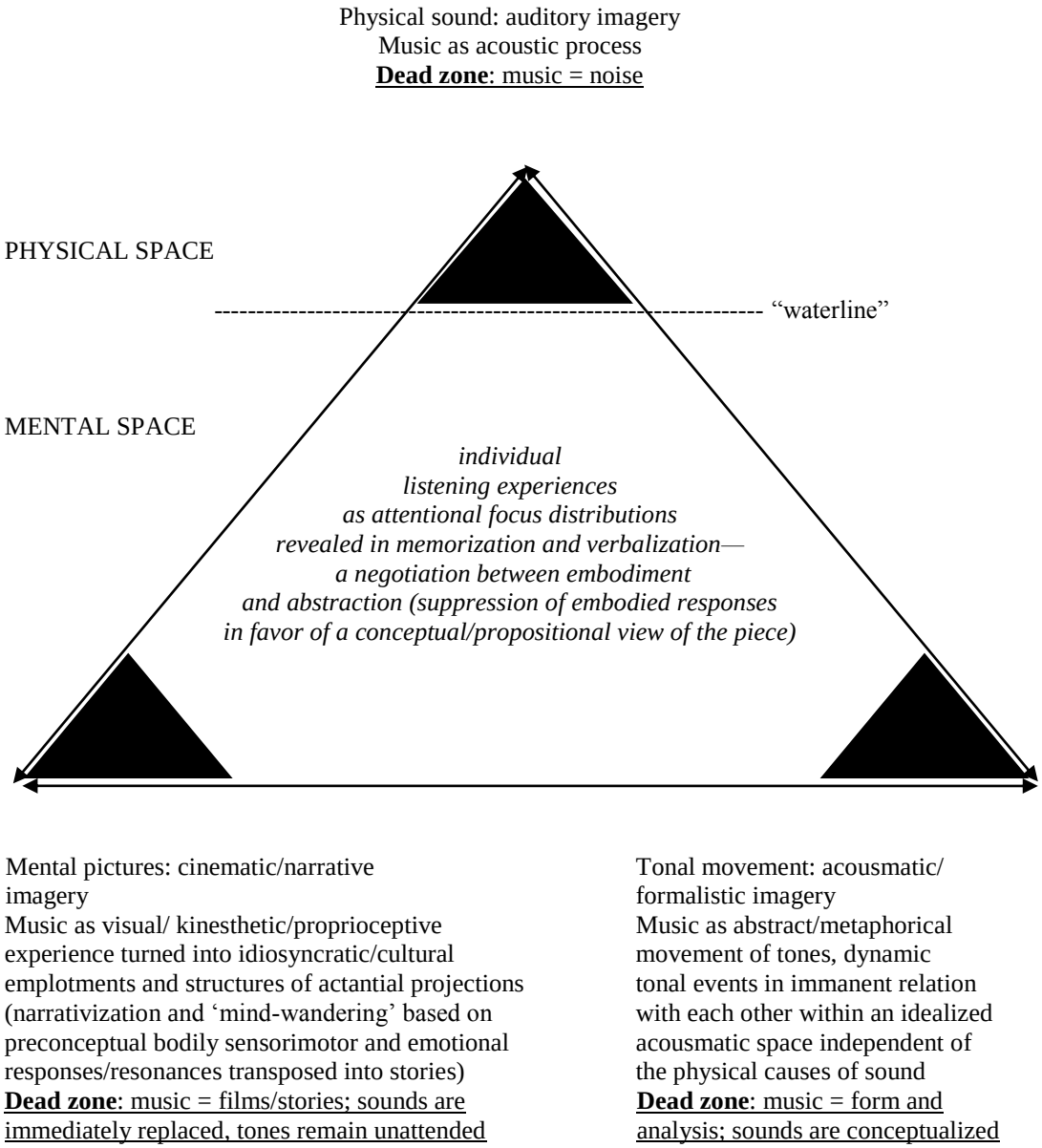

***Fig. 3*. The Triangular Iceberg of Musical Experience.**

Gass's concept of musical prose places fiction into a similar triangular relationship among sound, representation, and metaphor. Verbal narrative, too, should be recognized as an acoustic phenomenon, despite the normative predominance of silent reading. The mimetic/representational aspect of fiction, with its populated spatial and temporal storyworld in the author's and reader's imagination, embraces its illusorily facts and happenings, which constitute a narrative script (Ryan, *Narrative* 8-9) and make verbal narrative the prototypical example of narrative *par excellence* (Wolf, "Narratology" 174). Yet fiction also has a metaphorical dimension brought about by its relational structures. In that dimension, narrated events are not an informational end ("so and so happened"), but a formal means for expressing much more general concepts—sometimes moral or even didactic, as in Dickens or Dostoevsky, but at other times, in metafictionists like Gass, hermetic and self-referential. The latter distinction also exists for instrumental music—between its programmatic and absolute kinds, which receives a fictional treatment in Vollmann's Shostakovich case. When, in *Antithetical Arts*, Kivy considers literature as music's direct opposite to argue that "music alone" is never about specific characters and neither tells about nor shows "Hamlet murdering Polonius" (135), he forgets that Shakespeare's text is not to merely inform the audience of such a sad occasion. The scene has its function within the Shakespeare play, and, like every other episode in *Hamlet* and the entirety of the tragedy about the Prince of Denmark, it is open to multiple interpretations (including metafictional ones), as Shakespeare scholars tirelessly demonstrate.

Like a listener to a classical piece of music, the reader of fiction may, and is perhaps supposed to, conceptualize the meaning of such surface "facts" further.

Both a "naïve" listener's and a "naïve" reader's fixation on imaginary diegetic events, of which literature orients the beholder's eye somewhat more specifically, depend on the conceptualization of underlying structures, even if this conceptualization is not consciously registered. Imaging diegetic phenomena is in both cases only part of the process aimed at unpacking narrative metaphors (through generating other metaphors), which is hardwired neither in the text nor in the music, but in the human cognitive apparatus.

Defining narrativity in transmedial terms, Ryan draws an important distinction: "The property of 'being' a narrative can be predicated on any semiotic object produced with the intent of evoking a narrative script in the mind of the audience. 'Having narrativity,' on the other hand, means being able to evoke such a script. In addition to life itself, pictures, music, or dance can have narrativity without being narratives in a literal sense" (*Narrative* 9). Gass's narratives are often intended to be ones not "in a literal sense," but only metaphorically. His musical treatment of representation illustrate Fludernik's concept of narrativity:

> Experimental fiction can be read as intertextual play with language and with generic modes, and this . . . is a mimetic strategy just like any other. . . . Such experimental texts are . . . not mimetic in terms of reproducing, if in a different medium, a prototypical version of narrative experience but are mimetic in their structured anticipation of readers' attempts at reinterpreting them mimetically if only at a meta-realist level of a self-reflexive, explicitly anti-mimetic language game. (36)

The reader's mimetic instinct may function with no plot and characters, as "a great number of plotless narratives from the twentieth century [are] narratives fully satisfying the requirements of experientiality, since these texts operate by means of a projection of consciousness" (311). Walsh shows how the same is true of music. He outlines several directions in which music and narrative "share a common core that is both cognitively fundamental and primitive" ("Common"

50). He theorizes rhythmic properties of narrative in cognitive terms and concludes that "it isn't that music has meaning; rather, it's that narrative has affect" and can *move* us no matter what the story is about, through "the affective potential intrinsic in the permutations of narrative form itself" (65).

A narrative consciousness lies in this "common basis of narrative and music" that Gass knows and promotes. The experience of metaphorical movement in music and fictional narrative is abstracted from them by Gass's formalist standpoint. The narrative level of his acousmatic "music of prose" is a *transmedial* phenomenon: the genetic relation to music that literature maintains as its "sister art" takes effect not through verbal description of diegetic pieces, but through the reader's processing of words—"the world within the word," not the other way around.

CHAPTER III

DIVERSIFYING STIMULI:

RICHARD POWERS AND MUSICAL ENACTMENT

3.1. Riding Smoothly: The Musical Topoi of Powers

While Vollmann urges his readers to compute tons of diegetic data, and Gass manipulates his into slowing down to contemplate "the medium of fiction" itself, Richard Powers negotiates a moderate compromise of having things both ways. At the outset of Joseph Dewey's monographic study, Powers is mapped onto the American literary scene to legitimately represent not only the postmodern line of Pynchon, Gaddis, Gass, and Barth, but also the mimetic tradition of Updike, O'Hara, Styron, and Cheever (3). Literary clan hostilities once illustrated by the Gass/Gardner debate are virtually alien to Powers, who, from his pacific stance, is perfectly aware of past battles. Commenting on the issue, Powers mentions Gardner, but refuses to take sides and characterizes his own novelistic project "as a kind of bastard hybrid, like consciousness itself," seeing both realism and metafiction as subject to "relational processes" that complicate one another (Burn and Dempsey 308). The pace of *his* "musical prose" (Siegelman 51) is the mean between Gass's and Vollmann's.

Echoing Gass, Powers maintains that the "sense of complete commensurability between form and content at the level of the individual sentence is really what writing is all about," but seeks to escape the danger of hermetic formalism: "I don't want it to call attention to itself as a virtuosic set piece. But I do want somehow to do this double-voicing where a sentence can reflect . . . the multiplicity and richness of a sensibility as it tries to synthesize all

these inimical things in the experiential world" (in Berger n.p.). Powers's thinking is thus second- rather than first-generation cognitive: the novelist is preoccupied with the embodied mind instead of either the Cartesian anti-carnal *cogito* or artificial intelligence.[1] This philosophical leap is most explicitly dramatized in *Galatea 2.2* (1995) and implied in the substantial presence of IT in *The Gold Bug Variations* and *Plowing the Dark.* A biographic coincidence may begin to explain why "Vollmann and Powers share numerous ideas and concerns" (LeClair, "Prodigious Fiction" 30): both authors worked as computer programmers at the profession's dawn. To address the common features of their writing, Tom LeClair adds Powers and Vollmann to his list of "systems novelists" (cf. *In the Loop* 2).[2] Yet even the contrasting parts of their thematic arsenals—e.g. neurology vs. prostitution—are rooted in caring deeply for what experiencing life is like for real people. For the same reason, music is both writers' concern.

The reader's embodied mind is thus Powers's final destination, although he is not sure he has succeeded to create a "book that is both realistic and metafictional" (Berger n.p.). As his interviewer remarks, Powers is typically criticized because his "characters aren't palpable" (Berger n.p.; cf. Grossman). At the same time, Powers's prose is not disturbingly innovative: his readers are given a smooth ride. However, we are confronted with a "complexity and multivalence inside the fictional world" (Berger n.p.) and reminded of the equally complex nature of our own experience beyond fiction.

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[1] See Sabine Sielke's discussion of Powers along with anti-Cartesian neuroscience, such as Damasio's, in Kley and Kucharzewski (244-48), and her subsequent analysis of intersubjectivity in Powers's *The Echo Maker* (248-57).

[2] Bertalanffy's general systems theory, which accounts for "isomorphisms or homologies, formal similarities and differences among systems of notation" (LeClair, *Loop* 3), appears to resonate to Powers's *oeuvre*, whether or not he is praised as "the most scientifically literate novelist in the history of American literature" (Taylor 74). For Powers's own reaction to LeClair's term, see Burn and Dempsey (305-306). Powers and Vollmann are also paired in Toon Staes's theoretical overview of the fictionality debate in narratology, in which Gass figures in passing (181).

In light of such "a multivalent look at literature" (Berger n.p.), the dominant tendency to regard Powers as "a practitioner of bioliterature" (Lantos 17) and "the fiction of science" (Snyder 84), as an "econovelist" (Burn and Dempsey 60-74)[1] and alike, is reductionist. Science alone is not the right-size umbrella for Powers's work. Even when labeled less narrowly as an "encyclopedic scientist" (Grassian 25), someone destined "to emulate the encyclopedia" (L. Herman and Lernout 151; cf. Burn and Dempsey xxviii, Kley and Kucharzewski 11) in the "genre" of "encyclopedic narrative" (cf. Mendelson 1267), the reductionism is not overcome. In either case, Powers's narrative "parallaxes" (Strecker 235-36) are seen as a method of knowledge transfer resulting in the reader's erudition gain (cf. Sun 341).

"Why read a Richard Powers novel?" Kathryn Hume wonders, and replies on our behalf: "For the exciting insights into a variety of fields of knowledge—primarily scientific and technological, but also artistic, musical, and literary" (1), which morally commit the reader to "study and help" (8). James Hurt complements Hume's ethical and social reading of Powers by singling out the "narrative therapy" (24) in *The Time of Our Singing*. LeClair's reads *The Gold Bug Variations* in terms of recursion, fractal, and chaos theories ("Prodigious Fiction" 19-24; cf. Hermanson 40-41). J. D. Thomas's unwrapping of intertextuality in the same novel presents its literary allusions as translations from molecular physics (20; cf. Hurt 34; Frye 102). Critics assert that *The Gold Bug Variations* is organized around the "genetic code" (Taylor 75) and "leave a detailed analysis of the Bach influence [in it] to someone more knowledgeable

[1] "Econovelist" sounds particularly ironic in light of Powers's short story written for the 2007 edition of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, a Borgesian eulogy to the fictionalized "Richard Powers's" deceased female ecocritic friend, who never really lived in the first place ("Seventh").

about music" (LeClair, "Prodigious Fiction" 24), as if music were more cryptic and inaccessible to non-experts than genetic engineering or neurophysiology.[1] To the musical dimension of Powers's third novel, very few pay attention (see Labinger 92-93; Kley and Kucherzewski 45-65; Reichel 85-87), unless its musicalized substrate is discussed comparatively, among other narratives modeled on *Goldberg-Variationen* (Petermann 149-61; Ziolkowski, "Literary Variations").

Apart from rating encyclopedic data above experientiality, the scientific bias in Powers criticism appears to contradict the longing for balance that permeates the author's novels, none of which rests on a single thematic post. There is no dominant feature in Powers's prose: "According to Derrida and Powers, no thing exists discretely or independently. Seemingly individual entities achieve significance only by circulating through a larger whole" (Frye 101). Like a French symbolist, Powers celebrates "the deep interconnectedness of all things" (Burn and Dempsey 58)—the belief that could be announced romantically melocentric[2] and intermedial no less than poststructurally acentric and intertextual. As the philosopher of science Bruno Latour puts it, in a "morphism structure" like Powers's, "the good writer. . . is always complicating the projection by being uncertain about the morphisms and by constructing some sort of table of transformations where each morphism is undermined by another" (Burn and Dempsey 270). What distinguishes Latour's "scientifiction" from Mendelson's "encyclopedic narrative" is that, in the former, knowledge is neither essentialized nor put to the top of a hierarchy.

Science interacts with other domains—the musical one included—on an equal footing. Comparing Powers's fiction to the original paper by Alan Turing

[1] Although Powers himself plays the cello, he never had in-depth formal training in music and "made a study of it, like everything else, autodidactically" (Berger n.p.).
[2] Cf. Benson ("Modernism").

describing the celebrated Turing test, Latour finds that, in both, "thought is fully embodied" (280). What critics take for Powers's "science" is in fact a world view grounded in metaphoricity. Powers's "science" is not afraid of "surreptitious importation of metaphors from discrete areas of research" that Evelyn Fox Keller credits for all revolutionary discoveries (Snyder 93; cf. Dewey 50, Labinger 91). Echoing second-generation cognitive theorists, Powers defines narrative as embracing "the whole process of fabulation, inference and situational tale-spinning that consciousness uses to situate itself and make a continuity out of the interruptive fragments of perception" (Nielson 14-15; cf. Turner 4-11). Literature thus does not instruct us about life but fine-tunes our perception, including the perceptual commitments involved in reading and/or/as listening. With respect to music, Powers's wish to "direct the reader toward the world" (Burn and Dempsey xiv) is a metaphorical invitation to experience a book multimodally. As Elisabeth Reichel argues, certain analogies between Powers's narratives and music are "metaphorical rather than structural" (86; cf. Kley and Kucharzewski 12). Meanwhile, intermedial imitation of musical structures *is* metaphorical.

Powers's principal literary device to promote metaphorical fusions of themes and experiences is alternation of plot segments—the technique of narrative polyphony discussed in my section 1.2. His frequent use of it would suffice to charge him with contrapuntal narrative banalization, were there no other adepts of the method, from E. T. A. Hoffmann to Vollmann. Powers himself considers a unified description of his "narrative braiding" (Burn and Dempsey ix) an oversimplification:

> The qualitatively distinct frames of *Three Farmers [on Their Way to a Dance]*, for instance, share almost nothing with the temporal shuttling between different moments of Peter Els's life in *Orfeo*, now appearing twenty-nine years later. There is a big difference in

> alternating between adjacent frames of equal importance (such as in *Gain*) and creating a kind of nested-Russian doll structure (as in *Prisoner's Dilemma*). I have seen reviewers and critics desperately trying to shoehorn the formal and structural devices of *Galatea [2.2]* or *[The] Time of Our Singin*g into that formula, thereby missing as much of those books' structure as they succeeded in capturing, using the simple generalization. (in Vorda n.p.)

The author denies the charges.

Except for the more straightforwardly organized *Generosity: An Enhancement* (2009), each of Powers's eleven novels to date does have a multi-phenomenal storyworld describable in polyphonic terms. Moreover, musical allusions will often pop up where you least expect them. In *Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance* (1985), an ekphrastic narrativization of a photographic artefact in every second of each three chapters is entangled with two other subplots sandwiching it, the whole structure gradually developing a synchronic relevance. *Prisoner's Dilemma* (1988) alternates between a linear family narrative and a system of embedded stories of history and imagination. Music references and framed narratives mediate our experience of the hospital ward in *Operation Wandering Soul* (1993). The computer genius of *Galatea 2.2* is introduced to us to the sound of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto (11-13). Even in the least musical *Gain* (1998), with its turn-taking stories of corporate business and ovarian cancer, "*Berio has slowed to Brahms*" (296). In *Plowing the Dark*, two "contrapuntal stories serve as figure and ground for one another" (Burn and Dempsey 188). *The Echo Maker*, with its smart distribution of narrative voices, possesses "musical/sonorous qualities" and "contains multiple examples of doubling" (Spiegelman 49, 50).

All in all, Dewey's judgment that "Powers's novel can only be read polyphonically" (56) is not only true for *The Gold Bug Variations*, where

"shifting between three loosely touching narratives represents an ingenious approximation in the reading experience of the exact listening experience required to hear Bach's accomplishment" (55). *The Time of Our Singing* and *Orfeo* are the other two of Powers's "musical novels" in Petermann's sense (Reichel 83). Whether they adopt polytonality (Smith 14), contrary motion (Hooper 7), and Bach's *Musical Offering* (Heydenreich 166-67) in the former case, or counterpoint, ritornello, and Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (Reichel 90-93) in the latter, the constant "shifting between" for the sake of a polyphonic illusion is unmistakably invoked in both novels.

Orfeo is exceptional in the degree to which it foregrounds music, although both science and 20th-century history—the latter being the common denominator for Gass's and Vollmann's musical endeavors—are also on its multivalent menu. Unlike Stuart Ressler of *The Gold Bug Variations*, Peter Els (Ressler's partly anagrammatic modification) drops natural science in favor of musical composition, not computer programming. And although the music-related referential scope of *The Time of Our Singing* is also enormous, the core issue of the 2003 novel lies elsewhere. *The Time of Our Singing* "narrativises, *through* representations of music and musical performance, debates about the essentialism or non-essentialism *of racial identity*" (Smith 3, my emphasis; cf. Kley and Kucharzewski 175-93). Powers's musical matters had thus never been taken as far as in *Orfeo*.

3.2. *Orfeo*'s Musical Repertoire: An Introduction

As Powers testifies in his interview with Jill Owens, by the time he was writing *Orfeo*, he had begun composing with his voice, using the new technology:

> . . . speech recognition and oral dictation reintroduce an interest in prosody in the sense that comes from the sound of the sentence. . . . It becomes more important in those lyrical passages in a book like this that are not just trying to move people across the room or keep the plot moving forward, but creating mental states that are somewhat auditory in nature and to be able to test the quality of the prose—the rhythms, the diction, the register, the syntax. (Owens 378)

Since the bulk of *Orfeo* is musicalized in the mode of intermedial *thematization*, Powers's intention underlying his style is a synthesis of musical form (as in Gass) and subject matter (as in Vollmann). He achieves that synthesis by treating diegetic music so that it may also create those auditory mental states in the reader.

Once we admit that *Orfeo* "binds into one comprehensible narrative the entire modern history of music" (Leonard n.p.), it becomes pointless to make up a list of specific compositions the novel refers to. Powers's musical universe is like Jorge Luis Borges's Library of Babel from the eponymous novella: there are numerous existing pieces the world of *Orfeo* is overtly declared to accommodate, and it suggests still more—"an indefinite, perhaps an infinite, number" (Borges, *Ficciones* 58) of others that are either unidentified or (forever yet) unwritten. In Els's thoughts during a composition class with a college student, "For every pitch that ever reaches your ear, countless more hide out inside it. The things he can never tell her, the music he never wrote: it's all rolled up, high up there, in the unhearable frequencies" (324).

For example, Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* (1944), which remains anonymous in Powers's text,[1] is rendered with a series of internally-focalized ICAs (*Orfeo* 21-22). As Els's own compositions have no real

[1] Like Scher's identification of Wagner's Prelude to Act III of *Die Meistersinger* in *Doktor Faustus* ("Thomas Mann's 'Verbal Score'" 405), determining which piece Els loves "to death" as a boy is based on several clues in Powers's text. Little Peter rehearses the piece on the clarinet to perform it "with twelve older players" (21), and the original Copland ballet is scored for thirteen instruments; it is a "dance suite" with the opening tune pictured as "the rays of sunrise over eastern mountains" and returning "at the end, layered against an old Shaker hymn" (22).

counterparts outside the storyworld, the probability that some "future people" will actually score them musically is "close to zero" (Borges, *Ficciones* 62), yet in a postmodernist ontology of heterocosmic zones (McHale 27-29, 36-49; cf. Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative* 87-103) their potential existence can be neither verified nor denied. Like Borges's novella, Powers's novel only sets a model for such an infinitely alternative musical universe, metonymically exemplifying some of its parts with the many music styles and pieces known to the protagonist. Metaphorically, by foregrounding the analogy between musical and genetic structures,[1] *Orfeo*'s collection of scores is, like Borges's Library, "*limitless and periodic*" (Borges, *Ficciones* 66).

Powers's publisher—presumably, with the author's consent—has nonetheless chosen to append a selective list of "The Music of *Orfeo*: Recommended Listenings" (*Orfeo* 387) to the novel's paperback edition. A list is not an entire 2CD set, such as the one marketed to accompany Vikram Seth's 1999 novel, *An Equal Music*, with "[o]ver 2½ hours of music featured in a best-selling novel" (Bach et al.), but it is a step towards hyperlinking fictionalized music to its existing prototype. Suggested recordings of six pieces are listed regardless of the order of their composition dates and appearance in the novel: Peter Lieberson's *Neruda Songs* (2005), Harry Partch's *Barstow* (1967), Gustav Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* (1904), Steve Reich's *Proverb* (1995), Olivier Messiaen's *Quatuor pour le fin du Temps* (1941), and Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony (1937). For reasons more or less obvious, this reading aid excludes fictional compositions by *Orfeo*'s main character, Peter Els, and John Cage's *Musicircus* (1967), discussed in my sections 3.3 and 3.5, respectively. Els's and

[1] "*Gold Bug* and *Orfeo* form a thematic unit, with the two novels sharing genetics as one of their key themes" (Reichel 83). Both novels also actualize the conceptual link between genetics and music, which, in terms of narrative form, establishes a polyphony and/as thematic multivalence.

Cage's semantic load and page count in the novel are no less substantial, but there are no locatable recordings to list. Not "recommended" are dozens of traceable "sources" Powers treats in briefer verbal music sections, such as Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony No. 41 (1788) (*Orfeo* 17-19) and Alexander von Zemlinsky's Clarinet Trio (1896) embedded in the account of Mahler (28-39). The text itself, as I show in this chapter, may motivate the reader to go and listen to those, as well as to numerous other works mentioned in passing.

Since the Lieberson, Partch, Mahler, and Reich on the Recommended Listening list are works of texted music—"literature and music" rather than "music in literature" in Scher's early typology, which Wolf upgrades to "overt/direct intermediality" (*Musicalization* 70) and "plurimediality" ("Intermediality" 21-22)—I am less interested in discussing these than I am Powers's Messiaen and Shostakovich (see my sections 3.4 and 3.6). By citing the lyrics of vocal works, the novelist prompts an intertextual, if not simply textual, reduction of intermedial phenomena, encouraging the reader to experience music as overtaken and displaced by words. The scholarly equivalent of this reduction in WMS can be found in Ulrich Weisstein, who identifies himself as "the literary critic of the libretto" (3) and treats opera accordingly—*as* literature (3-15). Instrumental music may also get heavily texted in the listener's cultural experience of it (cf. Benson, *Literary Music* 5; Rabinowitz, "Chord" 39-42), but the knowledge that words are meant to vocally, not just subvocally, accompany the music, and that it is neither the narrator nor the author, but the composer who supplies those words written by yet another party, presumably drags our attention away from pitch, tempo, and timbre. In Powers's rendition of Reich, the Wittgenstein aphorism, looped and multiply repeated in both Reich and Powers,

makes the reader wonder what the philosopher actually meant by "*How small a thought it takes to fill a whole life*" (cf. *Orfeo* 245-55).[1]

Powers's verbal music embracing vocal works is structurally similar to his verbal accounts of instrumental music. The lyrics simply add an extra dimension to the experientially multivalent grid he offers. There are also embedded narratives, multiple perspectives, embodiment-provoking listening contexts, and diversified ICAs on top of cited words. Presentation of the Messiaen (107-25) accords to the same principles as that of the Mahler, and Powers's Partch (351-58) and Lieberson (359-63) mirror his Shostakovich (279-87).

Historical accuracy and the link to reality seem to matter less for Powers than for Vollmann, and more for Powers than for Gass. Encouraging the reader to get to know some actual pieces behind Powers's fictionalizations, as the Recommended Listening list directly does, transcends the reality/fiction divide less guiltily than Vollmann's accidental Bernstein-inflicted slip. At the same time, the connection to actual music is plainly made meaningful, which Gass, in his avoidance of any diegetic presences of existing compositions to ignore all non-literary business, never cares to afford. When Powers's readers are referred to non-fictional music, they are given an extra experiential aid to perform the novel they are reading, *Orfeo*, "with feeling."

The text's potential to trigger embodied responses needs to feed on the reader's experiential background. Getting to know the piece Powers's fictional narrative "pretends" to refer to, in Searle's terms, will enhance the reader's experiential background and result in a tighter rapport between the mind and the

[1] Els's experience of hearing Reich in a coffee shop is reminiscent of the final episode in Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938), in which Roquentin listens to his favorite record of "Some of These Days" and philosophizes musical experience as a moment of *being* as opposed to mere *existence* (Sartre 173-78).

book that makes the mind extended (cf. Clark and Chalmers). Powers uses the novel as an extended-mind and -body device. Experiencing virtual realities is a subject that is not confined to digital 3D technologies, as in his *Plowing the Dark*.

The interaction between fictionalized and real pieces of music is reciprocal. The novel provides us with a sense of music, which we may integrate with our extra-literary experiences, while every external encounter with music adds something to the music narratives we enact while reading *Orfeo*. In this sense, the novel contributes to its reader's accumulation of musical experience, no matter whether its "source" is felt to lie within or outside the novel. Ideally, the reader becomes an integrated circuit, a multimedia interface for a blended space between music and fiction synchronized, conceptualized, and simultaneously experienced. The "encyclopedic" range of composers and genres included into *Orfeo*'s explicit repertoire serves to mobilize multiple experiential backgrounds.

For a theoretical explanation of this state of affairs, I suggest addressing Manfred Jahn's Cyclical Model, in which narrative is presented as a circular process of internalization and externalization of stories (201). Each articulated narrative is an externalization of an internal story, which the mind may store in a non-verbal or pre-verbal, i.e. non-propositional, form, yet which itself is a previous internalization of some external, possibly verbal, narrative experience. Applied to verbal music, "the cycle of Internalization and Externalization" not only "creates a causal chain linking reception and production and suggesting that both processes are perhaps mutually dependent" (203). It also blurs the distinctions between narrative levels and makes music "sources" and their verbal music counterparts virtually interchangeable. What comes first—our hearing of the music or reading about it—matters little: as in Derrida, nothing is "originary."

The principal drive for *Orfeo*'s musicality is the protagonist, composer Peter Els. His devotion to and education in music are genuine, so that Powers's novel is a much more faithful mode of *Bildungsroman* than Gass's *Middle C*. The protagonist does learn about music, and the reader is entitled to a share of his musical education.

Els naturally perceives the world in musical terms. Things make sense for him once he finds how they are like music, just as for many people music only begins to mean something after they visualize and emplot it. "*An overture, then*" (1), with which *Orfeo* opens, is a negotiation between the visual and the auditory, on the one hand, and between external and internal focalization, on the other. Els's late style of "composing"—handling bacterial cells in his home biolab, so that "*DNA melts and anneals, snatches up free-floating nucleotides, and doubles each time through the loop*" (2)—is described by the non-diegetic narrator in terms of what it most looks like: cooking. The protagonist's own understanding of what he is doing, however, is reported in aural terms: in his strange experiments, he wants to "*hear the future*" (2).[1]

The auditory bias is taken up by the narrator in the next small section, which switches vision off altogether and reports Els's brief telephone exchange with the county emergency hotline dispatcher in the manner of Gaddis's *JR*—as disembodied voices on the 911 service's tape recording, acousmatically detached from their original causes, whether human or "from another planet" (3).[2] The

[1] Reichel regards Powers's "overture" as analogous to Monteverdi's *toccata* opening *L'Orfeo*—i.e. as the returning section A of the ritornello form, the music "referring to itself as an overture" (92).
[2] Quite naturally, this short aural scene abounds in music-related categories: "a pause," "a tenor," "the upper register," "the alto," "crescendos," "tune," "lullaby" (6). It soon becomes clear that the episode narrates the death of Els' "lab animal" (10)—of his musical lab, that is, since Fidelio the singing dog is not involved in neo-Pavlovian experiments the Joint Security Task Force ascribes to Els. In that way, *Orfeo*'s metamusical dimension—the paramount problem of the *distinction of music*—is raised on its very first pages: how do we distinguish music from food, the genetic code, or terrorism? Powers's characters do get confused about these issues.

narrative leap to the "[e]ight-year-old Peter" ten pages later (13) marks the beginning of the quasi-fugal organization of the novel's story-to-discourse relationship, "the interplay of past and present" of the diegetic reality (Hurt 39). As in Gass's *Middle C*, retrospective sections of the protagonist's past chase the ones updating the reader on the events of the narrated "now," both planes of discourse pushing their events forward and presented in alternating sequence, synchronized at the novel's end, when the chronological stream of earlier events catches up with the latest informational installments.[1] Furthermore, there is a third part to Powers's narrative counterpoint.

On first reading, this dissonant part is still puzzling and difficult to place long after it begins its non-sequitur intrusions following the "overture." Portions of one to three sentences marked out with a different typeface, indentation, and two horizontal lines to separate them from the longer sections turn out to be Els's embedded diegetic narrative in the form of Twitter messages. Identified as such only twenty pages before the novel ends, when Els's friend and collaborator Richard Bonner recommends "*that Web thing—Tweety Bird*" to "[*t*]*ell the whole world, in short little bursts*" about Els's last musical project (*Orfeo* 345), the messages double and loop: in my numbering, tweets 73-75 (350) repeat the very first three (3, 8), and tweets 79-82 (255) are identical to 13 (49), 36 (147), 8 (20), and 46 (190), respectively.

Such randomized sets of precise replica of earlier text fragments not only initiate a reading game in the manner of Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*, but force the reader to retroactively rethink the dissonances as consonant and relevant and map the three narrative planes of *Orfeo*, metaphorically speaking, onto a synchronized

[1] Apart from Genette's multiple Proust examples in *Narrative Discourse*, William Golding's *Free Fall* (1959) and Martin Amis's *Time Arrow* (1991) may provide models for similarly counter-temporal movements.

system of staves. Unlike Cortázar, Powers does not explicitly instruct us to try and read the novel in alternative orders, but the scarlet thread of tweets—even though it is clearly incomplete—may certainly form a separate contrapuntal line of Peter's own secondary diegetic narrative we may now untie and read separately. Segregating *Orfeo*'s three narrative streams from each other would mean that the reader may foreground one of them and "hear" in a linear fashion ("figure-ground model") or mentally switch to other timelines frequently enough to integrate them into a single stream ("integration model").[1] Apparently, Powers's preference is for integration: the three storylines are in fact parts of the same story told from a different starting point and at different tempos. Experientially, a second and third reading of the entire novel is not mandatory for the general *impression* of the polyphony—the musical *effect* the reader gains from verbal narrative. Such effect—the experience of reading *Orfeo* in terms of/*as if* listening to a polyphonic piece of music—may be accomplished by our thinking of what has been previously read as still lasting. This effect is facilitated and/or triggered by the retroactive function of the revealed nature of the previously obscure and fragmented Twitter messages, so that even on first reading, the last twenty pages of *Orfeo* welcome this experience. It is for this reason that critics are inclined to see this type of "macrostructure" design as contrapuntal (cf. Reichel 88-89), finding extra evidence for that in the author's paratexts.

Discussing the novel in an interview, Powers details its "structure in which there is a figure ground into play [*sic*][2] between the story that unfolds over the course of a few days and the story of a lifetime" with "a contrapuntal motion between the two" (Leonard n.p.). To those two, Reichel adds a "third structural

[1] See Bigand et al.; cf. my section 1.2.
[2] Andrew Leonard's mistake in transcribing the conversation: Powers must have said "a figure-ground interplay."

element" (89)—the "81 tweets with which the novel is interspersed," which she regards as "the structural device that endows *Orfeo* with a ritornello form" (93), thus deciphering Powers's analogy expressed in the same interview. Reichel notices how "tentatively" (89) Powers draws the analogy: he "[woul]d say it is a kind of progressive ritornello" that is "the musical form that's being parodied" (Leonard n.p.). She goes on to argue that "an Orpheus reworking" is the author's more specific prompt and convincingly demonstrates how Claudio Monteverdi's 1607 *L'Orfeo*, which, according to Reichel, exemplifies the ritornello form, "is modeled in the structure of Powers's novel," so that *Orfeo* "*imitates* Monteverdi's opera in its form of discourse" (93).[1]

There are two theoretical arguments Reichel importantly makes with respect to *Orfeo* that I consider central to the discussion of its communication of musical experience. First, disagreeing with Petermann (3), Reichel regards intermedial thematization as an essential, not optional, means of musicalization, which "accounts for the added value of the integration of macrostructural musical elements into the narrative construction" (94). It can be argued further that Els's musical experiences incorporated into the diegetic reality, which provide metafictional clues to the novel's structure, are also indispensable in tuning the reader's perception for experiencing the book as if it is itself a piece of music. That is how formal structural analogies to music traditionally privileged by some WMS scholars over referential content analogies may only matter to non-expert readers, and how a metonymic musical presence at the level of representation

[1] Concentrating on the ritornello/Monteverdi analogy, Reichel prefers to read *Orfeo* horizontally, looking at how the Twitter "ritornelli" actually return to the material of Els's narrated present, almost unchanging, due to its "tortoise" speed in comparison with the "Achilles" pace of how events in the retrospective storyline are related. Yet, like in Reichel's own account of the existing readings of the musicalized layout of *The Gold Bug Variations*, which can be contemplated "'in threes' or 'in twos,' as either canon-like or as theme and variations" (87), the tweets add a third voice to *Orfeo*'s vertical design of imitative counterpoint.

becomes metaphorically ascribed to the novel as a whole. Second, Reichel notices in Powers what has been central to my discussion of Gass—the experientiality of narrative form. As she maintains, "the readers, too, may reevaluate the functions and meanings of music, by experiencing the music that Powers's novel evokes in its form of discourse at the same time as taking part in Els's lifelong journey through classical and avant-garde music on the story level" (95).

The temporal layout of this "journey" resembles that of *Middle C*. The plane of what is happening to Els in 2011 corresponds to Skizzen's less precisely dateable "now." Flashbacks to the composer's past rhyme with Gass's chapters of Joey's earlier life. Els's tweets functionally equal Skizzen's Sentence. In Powers's narrative, stages of Els's musical development are often doubled by parallel episodes measuring the covered distance. Els's strongly embodied reaction to his very first disastrous experience on stage, when he vomits in frustration after playing Schumann's *Of Strange Lands and People*, from *Kinderszenen* (1838), is repeated in the curtain calls scene at the premiere of his own *The Fowler's Snare* (*Orfeo* 15, 293). His earliest and strongest fascination with Mozart's *Jupiter* confronts a tiny brain lesion causing an "acquired amusia" that prevents Els from being moved by the very same celestial sounds later in his life (326-28). The conflict with big brother Paul over whether pop music is worth hearing, with fourteen-year-old Els forced to listen to its predictable diatonic harmony (19-20), is resolved decades later, when Els has learnt, and brother Paul unlearnt, to enjoy it: "*I'm an adult, Petey. I listen to talk radio*" (227). The romance with peer college orchestra cellist Clara Reston, who introduces Els to Zemlinsky, Mahler, Berg, the Russians, and sex, making sure he drops out of chemistry into music,

and then dumps him,[1] is subject to a second testing in their London encounter, on which they replay his earliest music piece (57, 237-38). Being brought to hear all the resonant tones of the harmonic series by Karol Kopacz (79-82)—Powers's accidental and more authoritative parallel to Gass's fictitious Paderewski disciple Mr. Hirk—is duplicated almost *verbatim* in Els's own teaching of the overtone series to his female composition student Jen (323-24).

Like the heterogeneous 20th-century music trends, these diegetic experiences are tied into "a great feedback loop of influence" and are "all braided around each other in complex counterpoint" (98). Els's educational trajectory is thus circular, but unlike Skizzen's, it marks not as much the impossibility of growth as the Borgesian version of infinity and/as eternal recursion. Composed of an always finite number of elements, music and life are "limitless and periodic."

Repetitions of the same experiences at each round of Els's lifetime spiral constructed in Powers's novel are (per)mutational. With his first love, brother, teacher, and student as well as ex-wife, friend, and daughter he chooses to visit on his flight from the police as "Biohacker Bach," the protagonist moves along the narrative trajectory of Orphic return, an ever-repeated nostalgic glance back that turns things unmakeable. Loss of emotive musical facility due to a "*small transient ischemic attack*" (327) brings Els to regroup and recover: he needs to learn music again, and he does, by starting to genetically modify *Serratia* cells in a biocomposing project. The author explains, "Once I knew that this was Peter Els' story . . . and that this guy . . . heard the world in terms of these symmetrical and complex . . . structures, then I did want to . . . shape the book so it felt like a

[1] One aspect of his learning from Clara (31-32, 39, 55-60) is that Els's musical ambitions grow from amateur clarinet playing to composing. Els's initial instrument, the clarinet, contains a language pun: in Russian, *Klary net* would mean "there is no Clara," which is exactly what Els "rests on" with after Clara Reston abandons him.

meta-fictional representation of the kinds of compositions he was writing" (in Leonard n.p.).

What is driven perverse in Vollmann and negated in Gass—diegetic music—comes to the foreground in Powers. Everything *in* the novel, as well as the book itself, is to be "felt like"—that is, embodied by metaphor as—musical experience. In the subsequent sections I deal with some diegetic pieces of music that the "novel's soundscape" (De Bruyn 365) features, more or less articulately separating them from what seems like pieces of something else—land, machinery, biomatter, history, and so forth. We must not forget, however, that Powers's diegetic material may be musically (re-)interpretable—at least, in the authorial intent. In Ben De Bruyn's neo-Bakhtinian terms, music is part of the diegetic universe that contributes to its, literally, sonic, but not necessarily verbal heteroglossia. If, like Bakhtin in his theory of the polyphonic novel, we think in metaphors, a musical experience, which is never exclusively auditory, can be drawn from Powers's structures and/of analogies.[1]

Orfeo is the novel about music which is itself musical. Its narrative flow acousmatically makes up for the lack of literal musical sound. As a metafictional roman-a-clef, *Orfeo* contains an example of how diegetic music can work non-diegetically: Peter Els's composition "in DNA" is out of this (story)world, unheard by its inhabitants, and perceivable from "another planet" (3). Explaining his choice of title, Powers speaks of "one man's attempt to locate and reproduce the transcendent power of music," part of which is, for Powers, "music's mysterious ability to produce the profound human feelings from nothing but

[1] De Bruyn points out the limitations of those inquiries into fiction's diegetic soundscapes, where Bakhtin's metaphorical terms of polyphony and heteroglossia are literalized "in the direction of 'multisoundedness' and 'heterophonia'" (365), but still only human voices are considered. De Bruyn's concern is animal sound, and how it enriches a fictional sonic universe such as *Orfeo*'s (374-79). For a reading of Bakhtin along musical lines, see Benson ("For Want").

patterns of vibration" (Vorda n.p.). To hit the reader with musical affect, the author makes use of an impressive arsenal, of which Els's genetic experiments are a realization of the "music of the spheres" metaphor. It is diegetic without anyone in the storyworld being able to hear it, and it is difficult even for Els and his best friend Richard Bonner to contemplate what it might sound like (cf. *Orfeo* 345). If Schmid is right and "there are no gradations of fictivity" (32), the other, more performable, music pieces Powers invents and attributes to Els, as well as "real" works, are not that much different for the reader of Powers. We still need to mentally hear all those in the mind's ear, and what is gradable is to what extent Powers's narrative technique facilitates our coming up with the experience.

3.3. "Gradations of Fictivity": Peter Els's Music of the Spheres

In *Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote* (1939), Borges, whose fiction may be regarded as "[t]he paradigm, once again" (McHale 106), provides a two-page list of his invented novelist's "*visible* works" (Borges, *Ficciones* 29). The narrator then proclaims that the invisible and "inconclusive" part of Menard's heritage is more significant (31)—as we find not a single novel on the list—and proceeds to Menard's Cervantes project.

Peter Els's music compositions in *Orfeo* are not specially listed to merely be annotated, as Borges would suggest. While the Argentine's alter ego in the Prologue to *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941) regards novels as an absurdly "laborious and impoverishing extravagance," preferring "to pretend that these books already exist, and then to offer a resumé, a commentary" (*Ficciones* 3), Powers the actual novelist can afford writing out a fictional composer's music in some greater detail. For verbal music "based" on fictitious compositions, the

paradigm case for both Scher, who theorizes it, and Powers, who practices it, must be *Doktor Faustus*,[1] where Adrian Leverkühn's music—like Els's, predominantly vocal—is described as if the diegetic narrator really heard it performed. In contrast to Mann, whose verbal music, as Theodore Ziolkowski demonstrates, inspires real composers' attempts to back-translate it by actually scoring the Leverkühn pieces (*Music* 199-220), Powers makes some of Els's work impossible to recompose. Els's last piece, coded into genetically modified bacterial cells, is no less extravagant than Pierre Menard's attempt at a *verbatim* reinvention of Cervantes: what in literature is marked invisible, in music becomes unhearable. And even though Powers founds the story of an aged avant-garde composer accused of terrorism for his unconventional art on non-fictional cases of Steve Kurtz and even William Vollmann[2] (Owens 378), "describing musical pieces that don't exist" (377) is a literary exercise no less than Borges's.

In terms of intermedial thematization, such pieces are theorized as no qualitatively different from existing ones (cf. Scher, *Verbal Music* 8; Clüver, "Ekphrasis" 26; Benson, *Literary Music* 4). Despite that, and regardless of Schmid's categorical resolution that "there are no gradations of fictivity" (32), how exactly this kind of invented music interacts with the reader's imaginative capacity has been subject to much less scholarly scrutiny.[3] In this section, I look at

[1] Powers acknowledges his debt to Mann and Borges (Burn 169-73). In *Orfeo*, Borges is featured in Els's music, and Mann is mentioned (91). Cf. Els's argument with his teacher Mattison (92, 94, 100) as a conversation with the devil—the literary topos of Goethe, Dostoevsky, and Mann.
[2] Kurtz is a bioartist who was charged with abuse of hazardous materials. See Vollmann's account of the experience of being an FBI Unabomber suspect in *Harper's* ("Life"), which Powers read. In *Orfeo*, Els once thinks of himself as "a musical Unabomber" (255).
[3] Cf. McHale's suggestion that the marked and troubled member of Aristotle's history vs. poetry binary is the former: "The problem is not 'forms such as never were in nature' . . . . Rather, it is appearance in fictional worlds of individuals who *have* existed in the real world. . . . These are not *reflected* in fiction so much as *incorporated*; they constitute enclaves of ontological *difference* within the otherwise ontologically *homogeneous* fictional heterocosm" (28).

the conglomerate of Peter Els's pieces made subject for Powers's verbal music with respect to the chances the reader gets in experiencing them musically.

Peter Els's composition techniques change in the course of his life, and so does his music taste, yet there is a constant aesthetic belief that holds true for him: "Music, he'll tell anyone who asks over the next fifty years, doesn't mean things. It *is* things. And for all those years . . . his music will circle around the same vivid gesture: a forward, stumbling surge that wavers, sometimes in a single measure, between the key of hope and the atonal slash of nothingness" (*Orfeo* 69; cf. 189). The musical formalism expressed by this credo is not rigorously essentialist. Els is open-minded in his attempt to compromise between tonality as articulateness of signification (the diatonic "gesture" towards "the key of hope") and the disintegration of the tonal idiom for the sake of semiotic nihilism ("the atonal slash of nothingness").

On the one hand, most of Els's works *Orfeo* portrays are vocal music: the Kafka song cycle, the Whitman song, the *Borges Songs*, and *The Fowler's Snare*—a monumental opera with Richard Bonner's libretto. These are all rendered as if words comprise the music's semantic foundation. On the other hand, the texts Els uses, and Powers directly quotes, are cryptic. Kafka's aphorism # 109 and extracts from Borges are bits of poetic prose aspiring "towards the condition of music" not by virtue of how they originally sound (Els uses English translations), but by the conceptual and affective meaning their brevity, formulaic wording, and syntactic structure communicate to the recipient (either reader or listener) in combination with their multiple interpretive affordances dating back to the symbolist tradition. The fictional pieces rendered in detail perfectly match those that are not, such as the 12-hour looped instrumental music score of

"reactionary crap" (229) to accompany Els and Bonner's New York show in the manner of John Cage, *Immortality for Beginners*, or Els's setting of Ezra Pound's "An Immortality" (218). Verbal music based on Els's compositions is isomorphous to that which narrativizes non-fictional scores. His Borges and Kafka vocal settings are modeled on Reich's *Proverb*, whose minimalist music exemplifies the Wittgenstein maxim set to it: "*How small a thought it takes to fill a whole life"* (*Orfeo* 245). Even the bacterial piece of Els's bioart is texted in order to get "heard," when, prompted by Bonner, Els pleads "[g]uilty as charged" in his tweets (3, 350), turning bioart into bioterrorism in a figurative gesture with legal consequences. Paradoxically, writing in silent nucleotides needs to be verbally voiced and criminalized with words in order to become music.

In the scores composed by Powers's protagonist, music is never opposed to words. Instead, words and music complement each other, so as to reassure us that the text we read is sufficient for our grasp of the piece, whose music has identical effect. Composing his first serious work, a musical setting of an extract from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," Peter "studied the words for days, listening to the sounds contained in them. Then the phonemes and accents led him forward" (61). Like his author, Els aims at "a middle path between romantic indulgence and sterile algorithms, between the grip of the past and the cult of progress" (187).

Els's "hermetic, harmonically adventuresome song cycle for piano, clarinet, theremin, and solo soprano on texts from Kafka's 'The Great Wall of China'" (*Orfeo* 52; cf. 187) puzzles its only two scarce audiences (53). In addition, Els destroys the score in the nineties, so his own mind's ear is the only reality the piece is reported to have. Powers is straightforward: there is neither

score nor actual sound of performance for this diegetic piece, and yet more than 130 pages later, the narrative returns to it and gives it a detailed rendition. The passage seems to be formulaic of Powers's verbal music: it includes a glimpse of how the cycle is sketched, a brief technical description of its instrumentation, form, highlights, a quotation from the lyrics, a description of rehearsing and performance, and a characterization of the listeners' response to and/or interpretation of the piece (187-89).[1]

Powers literally makes the piece twice-told: the second time "The Great Wall" songs are rendered is a more detailed version, not a flash of the composer's memory but a retrospective narrative centered on the period when the work was created and performed. The Kafka text from the third song is repeated *verbatim* and in full (52-53, 187), and the narrative choice is peculiar: the only quote to represent Els's "The Great Wall of China" is in fact not from Kafka's "Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer," but from *Die Zürauer Aphorismen* Kafka was also writing circa 1917, which sometimes supplement the story in collections such as *The Great Wall of China and Other Short Works* (98; cf. *Zürau* 108). The false attribution of Kafka's fragment is typologically similar to the fictionalization of actual pieces of music, such as by skipping 39 bars of Shostakovich in *Europe Central*, or, most generally, the way historical characters are treated in fiction.[2] Moreover, to musicalize a literary source, Powers needs his protagonist to poetize

[1] The formula, with occasional omissions and/or elaborations such as added ICAs, embedded narratives, and partial repetitions, applies not only to Els's pieces—the Whitman song (60-64), *Borges Songs* (127-30, 151-65), *The Fowler's Snare* (269-79, 287-93)—but to all other verbal fragments with non-fictional prototypes: Mahler (28-39), Reich (245-55), Partch (351-58), Neruda (360-63). For a detailed discussion of the formula's implications, see my sections 3.4 and 3.6.
[2] Cf. McHale's reading of the "wrong" Tolstoy quotation opening *Ada* as creating an alternative Tolstoy novel in Nabokov's "science-fictionalized" reality (69). Powers also fictionalizes Els's literary sources: Els's setting of "the end of Whitman's 'Song of Myself'" (*Orfeo* 61) quotes the end of stanza 6 (Whitman 194)—i.e. the poem's beginning, not end. These "inaccuracies" resonate with their literary originals—the labyrinthine method of how the Great Wall is built in Kafka and Whitman's famous "Do I contradict myself?/Very well then I contradict myself,/(I am large, I contain multitudes)" towards the actual end of "Song of Myself" (246).

it: the Kafka aphorism is turned into a three-stanza poem. It is also used leitmotivically to connect Els's music to other themes of the novel, as the idea that "[t]*he world will offer itself to be unmasked*" preoccupies Els, coming up in his tweets (136) and his teaching (317).

Like other diegetic pieces of music, Els's early songs get tightly attached to his deeply personal experience, so that the analytic dissection of Kivy's "music alone" and Scruton's "acousmatic experience" from what is *not* music becomes highly artificial. The Whitman song is derived from its young composer's obsession with Clara Reston, while the Borges cycle is transformed entirely by its vocalist—Madolyn Corr, who marries Els and bears his daughter. The "*pretty eerie*" score gets "so many corrections" to adapt it to Maddy's voice that reading it becomes "like doing paleontology" (128). Furthermore, at its first presentation to the reader, the cycle is "looped through a little four-bar phrase" from the third song, which the singer keeps humming after the rehearsal. The lyric for the looped tune is from Borges's *El milagro secreto* (1944)—the story of a one-year time halt granted to an author by God so that he can compose his great drama in verse the instant before his death—entirely in his mind, since no bodily movement is possible in that universal standby mode. Like Borges's character, who "did not work for posterity," Peter Els writes "for forever and for no one" (*Orfeo* 128; cf. Borges, *Ficciones* 120). But once he hears Maddy's performance, his own inner clock resumes the ticking that stopped when Clara had left him for Europe, and his thumb resumes the habit of tapping "miniature pieces, rushing out to populate the future" (126).

Experimental art music's deep link to the sensory and emotional experience of everyday life is Powers's encouragement for the reader to respond.

When the *Borges Songs* are re-introduced in a longer section of verbal music centered on their premiere (151-65), they are co-authored by another important person in Els's life, his "new friend," stage director and librettist Richard Bonner, who turns the work "into madcap theater" (151). As we witness through the production stages, Els's music gets aggravated with weird costumes for the ensemble of musicians and gestures they are assigned to make. Bonner preaches to the performers, "*You gonna sit with a broom up your sphincter, afraid to tap your feet? You've forgotten where music comes from. Why do you think they're called movements?*" (153).

Watching how the composer and performers are infected with excitement of a new life for the difficult academic piece, Powers's reader is drawn to follow the author's track and mentally submit what is apparently lacking—the image of what this music sounds like. Confiding that the project of making Els's music tangible has to do with his own unrealized aspirations for becoming a composer, Powers elaborates on his methods of imagining and describing his main character's compositional output to stand "on par" with 20th-century music landmarks: "I was trying to find different kinds of vocabularies to describe them to laymen, as these musics unfold, and appeal to the reader. To treat these pieces—to almost compose them in my head and then to describe them as though I were listening to them for the first time" (in Owens 377). Embracing, and sometimes replacing, accounts of musical procedures with diversified visual and emotive stimuli, Powers makes the reader part of Els's team, so that the existence of musical sound in this richly immersive environment is subject to no doubt. We may not get a precise auditory image, which would be the same to all readers, but a vivid experience which contains musical sound coming from our own

experiential background is highly probable. At the public recital of the *Borges Songs*, it is hard to determine whether each instrumentalist's leave of stage is due to their genuine failure to accompany the singer to the end of the cycle or the execution of Bonner's secret instructions. Yet the way Maddy Corr deals with the situation is inspiring enough for Els to propose to her. Though neither the premature ending of the performance nor matrimony is in Els's score, this is what it does, performatively, and this is the narrative vocabulary Powers applies to let those "movements" move the reader.

Centering the passage on performance allows Powers to describe the score procedures in the experiential dimension of concrete space and time.[1] Rendering a work of vocal music enables him to combine the words from the score with brief instants of technical description of music. Getting the piece staged legalizes the visual images—ICAs of some sort—as part of the score, or at least as relevant to what the notes are saying. The "stutter-step stall" of the horn "picked up by the cello, and then the oboe" is accompanied with the image of Maddy, who "crept down the right aisle in a gray tunic" (155). After the piano breaks into the auditory scene, the sentence from Borges's *Funes el memorioso* (1941) opens the vocal part. Parsing Borges's prose into verse and supplying it with extra repetitions *shows*, rather than *tells*, the stuttering in the instrumental parts previously described:

> *The truth is,*
> *truth is,*
> *truth is . . .*
> *The truth is that we live out our lives*
> *putting off all that can be put off . . .*
> (*Orfeo* 155; cf. Borges, *Labyrinths* 64)

[1] Considering that, like most other Els pieces, the *Borges Songs* are subject to a single performance, performance and score merge, and an *ad hoc* performance description becomes the program notes for the piece.

Technical terms—such as the indicated switch in the pitch collection "to Hypophrygian" and "tight stretti of dense materials" in the next paragraph—are supplied with concise clarifications to experientially guide Powers's lay readership through these program notes: "an old church mode," "circled" (*Orfeo* 155). In the further unfolding of instrumental parts and the "Funes" extract in the vocal, the resulting soundscape's expressive and intervallic characterizations are supplemented with screen-projected images and "a choir of antiphonal taped voices" (156)—Bonner's toppings above Els's score.

After a paragraph focusing on the people in the audience, the first song ends (157), and the setting of a few sentences from *Nueva refutación del tiempo* (1946) begins: "*Time is a river which carries me along*" (158; cf. Borges, *Labyrinths* 234). Borges's recurrent themes—paradoxes of mind and memory, time and/as infinite recurrence—are highlighted in the text as something that is metaphorically synonymous to music—including Els's music doubling the Borges quotations. The protagonist is in the audience, and the expert precision of technical description comes as an inferable consequence of predominant internal focalization marked out most articulately when the listener's emotions are at stake in close connection with the music's simultaneous development in and out of time: "Listening, Els heard the total lie. He wrote for the future's love, and for the love of an ideal listener he could almost see. He saw how he might expand the music, make it stranger, stronger, colder, more huge and indifferent, just as soon as this concert was over" (159). Listening and composing are synchronized, and the music and the words, in Powers, collaborate equally to the same effects. The instrumentalists, who one by one abandon Maddy during the performance of the final song—an abridged sentence from Borges's "The Divine Comedy" (*Orfeo*

159-161; cf. Borges, *Seven* 10)—may do so because they are deprived of Els's powers as composer and listener. Asked to outlay the difference between playing the cello and writing fiction, Powers replies, "Playing the cello is attempting to bring back to life something that has a preexistence. Writing is attempting to find a life that does not yet exist" (in Berger n.p.).

Els's music marks not only how relationships enter his life, but also how they exit. Bonner's New York commission for *Immortality for Beginners* costs Els his marriage, and the single performance of the same piece, which "took most of a year to put together and . . . was over in a day" (216), seems to end the tandem of Els and Bonner. In ten years spent in a secluded forest cabin *à la* Thoreau, Els gets some music written, and "*World Band*—a juggernaut symphonic pastiche that ran a fourteen-note motif through a dozen ethnic styles" (224)—even gets performed in Europe by a touring Dutch ensemble. Yet it takes Bonner to return for Els to embark on his largest-scale project, the opera about the 16th-century Siege of Münster with his friend's libretto written in the intermingled manners of "Rilke and Isaiah" (206), giving the composer a short bit of fame and a college job. Powers first introduces a scratch of that libretto in the form of a few measures from the second act, which the 2011 Els accidentally tunes into on the car radio. The broadcast of the recording, whose very existence Els has long forgotten, cuts to what is now relevant to know of the "Pennsylvania college professor . . . wanted for questioning regarding the death of nine Americans by bacterial contagion":

> *Nothing is more beautiful than terror,*
> *More terrible than His coming.*
> *All that is high will be made low . . .* (*Orfeo* 205)

This evidence of his bioterrorism still fills the seventy-year-old Els with pride.

The short rendition of an aria fragment filtered through Els's hearing emphasizes the affective power of the music, as well as the listener's predisposition for empathy and direct association between the operatic situation and his own: "The orchestration cut through his interstate haze. . . . The tune was a clear incitement to violence, and Els felt himself being hung in the court of public opinion" (206). This he shares with *Orfeo*'s author, who reports his own "fascination with the Siege of Münster" also tangible in *Operation Wandering Soul*: "I always felt that the Münster Uprising would have made the greatest kind of contemporary opera, and since I was incapable of writing that opera myself, I had to get Peter Els to do it" (in Vorda n.p.).

Retrospectively, the autobiographical motif for *The Fowler's Snare* is traced as far back as Els's "childhood memory", when by association "an old man burying his dog" at the beginning of the novel suddenly recognizes the opera as a dramatization of the scene of his father's death rather than "a prophecy of End Time" (*Orfeo* 28). The intimately personal Oedipal pattern of guilt, for so long concealed in the composer's subconscious, draws connecting threads to Els's agonizing lack of confidence in the project at the time of his work on it. Once he discovers that the story of the 1534 Münster Anabaptist rebellion was previously used in Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Le prophète* (1849), Els panics and almost begs Bonner to close the "rip-off" production (276). He eventually tries to cancel the premiere; being unable to do so, he makes sure to turn down all offers to ever renew the show, quarreling and separating with Bonner once again. The reason is that not just a past fiction in the shape of a popular love opera, but the present reality manifests an ominous repetition of Els's operatic plot, when "a few dozen religious zealots" (288) bunker themselves down in central Texas and end up

being stormed and terminated by US Federal troops. Els fears accusations of a "Faustian bargain" (289), which Mann's fictional composer Adrian Leverkühn's music may result from, and tries his best to evade Leverkühn's fate, only postponing it by two decades.

The opera's three acts are rendered in three portions of verbal music (269-73, 276-79, 291-93), supplemented by two intermissions to tell the story of the opera's composition circumstances and production procedures (273-76, 287-91) and the insertion of an alternating verbal music segment from the 2011 narrative plane—Els's hearing of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony (279-87). From the overture opening "with almost nothing: one oboe, one English horn, and one bassoon" playing a unison theme from "a mass by Ockenghem," which then divides into several melodies to tonally paint a "[d]awn in the free city of Münster" (269), technical description of orchestral events is constantly qualified with plot-related explanations. We are invited to picture what is shown on stage along with the musical sounds, in quick shifts between sentences and paragraphs referring to either. The device of contrapuntal narrative, analogous to the compound melody/implied polyphony technique discussed in my section 1.2, is applied in Powers for sequential rendering of simultaneous events in the several media of the multimodal (plurimedial, in Wolf's terms) art of operatic performance. Powers constructs Els's masterwork as it is being performed and experienced by the composer prior to and during the premiere. Like other Els scores burnt, scattered, and forgotten, the opera, which takes forty months of diegetic time to assemble, exists independently from its stage realization—in the imagination of its creators, from different narrative levels. The author composes what the non-diegetic narrator tells and ascribes to the character's imagination,

borrowing from other sources—fictional characters as librettists and real composers as inspirations, and the entire piece is communicated to the reader, who gets a mental image of the music that is forever true, since no further verification is possible.

As lines from the libretto add up to the score, in the operatic characters' voices of assigned ranges and registers, the opera's embedded narrative becomes driven by their sound, which the reader is instructed to mentally hear: "Rothmann's baritone shines out above them," and "[a] trio of merchants caution the preacher, above the massed strings" (270). The sonic layers Powers's verbal score embraces indicate counterpoint in the narrow sense: to make the reader hear "the long, brazen lines of modal melody" sung simultaneously, Powers splits the page and types the parts in two columns (271). Special music terms, which some readers may opt to look up, are built into the narrative in a way that makes their metaphorical function contextually clear: "In the building passacaglia, Rothmann works his way downstage to join John of Leiden" (272). The passacaglia effect of solemn melodic variations over a "repeating eight-bar bass" (Griffiths n.p.) is concordant with the action the narrative describes, and the reader grasps it affectively from a position of an opera-goer, who may enjoy the performance without knowing there is a passacaglia section in the score. Powers's trick with technical terms is that his uses of "canon" (270), "modulation," "motet" (271), "tetrachord," "chorale" (272), "tutti" (273), "fugue" (277), or "sul ponticello harmonics" (291) are contextually defined in metaphorically suggestive ways.[1]

[1] E.g. ". . . canon—copies of a single germ, sped up or slowed down, pitched at various intervals" (270); "A sudden modulation into a remote harmonic region, and four men on horseback appear from the wings" (271); "Believers and unbelievers, foreigners and natives, prophets and merchants, the elect and the damned, swirl together in a frenzied tutti" (273; cf. 291); "The crowd takes up the decree in a gathering fugue" (277).

All layers of *The Fowler's Snare* as a diegetic artwork, except for the parallel text in two columns in the first act, are presented to the reader in a single stream of words. Specific segments in that stream refer to several streams of structured sensory data, each one interrupted to give way to a fragment from another stream—stage actions, historical background, instrumental parts, change of music texture, the protagonist's perception, and so on. Each of the streams is thus gapped, whenever one stream goes out of textual focus for another's sake, although we assume that, in the storyworld, the multimodal fictional score is complete. The impression of the multiple whole we collect from Powers's description results from our capacity for stream segregation, since even without noticing it we parse and classify the information in the text as characterizing different aspects of the fictional reality, which present themselves simultaneously.

Since that is also the way we process everyday reality, as well as polyphonic music (cf. Wright and Bregman 70), stream segregation is a natural cognitive capacity, which Powers addresses when he organizes his text in his alternating fashion and encourages the reader to experience it as a polyphonic unity. In his verbal music, he uses extra-musical streams consisting not of notes but of other elements, such as visual images, associations and thoughts, words from the libretto, and whole interludes of the fictional piece's broader diegetic context, as a matter of compensation for those acoustic and acousmatic layers of the music that remain thus unattended. However, considering how listener's auditory stream segregation works, and how the audience's attention is distributed in concert halls and opera houses (cf. Wright and Bregman 66-70), the effect Powers models and the amount of material his linear text provides might be sufficient for both quantitative and qualitative analogy between reading and

listening to music. It is thus not only referentially but also structurally that Powers's text reproduces the pieces of music it describes.

The overall trend of Els's compositional practices to hit no audiences, because terminated or lost, is pushed to the limit in Els's final work—his physical manipulation of *Serratia* genetic code to encrypt it with a music score. This music is impossible to hear, although it is literally "out there." It is deprived of the acoustic dimension and exists in the physical equivalent of Scruton's metaphorical acousmatic space—at the microbiological level of biochemical processes within the genetic structure of bacterial cells. Els's acquired amusia at the age of sixty-eight serves as a catalyst for his new composition method: now that his brain prevents him from empathizing with music, whose sound now cannot "trick the body into thinking it had a soul" (330), biocomposing is a handy solution. Ever since Peter did chemistry, believing that the "symmetries hidden in the columns of the periodic table had something of the *Jupiter*'s grandeur" (31), the panmusicalism of his perception has welcomed experiencing science as swarming in musical delights—metaphorically, but experientially so. At seventy, he feels "[s]cience should have been the career, music just a hobby" (143), but in fact the two are quite interchangeable, since music is everywhere:

> . . . music floated across the sky in cloud banks, and songs skittered in twigs down the staggered shingles of a nearby roof. All around him, a massive, secret chorus written in extended alternate notation lay ripe for transcribing. His own music had no corner on obscurity. Almost every tune that the world had to offer would forever be heard by almost no one. And that fact gladdened him more than anything he'd ever written. (331)

The *Serratia* piece is up to this ideal.

Encoding music by means of genetic modification is Powers's take at bioartist Eduardo Kac's 1999 project of doing the same with words, while the US

government's charges against another bioartist, Steve Kurtz, prompted him to turn the protagonist into a fugitive (Vorda n.p.). By adding the social and/or political dimension to Els's biomusical experiment, Powers overcomes the hermetic formalism of Els's troubled relationship with listeners: becoming "Biohacker Bach" (65) earns him a bigger audience than all his fifty years' work altogether.

Until Bonner talks him into tweeting, Els is reluctant to speak about his "hobby," assuming no one would believe or get interested anyway. "[T]rying to take a strand of DNA, five thousand base pairs long . . . and splice it into a bacterial plasmid" to find, "in a single cell, astonishing synchronized sequences" (142; cf. 299) is the way he explains it to himself, as we learn due to the narrator's use of free indirect discourse sustaining internal focalization on the main character throughout the novel. Els's project is extremely difficult to understand as a musical one, and by refraining from giving full explanations even to his friend Klaudia Kohlmann, not just the police, Els holds an elitist aesthetics of difficult art. To his knowledge, his musically modified "nonsense string would live alongside the bacterium's historical repertoire, silently doing nothing. Like the best conceptual art, it would sit ignored by the millions of trades going on in the marketplace all around it" (142).

Even if his "message" gets replicated, his assumption is that it will never be heard. The ascetic modesty of an artist whom the public habitually ignores is mixed with an enormous pride: Els has solved not only the problem of depriving music of its acoustic parameters and creating a purely acousmatic work, but creating a work that he believes is intellectually incomprehensible. The bacterial silence containing his music is more than John Cage's 4´33´´: genomics, with its "scores of indescribable beauty" (143), has cracked the code for the music of the

spheres, but only Els happens to hear it, so far. The further fate of his work proves that his exclusiveness in this matter is not quite the case: with Twitter, he gains followers.

The metaphor of extraterrestrial beings is the recurrent expression of the protagonist's feel of his most important ones: his first love Clara Reston "coming from a planet even more remote than his" (31), his second love and wife Madolyn Corr, "unreal" and "[f]rom another planet" (163), and his friend Richard Bonner (140): "*You're a damn alien, aren't you?* Els tells the director. *Outer space. Admit it*" (140). Clara is unavailable by the time Peter is involved with his biomusical home lab, but both Maddy and Richard have no problem at all understanding the artistic background of his *Serratia* endeavor: he does not even need to tell them. "*Was this some performance piece? Some kind of avant-garde stunt? Getting your revenge on the thankless public by scaring them shitless?*" (299), his ex-wife asks when, like Orpheus, he comes to see her in a world of the present, from which there is no return to the past. To read Els's mind, the earthly experience of him as a husband is sufficient: "*Oh, shit. . . . You were composing. In DNA?*" (300). When Els visits Bonner in his Alzheimer's drug-testing clinic in Arizona, the old director is the first to speak of the music of the spheres and ask, "*What's the piece?*" and "*what does it sound like?*" (344). During their conversation, Bonner looks at the stars through his telescope, and Els gradually stops denying that "*[t]here is a piece*" and begins to hear it in the celestial silence.

By recommending Els to tweet, Bonner co-authors the piece. Els's music of the spheres, for which he finds a proper spacing in the replicating cells, happens by means of the composer telling the world about it. Being concrete and literal in the sense that Els really modified bacterial genes in accordance with a

music score remains a totally abstract "*proof of concept*" (143, 345): no one can ever retrace, rewind, or replay it. Els's activity on Twitter is a performative utterance, coming into being as Els "goes on writing, of music converted into a string of zeros and ones, then converted again into base four. He writes of *Serratia*'s chromosome ring, five million base pairs long. He tweets how he divided those two numbers to produce a short key" (359).

The story of "how he turned a living thing into a jukebox" itself duplicates Els's genetic composition: "He presses a button and the message sets out into the biosphere, where it will live and copy itself for a while" (359). By letting his music emanate from the traceable electronic device and wittily naming his account "@Terrorchord" (350), the protagonist ensures that the "tweets condemn him" (359). The moment Bonner suggests launching a Twitter-transmitted "*epidemic of invisible music*," Els is aware of the consequences: "*They'll kill me, you know*" (346). Human fear is Els's warrant for an audience, and his medium is exclusively verbal this time. Els tweets verbal music based on a non-existent piece, which he doesn't have time to even finish and which is fully shaped only in his conversation with his long-term impresario:

> Sounds everywhere, but still no piece. There'll be no piece forever. Then there is.
> *Oh*, he says. *Oh. You're saying . . . You mean . . .*
> But Bonner, like music, doesn't mean things. He *is* things. Things that can never be unmade. (345)

The whole string of selected Twitter messages, which may bother the reader of *Orfeo* from the novel's outset until contextualized towards its end, is a *mise-en-abyme* (cf. McHale 127)—the model of what Powers does to Els's other, more "visible" pieces, to use the musicalized version of Borges's concept in "Pierre Menard." Like Gass's Joseph Skizzen, and like Powers and Gass

themselves, Peter Els composes with words, which transcends the diegetic and makes the music of his last piece non-diegetic—the constant and universal movement of microbes, implied indeterminately in DeLillo's *White Noise* and coming up as a "realized metaphor" (cf. McHale 133-37)[1] in Vollmann's *You Bright and Risen Angels* without Powers's musical imagery regulating the metaphorical matrix of *Orfeo*. Constraints of the Twitter format—short phrases, "dozens at a pop, no more than 140 characters each" (*Orfeo* 350)—determines the rhythm of Els's fragmented prose, with which he integrates so many quotations from 20th-century composers (Mahler, Cage, Partch, Crumb), but their words again, not music.

After the repetition of the initial three tweets (351), tweet 76 does not equal tweet 4, nor does 77 coincide with 5: there is a forking in the path, which marks the succession of Els's messages as itself gapped and incomplete. The order of tweets in the story/*fabula* is irretrievable from discourse/*sujet*, which is the normal aspect of the kind of composition we are dealing with: "By midafternoon when he pulled into Barstow and tweeted again, he had almost eighty followers. The messages were spreading by themselves" (351).

The topography of Els's last moves on his flight—from the Chicago area, where he talks to his ex-wife, to Phoenix, Arizona for Bonner's sake, to his daughter Sara's place on the Pacific Coast as the protagonist's final destination—

[1] McHale's preliminary remarks to his "Tropological Worlds" chapter render Benjamin Hrushovsky's views on the "existent" and "non-existent" frames making up a metaphor (still analytically, rather than cognitively, understood: cf. Black's (28) distinction between the focus and the frame of a metaphor). Both frames, however, can actually be "existent," thus characterized by coincidence of metonymic contiguity and metaphorical resemblance in what the Russian formalists called "realization of metaphor" (McHale 134). In *Orfeo*, the existence of Els's biomusical piece is pushed forward by an unverifiable insistence that the *Serratia* cells genetically modified by him really exist, so that his unfinished microbiological experiment of inserting a music score into the cells is both metonymy and metaphor. The result is problematic, since either frame—the score or the modified cells—might as well be non-existent, their reality is only made up by Els's telling his Twitter followers, and Powers telling us, that they do. Eventually, there is then only metaphor, from all sides.

includes Barstow, California. Harry Partch's eponymous hobo song cycle is the theme of this stop, but the broader metaphorical implication is Partch's theory and practice of microtonality—dividing an octave into much more than the twelve well-tempered tones of the Western chromatic scale. Microdivision—as in Borges's book with "an infinite number of infinitely thin pages" (*Labyrinths* 58)—is at stake in Els's biochemistry, music, and electronic networking. With the latter, Els's biomusical project is certain to last and become ineradicable: "Two mathematicians debate how hard it would be to decode the base-four music and play it back. . . . A young woman composer describes having heard the file that Peter Els spliced into the genome—a piece for small ensemble that's breakneck and free" (*Orfeo* 357). There is a piece, eventually.

Powers says of his main character: "He wants that thing that the ear can't hear yet" (in Leonard n.p.). As Powers's narrative switches to the foregrounding of the auditory and to the "you-narrative" mode of the final pages (366-69), "you"—i.e. Peter Els, the reader's consciousness-enactment vessel in *Orfeo*—can hear what Sara cannot: the cordon surrounding the house, the special forces awaiting the terrorist. In an open coda, which Powers refuses to paraphrase or explain (cf. Vorda), "you'll head through the door and through it," running "vivace as far as you can get," and "at last you will hear how this piece goes" (*Orfeo* 369)—a convincingly suggestive ending of immersive make-belief for the embodied reader of Powers. In *Orfeo*, the "gradations of fictivity" within the set of presumably fictitious works by the fictional composer, from the Whitman song of the protagonist's youth to his seventy-year-old @Terrorchord self's *Serratia* biomusic, are driven less evident than readerly common sense may suggest.

3.4. Synthesizing Messiaen

Powers's choice of *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* (1941),[1] by Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992), among the "twentieth-century landmarks" (*Orfeo* 70) of Western music covered in Peter Els's free music appreciation course for the local retirement community at Shade Arbors, and among the few extended passages of neatly organized verbal music in *Orfeo* (102-125), is anything but accidental. Some of the French composer's practices and ideas importantly resonate with Els's. Unlike Messiaen, who "sought to refine his compositions to speak more clearly about the truths of Catholicism" (Shenton 1), Els is not a religious mystic. Nonetheless, his creative mind is also set for the ineffable, and his biomusical endeavor is in some sense a secular version of Messiaen's "musical cryptography" (Shenton 2; cf. 69-80). In his lecture, Els does not speak of how Messiaen "maps letters and words directly to musical notes and phrases and transliterates text directly into music" (Shenton 1), nor does he ever explain the cipher he, Peter Els, has invented for encoding music into bacterial gene chains.[2] Yet what for Messiaen was the Lord's eternal glory conveyed in the word of the Holy Bible is for Els the awe-inspiring cosmos of infinite microbiological variety, which science seems to have finally begun uncovering. To both the historical composer and the fictional one, their subjects are musical, and vice versa: music is their way of approaching such subjects.

Powers himself "tries to expand our understanding of music" (De Bruyn 377) by granting musical rights to voices and phenomena that are traditionally

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[1] Powers consistently uses the English title, *Quartet for the End of Time*.

[2] Powers's previous thematic use of the genetic code "cracked" through listening to music is in *The Gold Bug Variations*: the pun in the 1991 novel's title mixes Bach's *Goldberg-Variationen* with Edgar Allan Poe's "The Gold Bug" (1843), a novella about decryption. Whether Els's cipher is predominantly alphabetic, like Bach's *BACH* and Shostakovich's *DSCH*, or, like Messiaen's Saussurean "*langage*" [*sic*], also takes into account phonological, morphological, grammatical, and syntactic variables (Shenton 87-98), is subject to the reader's/critic's speculation.

viewed as lying beyond the musical realm. Els's preoccupation with the "music" of dogs, frogs, birds, and bacterial cells as somehow related to that of "the spheres," in several episodes of *Orfeo*, rhymes perfectly with Messiaen's extravagant integration of birdsong into his music, systematically starting with the *Quatuor* (Hill 249).

Messiaen the "weak-eyed birder" (*Orfeo* 107) must be peripherally on Els's mind, when he stops to listen to a white-throated sparrow in the park and finds that a beautiful jogging girl with thousands of music tracks on her iPod "portable jukebox" can identify the bird to him and is ornithologically more aware than he is (73-78).[1] One of his elderly pupils at Shade Arbors—ironically, "the woman whom music didn't move"—enlightens him on frog-song straight after the Messiaen lecture (148). The episode, in which Els hears the singing of tree frogs he cannot identify except by associating the sound with "a glacial creation like Xenakis or Lucier," is discussed in De Bruyn's reading of the novel's natural soundscape (374-76). Moreover, at the beginning of *Orfeo*, we are introduced to Els's observations of his dog Fidelio's musical habits, which are related to the question of whether the twelve notes of the octave, and tonality as such, which musical universalists derive from the overtone series, are hard-wired in all animals, and not just Western human-beings (*Orfeo* 8-10). Yet Els's interest in the "music" of nature is accidental, compared to Messiaen's. Like St. Francis of

[1] Els's own experience of birdsong listening is devoid of the profound expertise that stands behind Messiaen's "bird style." Messiaen studied ornithology in depth and did actual fieldwork on transcribing birdsong around the world. As Shenton explains, birdsongs "could only be considered as 'natural' signs if recordings were played as part of the piece," whereas the French composer alters the songs significantly in "transcribing them in a slower tempo, lowering their register, and removing microtones while maintaining integrity in the intervallic structure" (60; cf. Hill 253). In Messiaen's music, birdsong is an artificial secondary language rather than a "natural" one (cf. Lotman 20-21), which denotes more than the mere sound of nature: "Not only does a phrase signify a certain bird, but birds themselves have a particular place in Messiaen's theology" (Shenton 61). All in all, the idea that birdsong, as well as music in general, "tries to capture a sense of nonhuman time" (De Bruyn 378), or even timelessness/end of time (Hill 236-37, 243), must appeal to Powers and Els no less than to Messiaen.

Assisi—the hero of Messiaen's eponymous 1983 opera—the French composer embraces God's other creatures and treats them as human equals, if not superiors: for him, birds are "the greatest musicians on our planet" (Shenton 61).

When Messiaen incorporates nature's aural miracles into his scores or exclusively builds entire massive works, such as *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (*Catalogue of Birds*, 1956–58), of pedantically transcribed actual birdsongs, his project is musical and theological. When De Bruyn discusses *Orfeo*'s "nonhuman music" (378) as a meaningful presence of natural sound in fictional storyworlds, he advocates the right of animal voices to be integrated into a literalized version of Bakhtin's novelistic polyphony. De Bruyn's project is thus theoretical and ideological. But when Powers integrates nonhuman music into his fictional composer's aesthetic thinking and practice, and selects Messiaen as both an intra- and inter-textual counterpart for these ideas, he argues against the restrictive concept of music, such as Kivy's or Scruton's, which denies music's physicality in favor of abstract entities—the acoustic for the acousmatic, the emotive for the formal(ist). Theories excluding actual sounds, emotions, and narrative associations from the experience of listening to music "as music," and consequently restricting the specifically musical experience, fail to recognize not only the "music" of dogs and frogs, but that of many composers Powers refers to, including certain aspects of Messiaen. Conversely, Powers's stance here is inclusive, not restrictive. His interests are metamusical and metafictional: on the one hand, he palpates the line between what is music and what is not; on the other, alluding to Messiaen's birds of the *Quatuor* predicts Bonner's choice of a verbal means to articulate Peter's last piece: Twitter, the "Tweety Bird" (345).

Assuming that, like Messiaen and unlike Skizzen, Powers's protagonist knows what he is talking about, it is important what he chooses to omit in his presentation of Messiaen's *Quatuor* to his lay audience at Shade Arbors. Not much of Messiaen's monotheistic Trinitarian theology (cf. Shenton 17-34) is found in Els's exegesis of the *Quartet for the End of Time*. Instead, the lecturer relies on the more accessible biographical reading of the Messiaen piece. As Andrew Shenton notes in his semiotic study of Messiaen, apart from specifically theocentric meanings, even the score's half-technical, half-esoteric preface and the programmatic titles of the eight movements contain a "poetic" layer, and the "certain freedoms of interpretation" this layer secures are "beneficial to the non-Catholic listener" (27).

Els goes into neither musicological nor semiological intricacies of Messiaen, such as modes, rhythmic "characters," or synesthetic understanding of colors (cf. Hill 17-42, 203-17; Pople 34-39; Shenton 49-58). He omits the hermeneutics of the theological subtext of the *Quatuor* (Shenton 63-67; Hill 234-47), but retains the most popular, culturally conditioned, and extramusical program for the piece. The final End of Time announced by the Angel in the Book of Revelation, which Messiaen most explicitly intends to convey, is interpreted "down" to a historical instant, "a direct expression of the prison camp ordeal" (Rischin 6).[1] This interpretation is welcomed by the circumstances of the creation

[1] Rebecca Rischin suggests that her own book—a detailed documentary story of the *Quatuor*—should be read along with the music (8), though "Messiaen denied that the Apocalyptic allusions in his *Quartet* . . . bore any relation to his captivity" (50). Interpreting the first movement, "Liturgie de cristal," in the composer's theological terms, Shenton remarks that the interpretation of the *Quartet* "in the context of Messiaen's own situation in Stalag VIIIA during the war" (67) is also acceptable. Whichever reading we prefer," Shenton continues, Messiaen's "commentary for this movement is actually ambiguous and raises more questions than it answers" (67). In addition, "as Messiaen himself indicated . . . the title of the *Quatuor* might contain a play of words concerning on the one hand the end of mortal time and on the other his hope for an end to 'the equal and measured time of classical music'" (Pople 44; cf. Rischin 52), which is related to his augmented, diminished, and non-retrogradable rhythms (Messiaen ii-iv; trans. in Rischin 131-33).

of the quartet, which have long "passed into legend" (Hill 180). The story of its genesis and first performance (cf. Hill 178-80; Pople 1, 7-11, 14-16) provides the Messiaen piece with a highly moving content. By relying on this mainstream biography-informed hearing for a narrative transposition of "the most widely performed and most popular of Messiaen's pieces" (Shenton 63), Powers gets a wide range of narrative triggers at his disposal to excite a diverse readership:

> I wanted to create descriptions of music and to treat those historical pieces in different ways—do a biographical approach, do a historical re-creation of the composition of certain pieces, but also do a more musicological or listener-response approach to music. I wanted to create this 'thirteen ways' of listening to the song of human beings in the 20th century. (in Owens 377)[1]

Els, who tends to think in historical rather than theological terms, must truly believe that the biographical foundation for the *Quatuor* is not only apt for his lay class of retired volunteers, but relevant to the music itself, "freed of imprisoning meter" (111).

Powers wraps the verbal music for the Messiaen piece into an intricate structure of narrative embeddings and mirror parallelisms. Here, as well as throughout *Orfeo*, the protagonist is the principal internal focalizer guiding his intra- and extra-textual audiences by virtue of his musical competence. The reader, led by the primary non-diegetic narrator, accompanies Els to his lecture venue. After a four-and-a-half-page preamble (102-107), from which we get updated on the content of Els's previous classes and meet some of his eight elderly students, the embedded secondary narrative situation is established. The lecture begins with a chronological account of the events around the quartet's creation: the capture of Messiaen and three other musicians by the Nazis in 1940,

[1] The success of Powers's technique at least among his friendly readers is registered in the interviewer's passing confession: "Your description in particular of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* was magnificently evocative. I haven't yet had time, but I want to listen to it soon" (Owens 376).

the life they lead as prisoners at Stalag VIII A in Görlitz, their rehearsals and first public performance of the *Quartet for the End of Time* to fellow-prisoners and guards on 21st January 1941, and their postwar destinies (109-19).

No matter whether the text we are reading is the character's direct speech or a paraphrase by the primary narrator, it represents Els's narrative. His diegetic narratees are provided with a historical frame of reference for their subsequent listening to the Messiaen recording, and so are Powers's readers. Furthermore, when the story reaches the premiere, we are told how the performance is preceded by the composer's introductory lecture, which "tells the audience what they're about to hear" (114; cf. Rischin 64). Messiaen's opening remarks are summarized too, which is another level of narrative embedding—a tertiary narrative centered on the same music piece. It adds up to what Powers's readers and Els's listeners have already learnt about the order of composition (*Orfeo* 108, 110-11), the composer's programmatic use of St. John's Revelations (111) and birdsong (108), his metrical innovations and his sources for those (112), and the specific movements—third (108), fifth, and eighth (111).[1]

The account of the rehearsals "in camp lavatories"—an experientially suggestive detail to trigger embodied response—contains Messiaen's instructions to the instrumentalists, which cite the score's performance directions (112). Briefly sketched images of each historical member of the line-up attach their biographies to the sound of their respective instruments, so that the timbres of the violin, clarinet, cello, and piano are pictured as people, not just birds and "Heaven's 'harmonious silence' . . . music cannot hope to attain but merely

[1] These are not explicitly identified as such at this point, but the narrative says "Messiaen reworks from memory two pieces that he wrote in another life"—that is, the fifth and the eighth movements of the *Quatuor* (see Pople 10).

represent"[1] (Pople 18; cf. Messiaen i). Els's story proceeds to the concert in Barrack 27, with experiential cues of high affordance to help us empathize with the characters of 1941: "snow carpets," "malnourished men in oil-stained rags"—an audience "from every class and profession" in the "bone-numbing night," including people who "have never heard chamber music before" (*Orfeo* 114; note the use of the present tenses). The facts and names Els provides from memory suggest his good knowledge of the whole story. His and Powers's source for it may well be a 2003 book, in which Rebecca Rischin critically revisits all earlier documents and supplements them with her own interviews with either the participants of the 1941 events (cellist Ettienne Pasquier and violinist Jean Le Boulaire, who premiered the piece in Stalag) or their relatives. Supplying many episodes and details we find in Powers, Rischin also refutes some myths, such as the three-string cello myth perpetuated by Messiaen himself, for theological reasons (66). The subject of Powers's fictionalization is thus a composer who holds meaningful tropes above literal facts.

With the historical scene fully set, Els's verbal music then covers each of the quartet's eight movements in the order they are scored and performed, giving one or two paragraphs to each, with Messiaen's titles and program notes cited from an English translation of the actual score (*Orfeo* 115-17; cf. Messiaen i-ii; Pople 17-87). The intermedial transposition relies on the integral part of the score—Messiaen's "Preface," which is not instrumentally performed, but opts to be made explicit otherwise (for instance, in Messiaen's and Els's lectures). The ICAs that arise here are neither "culturally conditioned" nor "idiosyncratic," in Wolf's terms: the instrumental music is not quite "alone," in Kivy's sense, but

[1] Cf., again, Els and Bonner listening to the stars as the concept of putting the bacterial piece together is born (*Orfeo* 345).

equipped with the composer's metaphors. Messiaen's verbal imagery may be vividly experienced as a Christian's longing for the "dissolution of time" (cf. Hill 236-38) by someone who, like Messiaen himself, is "unquestioning in his faith" (Shenton 19; cf. Hill 303, Pople 19), or as suggestive poetry inscribed on top of the music, which calls for further, more personal experiential response. The end of Els's secondary narrative, into which score-representing fragments are woven, does not stop the verbal music, for now the *Quatuor* is performed once again, within the primary narrative, for Els and his students to listen to, and for Powers's readers to read about how they listen (*Orfeo* 121-25).

In the broad sense of Scher's definition, almost all of this textual material can be qualified as verbal music, especially if we deduce the three contextualizing pages describing Els's drive to the lecture venue and start from where he types his topic in Klaudia Kohlman's smartphone to retrieve the track from the web: "Two more letters—O-F—and there it was, in the middle of the drop-down list, in a dozen different performances: *Quartet for the End of Time*" (107).

In his habitually oscillating manner, Powers has the three modes of verbal music in Scher's definition work towards the reader's musical experience: score (*Orfeo* 115-17), performance (108, 112-13, 115-17), and response (115, 116, 117, 121-25). To those whose experiential background affords it, the author supplies technical language of music terms and thoroughly-quoted samples of Messiaen's metaphysical parlance. To others, or all, Powers provides the instructive and embodied imagery of multiple sensory perceptions to flash in motor resonance and preconceptual recall. Experiential aids guide the embodied reader through dramatic spatial and temporary settings. The sensory properties of the musical experience are strengthened by Messiaen's metaphors, such as "*formidable*

granite sound; irresistible movement of steel, huge blocks of purple rage, icy drunkenness" for the seventh movement (117; Messiaen ii; Pople 64). The framing prologues and epilogues of the entire passage situating the music in the mid-20th-century historical and early-21st-century fictional contexts correspond to one of the two basic strategies of musical emplotment—hearing music as its composer's life (Neubauer, "Tales" 120), something Vollmann deconstructs, and Gass discredits.

The quartet's second movement exemplifies how Powers/Els builds his verbal Messiaen score:

> Then the angel appears, one foot on land, one on the sea, to announce the end of time. Bright, crashing chords, a race of doubled strings. Violin and cello, in a unison chant, wander as far from this camp as imagination can reach. The piano descends in waterfalls of chords. Fanfare returns, jarring the audience. No one can say what on earth these four performers think they're doing.
>
> Music drifts past the bundled listeners, through the snow-buried barrack, beyond the last twist of barbed wire that seals this camp in. The movement ends, releasing a fit of coughs. (115)

"The angel" is from Messiaen's program, to be mentally visualized as a cinematic ICA. "Chords," "double strings," and "unison chant" are rather specialized technicalities from music's acousmatic and acoustic domains of tonal relations and timbral properties, respectively. "Race" and "waterfalls" counterbalanced by "snow-buried barrack" and "barbed wire" do have experiential affordances that may well be universally appealing, while "a fit of coughs" could launch the script[1] of a concert hall environment, with all its inevitable aural distractions, familiar at least to some readers. Powers's verbal music thus switches between different levels of musical experience, multivalent for potential recall with mirror neurons'

[1] "A script is a memory structure that specifies the list of actions people perform in repeated situations such as visits to restaurants, lectures, and grocery stores […] When reading stories that take place in scripted situations, people evoke this type of memory structure to guide their comprehension" (Gerrig and Egidy 40).

firing. The author ensures that the reader's attention, when failing to respond to all the textual cues and stimuli, will be seized by at least some. In terms of consciousness-enactment, we are never left unattended: the secondary diegetic audience of Messiaen's premiere performance is mentioned, at almost equal intervals, all through the nucleus verbal music going through the succession of Messiaen's eight movements—the "score" as it is rendered in Els's lecture. Identifying with the prisoners of World War II may to some of us seem more difficult than with the 21st-century retirement community members in the subsequent diegetic listening to the *Quatuor*. Yet Powers provides his audience, and Els his, with many tangible cues to immerse into that verbally reconstructed winter of 1941 the way the characters from *Orfeo*'s 2011 supposedly do.

Not having to repeat the score parameters of his Messiaen and leaving just a couple of touches of it to orient us in terms of which movement we are in ("By the Intermède," 121; "During the last *louange*," 124), Powers's primary narrator takes us through a sequence of six particular characters' responses to music, plus that of an accidental "gray head" that "poked through the common room's double doors, listened for a moment, then withdrew in giggles" (121). A paragraph of anonymous acousmatic experiences is collected from the listeners' idiosyncratic minds:

> Sounds filled the room, none of them real: Rain spattering a tenement roof. A girl on a wobbly swing set. The rustle of cotton dresses in a dance hall in wartime. The wind over a Nebraska wheat field. A stone dropped down a well with a long-forgotten wish tied to it. Crickets in a November cupboard. (121-22)

The behavioristic presentation of personal responses to Messiaen's music comes from Els's observation of his students while the piece is playing, additionally informed with his knowledge of their individual life stories.

Powers takes us through a selection of experiential backgrounds, as though offering to pick one. In addition, there is silent communication between the watchful diegetic teacher and his listening pupils:

> Fred Baroni, financial planner forced into unwilling retirement, using the course to try to hold dementia at bay for another week, shot Els a scared look at the sound of the pulsing lines: Go on without me. Leave me here, by the side of the road, in the falling snow.
>
> By the Intermède, Paulette Hewerdine was cradling her face in her hands. The year before, her eldest son had been killed when an oncoming truck shot across the highway median. A month later her husband sat up in bed, complained of a headache, and died. She listened now, face covered, as if the sinuous music announced the long-expected trifecta. (121)

Each of these virtually discrete paragraphs may (or may not, since the text invites us to immerse, neither forcing nor guaranteeing immersion) take the reader from sympathy to empathy, from consciousness-attribution to consciousness-enactment, although our true model is still the main character, with his first-hand expertise on all the levels of musical experience he has gone through to become what he is.

Powers's synthetic approach making use of narrative embedding, repetition, embodied imagery, consciousness-enactment, and cinematic as well as acousmatic ICAs, touches upon each side of my Iceberg model: sounds, tones, and narrativized visual imagery. It facilitates what Vollmann's treatment of Shostakovich (see my sections 1.4-5) deliberately complicates, and Gass's take at Beethoven (section 2.3) promises but cancels. By showing how multiple cues for a pre-conceptual and propositional, embodied and acousmatic, referential and formalistic musical understandings thrive and trigger successful verbal transfer of musical experience inside the storyworld, Powers encourages his readers to do

virtually the same. In a sense, so does Messiaen—possibly, one of the most audience-friendly musical experimentalists of the last century.

3.5. John Cage and the Multimodality of Response

"A chance toss of the I Ching led Els to John Cage" (*Orfeo* 100): a substantial account of Cage's *Musicircus* (1967) comes in the novel (125-27, 131-39) straight after its take on the Messiaen, with a 44-year leap back in Els's life story. A star of the American avant-garde, John Cage (1912–1992) inhabits Powers's novel quite noticeably—mostly through the many Cage aphorisms quoted in Els's tweets and thoughts (11, 120, 125, 131, 202, 232), but also by presenting him "in the flesh" as a character of the *Musicircus* episode.

Along with references to such living composers as John Adams or Philip Glass, Powers's use of Cage is the closest we ever get to the "synchronicity between literary and musical texts" that Stephen Benson does not find in recent fiction. As Benson observes, "the Western art music which is of interest to the contemporary novelist . . . is by and large Classical and Romantic, the music of the common period" (*Literary Music* 7). Seen from the second decade of the 21st century, Cage the radical innovator, his one-time *vis-à-vis* Messiaen, and his teacher Schoenberg[1] are all classics, although their music certainly lies outside the Common Practice Period. Even associating Cage with postmodernism (Bernstein and Hatch 8-9) does not quite synchronize him with Powers, whom critics would consider either not postmodern, or a different brand of postmodernism, depending on how restrictively the term is treated. Portrayal through the lens of the seventy-

[1] Cage met Messiaen in Paris in 1949 and liked him, but gave aesthetic preference to his pupil Boulez: "While delighting in Messiaen the organist and person, Cage felt unenthusiastic about his music" (Silverman 82). For Cage's opinion on Schoenberg, see Kostelanetz (15) and Silverman (24), whose accounts are somewhat contradictory.

year-old protagonist inflates Cage's experimental art in *Orfeo* with a nostalgic feel. The defamiliarizing gesture of *Musicircus* and Cage's unconventional aesthetics in general are processed for them to make peace with the musical tradition, which Peter Els embodies. In Powers's musico-literary hybrid, the "true polyartist" and "de facto esthetician" John Cage (Kostelanetz 3; cf. 34-46) is a reconciliatory figure in lieu of a provocateur. Even better than Messiaen's birdsong, Cage's musical thinking is suitable for Powers's all-inclusive approach to music, which Els adopts in his silent DNA-score endeavor.

As demonstrated by his best-known *4′33′′* (1952), Cage extends the notion of music to include ambient non-pitched noises within the concert hall, the indistinct murmur of street traffic from the outside, and eventually "all sounds, whether intentional or not" (Kostelanetz 5). The piece is scored as three uneven successions of measures marked as rests. The performer controls the exact length of each movement with a stopwatch, closing and opening the piano cover to signal, respectively, the beginning and end of each movement. In the 1960s, Cage "considered [*4′33′′*] as a musical work that went on constantly, an intimation of the ultimate unity of music and life" (Pritchett 145), so the initially strict duration of the piece would cease to matter. As a result, its pair piece, *0′00′′* (1962), which is technically neither silent nor even a "composition," due to Cage's least-imposing layout for it, implements the idea of "Zero Time (that is to say no time at all)," in which music is a *process*, not *object* (147)—an interesting secular parallel to Messiaen's apocalyptic subtext of the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*. Cage's philosophical trajectory from American transcendentalism and pragmatism to Zen Buddhism and the *I Ching*—the ancient Chinese *Book of Changes*—

reflects an aesthetic sensibility quite different from Messiaen's theology[1] and determines the "indeterminate," *alias* "nonintentional" or "chance" nature of much of his art (Bernstein and Hatch 230).

In *Orfeo*, the "Imp Saint" John Cage appears on the University of Illinois campus at around the same time as his historical prototype—in 1967. Peter Els is then a music graduate student and aspiring composer, who is deeply engaged in watching scandalous contemporary trends. He comes to realize that music not only "is things" (69), but that it also "knew things" (100). Cage's "artistic philosophy based upon the negation of self-expression" (Bernstein and Hatch 3) is in the air of the 1960s, so Els is confronted with the urge to see music as a subject, not object, escaping its human "creators," who have little to do with it. The freedom Cage seeks in tossing coins for compositional decisions in *Music of Changes* for the piano (1952) and other *I Ching*-generated scores is anti-romantic. It is not a matter of a free individual's heroic choice, but of yielding to forces beyond our intention and control. Cage's artistic anarchy witnessed by Els at the *Musicircus* performance and his cryptic scores of chance-determined hexagrams from the fortune-telling *I Ching* belong to a different level of transpersonal order—just like Els's own early computer-programmed "string quintet using probability functions and Markov chains" (*Orfeo* 73) or his late biomusical *tour de force*. For Cage, anarchy is not chaos, even if no teleology is inferred: there is the *I Ching*, for instance, to determine the entire musical content and formal procedures of many Cage works. The method is founded on "the integration of law and freedom" (Pritchett 70) rather than on chaos. In fact, what Cage rejects by

[1] Apart from Meister Eckhart, philosophers important for Cage are not Christian mystics. For their namelist, including C. S. Peirce, John Dewey, William James, C. G. Jung, Wittgenstein, and D. T. Suzuki, see Bernstein and Hatch (62-112). In his "vocal" works, Cage extensively uses H. D. Thoreau as well as Joyce, Marshall McLuhan, and Marcel Duchamp (cf. Kostelanetz 111, 150-54).

consulting the *I Ching* or using other "chance" methods for his art is intentionality—the distatorship of the artist. He delegates the power to determine the shape of a piece to a transhuman authority, but coins are there to order and create, not mess up and destroy.

Cage's set of terms to describe this "un-aesthetic choice" (Pritchett 71) shares its assumptions with his concept of "silence" embracing all hearable sound. In Powers, Els's biomusical "composition"—his "thousands of runaway pieces" (*Orfeo* 43)—is an attempt to create something that is also beyond us and has to do with such laws of reality that transcend knowledge. At the same time, Els holds a teleological belief that natural genomics is itself a design, even if it is ruled by sheer chance. The results of chance operations may be revealing and transformative: "by selecting rhythmic patterns randomly" in *Music of Changes*, Cage finds it turn "into something quite different than he had originally imagined" (Pritchett 83).

Among the many literary models for Cage's chance composition methods, there are Tristan Tzara's collage and William Burroughs's cut-up techniques; the paradigmatic musical prototype is supplied by Mozart. In Cage's monumental *HPSCHD* (1967–69), one of the seven harpsichord parts is a musical dice game attributed to Mozart (K.294d, 1793), which "consists of sixteen measures of minuet-style music and tables of numbers referring to these measures. Dice are used to select measures from the table at random, thus creating a chance-composed minuet" (Pritchett 160; cf. Kostelanetz 101).[1] The idea of connectedness between avant-garde experimentation and the classical style nourishes Els's (and Powers's) broad musical taste, which resists negativity: the

[1] See the descriptive reference to *HPSCHD* in *Orfeo*, where the piece is not explicitly named (167-68).

protagonist's early rejection of the rock'n'roll (*Orfeo* 19) is replaced, in the course of a lifetime of musical education, with his interested listening to a heavy-metal CD cherished by the grandchildren's generation (172-73).

Powers establishes a communication framework to broadcast *Orfeo*'s music to the reader by avoiding direct collision with any possible experiential backgrounds his readers may possess. Even though "Peter wants to flee, too," he does not join Maddy when she walks out of Cage's *Musicircus* premiere soon after they get in. Els stays "in the belly of this beast" (134) till the very end, absorbing the atmosphere, which at first does not agree with his melocentric sensitivity at all. It is as if Powers's character intuits how he is partially modeled on Cage, although a fuller picture of their resemblances drawn by the author must necessarily escape him.

Like Cage's, Els's (much more moderate) search for new musical languages is not aimed at terminating the existing ones, but is meant to transcend borders and set free all the "things" that music "is" and "knows" and liberate it from biological as well as tonal restrictions. Cage's botanic interests—a profound mycological expertise he extravagantly justifies by the fact that mushrooms and music "appear adjacent to each other in most dictionaries" (Kostelanetz 21; cf. Silverman 166-68)—must be known to Powers, who parallels it with Els's scientific enthusiasms. The entire history of Els's friendship and artistic collaboration with Richard Bonner—his choreographer, impresario, stage director, and librettist—unmistakably reminds attuned readers of Cage's longtime association with dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham (Kostelanetz 25-33), except for the homosexual aspect of that relationship (Bernstein and Hatch

41-61).[1] Only after Els retires from composition and teaching will he rival Cage's radicalism with the *Serratia* "piece"—hence the Cage quotations in the tweets "advertising" it. What in Messiaen is religion (his reading of the Revelations), personal history (his experience at Stalag), and the glory of God's creation (birdsong) is literally *everything* in Cage's artistic views. Els articulately comes to share this mindset and completes shaping the contours of his final biomusical project while visiting Bonner in Arizona, which in the story occurs *after* the Messiaen lecture. In light of Cage's ideas, it is hardly accidental that the Kafka quotation from Els's early song cycle (*Orfeo* 52-53; 187) is repeated as Els's tweet 34, inserted into the account of Els's *Musicircus* experience: "You do not need to leave your room. Don't even listen. Simply wait. The world will offer itself to be unmasked. It has no choice" (136).

As well as the rest of the novel, the *Musicircus* episode is told by the primary non-diegetic narrator, internally focalizing on Els. The present-tense narration—just like in Els's Messiaen narrative set in 1941—may, or may not, signal a closer fusion between the narrator and character. This time, it is not the character's present self's words, but his re-experiencing of the 1967 scene, from memory. This interpretive possibility is suggested in the story when Maddy kisses Peter before she leaves the venue: "The old man of seventy standing next to them nods in recall" (135).[2] Powers's historical "inaccuracies" in fictionalizing the scene[3] could in this case be realistically motivated by a lapse of the character's

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[1] While the two are working on the *Borges Songs*, Bonner comments to Els: "*It seems to me that half of life's problems would be solved if one of us had a vagina*," which makes Els shudder (154).
[2] Metalepsis is first suggested two pages earlier: "An old man presses past them, closer than he needs to, smiling at Maddy and Peter as if possessing a great secret" (133).
[3] Attending a performance of "Cage's *Concerto for Prepared Piano*," Els sees "the pianist crawl under the instrument and wallop it with a mallet" (131), which might be Powers's fusion of two Cage works: *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra* (1950) and the more demanding *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957–58), for which David Tudor created a piano realization that required him to "crawl under the piano to thump it from below" (Silverman 155).

memory. According to documentary sources, Cage produced *Musicircus* "[i]n November, two months after arriving at the university" (Silverman 236), which may pass in Els's memory for a "Friday night in winter, late in ´67" (*Orfeo* 125) or even a "Midwestern midwinter" (139). Powers's overview of the event's participants (133) does not need to coincide with Cage's own (qtd. in Kostelanetz 161-62) or with anyone else's (Pritchett 157-58) for two other reasons. First, and most obviously, since *Orfeo* is a work of fiction, its characters would not appear on any attendance list for the historical happening, if such a list existed. Second, Powers's fictional account of *Musicircus* cannot possibly fail the authenticity test, because any performance of *Musicircus* is the authentic *Musicircus*: the work literally has "no score at all" (Pritchett 144).

Musicircus was "composed"—or, rather, *not* composed—in the decade when Cage almost abandoned music writing in any approximation of a traditional sense. For musicologists, as Charles Hamm notes, "it was not always clear whether certain events in which he had been involved in the late 1960s and early 1970s—the *Musicircus*, for instance—should be listed as 'compositions'" (3). "Music (not composition)" is Cage's formula for the period: music is taken beyond all its traditional confines and limits (Pritchett 145-46), including its presumably auditory medium, to be understood as virtually everything—and nothing, as the advert for *Musicircus* goes (158). "No directions were given anyone" (Kostelanetz 162), so Cage's original "piece" called *Musicircus* "was no more than an invitation to some musicians to perform simultaneously whatever they wanted, in any way" (Silverman 236-37). This entitles Powers to "rescore" *Musicircus* as he likes, and have its cattle-show venue—the historical Stock Pavilion—to accommodate not "a piano recital, a baroque orchestra, a jazz band,

silhouetted movements of some Cunningham dancers, David Tudor electronically amplifying the noise of a ventilator, a mime pretending to fight against a wall of sound, and Cage himself operating a lighting console" (Silverman 237), but "a woman singer in a red velvet gown," "a dancer on a platform several feet away," "a string quartet saw[ing] away at atomized messages for no one," and "a scarecrow slashing a silver flute through the air like he's threatening to kill someone" (*Orfeo* 133). Powers's character Cage is there also, but instead of busying himself with audible light-making, he is "gossiping with a spectator" (134) before he "joins a quintet pouring water into different-sized bowls and tapping them" (135). Powers's metafictional comment on this indeterminate scenario is given when, on their way to Stock Pavilion, Peter and Madolyn cannot find it and suspect that "*Cage made it all up*" in a sort of "*Zen koan*" (125). In the spirit of Borges's library of Babel, which shelves even non-existent and impossible books, *Orfeo*'s *Musicircus* absorbs fictitious music: "Puccini mocks the furious electronic permutations of a piece by [Els's professor at Illinois] Matthew Mattison, whose old *épater la bourgeoisie* sounds housebroken in this surge of crazed elation" (136). Evidently, Els's standing "twenty feet away" from John Cage (134) is not the only feature introduced by Powers to pirate Cage's *Musicircus* for *Orfeo*.

Paradoxically, unlike Vollmann's intermedial transpositions of Shostakovich, the overtly fictionalized version of Cage in the respective passage of *Orfeo* is true to the "score." That, certainly, is the consequence of the totally open nature of Cage's original artwork. However, is Powers's *Musicircus* a piece of verbal music, in Scher's terms? Strictly speaking, if there is no "piece," there is no transposition. In the implied three-fold structure of Scher's definition (score,

performance, reception) the core element is missing: there is, again, no (i) score. Yet there are the other two components, (iii) an experience of (ii) a performance the reader is invited to share. Is that experience musical? This is precisely the question that Powers's narrative implies.

The use of Cage lets Powers raise a theoretical agenda in the aesthetics of music and, thereby, make his verbal music reach a metalevel. The question whether telling about a musical event brings about musical experience is now asked within the story: can the event itself be experienced musically? Like the "readymades" of Cage's friend and mentor Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), which acquire their status as art by means of relocation of context, a mass of Cage's creations provokes the question "Is that music?" and simultaneously answers it in the positive, since music is everywhere. Lack of score, or an idiosyncratic score of hexagrams and random dots, does not make the music cease: there is music always. *Musicircus* feels impossible to intermedially transpose, because it is already intermedial—a "multimedia extravaganza," as Powers puts it (*Orfeo* 132). As a variety of Cage's indeterminate polyart, this mode of "happening" (the 1958 coinage of Cage's student Alan Kaprow) dates back to the "centerless theater pieces" Cage initiated at Black Mountain College in the early 1950s, and further back to the European Dadaists and Futurists (Silverman 192-94). Belonging to what developed into "the most interesting and valid species of American 'opera'" (Kostelanetz 14), *Musicircus* provides for a multimodal embodied experience, which is musical at least in Cage's extended sense.

Powers's depiction of *Musicircus*, which his protagonist struggles through when he is there, and, as the case may be, mentally reconstructs for us so vividly, transcends even the Triangular Iceberg model of musical experience presented in

my section 2.6. The physical sound within the acoustic space is no longer the only aspect of music showing above the water surface. The actual causes of sound—the performers' voices and instruments, the sound engineering equipment deferring the original sound sources through amplification and the use of recordings[1]—are foregrounded. The air vibrations strong enough to be kinesthetically experienced can be neither separated from the internal "essence" of the musical event, nor ignored. The visual narrative is physically present, since what is happening "in the music" is exactly what that the recipient can see in the course of literal movement around the venue.

The metaphor of the tonal movement in the acousmatic space is thus realized and returned to a different medium: in Cage, there are no "tones" in Scruton's sense, although much of the music simultaneously performed in *Musicircus* may be tonal. The conflicts and resolutions, groupings and prolongations, phrases and cadences that make up for the experiential illusion of movement within a well-formed tonal piece are replaced with and realized in the actual conflict between competing sources of actual sound. The resulting "piece" is determined by the listener's own decisions: to approach or walk away from a certain source, to distribute attention,[2] to "mute" the sound in favor of the visual or tactile aspects of the show, to add elements to it by intentional participation, or end it by leaving the premises, and then reconstruct it verbally to friends and relatives. The anecdotal approach Powers takes in his fictionalization of *Musicircus´*67 is as natural as it is opposed to the practice of technical description

[1] In 1948, Cage meets Pierre Schaeffer (Silverman 110), who not only first thought of manipulating recorded sounds for his *musique concrète*, but also redeployed the term "acousmatic" from Pythagoras's Greek (Scruton 2). Later, Cage experimented with various electronic effects at Luciano Berio's Milan recording studio (Silverman 162-64).
[2] "The longer Els stands still, the more the music pulls apart. His hearing sharpens, able now to pick out strands buried in the babble" (136).

given to a piece of classical music, which is, after all, quite an artificial and highly professionalized way of passing musical experience.

Even if this section of *Orfeo* is not a "piece" of verbal music, Powers is very close to infecting the reader with the experience, which is musical in Cage's broad sense. We follow Els's focalized reactions, which register other spectators' responses contributing to *Musicircus*, where the performer-audience borderline is crossed all over. To hear each other, Maddy and Els have to yell, and their "shout, too, is a kind of music" (135). Els finds Bonner "seated by himself, conducting" (136), stealing the role of the show's puppeteer, which Cage refuses to play. In following this active audience of the show, we enact *Musicircus*, forming mental imagery to remember the event as if we were really there, with Els. "*You can't even call it a piece*," says Els to Bonner (138); conversely to Ingarden's claims (*Music* 10-15), this piece *is* equal to its performance, by anyone—including Powers's readers, who assemble it while reading.

Paradoxically, the longer Els stays, the sharper his hearing gets. His ears gradually manage to adjust to the noisy heteroglossia and begin to interpret it:

> This night wants to strip him of every belief, to pull him down into mere sensation, the place of no desire, of pure listening.
>
> But listen to what? To the eve of destruction. To the air raid siren of things to come. To the explosion of Els's own quaint and laughable ambitions. To a deafening freedom. (*Orfeo* 134)

In an event devoid of any musical "purity," Els fails to find out what it expresses, thus experiencing it as an "intransitive" expression, expressive without expressing anything in particular, as a "tertiary object," which music is, in Scruton's terms (158-62). Els ends up perceiving this grand mess as a consistent whole: "The thousand noisy tourists turn into a single organism, and then a single cell, passing millions of chemical signals a minute between its organelles" (*Orfeo* 139).

Musicircus unpredictably juxtaposes random musical performances in space and time, generating multiple streams of simultaneous sound. Since those streams are not organized, they cannot form a contrapuntal texture of the Baroque tradition, but they resemble life, with its abundance of similarly simultaneous sonic events. For Cage, this swarming life is itself music, as silence also is. In the narrator's parlance, "[t]he smallest sound, even silence, has more in it than the brain can ever grasp" (*Orfeo* 139), so the musical distinctions between monodic, homophonic, and polyphonic textures stops mattering. In any restrictive sense, however, only a teleological (or theological) explanation investing such a chaos with a supreme design and sense of unified direction could claim it is polyphonic.[1] This kind of world vision is implied in Bakhtin, from whose "point of view of philosophical aesthetics, contrapuntal relationships in music are only a musical variety of the more broadly understood concept of *dialogic relationships*" (*Problems* 42).

A conscious assumption that there is such a design is superficial, as the human cognitive apparatus cannot help establishing meaningful connections among unrelated streams, *as if* they were supposed to form a polyphonic texture. Stopping by "the Kabuki mimes" who tap bowls of water, Els "can hear every ringing pitch the mute bowls make" somewhere "deep in his neocortex" (*Orfeo* 135). The way the protagonist manages to internalize multiple conflicting stimuli by letting some in and blocking others is a felt rather than an intelligible effect of *Musicircus*. "Battered by cacophony, he grows huge" (139): the way Powers's narrative briefly and metaphorically alludes to some high-affordance features of

[1] To draw a distinction for contrapuntal fiction, one of the restrictions Shockley imposes on the parallel between narrative and music is that "an author juggling multiple intrigues in multiple parts of the world with casts and occurrences unique to each location provides no apt analog to a Bach fugue" (23).

this effect instead of going into detailed philosophical exegesis makes the effect suggestive and facilitates its penetration into the reader's mind "mind-reading" the protagonist's (cf. Zunshine 6-16).

Els's emotional response to Cage overtakes his inertia-driven intellectual reaction to it. In his first conversation with Bonner, what Els accepts intuitively, he rhetorically rejects as a "*one-off novelty*" (*Orfeo* 138). Bonner is therefore right in characterizing his new friend as "a masterpiece guy," an old-timer lagging behind the "permanent future" of art unfolding in front of them (137). He dismisses Els's classicist judgments, such as "*Art is not a mobocracy. It's a republic,*" and "*People can't stand too much anarchy. They need pattern. Repetition. Meaningful design*" (138).

Bonner's advocacy of Cage, however, rests on arguments that are more compatible with Els's reservations than Cage's innovations: as Els's soon-to-be impresario insists, *Musicircus* will be revived every year. Meanwhile, for Cage, one of whose lectures is titled "Indian Sand Painting or The Picture that is Valid for One Day" (Pritchett 55), it would be of little concern that *Musicircus* may well be "*over and done*" after the first night (*Orfeo* 138). For Powers's readers, the story itself is a legitimate revival, and once we manage to come up with some multimodal imagery of Damasio's "imagined future" type, the fact that we are not surrounded by the immediate audiovisual stimulation of the 1967 event in the Stock Pavilion, but merely read about it, is of no importance. The embodied mind compensates the lack of the storyworld environment around us by translating the verbal stimuli into an experience of being there (cf. Wolf "Aesthetic Illusion").

Like Els, we may resist considering this experience strictly musical, but *Orfeo* teaches us some tolerance to such *enfants terribles* as Cage or Partch, who

are both Els's heroes. Together with Els, we learn to accept and appreciate a musicality of everything. Justifying his use of contemporary composers—Cage, Reich, Glass, and Partch—Powers explains: "[W]hat these four composers do have in common . . . is their insistence that the language of music can be extended into whole new places" (in Vorda n.p.).[1] Powers's verbal *Musicircus* sheds light on the multimodality of *any* musical experience, in listening or reading.

3.6. Shostakovich Revisited

Talking to Els in the middle of the Cage show, Bonner diagnoses his new friend as "*a damn centrist*" (*Orfeo* 139): "*And fasten your seat belt, baby. Both sides are going to beat your ass black and blue*" (140). On second reading, this moment reveals itself as a proleptic hint of Els's profound identification with Shostakovich as he plays the latter's Fifth Symphony in D minor, op. 47 (1937) on the car stereo, heading to St. Louis to see Maddy before the anti-terrorist forces get him. The trap Shostakovich seems to have never quite escaped is that his music could be simultaneously derogated as formalist, difficult, dissonant, and elitist (in the USSR), and dismissed as programmatic, banal, tonal, and populist (in the West).

Vitally important for Vollmann, who dramatizes this conflict in light of his historical preoccupations in *Europe Central*, Shostakovich is found worthy of just a single contemptuous passing remark in a text with such strongly implied anti-mimetic sentiments as Gass's *Middle C*. The Germanic airs "Professor" Skizzen

[1] Cf. a Partch quote in Els's tweet 36: "I heard music in the voices all about me, and tried to notate it" (147). Cage's correction on the minimalism of Reich and Glass would be that he "faulted both composers for arousing in their listeners a convivial feeling that turned them into a group, like a pop music audience. By contrast, he tried to bring about a situation his listeners could not readily dig—where the audience is more apt to become a conglomerate having individual relationships to what they see and hear" (Silverman 383).

puts on provide, ironically, a realistic motivation for his Adornian neglect of Russian composers. As a result, Shostakovich's name is only mentioned in Skizzen's lecture on Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, in which the Hungarian exile mockingly refashions the invasion theme from the *Leningrad* Symphony: "This theme was so vacant of any real energy or significance that Bartók promptly borrowed it to use for an interruption he might ridicule" (*MC* 368). With the multi-layered ironies of this passage in Gass set aside, Powers's reconciliatory synthesis allows both Berg and Shostakovich, along with Messiaen and Bartók, but neither Schoenberg nor Cage, to be on the list of composers Els "return[s] to at seventy" (55).

It is as if indeed Shostakovich, in these three 21st-century American novels, comes as a recurrent theme, a common denominator. The figure so deeply engraved on the cultural histories circa World War II is foregrounded in Vollmann, negated in Gass, and recapitulated in Powers. The same verbal music techniques Vollmann struggles with, and Gass aborts and/or substitutes, are positively revisited, straightened, and purified in Powers. Els, who is neither Alexandrov nor Skizzen,[1] is entitled to hear the same stereotyped story of Shostakovich's life as if it is narrated in the music, but with no damage to its formal procedures. The culturally conditioned imagery is now properly authorized by a listener who is certainly qualified for acousmatic ICAs: Els has "long ago analyzed every phrase to death" (279-80). Alone in his car, he has no diegetic audience to keep the sophistication of the music down to this biographical listening, although Powers's readers, who do not have to be music connoisseurs, are certainly counted in here, granted the permission for such a hearing.

[1] Cf. "The Soviet Union and the Third Reich. A theme and its variations" (*MC* 370): Skizzen's flawed lecture on World War II echoes a number of points in Vollmann's *Europe Central*.

To a reader of Vollmann, Powers communicates no new biographical details, drawing the familiar ones in a much less conflicted manner, not of Dostoyevsky's "dialogic imagination," but of Akhmatova's neoclassical lyricism—especially when dealing with the first "monothematic" sonata form movement of Shostakovich's Fifth (Hurwitz 24). To a reader of Gass, the interruption of the fourth movement by a police car "chasing" Els may look familiar: the protagonist stops attending to the music, overwhelmed with the unmistakable fear of being arrested (*Orfeo* 285). Although his musical self is not doctored like Skizzen's, Els is a fake terrorist, who is about to accept the charges for his biomusical piece. The release of tension when the state trooper passes by is very Gassian, especially since arrest is simply deferred: like Orpheus, Peter is doomed to lose it all.

The blend of biographical narrative, brief technical description, and a fictional listener's highly personalized internalization of the music, parallels Powers's approach to Messiaen, whose theology he also supplements with biography. Els thinks of Shostakovich's Fifth as "a condemned man writing the accompaniment to his own execution" (269)—a paraphrase of the famous Shostakovich 1937 newspaper formula for the symphony, also quoted in *Orfeo*: "*A Soviet artist's creative response to justified criticism*" (282). Such commonplace verbal formulas linked to Shostakovich, which we also find in Vollmann before Powers and in Barnes after both, have amalgamated with the music so irrevocably that they can be viewed as its natural sub-track, even though, unlike Messiaen, Shostakovich does not want his music to be thus texted. Characterizing the Fifth as "a condemned man's testimony" (279), Powers gives out his and his character's knowledge of Shostakovich's *Testimony* as "related

and edited" by Volkov (see my section 1.3).[1] A collage of quotations reusing the standardized narrative of the relation between Shostakovich's Fifth and his nearly fatal opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*, condemned by Stalin as "Muddle instead of Music" on *Pravda*'s front page, and the withdrawn Symphony No. 4, is made subject of Els's thoughts as he listens to the recording. These common elements of the historical emplotment of Shostakovich' life are fused with Els's current situation: he, too, is condemned for what he recognizes as a piece of music. Governments, he realizes, are always there "to legislate sounds" and "police the harmonic possibilities as if there were no limits to music's threat" (282).

In Powers's alternating narrative, Shostakovich's Fifth is additionally framed by Els's *The Fowler's Snare*: as soon as the symphony is announced, we are led away into the fictional piece instead: "The overture begins with almost nothing: one oboe, one English horn, and one bassoon" (269). Shostakovich's "*Moderato*, to begin with" (279) comes ten pages after, and the story of Stalin's termination of the triumphant *Lady Macbeth* written by the "adventurous composer, at the top of his Orphic game" (280) rhymes well with the story of Els's tormented relationship with his own opera, which temporarily replaces the postponed Fifth Symphony narrative.

Transitions between chronological planes of Powers's novel are often marked by Els's tweets. The three that switch between the Fifth Symphony and *The Fowler's Snare*—in my numbering, 61 (269), 63 (279), and 64 (287)—are Els's metaphorical implementation of his biomusical piece: they characterize how

[1] Powers's reference to Stalin as "Czar Joseph" in a Shostakovich-related context (286) may indicate his familiarity with Volkov's *Shostakovich and Stalin: The Extraordinary Relationship between the Great Composer and the Brutal Dictator* (2004) describing the relationship in question as a jester-to-monarch one.

Serratia cells split by million every hour and cannot possibly be stopped. This contrapuntally juxtaposes the Shostakovich with yet another theme, which relevantly synchronizes it with the protagonist's present state—even though the tweets come from the future, since on his ride to see his ex-wife in St. Louis Els is not on Twitter yet. The "landscape of black earth and brown stubble" Els is driving through provides the music with a readymade videotrack: "Relentless Midwestern farmland and Shostakovich's Fifth: both spread in front of Els, pliant, empty, and terrifying, made for each other" (279). As he listens to the first movement, the scenery in front turns into "a featureless gulag only waiting for him, the latest public enemy" (282). A natural trick of imaginative projection played on Els by this immersive music makes the listener become the composer in a conceptually blended time and space: "Els piloted the car toward the setting sun, back into the firestorm of 1936" (280).

Powers renders the musical procedures of Shostakovich's symphony in a summary mode. The first movement opens with the "jagged theme and its canonic echo" (279),[1] and its other recognizable features—"the spare counterpoint, the chromatic ambiguity, the concision, the relentless reworking of that blunt first theme" (280)—are listed as something his memory easily holds, so that another listening is superficial for refreshing those. What his new fugitive status makes him realize is how music—any music, since the quotation below does not say "this music" or "the music"—is narrativized in the listener's mind in order to be emotionally striking:

> From the first leaping figure in the strings, Els heard again the problem with music. Even the slightest tune sounded like a story. Melody played on the brain like a weather report, an avowal of faith,

[1] Cf. Hurwitz's characterization of the "jagged rhythm" in the recurrent opening theme he marks as the A section of Shostakovich's "circular" first subject group, ABACADA (23).

> gossip, a manifesto. The tale came across, clearer than words. But there was no tale.
>
> Despite himself, in that first bleak figure in the strings, the one that would reappear in so many guises before the end, Els made out the maker's miserable life: driven into the public arena, forced to choose between penance and revolt, heresy and faith, while his life hung on whatever story the state imagined that it heard. (280)

The description of the first movement's tonal procedures, which "offered up anything Els might want to find in it—hope, despair, stoic surrender" (283), resumes only after two-and-a-half pages of *Lady Macbeth* and Stalin, Shostakovich and the NKVD. Els's own choice "between truth and survival" (282) in Powers's novel is probably made here, in the way he chooses to interpret Shostakovich as expressed in the sounds of the Fifth Symphony. Next, a short paragraph describes the intervallic relations in the *Moderato* movement, taking it as far as "a march, or perhaps a parody of one" (283) in the development section (cf. Hurwitz 25-26; Taruskin 537-38). The verbal version is certainly abridged, but faithful to Shostakovich's score. The idiomatic description of the "deranged Allegretto" of the second movement—scherzo with trio (Hurwitz 28)—a paragraph later is closely stylized in many Volkovian critics' manner:

> The desolate theme from the first movement turned into a lurching waltz, a deep-woods Russian folk tune, a triumphal horn call, a halfhearted military band. Vintage Shostakovich: a cavalcade of perky, grim, mocking, and sardonic snips, reaching for the one freedom that would always be available, however complete the disaster: the condemned man's dance. (283)

These stereotypical cinematic ICAs must be culturally conditioned by the popular way of visualizing such "vintage Shostakovich" music, but they perfectly coincide with Els's idiosyncratic ones resulting from his current situation.

Shostakovich's third movement, *Largo*, which Taruskin reads as funeral music comprising several texted sources and thus indirectly texted itself (530-32), is too familiar for Els "to make out anything new," yet he hears its "naked pain"

and pictures people weeping at the Russian 1937 premiere (*Orfeo* 284; cf. Vollmann's Seventh Symphony episode in my section 1.5). Instead of the movement's sonata layout (cf. Hurwitz 29-31), Els thinks of its composer's doublespeak: "Here was music simple and populist, just as Stalin commanded, and in a language whose anguish everyone recognized. Naming the crime so bluntly should have been suicide. But to convict Shostakovich for speaking out, the state would have to admit to crimes worthy of this Largo" (284).

In light of the story Els is telling himself, the Finale, with the "shrill joy" of its "march: Russian to the bone" cinematically associated with "hip-booted regiments of Cossacks, heads-sideways, goose-stepping past Lenin's mausoleum" (284), is the most important movement of the Fifth. As Hurwitz observes, discussions of the entire symphony are dominated by "whether or not the finale represents a genuinely happy ending" (21). Els's decision to read it as an irony of "the outlaw artist, exit laughing," and not "Shostakovich throwing together a blast of Soviet Realist bombast, a sellout finale to save his neck," is paralleled by his own narrow escape from the Illinois state trooper, who was not after him, after all. As "the cop blasted past in the left lane," Els manages to stop "his brittle giggling" and attend to the movement's ending (*Orfeo* 285), leaving him "the hum of engine and wheels" now sounding "symphonic" (286). The protagonist's ability to experience life musically is fully stated. It is now the reader's turn.

Codetta: Prolegomena for Empirical Research into Musico-Literary S(t)imulacra

Of the three writers discussed in my study, Powers is probably the reader-friendliest. That "[r]eaders feel deeply about his texts" (Dewey ix) might be an evaluative judgment rather than a sociologically-documented fact, but readerly immersion is an articulate part of the author's intentional set. Powers, who sees "narrative as somehow an integral part of cognition" (Nielson 15), is well-aware that readers are bound to "experience a palpable, realistic verisimilitude," "adopt the world of the narration," identify with characters, and add "the complexity of [their] lived experience" to the gappy "cartoon" that fiction presents (Berger n.p.).

In *Orfeo*, Powers diversifies the narrative stimuli engaged in rendering the characters' experience of musical compositions. Each time, he parallels the music with a story threaded through the two main chronological planes. He plants experientially suggestive cues of sensory and emotional affordance in the details of those stories. He adds a proportion of technical vocabulary to address musical form and instrumental particularities, but does not overdo it, so that even the terms that are not familiar to non-expert readers feel as if they are. If, like a music score, a literary text is "a set of instructions" for the reader to perform (Iser ix; cf. Caracciolo, "Blind" 99), Powers's directions for what his fictionalized pieces should sound like are thoroughly arranged. At the same time, since all these diegetic stimuli are fictive, enacting them depends on mental simulation of storyworlds informed by our experiential backgrounds and discourse processing skills.

The fictional representations of music the reader is stimulated by are simulations themselves—like simulacra "substituting signs of the real for the real

itself" (Baudrillard 167). The intriguing thing about music is that its actual stimuli—the sounds of a performance or a score's notation—are mentally processed. They get realized through the same simulation mechanisms, internalized by the recipient as a combination of acoustic, cinematic, and acousmatic images mapped among the apices of my Triangular Iceberg model (Fig. 3). Powers's text stimulates, but also simulates musical experiences not in that it pretends to be music—as Baudrillard points out, simulation is not feigning (168)—but by letting music infect both its narrated and discursive domains. Diegetically, the characters enact music in their fictional minds, living it through. Discursively, the novel's alternating narrative design and the function of voicing biomusic that Els's Twitter messages perform are musical symptoms that simulate rather than imitate. This peculiar dialectic can be captured in the notion of "musico-literary stimulacra," as I might dub what musicalized fiction generally invites its readers to respond to.[1] When Reichel complains that *Orfeo* "is restricted by its inability to produce music which does not require auditory imagination on the recipient's part" (93), she forgets that auditory imagination is also a prerequisite for actual listening to actual music.

Like Gass, Powers relies on transmedial properties music and literature share, one of which is what Fludernik calls "narrativity *qua* experientiality" (cf. Hauer), with the recipient "integrating sequential events (such as individual tones, or scenes, or phrases) into units of perception" (Popova 34). Like Vollmann, Powers is also interested in the transfer of diegetic experience to the reader. Since *Orfeo* is much more centered on music than historical forces, its capacity to engage the reader is not constrained by the totalitarian aesthetics and doublethink

[1] Cf. Alvin Goldman's definition of simulation as "enacting a mental state, trying to produce it in the absence of the appropriate stimulus" quoted in Caracciolo ("Blind" 84).

Variable	The "Rat Theme"	The *Moonlight* Sonata	*The Quartet for the End of Time*
association with objects of high affordance	–	+	+
consciousness-attribution	+	+	+
consciousness-enactment	–	+	+
acoustic grounding	–	+	+
visual aids	–	–	+
acousmatic experience	+	+	+
scripted situation	+	–	+
broader context	–	–	+

***Table 6*. Drivers of verbally-transmitted musical experience.**

ethics of *Europe Central*. In Table 6, I provide a tentative list of textual variables that I hypothesize as significant for readerly musical experience. I mark their presence (+) or absence (–) in example episodes from each novel: Vollmann's intermedial transposition of the *ostinato* from Shostakovich's *Leningrad* Symphony, Gass's version of the opening measures of Beethoven's *Moonlight*, and Powers's treatment of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*.

Whether the text mentions objects recognizable to most readers, such as Gass's chair or Powers's lavatories, which are transitive in the sense that our experiential background is likely to contain recallable images of our own actions directed at such objects, is important for pre-conceptual enactive response. The first-person stance we occupy in relation to diegetic music could depend on the presence and amount of such experiential cues, as suggested in Kuzmičová's work. Caracciolo's pair of factors related to focalization types—consciousness-attribution and consciousness-enactment—are also responsible for the reader's

position *vis-à-vis* the storyworld, since "experience is irreducible to an object-based view of representation" (*Experientiality* 41).

Consciousness-attribution is our default reaction to all characters, whereas consciousness-enactment means an imaginary alloy with one. A diegetic bearer of musical experience may help us enact it even if we have never played an instrument, so that the word "clarinet," for instance, invokes no sensory associations. In Vollmann's case, with no diegetic consciousness to lead the reader in, the music comes as something abstract, self-contained, and estranged.

The acoustic grounding is the attention the text pays to the aural experience of the reader: how much auditory imagery does the text explicitly present, and how clearly can we imagine the music as sound? In Gass, the positive result I hypothesize is facilitated by the widely familiar piece, whereas Powers mediates Messiaen's own use of universally familiar sounds, such as birdsong. By visual aids I mean the explicit cinematic ICAs—an imaginary videotrack supporting the musical movement, which is suppressed in the Vollmann and Gass examples, but quite articulate in Powers, who refers the reader to the authorial imagery in the Messiaen score paratext. Some glimpses of acousmatic experience, foregrounded in Vollmann's "Rat Theme" by its representation of tonal events, can be found in all the cases, since none fully ignores the flow of musical procedures. Registering them is gradable, and so is the tangibility of the other aspects of musical experience.

The use of a scripted situation, such as the performance setting in Vollmann and Powers, may also invoke immediate recall of similar occasions in the reader's own life and facilitate the transmission. Standard scripts are not followed routinely, so the concert hall is displaced to a composer's flat (Vollmann), a war

prison camp (Powers), or a fictional character's head (Gass)—a degree of metaphoricity that ruins the script. Finally, mental enactment of the music cannot but depend on the reader's knowledge of the broader context of the book: Joey Skizzen can get away with his limited presentation of the *Moonlight* Sonata as a musically gifted youth, but once we know him as Professor Skizzen, our inclination to co-experience music with him may well fade away. The same is true for Vollmann's narrative, where the narratorial presence of Comrade Alexandrov poisons any Shostakovich passage's authenticity even if the diegetic narrator is not explicitly there. Considering the "narrator-character association" Bortolussi and Dixon point out (82), I have not included the narratorial voice as a separate variable, and treat the reader's construction of the narrator as a "conversation participant" (16; cf. Popova 62-66) as a sub-case of Caracciolo's consciousness-enactment: consciousness may be either the narrator's or character's. Skizzen and Els merge with their non-diegetic narrators closely enough to ignore the distinction, while the disturbances of permeable narration in *Europe Central* blur the line between the non-diegetic Vollmannesque narrator and Alexandrov, affecting their character Shostakovich. As Bortolussi and Dixon contend, "under many circumstances readers are relatively insensitive to diegetic level" (74).

The effect of the textual variables in Table 6 upon actual readers' experience of intermedial thematization of music is hypothetical. On the one hand, this hypothesizing is based on my close reading of the musicalized novels, which demonstrates the differences in how they treat music within their storyworlds. On the other hand, I consider music among many phenomena that fiction diegetically annexes from the "real world," which suggests that, like anything else, it is subject to readerly immersion. Therefore, I fasten my argument to some existing theories

explaining how readers get enactively engaged with narrative. In his 2014 *The Experientiality of Narrative* (12-13), Caracciolo revoices an old disclaimer for not discussing real readers (cf. Iser x) and argues that theorization is essential for empirical research to follow, yet three years and two books later, he is still confronted, at the 2017 Narrative conference, by the question *when* he will actually conduct such research.[1]

The vision that the theoretical findings of my thesis may become subject to empirical testing is based on my feeling that, if narrative and music do share a transmedial "common basis," their meeting point in musicalized fiction may be of interest to both psychonarratologists and psychologists of music. Can musical experience be "story-driven"? The least narrative can do is direct the reader's intentionality towards music—tune the reader in for revisiting past listening experiences and longing for future ones. How exactly these imaginative performances occur, however, is an empirical question on the crossroads of disciplines. The comparison between what happens to music listeners and/as fiction readers could be beneficially scrutinized by two classes of cognitive psychologists, who otherwise tend to specialize in *either* discourse processing *or* music perception, and do not interact, although some major assumptions—such as the study of the mirror neurons in mental simulation—are visible in either case.

As embodied metaphors (cf. Johnson) are primarily associated with linguistic issues, they do not as often come up in music-related studies, although actual musicians' preference for figurative language over special terminology in their talking about music is sometimes reported (Stakelum 174; Larsen and Whitaker

[1] The question was asked by Jan-Noël Thon during the first general Narrative Theory panel on March 23, 2017. Caracciolo's additional passing remark that the critic's own close reading is already empirical (*Experientiality* 13) corresponds to Uri Margolin's idea of an "individual psychology of cognition" (Zyngier et al. 8). Cf. Kuzmičová's introspective observation of her own reactions to a Hemingway passage ("Outer" 119).

92). Experiments for determining the *musicalization of response* to fiction should probably be initiated within the literary field, but must be controlled by insights from psychology, philosophy of music, music theory, and musicology to determine what those musical "effects" that Scher refers to really are. Since such experiments should involve actual listening to music, music specialists are essential for interpretation of collected data. An interdisciplinary line-up for this kind of teamwork may also comprise IT experts and neuroscientists.

There is a history for such projects, going back to Siegfried Schmidt's group in the 1970s, followed by the foundation of the International Society for Empirical Study of Literature in 1987 (Kreuz and MacNealy xvi). Among the pioneering studies in the field is Willie van Peer's *Stylistics and Psychology* (1986), testing the legitimacy of the formalist and structuralist theories—an impressive scientific endeavor with graphs, charts, statistical analyses, and some unexpected results. For instance, van Peer finds that the interference of thematic issues into the "effects of foregrounding" may "even override" them (176). In the subsequent decades, the methodology has accumulated enough for a comprehensive textbook, *Scientific Methods for the Humanities*, published in 2012 (Peer et al.), to introduce a scholar of "cultural disciplines" to the techniques of conducting empirical research.

As the question of aesthetic quality has been the core issue of empirical aesthetics (cf. Kreuz and MacNealy 4-10), the field has, to my knowledge, not attempted to determine the experiential effects of intermedial presences in the arts. However, the base for designing such a study appears to be substantial. With such experimental psychologists as Bortolussi and Dixon, Miall, and Zwaan closely affiliated with cognitive narratology, this field may provide a platform for the

kind of study I envision. Models may also be sought in music psychology, with the experiments described in *Music and Emotion* (Juslin and Sloboda 361-49). The enterprise requires more precisely formulated hypotheses and narrower research questions than the ones my discussion of the three American authors has so far developed. At the same time, a rationale for initiating such a project lies in the prospect of learning more about the principles underlying reception of fiction *and* music, for which my specific cases of Vollmann, Gass, and Powers may provide a point of departure.

If I was to tentatively describe example experiments to be designed and run in the aftermath of my current study, with the generic objective to test whether, and to what extent, musical experience is verbally transmittable by fictional means, I would begin by listing several variables—"set[s] of measurements that can be indexed in a systematic manner" (Bortolussi and Dixon 47)—to be considered for such experiments. The variables in Table 6 are *textual variables*, although more should be done to formalize them properly, with indication of textual features signaling their presence and quantifying these features for subsequent *text-manipulation*—either adding or removing them to regulate the degree of their presence. For example, how would replacement of textual references to familiar objects or sounds with words denoting less familiar musical instruments influence readers' capability to mentally rehearse diegetic sounds in a fictional musical performance? If a Powers fragment is rewritten with internal focalization erased for behavioristic externally-focalized narrative, how destructive would that be for the reader's subjective estimation of the "musicality" of the text? Would removal of visual imagery (cinematic ICAs) from Vollmann's military *toccata* of Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony intensify the reader's

subvocal response to the text at the sensorimotor level? How would the amount of text presented to the readers from Powers's Messiaen affect their sense of a musical "presence"? Would an increase in contextual knowledge of Skizzen's faked expertise, produced by shifting a later section of *Middle C* to the immediate front of the Beethoven episode, distort the reader's impression of the *Moonlight* Sonata? Would the *Moonlight* be recognized from Gass's *dum-doh-dee-dum*, if the piece remained untitled in the fragment the informants read? Would a manipulation of Gass's "Polly-Wolly-Doodle" insertions result in a different impression from this prose segment? What would change if we removed the verbal "designator" (Kramer, *Classical Music* 69) of the lyrics from Powers's versions of Els's songs and opera?

Apart from these *feature-related* variables, *construction-variables* of how the reader perceives what is *not* directly featured in the text (cf. Bortolussi and Dixon 28) may be of particular interest with respect to musico-literary intermedial transpositions. Since the sound of music is, trivially, not there in the narrative text, level of recognition of the described piece by comparison with one, two, or three options *played* to readers may confirm or disconfirm my statement in Chapter I that the observance of the letter of the score is not only hardly possible, but unnecessary for verbal music to take effect. Would readers of a Vollmann passage recognize whether a movement they hear is the one they have just read through? Would they match the right music to the literary text, if they were given a selection of recordings to choose from? Would they tell the difference between a passage of verbal music and music criticism, and which would be more affective? Would they identify Vollmann's mistake, if they were allowed to listen to a recording of Shostakovich's invasion theme other than Bernstein's? Would they

determine which three out of Messiaen's eight movements are played for them, looking at Powers's two-page "notes" encompassing all the movements of the *Quatuor*? Would Powers's introduction of the prison camp story to the readers be as transformative for their hearing of Messiaen as Els's lecture is to Klaudia Kohlman (*Orfeo* 151)? Would Gass's realized metaphor of "twelve-tone" word-polyphony in Skizzen's Sentence or in the Polly-Wolly fragment feel more like Bach, Schoenberg, or just feel like noise? With Els's fictional pieces, it may be interesting to know what music readers associate it with, which could also be checked by means of multiple-choice listening tasks. The order of presentation is an interesting point to consider in designing the experiment. Readers could also be asked to subjectively estimate the degree of intensity their imagining of the music takes while reading the passage, as compared to listening to a sound recording.

The *population* of readers and/or listeners represented by participants in an experiment can become an important *extra-textual* variable (cf. Zyngier et al. 75-88). Considering the role of experiential background outlined in cognitive approaches to reading, varying the selection of informants may prove extremely helpful in determining causalities in reader response. In terms of verbally-transmitted musical experience, the important variable is the readers' expertise in music. If two groups of informants contrasted by their possession or lack of musical expertise is unavailable, selection of informants should at least be consistent in terms of this variable rather than simply randomized. An additional benefit from asking music experts to comment on a musicalized passage may be that the level of their appreciation of the text could also be determined. Would musically trained subjects like the passage more because of its thematic focus, or

would they hate it because the author's expertise in their field is poor?[1] Expertise in literature could also be taken into account, so that if students are to be the informants, groups of English and Music majors could be given the same reading tasks. The advantage of a more literary-oriented audience for the tests is that such readers may be asked to read the whole novel rather than an extract from it, and their response to particular passages may be controlled with respect to their overall impression of the book. Is the Viking graphic designer alone in her associating Vollmann's novels with symphonies? Can readers who are not instructed in intermediality theory, such as members of a "middle-brow" book club (cf. Radway), sense Powers's "contrapuntal" narrative plans for his novels? How disturbing would they find Vollmann's musicalized "pornography" in the Cello Sonata, Powers's use of music terms, or Gass's tricking them into identifying with a fraud? For these authors, addressing their overlapping actual audiences and determining their "statistical reader," rather than accidental one, could make the results more reliable. How many friendly readers would be able to mentally hear Beethoven's sonata further into the first movement than Skizzen does? What story would they come up with if they listened to the third movement of Shostakovich's Eighth and were to write down what they have pictured?

Finally, there are *instruction-variables* (Peer et al. 124): say, one group of informants are told that they are reading a passage by a musicologist, and another group are given the same text for a work of fiction.

Bortolussi and Dixon are flexible in terms of data acquisition and processing methods: they do not insist on the use of expensive equipment such as eye-tracking technologies (41). Simple tests and questionnaires their experiments

[1] A physician friend of mine was increasingly irritated by Powers's neurophysiological content in *The Echo Maker*, saying that "the chap is pretentious and doesn't know what he's talking about."

encompass are certainly valid for the control of the conscious reader-response to musicalized fiction. If phenomena of pre-conceptual reception, such as consciousness-enactment, with very subtle external exposure, were to be also tested, and more "objective" data about the musical experience collected, fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) and PET (positron emission tomography) tests could also be involved. Here the findings of music psychologists related to the brain hemisphere specialization (cf. Juslin and Sloboda 108-21) could be compared to the subjects' neural activity in the course of reading passages of musicalized fiction as opposed to those that are, on the surface, unrelated to music. Is explicit intermedial thematization neurally mapped to cover the brain areas associated with listening to music, or does any prose narrative, transmedially, affect the "musical" parts of the brain in a similar fashion, so that there is nothing special about musical references and designs featured in the text? It would be interesting to find out.

Limitations of the kind of empirical research outlined in this section lie in the fact that results are not positively guaranteed. Formalization of textual cues to be directly associated with certain effects upon readers is an arbitrary enterprise, and it would be naïve to believe that such cues could be determined once and for all. Sloboda has reasons to mock what he calls the "pharmaceutical" approach of "ascribing to the music a mandatory power of bringing about certain perceptual, cognitive, or emotional responses in a listener" (193). We should bear in mind the artificiality of experimental settings and consider another Sloboda dictum: "One cannot begin to give a full account of the cognitive, affective, or aesthetic response of a listener, without paying detailed attention to the reasons why the person is listening to that particular music at that particular time" (320).

CONCLUSION

AFTER WORDS

As I announced in the Introduction, my twofold objective in this thesis was to contribute to two major fields: American literature *and* word and music. In the former respect, I studied three musicalized texts by contemporary white male authors to show their articulate attempts to extend their own connectedness with the elitist tradition of Western art music to their actual audiences. In the latter, I suggested some new directions for WMS to take towards a reader-oriented approach to musicalized fiction, informed by a variety of neighboring theories and (inter)disciplinary approaches. In conclusion, I would like to summarize the way I coped with each task.

With regard to broad readerly appeal, musico-literary encounters in contemporary American fiction lag statistically behind subject matters of romantic relationships or social problems. Formwise, conventional narratives certainly beat intermedial fictions, which are hardly meant to be trendy in the first place. Vollmann, Gass, and Powers treat this *status quo* differently: Vollmann by using music for sharpening his political and moral concerns, Gass by widening the gap between music and life, and Powers by negotiating a compromise of presenting music and life in the same terms so as to equate their importance. By way of musicalization, the three authors make us an offer we *can* refuse, but this non-marketed optionality may attract actual audiences. How (much) musical experience can be promised to the reader in fictional narrative is a spectrum between Vollmann and Powers.

Vollmann's intermedial transpositions of Dmitri Shostakovich's fictionalized works are framed by a mimetic bias, under which diegetic music functions as a characterization means for the author's historical preoccupations. The Shostakovich/Alexandrov controversy is mirrored, paralleled, and counterbalanced in *Europe Central*'s other subplots. The *thesis* I infer from Vollmann's approach is that music is a part of the fictional reality. Music is representative, informative, and even definitive of what that reality is. The choice of none other than Shostakovich is stipulated not only by Vollmann's personal taste, but also the multi-phased history of the composer's and his music's relationship with the polarized 20th-century world Vollmann fictionalizes.

Gass's metafictional distrust of representation is *antithetical* to Vollmann's method. Discarding most diegetic music expectable in a plot centered on a music professor and having the protagonist fail and fake musical education, Gass does not negate, but in fact foregrounds, musicality as such. In *Middle C*, with all its ironies, Gass points out ways of experiencing verbal textures musically and shows that even a dysfunctional treatment of music with words rests upon powerful metaphors of the mind's creativity. The disabilities of Skizzen's Sentence are compensated for by the crafty web of Gass's sentences and patterns of circular narrative motion. Rhythms and sounds of this kind of metaphorical music may prove to be experientially valid to Gass's devoted readership.

Powers's balanced treatment of musicalized literary material and his generous supply of multivalent experiential cues are forged to connect to a larger audience. In a *synthesis* of Vollmann and Gass, Powers brings form and content together. His narrative design and subject matter in *Orfeo* correlate and may both contribute to the reader's generating of musical experience. On the one hand, the

protagonist's lifetime engagement with Western art music is detached from neither human relationships nor current affairs, unlike the case Gass crafts. Els is a good device for readerly immersion. On the other, the connection between Els's music and everyday life is not as troubled as Shostakovich's in Vollmann. The connection is not unproblematic, but progress and closure are granted.

Europe Central, *Middle C*, and *Orfeo* are all, to some degree, novels *about* music, but they are not its replacements. They are music's literary supplements, not surrogates. Each of them is unique, but altogether they represent a wide spectrum of possibilities that literary narrative opens up for readerly constructions of musical experience. These possibilities do not uniquely belong to these texts written by these authors in this language and in this particular decade. The long tradition of Western art and thought stands behind Vollmann, Gass, and Powers, as their dense intertextuality efficiently demonstrate. Reaching out to the words and music of many centuries but not all, the narratives I have discussed operate with transhistorical as well as period-specific functions of music. The intermedial distinction between the two "sister arts" gets more and less dramatic at different epochs, but their juxtaposition and/or blending occurs on largely the same terms.

Therefore, the theoretical implications and analytical tools developed in this thesis are applicable to, virtually, any narrative in which musical experience is foregrounded. Multiple references to other literary works, which can be found in the body and footnotes of this study, indicate numerous forking paths for further investigation. From the moment *literature* emerges as the art of *letters*, it gradually opposes itself to oral *poetry* as the art of *sung words*, grows silent, and loses much of its material auditory substance. Literal voices of literature are still heard in the Victorian practice of reading aloud, but by that time the verbal art has

largely suppressed its overt and matter-of-fact musicality. Music as both organizing principle and subject matter of verbal narrative has moved to the realm of literary imagination, readerly and writerly, where it stays secret and unrecognized unless writers and/or readers tune in and recover it. For the last two centuries at least—in Poe and Dostoevsky, Hoffmann and Virginia Woolf, Tolstoy and Thomas Mann, Proust and Toni Morrison, up to the most recent and least canonical works—musical experience permeates fiction as a mode *and* method of cognition. However, as I have shown in my thesis, this mental being of music is not abstract but embodied, and what we indisputably identify as music with sound does not exist without the same cognitive basis. Music as an experiential phenomenon and actual event begins with the embodied mind's association between its sound (in itself, just noise) with other sounds, which are not all present at every moment when the music is on. There is memory to recognize and keep the resultant analogical patterns, with application of words to describe music *in terms of* other experience—as figuratively visual, philosophical, and literary. At this juncture, the process is reciprocal: other experiential domains are perceived and understood in musical terms, either with "natural" ease or as an intellectual *tour de force*.

The model of musical experience proposed in my Chapter II belongs primarily to the domain of general aesthetics and seeks to reflect the cognitive turn in contemporary humanities. My "Triangular Iceberg of Musical Experience" (Fig. 3) can account for more than just literary narrativizations of music, since it stems from the philosophy of music per se, which strives to segregate music from whatever it is not. Paradoxically, the argumentation of musical purists often sheds light on how the essences defining music can also define other humanist domains,

such as verbal narrative—the art and medium of fiction. The inescapable complexity of musical experience, which my model captures, is certainly not a property of music listening only. Once the intentional auditory bias of my research is replaced with another one, in another research endeavor, the sonic stimuli at the top of the figure (Fig. 3) can be replaced with the stimuli of a different sensory modality. The base of my triangle, which signifies the imaginative and abstract capacities of the mind, will remain principally the same. The examples from the three novels subject to my scrutiny in this thesis demonstrate that configurations of musical experience may vary up to the point when it loses its specificity, as it happens in the case of Powers's treatment of Cage, yet all the experiential dimensions the model symbolizes will be covered. The idea that literature can, like music, give us a chance to make use of our embodied minds' abilities, which are not necessarily associated with words, is counterintuitive within certain intellectual frameworks, but the tradition of such intellectual and experiential trespassing is centuries old. The Walter Pater aphorism cited in every other word and music study is suggestive, but it does not explain how "all arts" realize their musical ambitions. With my theorization of musical experience, which approaches this experience from literary narrative, I clarify *what* "condition of music" *is* that all arts are supposed to aspire towards.

The experience of reading musicalized fiction may transport us to musical sounds, acousmatic forms, and visual story-images. How powerful this virtually musical destination should be depends on where we depart in terms of experiential background and competence. The dependence is hardly direct and highly individual: some readers with no knowledge of music may "buy" it packaged, if the narrative is experientially rich in other ways (Powers's case, and to some

extent Vollmann's), and then discover music, thus developing a taste for it. Experts, on the contrary, may grumble over the text's technical inadequacies (the case that Gass's irony builds a stronghold against).

Reading about music may prompt us to go and listen, just as reading about a place could encourage us to go and see. At the same time, fiction does not make this (re)action mandatory. It commits us to listening without compelling us to listen. It may also help us hear—in an actual piece of music—what otherwise we would not. In this sense, music, like many other kinds of experiences, can, and often does, come after the words of fiction—that experiential teaser and seducer of Don Quixote and Emma Bovary. An immersive musical(ized) novel is a good introduction to the art, especially for those whose ears, for some reason, remain plugged against direct auditory grasp of, say, classical music. Just like the professional skill of parsing and memorizing musical material boosts musicians' mnemonic performance in other media,[1] dealing with (musicalized) fiction can unlock the doors of music perception. Metafiction, the vehicle of learning about other books by reading one, can acquire a metamusical dimension not by turning into "music about music," but by making us aware of the hint of such a transfiguration. The mind's capacity for seeking, finding, and establishing analogies and processing embodied metaphors should never be underestimated.

Once again, it is not a must for music to come after words. Readers can miss or ignore whatever textual invitations Vollmann, Gass, and Powers send them. Furthermore, in terms of Jahn's cyclic model of the

[1] Due to their "relative strength in the extraction of higher-order, semantic information during encoding," musicians score higher in both verbal and visual memory tests, so that "formal music training is associated with superior performance in multiple domains of memory functioning" (L. Jakobson et al. 50; cf. 43, 49, 51; Franklin et al.; Hansen et al.). Undermining the talent as largely a cultural myth, Sloboda finds that exceptional musical memory functions "by representing material in terms of familiar higher-order structures" and results from "many thousands of hours of practice over many years" (111).

externalization/internalization of narrative, music is not an end to literary means, since the chain is looped. What comes first, and what comes next, is a matter of a chicken-and-egg dilemma. Music may precede, as well as succeed, words. The crucial vindication for my entire thesis is that music must show up in experiential glimpses for most readers, and in powerful cascades—for some.

Theorizing musico-literary intermediality, I have shown how references to diegetic musical scores, performances, and perceptions, as shaped by what Scher calls verbal music, are expressed in two types of imaginary content analogies—the cinematic and acousmatic ones. I have argued that, as far as existing pieces are concerned, verbal transpositions of musical works have no obligation of being faithful to the "original" scores, but suffice to catch what a faulty non-expert listening would make, and hold, of the piece's structure and emotional appeal. I have treated intermedial transpositions of music as a readerly challenge, most successfully met on cognitive grounds: via mental simulation, immersion, and consciousness-enactment of focal characters and/or narrators. I have sketched some theoretical basics for non-diegetic/exegetic musical presences in the reader's experience, outside the traditional observation on how a poem or narrative tries to structurally imitate a particular musical form or style. Musical experience in and through fictional narrative is never literal, and a deficiency in physical sound, lack of "vertical" simultaneity, or surplus of referentiality that distinguish fiction from music are largely neutralized, once listening and reading are seen transmedially as embodied mental practices. I have, finally, outlined some prospects for how these theoretical, if not merely speculative, hypotheses could be taken to empirical testing.

In “Notes towards a New Philology” (Zyngier et al. 35-47), Donald C. Freeman envisions a discipline comprising “stylistics, discourse structure, narratology, contemporary metrics, empirical approaches to literature, the European poetics descended from the Prague School and Russian Formalism, the growing body of research in cognitive metaphor, and enough non-specialist knowledge of contemporary linguistics to do work in these fields” (35-36). Freeman contrasts it to the kind of “interdisciplinarity” developed in the “cultural studies” approach to literature—a “theory” of everything pioneered by the French deconstructionists’ *jouissance*, which, in Freeman’s view, distrusts facts to the point of neglecting them and speaks of anything, while knowing nothing in particular (cf. 36-39). Interestingly, what is known as New Musicology represents precisely that symbiosis of poststructuralism and cultural studies, as if no symmetry is to be ever expected between words and music—not even in the ways they are studied. In my thesis, I do not hesitate to make use of both Derrida and Gerrig, Kramer and Sloboda, Kivy and Carrol, Prieto and Wolf. Unless a “New -ology” must be proclaimed for proclamation’s sake in simple reverse of an “old” one, opposing approaches can shed light on their shared subjects and on each other. No context is too broad for inquiries into how cultural artefacts are understood. If New Philology is indeed to emerge, with cognitive metaphor among its cornerstones, it needs to incorporate even more than Freeman welcomes.

As I come to suggest in this thesis, the most productive level for studying musico-literary relations is not intermedial, but transmedial. Add “/music” to “narrative” and say “teller/performer,” and the following quotation from Popova acquires extraliterary importance: “The main interest of narrative lies precisely in

the possibility it affords to enact prospectively, and with an acute sense of anticipation, a past that has already happened and been concluded for its teller" (27). At some level, there is fundamentally no difference between listening and reading. When we *read* about somebody *listening* to music, we may observe and experience the emerging analogical space between the two activities. With verbal music, it is a matter of representation: we enact and internalize someone else's externalization of an internalization of a piece of music, and thus relate narrative to music. With a structural/discursive/non-diegetic use of music in fiction, we may not be told explicitly that the passage we read is like music, but we sometimes get the impression, since it affects us as if it is.

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