

*the numbered land stretches away
and your house is built in tomorrow
but surely not before the examination
of what is right and will befall
not before the census
and the writing down of names*

John Ashbery, *as you came from the holy land*

the passions may be more forcibly express by a strong bold stroke than by the most delicate engraving

William Hogarth

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Berio once described composing as creating ‘patterns of expectation’.¹ I often find myself reaching for this phrase in conversation because its simple terms harbour a complex thought: *expectation* inhabits a region beyond the thing itself—the relation between it and our individual sense of history—while *patterns* implies the perception of an order between things. In other words, *patterns of expectation* refers to the relationships between what lies beyond the thing itself.

This dissertation has attempted to illuminate that intangible gap. My concern has been the challenge posed by these patterns of expectation, what Bloom referred to as “the breaking of form”, and what I have situated within a characterisation of disorder.

Why is any of this important, you may ask, especially if, as may be the case, we can experience music’s expression without a theoretical understanding of its mechanisms. In the introduction I described two fundamentally different conceptions of composition: the first a sound-based approach according to which expression is the product of the identification of an analytical kind of difference, likening this to a conception of composition akin to the possibilities of an infinite chessboard (Berio’s metaphor); the second grew from an understanding of how meaning is created, starting

with the inherent subjectivity of recognition and the necessity of non-identical repetition, whereby composition itself expresses the disorder of its experience, proceeding to examine the role of loss and its characterisation according to its troping. I associated the first kind with composers like Boulez and Maxwell Davies; I hope it is clear I have done so in simple allegory, and partly to avoid implicating living composers. This attitude is, I have argued, according to its analytical foundations, inherently linear, and concerns itself with ideas of “development” and “newness”; it is unavoidably institutionalising and enshrines a kind of intellectual musical elitism. Georgina Born relates a post-concert comment from IRCAM now forty years ago by an American computer musician: ‘the 4X was *incredibly underused*. You could have produced the same results with just a few analog devices and filters! I think that was a pretty general response. It was a farce, all those technicians sitting there! [*With irony*:] Xenakis said to me, ‘Is this contemporary music?’² Sadly such a comment would be at home in the conversations in the pub after the New Music concerts of today, reinforcing the reality that the dissertation’s polemic is hardly original.

I have identified Berio as offering an opposition to these forbidding structures, demonstrating how his theoretical stance is not simply enshrined in but produces the expressive structures of his music, and I have highlighted various writings of his that expound such ideas. Berio wrote with exceptional clarity; it is all the more revealing that his characterisation within New Music tends to be as an experimentalist—the shock of *Sinfonia*, the technical demand of *Sequenza III*, the pioneering 4X at IRCAM—rather than a product of his radical theoretical stance whose expressive impetus inevitably innovated. Bloom reminds us that ‘the strongest of poets are so severely mis-read that the generally accepted, broad interpretations of their work actually tend to be the exact opposites of what the poems truly are’; perhaps it is not entirely surprising that Berio’s achievements have been misappropriated in this way.³

I have proposed a solution to New Music’s institution, approaching composition from the influences of physicality and its notation, a regard for which, I feel, defends against elitist tendencies. I hope it is the case that my work without these pages, though summarised within, demonstrates this application. Because, however, we are dealing so intimately with performativity, scores and recordings can only go so far; in the instance of *Image*, I would argue the score alone cannot provide an idea of the work; *3 Dreams* relishes in its notation as a kind of joke from the perspective of the performers, and so its fundamental expression is focussed in the negotiation between the score and its performance which does not sound like it looks (the *theatre* of *3 Dreams* should be

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considered above all); *Encore* is easiest to approach from score and recording; *à jamais 1* and *2* have facets of *Encore* and *3 Dreams*.

The dissertation situates these issues within the theory of musical meaning. Examining *how* it is that music expresses, I propose that the perception of expression is the sense of its disorder. Disorder is a living agent, forever transforming yet capable of ultimate precision. In an interview, Berio described his ‘strange feeling that musical processes can be more intelligent than the people who produce and listen to them’.⁴ His work essentially attempts to map this intelligence; it is an encyclopaedia of potential musical relations. The third movement of *Sinfonia* represents such a task: every note is disordered, prepared to erupt, loaded with what it proposes to move beyond.

Loss is a necessary product of transformation, whose role I have examined within the expressive negotiations of disorder, as well as its significance in the context of influence and misreading. Bloom writes that a poem’s meaning is a poem’s complaint, and I have suggested that music’s meaning is what it laments. The sentimental centre of this dissertation is chapter 3 in which Rameau’s expression of “tenderness” is identified, and its codification proposed as representing a different way of listening in the eighteenth century, a reflective structure that embodies a kind of distance from the present. I have proposed that tenderness is a disorder of the trope of loss, examining the influence of lament on its expression, and the performance of lament as dramatically ironic. This is not entirely straightforward to discuss since we are dealing with both representations of loss and mechanisms of loss. Indeed, at times the expression of tenderness seems to reflect its own mechanisms of meaning. This fascinates me; it is a source of the kind of distance I have described which characterises Rameau’s remarkable sensibility. As such the chapter can be considered a microcosm of the dissertation as a whole, in which *what* something means is arrived at through a consideration of loss, of tropes, of history, and of performing and listening in time.

It all comes back to experience and to recognition: our conception of history provides the fundamental materials out of which we form interpretations of, and, indeed, compose musical works, what Berio would call the ‘impalpable zone with which we can only come to grips through the mediating influence of works that we have already assimilated’; of course, and as we have discussed, this extends infinitely beyond the musical work.⁵ And so it is that the disorders of subjectivity are inextricably mingled with history and meaning; but this is a fancy way of saying something that will be obvious to most: meaning is contextual. Berio was acutely aware of this character of history, stressing its importance in his 1963 essay on “gesture”. It is no coincidence that

in the same year he composed *Gesti*, Berio also edited Monteverdi's *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*.⁶

Hogarth's *The Enraged Musician* is a stereotype of a busy London street in the eighteenth century, and yet it is also a reworking of an Italian street scene from the seventeenth century, a relationship which was just as much a convenience for Hogarth as it was an artistic decision. Hogarth wasn't disillusioned: he knew exactly to which traditions he wanted to belong.

Rameau's tenderness disorders its influence and reframes it; it is a different way of listening in time, a sensibility comparable to that of Hogarth's radical visual structures. The music looks on itself and sees its lament, sees its meaning; it is like "listening between the lines". In the most extraordinary examples Rameau's music transcends its own condition. The 'Entrée' from *Les Boréades* is such an expression; over forty years after the publication of *Traité* Rameau's technique is entirely consumed by a sensibility with such strength as if to paint without effort the lament of the human condition.

Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* seems the embodiment of Enlightenment ideals, but he, too, was reframing the past. I demonstrated how these lessons manifest themselves in a canon by Mozart. Mozart's canon is the most insincere of compositions built upon the most sincere foundations, capable of supporting even the triumph of the "Jupiter" finale. However, while the foundations might be engraved "Vienna: 1725", the stone is re-chiselled from older Italian foundations. Were the performers of *Leck mich im Arsch* aware they were negotiating with Palestrina? And yet the extraordinary expression of Fux's 'Sol per gloria di un giorno si grande', I have argued, laments its own myth, sounding the Classical condition a decade before Bach's *Matthew Passion*; it is a kind of lament which Mozart, at the height of his powers, would transform beyond Fux's imagination. Fux's note that 'composition must rely on precepts' reads like a sterner, eighteenth-century translation of Berio's "patterns of expectation".⁷

Beethoven was communicating with similar ghosts, a Lydian presence emerging seemingly triumphant from the wrestle of the "Heiliger Dankgesang". But it is in this battle where we see Beethoven himself most clearly, amidst a structure whose notation gives the performers no option but to engage in social terms with one of the most intense contrapuntal negotiations of all time: an impossible relationship, and the resonant bliss of the violin as it escapes Beethoven's inescapably functional grasp for a sublime moment.

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Messiaen doesn't search for this gap, he suspends 'Liturgie de cristal' in it—"there is eternity before and eternity after". However, his new, radical rhythmic order cannot manifest in itself, only in relation to its harmonic order. Messiaen's technique betrays his eternal ambitions: this is what my analysis of the *color* really means.

Likewise, we see Hogarth most clearly not in *The Enraged Musician* itself but between states. The visual structure of the work that emerges in 1741 is the product of the destruction of its previous states, the rewriting of its model; the process stages the disorder of a scene in which the subject is pulled to the side, imprisoned, and eventually replaced. It could not be more fitting that the milkmaid is, at last, mid-step.

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¹ L. Berio: 'Meditation on a Twelve-Tone Horse', *The Christian Science Monitor* (July 15, 1968).

² Born: *IRCAM*, p. 171.

³ Bloom: *Kabbalah*, p. 103.

⁴ Berio, Dalmonte and Varga: *Interviews*, p. 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁶ Thirty years later, Berio would describe how 'The history of vocal music and music-theater of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, after all, can be written without taking account of Monteverdi, but that of the twentieth century cannot'. *Remembering*, pp. 64-65.

⁷ Fux: *Gradus*, p. 241. 'Compositio[n]em *Praeceptis nixam* esse debere'.