

Diana Kupfer

« Nec tecum nec sine te »



**Language-Music Interplays
in Musical Responses to Samuel Beckett**

Inauguraldissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der Philosophischen Fakultät
der Universität Heidelberg

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Acknowledgements

Support and encouragement from numerous individuals and institutions have helped bring this project to completion. First, I would like to thank my thesis advisors at Heidelberg University, Prof. Dr. Dorothea Redepenning (Department of Musicology) and Prof. Dr. Peter Paul Schnierer (Department of English). For their help and advice I am also much indebted to Prof. Dr. Silke Leopold, Dr. Joachim Steinheuer (Department of Musicology, Heidelberg), Prof. Dr. Dietmar Schloss, and Dr. Heiko Jakubzik (Department of English, Heidelberg). Moreover, I owe my deepest gratitude to:

- Martha Potter Kim, Prof. Paul Salerni (University of Lehigh, Pennsylvania), Prof. Anthony Brandt (Rice University, Texas), and Laura Johnson for graciously sharing their personal memories of Earl Kim, answering my questions, as well as providing me with scores and photographs
- Prof. Dr. Nicholas Till (University of Sussex) for encouraging me to present my first conference paper at the International Beckett and Music Symposium in 2009
- Prof. Federico Zandonà (Conservatorio E. F. Dall'Abaco, Verona) for allowing me to attend Paul Salerni's composition masterclass at the Verona conservatory in April 2010
- the librarians of the Samuel Beckett Archive (University of Reading) and of the Houghton Library of Rare Manuscripts at Harvard University
- the librarians, staff and curators of the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, especially Sabine Hänggi-Stämpfli and Dr. Felix Meyer
- Richard Barrett, Rebecca Saunders, Oliver Korte, Ann-Kay Lin, Clarence Barlow, to name only a few "Beckett composers" who were kind enough to answer my questions on their works or who even sent me scores, recordings, and notes
- the composers Prof. Daniel Ott (UdK, Berlin) and Martin Bauer (Buenos Aires, Argentina) for allowing me to participate in their Beckett and composers workshop in February 2011
- Eric Kuchle and Stefan Weger for proofreading
- Maria Ristani, John McGrath, Brynhildur Boyce, Isabel Wagner, Minari Bochmann, Márton Kerékfy, Dr. Benjamin Levy, Alexandre Babel, Caspar de Gelmini, and Austin Buckett for stimulating discussions on Beckett and various composers
- all my friends in Heidelberg
- my music teachers Walter Seidel (†) and Patricia Morrell
- last but not least: my parents

This project was funded by a dissertation grant from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty (2008-2011) and by a research grant from the Paul Sacher Foundation in 2011.

Heidelberg/Lingenfeld, August 2011

Plus ils deviennent, tous ensemble, l'Autre, plus ils se trouvent 'soi.'

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

The more 'other' they become in conjunction, the more they find themselves as 'self.'

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

1. "I open...": Introduction

1.1. 'Beckettese' as musical *lingua franca*

Music *on* literature is never a far cry from music *in* literature: It is well known that the myth of Orpheus ranks among the first literary themes ever turned into an opera. Or, to put it the other way around, when European opera was still in its infancy, it already featured a literary hero whose musical performance forms the pivot of the story. What is more, the mythological lyre player became an immensely popular libretto subject for centuries to come.¹ Likewise, William Shakespeare's plays, in which music abounds, have been adapted into over 380 vocal theater works.² The assumption that musicalized fiction is particularly likely to spawn fictionalized music, that, in other words, intermediality is often reciprocal rather than unidirectional, is paramount to the observations on musical responses to Samuel Beckett's writings put forward in the present study.

Throughout his career, Samuel Beckett employed a variety of modes of expression and media in his works: Not only did he write novels, poems and plays, but also a short film script as well as a small number of works with and without spoken words for radio and television. In a sense, Peter Seibert's term *Medienkünstler*³ ('media artist') is more suitable an epithet for a creative mind of such versatility than labels such as 'author', 'playwright' or 'poet.' Certainly, it is in part this very multifariousness and dispersion of aesthetic expression, which one might call 'multi-channeling,' that accounts for the global reception of his works.⁴

Along these lines, it is partly owing to the strong role played by music in his works that Samuel Beckett's works figure so prominently in compositional history from 1930 to the present day. With more than 250 Beckett-based compositions (at the time of this writing) of different genres and styles and from various countries responding to virtually the

¹ For a listing of operas based on the Orpheus myth, cf. Sternfeld, Frederick W. "Orpheus." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Vol. 3. Ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 1992, 776-7. On the *Sacra Rappresentazione* adaptation of Angelo Poliziano's *Fabula d'Orfeo* around 1480, i.e. even prior to the birth of opera, cf. Leopold, Silke. *Die Oper im 17. Jahrhundert*. Laaber, 2004 (= Handbuch der musikalischen Gattungen 11). 18-23.

² Wilson, Christopher R. "Shakespeare, William." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Vol. 4. Ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 1992. 338-47: 338.

³ Seibert, Peter, ed. *Samuel Beckett und die Medien. Neue Perspektiven auf einen Medienkünstler des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008.

⁴ Cf. Nixon, Mark and Matthew Feldman, eds. *International Reception of Samuel Beckett*. London: Continuum, 2009.

entire Beckettian œuvre (see Appendix), it appears that Beckett's poems, plays and prose have exerted an influence on composers unequalled by those of any other 20th-century author. None other than Pierre Boulez is contemplating the composition of an opera based on *Waiting for Godot* to be premiered in Milan in 2015.⁵ In the second chapter, entitled "Toward Intermediality," following the stipulation of intermedial reciprocity, the first step of the present study will be to unravel the contribution of Beckett's own artistic vision to his great appeal to composers. As has been discussed by many critics, Beckett's entire œuvre is not only replete with references to works of music, composers, and musical terminology (explored in chapter 2.2.2.), but, in addition, his language is marked by a skillful organization of speech sounds (cf. chapter 2.2.3.). The chief aim is to pinpoint four composers' motives for drawing on Beckett and their different strategies of incorporating the author's works into their music. The insights gained from this analysis will shed light on the scope and nature of musical reception of Beckett's writings and, by extension, on the larger picture of musico-literary intermediality since the 1960, notably the questions as to why literature, amongst other media, has assumed such a prominent position in postserial⁶ composition, and how works of literature tend to be approached by composers.

As a first step towards our major concern – that of music drawing on literature – it is worth pointing out Ulrich Dibelius' observation that the inclusion of extramusical sources of inspiration can be considered a hallmark of musical composition in the 1960's and 70's (and, one might add, still is):

Das gegenwärtige Komponieren schirmt sich nicht ab, sondern es bezieht ein; es will nicht als elitäre Kunstübung, sondern als ein dazugehöriger Teil des gelebten Alltags verstanden sein. Und folglich kontaktiert es mit anderen Medien und Materialien; nimmt Optisches, Sprachliches, Geräuschhaftes ebenso als komponierbare Elemente wie Aktion, Bild, Zufall, Schweigen oder den Klang bereits vorhandener Musik; befaßt sich mit der Synthese aus Generatorklängen, mit elektronischer Verfremdung oder Transformation, mit Film und Fernsehen, mit Computern zur Herstellung geeigneter Programme. [Modern musical composition does not shut itself off from others, but instead works to involve them; its goal is not to be seen as an elitist demonstration of technique, but as an integral part of everyday life. And accordingly, it reaches out with other media and materials, viewing the optical, linguistic and acoustic, along with action, images, coincidence, silence, or the sound of past musical works as elements that can be composed; it concerns itself

⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/tomserviceblog/2010/jul/09/pierre-boulez-opera-waiting-for-godot> (posted 9 July, 2010)

⁶ Given its heterogeneity and plurality, Gruhn sees the term as a problematic one (cf. Gruhn, Wilfried. *Reflexionen über Musik heute*. Mainz: Schott, 1981, 10). In the present context, however, the term is not used *despite*, but *because of* its breadth, i.e. to designate the multiplicity of phenomena whose only common denominator seems to be a critical posture toward the determinism of serial techniques. In this study, postserialism will be regarded as a manifestation of postmodern thought in music. See chapter 4.1.3.

with the synthesis of generator noises, with the alienation or transformation of the electronic, with film and television, and with computers that allow us to create our own programs.]⁷

With regard to literature and music, Ivanka Stoïanova asserts:

Die Aufhebung der konventionellen Dichotomie Text-Musik gehört zu den wichtigsten 'Grenzüberschreitungen,' die unsere Zeit der Postmoderne definieren. Die Zeit des Puritanismus ist offensichtlich vorbei, wir leben in einer Zeit der 'Unreinheiten'[,] [Doing away with the conventional text-music dichotomy is one of the most important acts of 'crossing the line' that define our postmodern age. The age of Puritanism is clearly now come and gone, and we live in an age of 'impurities'(.)]⁸

This trend of language, music, and other media becoming increasingly permeable to one another, giving rise to new modes and formats of intermedial exchange – what the poet Frank O'Hara referred to in 1972 as the "inter-involvement of the arts"⁹ – and interdisciplinary research, was designated the *intermedial turn* by Werner Wolf.¹⁰ At first glance, such labeling might appear superfluous on the grounds that previous centuries have, quite similarly, seen a proliferation of interartistic activities. It will become apparent, however, that the musico-literary points of contact under discussion, spanning a period of about three decades from the early 1960's to the late 1980's, are prepared by unprecedented expressive or representational crises within the semiotic systems themselves. It is against this backdrop of intramedial self-consciousness and the modern loss of unity, utopias and universals,¹¹ explored in the chapter on Beckett's language (2.1.), that new, postmodern forms of intermedial contacts and, simultaneously, new forms of dialogue between art and society have gained ground. Along with the aspect of the technological dissemination¹² and wider accessibility of artworks, it is largely this aesthetic self-

⁷ Dibelius, Ulrich, ed. *Musik auf der Flucht vor sich selbst. Acht Aufsätze*. Munich: Hanser, ²1970, 10.

⁸ Stoïanova, Ivanka. "Das Wort-Klang-Verhältnis in der zeitgenössischen Musik. Formbildende Strategien in der Verwendung von Sprache." *Zum Verhältnis von zeitgenössischer Musik und zeitgenössischer Dichtung*. Ed. Otto Kolleritsch. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1988 (= Studien zur Wertungsforschung 20). 52-67: 65.

⁹ "New Directions in Music: Morton Feldman." *Give My Regards to Eighth Street. Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*. Cambridge, Mass.: Exact Change, 2000. 211-7: 211.

¹⁰ Wolf, Werner. *The Musicalization of Fiction. A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999, 2.

¹¹ Welsch, Wolfgang. *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*. Berlin: Akademie, ⁵1997, 6.

¹² In the 1930's, Walter Benjamin wrote on the effects of technological reproduction, i.e. the loss of uniqueness and authenticity (what he calls the "aura") of the artifact. Furthermore, reproducibility "enables the original to meet the recipient halfway." As regards the recipients, he observed a "*desire of the present-day masses to 'get closer' to things spatially and humanely, and their equally passionate concern for overcoming each thing's uniqueness by assimilating it as a reproduction.*" Niklas Luhmann highlights the aspect of non-interaction between the sender and the addressee in reproducible media. Cf. Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1936-9). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Eds. Vincent B. Leitch et al. New York: Norton, ²2010. 1051-71; Luhmann Niklas, *Die Realität der Massenmedien*. Wiesbaden: VS, ⁴2009.

skepticism on which intermedial relations have thrived since the latter half of the 20th century.

Furthermore, it will be suggested that Beckett's double-coded¹³ language, sounds and images, which have struck many a chord with scholars, writers, composers, and theater aficionados across cultural bounds and social strata,¹⁴ have served as a blueprint for crossing medial and social gaps, i.e. for shunning exactly that "elitist artistic practice" which Dibelius delineates in the passage quoted above – in favor of a de-hierarchization of both the author-audience relationship and the intermedial interplay. To be sure, it is an outcome of this paradigm shift toward more exoteric and participatory artistic modes and toward a postmodern "radical pluralization" (Welsch¹⁵) of meaning and expressive vehicles, that Beckett, amongst other writers, regarded music as an equal interlocutor¹⁶ of language and, vice versa, composers have become more receptive to new modes of text-setting.¹⁷ Along these lines, this study also aims to identify and explicate to what degree the four composers' partly overlapping aesthetic tenets – to "liberate sounds" (Feldman), to have a "multiplicity [of styles] become[...] unity" (Kim), to "include" rather than "exclude" (Rands) or to show "more respect for listeners" (Barrett) – reflect the "post-exclusivist" (Sloterdijk¹⁸), decentralizing or participatory tendencies of post-modernism that also underlie Beckett's writings. It is, after all, most revealing that Feldman's first Beckett-based composition, *Elemental Procedures*, was a commission from the WDR for a 1977 concert series entitled "The New Simplicity." What is more, Beckett's work promotes the dissociation of authorship from authority in the sense that the author seeks "creative assistance"¹⁹ from his audience, as Alain Robbe-Grillet has asserted. More precisely, "[w]hat [the author] asks of him is no longer to receive ready-made a world completed, full, closed upon itself, but on the contrary to participate in a

¹³ The term "double coding" was introduced into architecture by Charles Jencks. It referred to buildings that conformed with the aesthetic standards of both "low brow" and "high brow" cultures. Cf. Jencks, Charles. *The New Paradigm in Architecture. The Language of Post-modernism*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2002, 19.

¹⁴ At San Quentin State Prison, Herbert Blau's production of *Godot* was performed by inmates in November 1957 and, as a result, "associated [...] with the American underclass." c.f. Gontarski, S. E. "Beckett's Reception in the USA." *International Reception of Samuel Beckett*. Eds. Mark Nixon and Matthew Feldman. London: Continuum, 2009. 9-23: 12.

¹⁵ Welsch (1997), 4.

¹⁶ Dibelius (1970), 132.

¹⁷ Dibelius (1970), 10.

¹⁸ Sloterdijk, Peter. *Kopernikanische Mobilmachung und Ptolemäische Abrüstung*, Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp, 1987, 11.

¹⁹ Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *For a New Novel*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989, 156.

creation, to invent in his turn the work – and the world – and thus to invent his own life."²⁰

That postserial music has become increasingly receptive to other outside influences apart from literature, e.g. social and political concerns, will become evident in the aesthetic trajectories of the four composers and in the generations they represent, from Kim's gradual turning away from the hermetic automatism of the Twelve-tone system (in the 1960's and 70's) to Barrett's *NO*, a musical response to the war in Iraq (1999-2004). Since the composers' individual aesthetic (and political) stances deeply inform their readings of Beckett, each of these creative trajectories will be devoted an entire chapter, followed by an analysis of the Beckett-based composition(s) of the respective composers.

Diametrically opposed to these convergences is the fact that, with an ever-growing number of professional composers of art music (50,000 in Europe, as of 1998²¹), and against the backdrop of the climate of "radical plurality," composers have been under ever-greater pressure to 'market' themselves by highlighting their individual trademarks and points of differentiation from their fellow composers, in the course of which musical languages have undeniably diversified. This last point also goes for musical approaches to works of literature. This is apparent, for example, in the divergent styles of composers who for many years worked under the roof of the same academic institution, such as Harvard professor Earl Kim and his student and friend Bernard Rands. The heterogeneity of compositional paradigms within fairly narrow geographic and aesthetic margins points toward another role that Beckett's output (and possibly that of other authors) has assumed among composers: It would appear, namely, that the common reverence for the author's work supersedes intersubjective musical domains, a frame of shared knowledge that is exempt from the "anxiety of influence"²² from other composers: In postwar Hungary, György Kurtág was first introduced to Beckett's oeuvre by his mentor and friend György Ligeti.²³ That Kurtág associated Beckett with his composer-

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Böhmer, Konrad. "Die dritte Revolution der Musik: Vom Konzert zur Disco?" *Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie* 3 (1998): 1-14: 2.

²² Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 21997.

²³ Kunkel, Michael. "...dire cela sans savoir quoi...": *Samuel Beckett in der Musik von György Kurtág und Heinz Holliger*. Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2008, 50.

friend is revealed in references to Ligeti in two of his Beckett settings.²⁴ In 1971, the East-German composer Paul-Heinz Dittrich received a copy of Beckett's *How It Is* from his friend Heinz Holliger. The text, not available in the German Democratic Republic, inspired Dittrich's *The Anonyme Stimme* (1972).²⁵ It is also revealing that Richard Barrett claims to have drawn no inspiration from the compositional past²⁶ (apart from Xenakis), while having read Beckett's entire oeuvre twice through.²⁷ Most significantly, it is symptomatic that, to an extent far beyond their musical language, references to Beckett represent a *tertium comparationis* between composers who were personally acquainted with one another or even in a teacher-student relationship: Kim and Rands, Rands and Luciano Berio (who used fragments from *The Unnamable* in his *Sinfonia* of 1968), Rands and Bun-Ching Lam (*Four Beckett Songs*, 1980), Rands and Roger Reynolds (who wrote four Beckett-based pieces between 1968 and 1993), Rands and Feldman, Feldman and Charles Amirkhanian (who composed both *Pas de Voix: A Portrait of Samuel Beckett*, 1987 and a tribute to Morton Feldman, *Loudspeakers*, 1990), Feldman and Gyula Csapó (*Krapp's Last Tape*, 1975), Csapó, György Kurtág and Peter Eötvös, etc. Not surprisingly, then, Beckett has been a topic of discourse among composers: The British composer Roger Redgate stated that he had been close friends with Richard Barrett and that they often conversed about Beckett.²⁸ Yet, unlike Barrett, Redgate actually set Beckett's language to music, rather than extracting from his work a set of ideas or "mottos" and using them as a hidden text, as Barrett has done. What is more, Redgate drew on a text that Barrett never worked with (*Mirlitonnades*, 2004). In fact, when it comes to setting Beckett, Redgate feels an aesthetic kinship with Heinz Holliger,²⁹ who has also set three Beckett texts in the 1970s and 1980s: *Come and Go* (1976/77), *Not I* (1978-80) and *What Where* (1988).³⁰ Apart from these networks and personal bonds between composers, common references to Beckett may underscore aesthetic links, as

²⁴ In the *Footfalls* fragment (1978), Kurtág envisages a "net" (*szövevény*) of voices à la Ligeti. (PSS, MF 320/98). In addition, one of the *Mirlitonnades* settings in op. 36 is entitled *Ligetinek*.

²⁵ Interview with Heinz Holliger, cf. Dittrich, Paul-Heinz. *"Nie vollendbare poetische Anstrengung." Texte zur Musik 1957-1999*. Ed. Stefan Fricke and Alexandra Raetzer. Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2003, 256.

²⁶ Toop, Richard. "Richard Barrett in Interview." *Sounds Australian* 29 (1991): 27–31: 30.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁸ E-mail to the present author, received on January 12, 2010.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ On Holliger and Beckett cf. Kunkel; Jackson, J. E. "Holliger et Beckett." *Bruno Maderna/Heinz Holliger*. Paris, 1991. 127–9.; Ericson, Kristina. "Die Ich-Verneinung als musikalischer Prozess: Studien zu Heinz Holligers monodrama *Not I* nach Samuel Beckett." *Schweizerisches Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, new ser., 13/14 (1993-4): 359–77; Szendy, Peter. "End Games." *Samuel Beckett and Music*. Ed. Mary Bryden. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 99–129.

with Michael Denhoff, whose stylistic development is much indebted to György Kurtág³¹ and Morton Feldman, to whom he overtly paid homage in the title of his chamber music CD *The Cello in My Life*.³² With Cage and Feldman, conversations about painting famously supplanted discussions on music,³³ and similarly, Beckett's and other literary works represent a non-musical, neutral common ground between composers.

Although the first Beckett setting ever written, Henry Crowder's *From the Only Poet to a Shining Whore*,³⁴ which is based on a poem written especially for the jazz pianist (then the companion of Beckett's first publisher Nancy Cunard) dates back as far as 1930, it can easily be gleaned from the list that a significantly greater number of Beckett-based compositions were conceived after Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1969. Needless to say that musical adaptations of Beckett are often marked by a stark asymmetry between the popularity of the author and that of the respective composer. In such cases the intermediality of the works is not only overt, but downright blatant. As Linda Hutcheon points out, this perfectly exemplifies the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism, i.e. the work of art viewed as invariably engaging in a dialogue with other works.³⁵ In addition, the "financial appeal" that Hutcheon surmises behind references to famous works in not-so-famous or not-yet-famous ones³⁶ is not to be neglected. It is certainly not preposterous to state that some composers have drawn on a writer whose works are, as Joseph Epstein would put it, "hot on the quotation market,"³⁷ in order to supply legitimacy and ennoblement (or rather, en-Nobel-ment) for their own art.

As a result, "Beckettese," as one might call this common literary code, has undeniably

³¹ On Kurtág and Beckett s. Kunkel, op. cit.; cf. also: Steiert, Thomas. "György Kurtág's Vertonung von Samuel Becketts 'What is the Word' (Siklós István tolmácsolásában Beckett Sámuel üzeni Monyók Ildikóval) op. 30b." *Das Gedichtete behauptet sein Recht – Festschrift für Walter Gebhard zum 65. Geburtstag*. Ed. Klaus H. Kiefer. Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang, 2001. 577-86.; Zenck, Martin. "Beckett after Kurtág: Towards a Theory of Theatricality of a Non-theatrical Music." *Studia musicologica Academiae scientiarum Hungaricae* 43 (2002). 411-20; Navacchia, Stefania. "Il 'dramma' della comunicazione in *Samuel Beckett – What is the word* di György Kurtág." *Musica/Realtà* 28.84 (November 2007). 69-79.

³² CD label: Cybele, 2002, referring to Morton Feldman's piece *The Viola in My Life* (1970).

³³ "There was very little talk about music with John. [...] But there was an incredible amount of talk about painting." Feldman, Morton. "Liner Notes." *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*. Ed. B. H. Friedman. Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2000. 3-7: 5.

³⁴ Barnett, Anthony. *Listening for Henry Crowder. A Monograph on his Almost Lost Music with the Poems and Music of Henry-Music*. Lewes: Allardyce and Barnett, 2007.

³⁵ Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Transl. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

³⁶ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006, 5.

³⁷ Epstein, Joseph. "Quotatious." *A Line Out for a Walk*. New York: Norton, 1991. 88-107: 96.

assumed the status of a musical *lingua franca* among composers around the globe, in that "every contemporary composer makes it their business to have an opinion about Samuel Beckett," as one journalist put it.³⁸ It is likewise a point of contact between the four composers that will be dealt with in this work: Morton Feldman (1926-87), Earl Kim (1920-98) – both of whom met Beckett personally –, Bernard Rands (1934-) and Richard Barrett (1955-). All of the Beckett-based compositions analyzed in this study are autonomous works rather than incidental music for theatrical productions. What is more, they are inspired by a wide variety of texts and text genres.

The basic method pursued in the present work is a selective, in-depth portrayal of each of these composers, all of whom consider(ed) Beckett a major influence upon their own oeuvre, followed by an investigation of their perceived points of contact with the author, and, finally, an interdisciplinary analysis of their Beckett-based works. Indubitably, such a narrow focus will do better justice to our topic than a comprehensive survey of all the works collected in the corpus. Due to the dictates of time and space, the latter approach would preclude a detailed delineation of the composers' trajectories and motives for drawing on Beckett, which is, however, key to interpreting Beckett's work through the lens of a given composer as a "second-order observer"³⁹ rather than making judgements on the aesthetic compatibility of text and music on a putatively 'objective' basis. Elucidating the musical Beckett interpretations of only a limited number of composers originating from a relatively limited geographic and aesthetic radius who nevertheless differ tremendously in their compositional portfolios and outlooks will provide an idea of the diversity of musical responses to Beckett even within a small scope of musicalizations.

As a starting point, I will discuss, contextualize and suggest new viewpoints on Morton Feldman's *neither*, to date the most well-known and most frequently performed Beckett-based composition. It is fair to say that, since it received its premiere in 1977, this opera or anti-opera, along with the follow-up Beckett-inspired works *Words and Music* and *For Samuel Beckett* (1987), has come to be regarded by critics and journalists alike as a

³⁸ Clark, Philip. "Writers in Music: Samuel Beckett." *Gramophone*, February 2009: 44-7: 44.

³⁹ "Beobachter zweiter Ordnung." Luhmann, Niklas. *The Reality of the Mass Media [Die Realität der Massenmedien]*. Transl. Kathleen Cross. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000. 4-5.

nonpareil musical equivalent to Beckett's language.⁴⁰ Concomitantly, Morton Feldman has been – depending on one's perspective – elevated or downgraded to the status of a prototypical 'Beckett composer.' However, the diversity of vantage points on Beckett's work in literary criticism does find its counterpart in musical adaptations of his works, be they considered 'highbrow' or 'lowbrow.' It is hardly a wonder, then, that the other Beckett compositions discussed in the present work, which are far less widely-known or not even published (as is the case with Earl Kim's *Narratives*) display a variety of highly subjective musical interpretations that are not only equally viable, but also equally contingent.⁴¹ They diverge considerably not only from Feldman's idiom, but also from one another. Their composers assert knowledge of Beckett's aesthetic vision on the one hand, while, on the other, they acknowledge the impossibility of an ultimate understanding of his texts and the improbability of an intermedial 'communication.'⁴² Along with this ambivalent treatment of literary texts, these interplays between language and music have, as we will see, taken forms other than those of *prima le parole, dopo la musica* or vice versa.⁴³ As will be argued, Beckett himself sought to de-hierarchize the relationship between sound and meaning by mirroring their respective expressive potentialities and shortcomings against each other instead of tautologizing

⁴⁰ In his *Gramophone* article, Philip Clark states that "Feldman's concepts of time and structure were uncannily close counterparts for Beckett's own." He falsely claims that Feldman became the "one exception" Beckett made to his alleged rule of refusing any collaboration with composers whatsoever. Cf. "Writers in Music: Samuel Beckett," op. cit., 44. Likewise, Jörn Peter Hiekel, in his liner notes for Paolo Pizzani's *All for Company* (2002) writes: "There is always a bit of pretension involved in setting poetry of an exceptional level and extraordinary intensity to music: [...]. In the case of the compositional confrontation with Samuel Beckett, there is the additional difficult factor, [sic!] that the American composer Morton Feldman congenially delved into these texts, impressively underlining the relationships of his own aesthetic to those [sic!] of Beckett. Hiekel, Jörn Peter. *Liner Notes: Alles Theater!* Transl. Alexander G. Adiante. Stradivarius 2004 (STR 33680), 24. In a radio broadcast on Beckett settings for the German Südwestrundfunk, Werner Klüppelholz asserted: "Morton Feldman hat sich mit seiner sogenannten Oper dem Kosmos Becketts noch am weitesten angenähert, ihn am klarsten erfasst." Klüppelholz, Werner. *Unheilig jeder Laut des Gesangs. Samuel Beckett – vertont*, broadcast manuscript. Südwestrundfunk 2, broadcast: 11 Feb., 2010, 12.

⁴¹ Following Luhmann's definition of the term, "something is contingent insofar as it is neither necessary nor impossible; it is just what it is (or was or will be), though it could also be otherwise. The concept thus describes something given (something experienced, expected, remembered, fantasized) in the light of its possibly being otherwise; it describes objects within the horizon of possible variations. It presupposes the world as it is given, yet it does not describe the possible in general, but what is otherwise possible from the viewpoint of reality." Luhmann, Niklas. *Social Systems*. Transl. John Bednarz Jr. Stanford University Press, 1995, 106.

⁴² Cf. Luhmann, Niklas. "Die Unwahrscheinlichkeit der Kommunikation." *Niklas Luhmann. Aufsätze und Reden*. Ed. Oliver Jahraus. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001. 76-93. The primary obstacles to communication, Luhmann states, are: 1. the improbability of mutual *comprehension*, given the individualization of consciousness, 2. the improbability of *reaching* the desired addressee(s) (the main impediments being physical absence, temporal limitation, and lack of attention), and 3. the improbability of communicative *success* (that is, the proposition that the selective content of the communication is adopted as a premise of one's own behavior).

⁴³ Stoianova (1988), 52-67. The dictum "prima..., dopo.." is derived from Antonio Salieri's *Divertimento teatrale Prima la musica, poi (dopo) le parole* (Vienna, 1786, to a libretto by Giovanni Battista Casti).

the expressive content by way of a hierarchical opposition. Many composers drawing on his texts have followed suit, or rather: They have found this aesthetic paradigm, which they call their own, echoed in the works of the author.

1.2. "Make sense who may": Beckett's writings perceived as 'open' works

Am schönsten sind die Rätsel, die verschiedene Lösungen zulassen: Man kann immer sagen, daß die Lösung (nicht) stimmt. [The best riddles are those that allow for several different solutions: You can always claim that the solution is (not) wrong.]

Roman Haubenstock-Ramati

It is a truism that art reception feeds back into art production, and vice versa. The very fact that Umberto Eco, in his *Limits of Interpretation* (1990), deplors that many readers of his *Opera Aperta*⁴⁴ have selectively appropriated the notion of aesthetic openness,⁴⁵ reveals that this idea fell on open ears, both on the art-producing and on the art-receiving side. The fruitful friendship between Eco and Luciano Berio testifies to this. In other words: Not only do works of art – n. b. not only the "unfinished" musical forms Eco discusses at the beginning of his study – open themselves up in manifold formal and semantic ways, becoming polyvalent, multi-interpretable and thus fostering the "interplay between stimulus and response," as Eco stipulates in *The Open Work*.⁴⁶ In addition, supply has created demand. That is, as a result of this overall climate of openness toward which the arts have aspired in the past decades, of "exemption from meaning,"⁴⁷ there has, reciprocally, been a stronger call for works of art on the part of the recipient that, by their ambiguous, fragmentary or symbolic nature⁴⁸ open up a plethora of parallel hermeneutical universes rather than being "hemmed in by any ideal normative conception of the world."⁴⁹ In particular, semantic malleability seems to have played into the hands of composer-recipients drawing on literature as an inspirational force who have dismissed notions such as text fidelity, text-music tautology, and, similarly, the vision of creating a harmonious unity out of two separate media. As Walter Zimmermann writes on the text-music relationship in contemporary opera,

⁴⁴ Eco, Umberto. *The Open Work*. Engl. transl. Anna Cancogni. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

⁴⁵ Eco, Umberto. *The Limits of Interpretation*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, 6.

⁴⁶ Eco (1989), 3.

⁴⁷ Barthes, Roland. "The Breach of Meaning." *The Empire of Signs*. Translated by Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 2000. 69-72: 69.

⁴⁸ Eco (1989), 8-9.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

es geht darum, ein Feld zu schaffen, in dem sich nicht nur der Komponist als das Subjekt sieht, sondern auch die möglichen Hörer sich frei bewegen lässt mittels aktivem Zuhören, d. h. ich entziehe der Oper eine eindeutige Botschaft. (...) Was entsteht, ist ein loses Nebeneinander, Miteinander vielleicht. [it is about creating a field in which not only the composer regards himself as the subject, but which also allows the potential listener to move about freely by listening actively, i.e. I deprive the opera of any clear message. (...) This way a loose side-by-side, togetherness perhaps, is created.]⁵⁰

Not only does this "loose side-by-side" grant more interpretational leeway to the listener, it also allows the composer to roam freely through the text so as to re-write his own tailored montage of it.⁵¹ The composer Ann-Kay Lin, whose work *Journey* (1st version for voice: 1991, second version for oboe: 1998) responds to Beckett's late text *Worstward Ho*, was initially puzzled by the enigmatic language before finding the key to the text in her own subjective reading of it: "It occurred to me that, instead of trying to understand the meaning of the texts in detail, I should have simply followed my **instinctive** reaction to the texts, i.e. **my perception** of sound and structure."⁵² Given the spread of such reception-centered readings of literature from the 1960's onwards, and, around the same time, the advent of the corresponding phenomenon in literary theory, reader-response criticism,⁵³ it is no great wonder that composers have felt drawn toward fragmentary or fragmentable texts leaving plenty of interstices to be filled by the composer's individual response. As Wolfgang Rihm puts it:

Der fragmentarische Text bringt [...] eine besondere Eignung mit, musikalisch konfrontiert zu werden. Ist er doch durchlässig und offen, von sich aus beziehungsreich, weil seine Anschlüsse nicht bereits definiert sind wie beim "vollendeten" Text. Seine zugleich offengelassene Hermetik schließt Musik – die fragmentarischste und emotionalste Kunst – bereits mit ein. [The fragmentary text is (...) uniquely suited to musically confronting listeners. After all, it is permeable and open, it is intrinsically rich in relations, as unlike the

⁵⁰ Zimmermann, Walter, "Das Spiegelkabinett." *Zum Verhältnis von zeitgenössischer Musik und zeitgenössischer Dichtung*. Ed. O. Kolleritsch. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1988 (= Studien zur Wertungsfor-schung 20). 116-20: 117.

⁵¹ Compare György Kurtág's appropriation of "cross-reading" and "waste books" in his Beckett composition...*pas à pas... nulle part* op. 36. Cf. Kunkel, 135-55. An earlier example of this selective approach to literary sources is Hanns Eisler's *Anakreontische Fragmente* and *Hölderlin-Fragmente* (both 1943), for which the composer selected and reassembled the verses according to his own "communist" standards and taste. Cf. Grabs, Manfred. "Afterword." *Hanns Eisler. Ausgewählte Lieder I*. Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1972. Compare also Ingeborg Bachmann's treatment of the text *Der Prinz von Homburg* for Hans Werner Henze's opera of the same title: Tumat, Antje. *Dichterin und Komponist. Ästhetik und Dramaturgie in Ingeborg Bachmanns und Hans Werner Henzes Prinz von Homburg*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2004.

⁵² Lin, Ann-Kay. "My Experience of Samuel Beckett" (originally an essay entitled "From Enigma to Refrain From Understanding"). Notes concerning *Journey*, 1995 (revised copy printed upon request of the present author, 2008. Emphasis added).

⁵³ Cf. e.g. Iser, Wolfgang. *Der implizite Leser. Kommunikationsformen des Romans von Bunyan bis Beck-ett*. Munich: Fink, 1972, and *Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*. Munich: Fink, 1976.

"completed" text its connections are not strictly defined. Its unfathomable yet undefined nature already encompasses music – the most fragmentary and emotional of the arts.]⁵⁴

It is easily seen that Beckett's works, marked by non-consecutive fractured narratives in lieu of coherent forms, and, what is more, permeated by repetitions, enumerations and re-arrangements, if not utterly pared-down to begin with, lend themselves easily to dis-assemblies and re-assemblies according to the composer's individual purposes. This seems to be why the *Mirlitonnades*, Beckett's late French miniature poems, in which the author himself toys with the assonance, mobility and interchangeability of its phonetic constituents, have been set to music particularly often.⁵⁵ Using repeated passages literally as "passages" between different sections of the novel, Earl Kim created a text montage of *The Unnamable*, thus transforming the novel into a short song text for his *Rattling On*. Fragmentary appropriation and selective quotation have become so pervasive in musical composition that some aphorisms and mottos have virtually gone viral: The title of a leaflet of the contemporary *Ensemble Surplus* reads: "'il faut continuer' (Samuel Beckett)," from the French version of Beckett's *The Unnamable/L'innomable*, which, in turn, is borrowed from the title of Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf's *Requiem for Samuel Beckett* (1989-90), a work in homage that has been recorded by the ensemble in question. What is even more curious is that individual lines from Morton Feldman's *neither* have inspired three other pieces of music, John Duncan's/ Bernhard Günter's *Home: Unspeakable* (1996) and two works by Rebecca Saunders: *to and fro* and *neither* (both 2010).⁵⁶

In the light of this fragmentability and thus meme-ability, it is unquestionably easy to view Beckett as a 'creator of open works' – perhaps even more so in retrospect or to those unfamiliar with the author's background and the context of his works. In the early 1970's, Al Alvarez compared him to "a painter whose distaste for the excesses of style and the claims of the imagination make him end with a blank canvas."⁵⁷ Moreover, Beckett's constant understatement has provided plenty of justification for such open

⁵⁴ Rihm, Wolfgang, "Sprache als Anlaß für Musik." *Ausgesprochen. Schriften und Gespräche*. 2 Vols. Ed. Ulrich Mosch. Winterthur: Amadeus, 1997 (= Publications of the Paul Sacher Foundation 6.1/6.2), Vol. I. 13-15: 13.

⁵⁵ By Oliver Korte, Stefano Gervasoni, Antonio Giacometti, Mischa Käser, Mayako Kubo, György Kurtág, Marco Momi, Paolo Pizzani, Roger Redgate, and, of course, possibly more.

⁵⁶ See Appendix. Compare also: Friedrich Hölderlin's poem "An Diotima," Luigi Nono's *Framente – Stille, An Diotima* (1979/80) and the French string quartet ensemble "Diotima," named after Nono's composition.

⁵⁷ Alvarez, Al. *Samuel Beckett*. London: Collins & Sons, 1973. 123.

work conceptions: A passage often quoted and referred to by critics is the one in which Beckett wrote, in musical terms, that he considered his work "a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke intended) made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for nothing else. If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them. And provide their own aspirin."⁵⁸ Just before that statement, he makes his point more explicitly: "[W]hen it comes to those bastards of journalists, I feel the only line is to refuse to be involved in exegesis of any kind."⁵⁹

This downplay is also found in a letter in which he writes about the "skeleton"⁶⁰ simplicity of *Godot* – famously summarized by Vivian Mercier as a play in which "[n]othing happens, twice."⁶¹ In another much-quoted passage from the *Three Dialogues With George Duthuit* Beckett addressed "[t]he expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express."⁶²

It is, perhaps, owing to the possibility of such open work conceptions that, while Beckett's plays may mystify the spectator, they never seem to alienate him. The concluding line of his last play *What Where* "Make sense who may. I switch off"⁶³ could be read as an aesthetic testament or as a general guide to his works; as a permission, possibility or authorization. Similarly, the last word in Lucky's monologue in *Godot* is "unfinished," by which the speech seems to hint at its own multi-interpretability. Notably, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati links this semantic and formal openness directly to his compositional technique, "mobile," used in *Credentials* (1961), which is based on Lucky's monologue:

It stops abruptly at the word 'unfinished'; Lucky starts being excited; his thinking is becoming dangerous. Therefore, 'Off with the hat!' 'Unfinished.' – Like the *musica mobile*, the aria may start again to tell us – in a different version – another story with the same words about our existence.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Letter of 29 December, 1957 to Alan Schneider, *No Author Better Served. The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett & Alan Schneider*, ed. Maurice Harmon. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, 24.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Letter to Pamela Mitchell dated 18/08/1955, Beckett Collection, Reading: MIT/057.

⁶¹ Mercier, Vivian. "The Uneventful Event." *The Irish Times*, 18 Feb., 1956: 6.

⁶² Beckett, Samuel. *Proust and Three Dialogues*. London: John Calder, 1970, 103.

⁶³ Beckett, Samuel. *The Complete Dramatic Works*. London: Faber & Faber, 2006 (hereafter: CDW), 476.

⁶⁴ Qtd. in: Krones, Hartmut. Liner Notes. Transl. Hanns H. Bühler. *Österreichische Musik der Gegenwart* (record). Österreichischer Musikrat. Amadeo Classic, 1984. Cf. also: Kim, Eun-Ha. *Studien zu den Vokalkompositionen von Roman Haubenstock-Ramati mit einem Beitrag zu seiner formalen Idee*. Dissertation, University of Vienna, 1999, 164.

Various agents of indeterminacy, such as ageless characters, toneless voices (in *Play*), the emphasis on formal aspects or rituals constituting the creative act, the absence of proper names ("he," "she" in *Rough for Radio I*, W 1, W 2, M in *Play*), generic names such as "Joe" and "Bob" in *Words and Music* and, as we will explicate, the presence of archetypes, promote the appearance of general accessibility, moving the work "toward simplicity, toward the essential, toward the universal," as S. E. Gontarski maintains.⁶⁵ As a young research assistant to James Joyce, Beckett seems to have been particularly intrigued by Bruno's principle of the identity of opposites, which will be explored in detail in chapter 2.1.3. As Beckett paraphrased and understood it, "in principle, corruption is generation."⁶⁶ Applied to aesthetic production, this rule of complementarity implies the paradox of creating aesthetic multivalence through quantitative reduction, and thus generating meaning by denying its presence. Or, as Eco phrased it: "Let us be realistic: there is nothing more meaningful than a text which asserts that there is no meaning."⁶⁷ In other words: The less said, the more implied.

However, Beckett's work is characterized by a hermeneutical double-bind, a dialectic between the abstract and the concrete. Thus, the (perceived) elasticity is only one aspect of his œuvre (next to the aforementioned ones of musicalized writing and the Nobel prize) that sheds light on its global reception⁶⁸ and acclaim. Not to be neglected is what Paul Heinemann has termed *Interpretationszwang*⁶⁹ ("compulsion to interpret"): Vis-à-vis the universal, the archetypal, the Platonic, each of his works is interspersed with autobiographical hints: allusive names and places – "demented particulars,"⁷⁰ symbols, metaphors, and a plethora of intratextual references only accessible to insiders. Clearly, this is also an idiosyncrasy that has brought about various approaches and thus given rise to an interpretation 'industry,' which finds its counterpart in the multitude of Beckett-inspired musical projects.

In the present context, Eco's concept of the open work is by no means invoked as a pre-

⁶⁵ Gontarski, S. E. *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, 3.

⁶⁶ Beckett, Samuel. "Dante...Bruno. Vico...Joyce." *Disjecta. Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*. London: Calder, 1983, 21. Italics added.

⁶⁷ Eco (1990), 7.

⁶⁸ Cf. Nixon/Feldman (2009).

⁶⁹ *Potenzierte Subjekte – potenzierte Fiktionen. Ich-Figurationen und ästhetische Konstruktion bei Jean Paul und Samuel Beckett*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001.

⁷⁰ Phrase used by Beckett himself in *Murphy*. New York: Grove, 1957, 13.

text for endorsing any critical or musical approach to Beckett's work whatsoever. Nor does it refer to a standard of aesthetic production or an ideal. Rather, it simply designates a practice of artistic reception and literary adaptation, in which works of art, in our case Beckett's writings, are considered open to any conceivable and viable subjective response, adaptation and medial recontextualization, in other words: a tendency to perceive semantic plurality or malleability in artifacts regardless of the intention that originally prompted their creation.

1.3. Current status of research

1.3.1. on Beckett and music

Beckett and music has been a topic of interest and concern well beyond the circles of musicologists and Beckett critics. In fact, by now it is popular enough to be the subject of a *Gramophone* article,⁷¹ a German radio broadcast,⁷² and a composers' workshop.⁷³ Thus, interest in Beckett's musicalized work and composers' takes on it have spilled across the bounds of the academic realm.

The present study largely relies upon two strands of research, both of which have become thriving fields in both musicology and in literary criticism since the mid-1990's. The first one, intermediality, especially the subcategory originally inaugurated as "melopoetics" which, by now, has fully established itself under the name "Word and Music Studies,"⁷⁴ has supplied indispensable analytical tools for investigating a broad range of musico-literary relations. This has allowed me to embed my observations on Beckett and music into the wider context of inter-artistic dialogue in the last decades of the 20th century. After all, Beckett was not attracted to music alone, but to a variety of media. Werner Wolf's publications, especially *The Musicalization of Fiction*,⁷⁵ have been particularly helpful in comprehending the scope, history, and background of text-music interactions from the point of view of literary criticism. Steven Paul Scher's and Werner

⁷¹ Clark (2009).

⁷² Klüppelholz (2010).

⁷³ Held by the composers Daniel Ott and Martin Bauer in collaboration with the Universität der Künste, Berlin, Germany, Feb. 3-7, 2011.

⁷⁴ Bernhart, Walter et al. *Word and Music Studies: Defining the Field*. Amsterdam, Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1999.

⁷⁵ Wolf, Werner. *The Musicalization of Fiction. A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999; by the same author: "'The musicalization of fiction'. Versuch intermedialer Grenzüberschreitungen zwischen Musik und Literatur im englischen Erzählen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts." *Intermedialität*. Ed. Jörg Helbig. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1998. 133-164.

Wolf's terminology and taxonomy of intermedial relations have been further specified and systematically expanded by Irina O. Rajewsky in *Intermedialität* (2002) so as to apply to the entire scope of intermedial interfaces. Earlier studies such as Scher's *Literatur und Musik*,⁷⁶ Gier's/Gruber's *Literatur und Musik*,⁷⁷ Hans Joachim Kreutzer's *Obertöne*,⁷⁸ or Zima's *Literatur intermedial*,⁷⁹ will play a lesser role in the following analyses. As opposed to literary criticism, musicology has been hesitant to map out systematic frameworks of intermedial relations. Rather than devising a unified vocabulary and taxonomy, musicologists have employed a variety of analytical tools and approaches tailored to individual works, composers, authors, and eras. This is evident, for example, in the essays contained in the volume *Zum Verhältnis von zeitgenössischer Musik und zeitgenössischer Dichtung*,⁸⁰ some of which will be cited in the present study. Hanns-Werner Heister's essay "Literarisierung und Literaturoper"⁸¹ as well as Robert P. Morgan's *Twentieth-Century Music*⁸² provide a compact overview of narrativization techniques in 20th-century opera. This interdisciplinary study aims to combine these two distinct angles on intermedial relations: the broad focus of literary theory and the more differentiated views of musicology.

Although in *The Musicalization of Fiction* Werner Wolf devotes an entire chapter to music in Beckett's work, it is somewhat astounding that intermedial studies and the second field of research from which I have drawn various impulses – Beckett and music studies – have until now hardly touched upon one another, let alone intersected. This does not seem to be due to the fact that intermedial studies originated in the German-speaking parts of Europe, since the Word and Music Association has developed into an international network of scholars. Moreover, even the German Beckett critic Franz-Michael Maier (in his comprehensive study on Beckett and music⁸³), is apparently un-

⁷⁶ Scher, Steven Paul, ed. *Literatur und Musik. Ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines komparatistischen Grenzgebietes*. Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1984.

⁷⁷ Gier, Albert and Gernot W. Gruber, eds. *Literatur und Musik. Komparatistische Studien zu Struktur- analogien*. Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang, 1995.

⁷⁸ Kreutzer, Hans Joachim. *Obertöne. Literatur und Musik. Neuen Abhandlungen über das Zusammenspiel der Künste*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994.

⁷⁹ Zima, Peter, ed. *Literatur intermedial. Musik – Malerei – Photographie – Film*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995.

⁸⁰ Ed. O. Kolleritsch, Vienna: Universal Edition, 1988 (= Studien zur Wertungsforschung 20).

⁸¹ Heister, Hanns-Werner. "Literarisierung und 'Literaturoper.'" *Musiktheater im 20. Jahrhundert*. Ed. Siegfried Mauser. Laaber, 2002 (= Handbuch der musikalischen Gattungen 14). 315-27.

⁸² Morgan, Robert P. *Twentieth-Century Music*. New York, London: Norton, 1991, 441-5.

⁸³ Maier, Franz Michael. *Becketts Melodien*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006.

aware of this discourse, even though he lists one of Wolf's essays⁸⁴ in his bibliography. Another aim of this study is, therefore, to bridge the gap between these two fields of research.

With respect to this second pertinent field of study, the groundbreaking collection of essays edited by Mary Bryden, *Samuel Beckett and Music*, was an indispensable resource, guide and basis for my investigations.⁸⁵ Drawing together viewpoints from critics and composers in the form of essays, personal statements, and interviews, it has spurred a great deal of interdisciplinary activity and research related to the field since its publication in 1998, as was evident in a follow-up event in 2009, a symposium on Beckett and Music at the University of Sussex in Brighton. Next to Bryden's own pioneering contributions,⁸⁶ Catherine Laws has provided profound analyses of the text-music relationship – both in Beckett's work and in musical responses to it, and, given her background as a musicologist, pianist, and literary critic, these have done justice to both musicological and literary concerns.⁸⁷ Daniel Albright has also approached the subject from both angles, musicological and literary, in a chapter on music (pp. 138-56) in his own volume *Beckett and Aesthetics*.⁸⁸ He also tackles music *in* Beckett as well as *on* Beckett, making especially astute observations on Earl Kim's *Earthlight*. What is more, he contributed an essay to another volume, *Samuel Beckett and the Arts*,⁸⁹ the first section of which is dedicated entirely to Beckett and music.

Apart from publications exclusively dealing with Beckett and music, studies related

⁸⁴ Wolf, Werner. "Das Problem der Narrativität in Literatur, bildender Kunst und Musik. Ein Beitrag zu einer intermedialen Erzähltheorie." *Erzähltheorie transgenerisch, intermedial, interdisziplinär*. Eds. Vera & Ansgar Nünning. Trier, 2002, 23-104.

⁸⁵ Bryden, Mary. *Samuel Beckett and Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998; hereafter: SBM.

⁸⁶ Outside the above volume, see, for example: Bryden, Mary. "Aural and Musical Perception in the Writing of Samuel Beckett." *Perception and the Senses. Sinneswahrnehmung*. Ed. Therese Fischer-Seidel – al. Tübingen: Francke, 2004. 225-233; "Reflections on Music with a Case Study: Paul Rhys' *Not I*." *Samuel Beckett and the Arts: Music, Visual Arts, and Non-print Media*, ed. Lois Oppenheim. New York: Garland, 1999. 83-102.

⁸⁷ E.g. "Beethoven's Haunting of Beckett's Ghost Trio." *Drawing on Beckett: Portraits, Performances, and Cultural Contexts*. Ed. Linda Ben-Zvi. Tel Aviv, 2003. 197-213; "The Double Image of Music in Beckett's Early Fiction." *Samuel Beckett Today – Beckett and Religion/Beckett/Aesthetics/Politics*. Eds. Marius Buning and Sjef Houppermans. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000. 295-308; "Beckett – Feldman – Johns." *Beckett at 100 – Revolving it all*. Eds. Linda Ben-Zvi and Angela Moorjani. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 230-245; "Music in 'Words and Music': Feldman's Response to Beckett's Play." *Samuel Beckett Today – Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000*. Eds. Angela Moorjani and Carola Veit. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001. 279-290; "Morton Feldman's *neither*: A Musical Translation of Beckett's Text." SBM. 57-86.

⁸⁸ Albright, Daniel. *Beckett and Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

⁸⁹ Oppenheim (1999).

subjects, e.g. the radio plays (e.g. Clas Zilliacus' *Beckett and Broadcasting*,⁹⁰ Kevin Branigan's *Radio Beckett*⁹¹), also shed light on the topic. Overall, standpoints from literary critics on "musical" aspects of Beckett's œuvre have become so numerous that even a partial listing of titles would be beyond the scope of the present chapter and will instead be provided in chapter 2.2.

1.3.2. on the composers

To date, two musicological dissertations are available on selected musical responses to Beckett: Lukas Näf's discussion of Marcel Mihalovici's collaboration with the author⁹² and Michael Kunkel's analysis of Beckett-based compositions by Heinz Holliger and György Kurtág.⁹³

Of the four composers treated in the following chapters, Morton Feldman is undoubtedly the most widely discussed and most broadly known. This is partly owing to Feldman's own numerous eloquent (and often highly rewarding) essays, commentaries and talks on his own work and that of others, which have been edited and published in several volumes in Germany, the United States, and the UK: *Morton Feldman Essays*,⁹⁴ *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*,⁹⁵ *Morton Feldman Says*,⁹⁶ and, most recently, *Morton Feldman in Middleburg*.⁹⁷ It must be noted, however, that these primary sources, as much as they elucidate Feldman's *modus operandi*, also raise additional interpretational difficulties owing to the composer's lavish use of metaphors, innuendoes and ambivalent analogies. In 1977, Feldman gave an interview to Howard Skempton on *neither*,⁹⁸ which, despite its brevity, remains one of the pivotal sources with respect to the work's genesis. In 1986, a publication on Feldman appeared as part of the publication series

⁹⁰ Zilliacus, Clas. *Beckett and Broadcasting. A Study of the Works of Samuel Beckett for and in Radio and Television*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1976.

⁹¹ Branigan, Kevin. *Radio Beckett. Musicality in the Radio Plays of Samuel Beckett*. Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang, 2008.

⁹² Näf, Lukas. *Music Always Wins. Marcel Mihalovici und Samuel Beckett*. Diss. University of Zürich, 2008.

⁹³ Kunkel (2008), op. cit.

⁹⁴ Ed. Walter Zimmermann. Kerpen: Beginner Press, 1985.

⁹⁵ Ed. B. H. Friedman. Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2000.

⁹⁶ Ed. Chris Villars. London: Hyphen Press, 2006.

⁹⁷ Ed. Raoul Mörchen. Cologne: Edition MusikTexte, 2008.

⁹⁸ Skempton, Howard. "Counterpoint. Beckett as Librettist." *Music and Musicians* 5 (1977): 5-6. Repr. in: Villars, Chris, ed. *Morton Feldman Says. Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964-1987*. London: Hyphen Press, 2006, 75-6.

Musik-Konzepte.⁹⁹ It includes the first academic article on *neither* by Gottfried Meyer-Thoss, which focuses on the work's *mise-en-scène*.¹⁰⁰ Thomas DeLio's *The Music of Morton Feldman* (1996)¹⁰¹ was the first book devoted exclusively to the composer's music, and, to date, remains the only such work published in the USA. While not providing a comprehensive survey of Feldman's work, it nevertheless contains both general aesthetic considerations (e.g. Herrmann Sabbe's essay "The Feldman Paradoxes") and discussions of individual works (although none of *neither*). Two other book-length contributions to Feldman's music were written and published in Germany: Marion Saxer's *Between Categories*¹⁰² traces the composer's line of development up to the point at which he started working primarily with compositional patterns. While Saxer addresses the aesthetic kinship between Feldman and Beckett, her study does not cover their common projects. Both in Europe and North America, Sebastian Claren's *Neither. Die Musik Morton Feldmans*¹⁰³ is by far the most exhaustive study of Feldman's work, although, as with Marion Saxer's book, it is only accessible to the German-speaking academic community. Containing a detailed account of Beckett's and Feldman's encounter and a comprehensive analysis of the opera, it will, together with Catherine Laws' essay on *neither*,¹⁰⁴ serve as a point of departure and cornerstone for my own analysis, the goal of which, however, is to shift the focus to compositional aspects as yet less considered. In his essay "Zwischen undurchdringlichem Selbst und undurchdringlichem Unselbst,"¹⁰⁵ Gregor Herzfeld also raised a number of fascinating issues on Beckett's and Feldman's common ground – tying in philosophy and postmodern theory – some of which will be woven into my analysis. My original impetus to examine different musical approaches to Beckett was Daniel Albright's chapter on Beckett and music,¹⁰⁶ in which the author engages in a brief comparative analysis of Feldman's *neither* and

⁹⁹ Metzger, Klaus-Heinz and Rainer Riehn, eds. *Morton Feldman*. Munich: Edition Text & Kritik, 1986 (= Musikkonzepte 48/49).

¹⁰⁰ Meyer-Thoss, Gottfried. "Facetten des Transluziden." *Morton Feldman*. Eds. Klaus-Heinz Metzger and Rainer Riehn. Munich: Edition Text & Kritik, 1986 (= Musik-Konzepte 48/49). 122-134.

¹⁰¹ Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996.

¹⁰² Saxer, Marion. *Between Categories. Studien zum Komponieren Morton Feldmans von 1951 bis 1977*. Munich: Pfau, 1998.

¹⁰³ Claren, Sebastian. *Neither. Die Musik Morton Feldmans*. Diss. FU Berlin, 1996. Hofheim: Wolke, 2000.

¹⁰⁴ Laws (2008).

¹⁰⁵ Herzfeld, Gregor. "'Von undurchdringlichem Selbst zu undurchdringlichem Unselbst.'" *Musiktheater der Gegenwart. Text und Komposition, Rezeption und Kanonbildung*. Vorträge des Salzburger Symposions 2006. Eds. Jürgen Kühnel et al. Salzburg, 2008. 520-535.

¹⁰⁶ Albright (2003).

Kim's *Earthlight*. Additional background information on Beckett's and Feldman's meeting in Berlin is drawn from James Knowlson's authorized Beckett biography.¹⁰⁷ Finally, the fountainhead of Morton Feldman's aesthetic ideas, the New York School with its myriad interartistic ties, has been amply spotlighted in the volume *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*.¹⁰⁸

By contrast, very little has been written on the other three composers. So far, only two pieces out of Earl Kim's *Narratives* have received scholarly attention: *Eh Joe* is discussed in a chapter of Grant Lyle Jeffers' dissertation on poetry settings,¹⁰⁹ and, as mentioned above, some of the compositional techniques used in *Earthlight* are compared to Feldman's *neither* in Daniel Albright's essay on Beckett and music. As opposed to the *Narratives*, *Exercises en route* has been recorded in its entirety. Yet it has hardly generated any scholarly interest. Clearly, this is also due to publication issues, which will be explained in the respective chapter. Two longer interviews with the composer¹¹⁰ have enabled me to plot Kim's aesthetic coordinates. However, as evident in his two negligible contributions to Lois Oppenheim's and Mary Bryden's collections,¹¹¹ Kim was not nearly as keen to disclose his compositional strategies and underlying concerns as was Feldman. Martha Potter Kim and Kim's disciples Paul Salerni and Anthony Brandt, with whom I have corresponded, have been extremely supportive, generously sharing their thoughts, notes and opinions on the composer's methods, skills and sources of inspiration.

Writings on Rands are not as sparse, although they tend to focus on Rands' œuvre as a whole rather than single works (two exceptions are *...body and shadow...*¹¹² and *Canti d'amor*¹¹³). Apart from two illuminating interviews conducted by Richard Duffalo and

¹⁰⁷ Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame. The Life of Samuel Beckett*. London: Bloomsbury, 1996.

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, Steven, ed. *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*. New York, London: Routledge, 2002.

¹⁰⁹ Jeffers, Grant Lyle. *Non-narrative Music Drama: Settings by Virgil Thomson, Ned Rorem and Earl Kim of Plays by Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett*. Diss. Los Angeles: University of California, 1983.

¹¹⁰ Jeon, Mee-Eun. "'I Am Concerned With What Is Good.' An Interview with Earl Kim." *Sonus* 7.11 (1987): 1-9.

¹¹¹ "A Note: Dead Calm." SBM. 257-259; "Words and Music: Situating Beckett." In: Oppenheim (1999), 2-6.

¹¹² Fischer, Peter. *Structure and Organization in Rands' Work "...body and shadow..." and an Original Composition for Violin and Orchestra*. Diss. Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1996; Kramer, Jonathan D. "Bernard Rands' *...body and shadow...*: Modernist, Postmodernist, or Antimodernist?" *Contemporary Music Review* 20.4 (2001): 29-43.

¹¹³ Rivera, Benjamin D. *An Introduction to the Musical Language of Bernard Rands, as demonstrated in Canti d'amor*. Diss. College of Performing Arts. Chicago, IL, 2005.

Janet Tassel,¹¹⁴ the composer Roger Marsh (himself a 'Beckett composer'¹¹⁵), Keith Potter,¹¹⁶ and Christopher Small¹¹⁷ have written insightful magazine articles on the composer based on which his aesthetic trajectory will be reconstructed and Rands' choir piece...*among the voices*... will be analyzed.

Like Feldman, Richard Barrett has written and spoken extensively on his personal concerns, the work of other composers as well as on broader phenomena such as postmodernism in music.¹¹⁸ And as with Feldman, there is a striking asymmetry between primary and secondary sources. Barrett is generally seen as part of a 'school,' or rather: a loose network of like-minded composers called the New Complexity, which has been the subject of much musicological discussion in recent decades.¹¹⁹ Parallels to Beckett's style are drawn in Ivan Hewett's article "Fail Worse. Fail Better,"¹²⁰ but more convincingly in Christopher Fox' "Music as Fiction,"¹²¹ in which the author roughly delineates the structure of Barrett's *I Open and Close*. This article, together with the composer's own *Notes Supposedly Concerning Samuel Beckett*, an unpublished document which he was kind enough to provide me with, will serve as a basis for my approximation to the intricate micro-structure of this string quartet, a work which ultimately defies analysis.

¹¹⁴ Dufallo, Richard. "Bernard Rands." *Trackings: Composers Speak With Richard Dufallo*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. 125-38; Tassel, Janet. "The Triple Life of Bernard Rands." *Harvard Magazine* 93.4 (1991): 32-9.

¹¹⁵ Marsh, Roger. "Every Bloody Note." *Musical Times* 136 (1995): 397-402.

¹¹⁶ Potter, Keith. "Bernard Rands' Busy Year." *Music and Musicians* 24.2 (1975): 26-7.

¹¹⁷ Small, Christopher. "Bernard Rands." *Musical Times* 107 (1967): 905-7.

¹¹⁸ Barrett, Richard. "Standpoint and Sightlines." *Diskurse zur gegenwärtigen Musikkultur*. Ed. Nina Polaschegg. Regensburg: ConBrio, 1996. 21-32.

¹¹⁹ E.g. Complexity Forum, *Perspectives of New Music* 31.1 (1993): 6-85; 32.2 (1994): 90-223; Toop, Richard. "Four Facets of the 'New Complexity.'" *Contact* 32 (1988): 4-50; Bons, Joël, ed. *Complexity in Music? An Inquiry into its Nature, Motivation and Performability*. Booklet for a festival on complexity, 8-10 March 1990, Rotterdam.

¹²⁰ Hewett, Ivan. "Fail Worse, Fail Better." *Musical Times* 135 (1994): 148-51.

¹²¹ Fox, Christopher. "Music as Fiction: A Consideration of the Work of Richard Barrett." *Contemporary Music Review* 13 (1995): 147-57.

2. Toward Intermediality: Language-Music Interfaces in Beckett's Œuvre

2.1. Language

A language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of incompetence.

Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

It is commonly recognized and well documented that Beckett's language (as he saw it, pared down to a thin fabric of "fundamental sounds"¹) is symptomatic of his profound distrust of the creative potential of linguistic expression. His bent for terseness, frequent silences and, on the other hand, repetitions and verbose, arcane monologues, have been major topics of critical discussion over the past decades. In what follows, we will expound some of the idiosyncrasies of Beckett's aesthetic, above all his skepticism about language. In addition, a number of principal critical positions on the subject matter will be explored inasmuch as they are relevant for the discussion of the text-music interplay in the musical adaptations. In order to unravel some of the aesthetic concerns underlying Beckett's treatment of language, we will begin by probing the broader context of language-critical discourses in the 20th century before zeroing in on Beckett.

2.1.1. The 'Linguistic Turn'

Was als das Wort von der 'Sprachkrise der Moderne' in die Geschichtsschreibung eingegangen ist, bedeutete den grundlegenden Zweifel daran, dass die historisch gewachsene, traditionelle Sprache noch zum Ausdruck der geistigen, gesellschaftlichen, kulturellen und politischen Verhältnisse taugte. [What made its way into historical records under the label 'Language Crisis of the Modern Age' denoted a fundamental doubt about whether historically grown, traditional language was still suitable for expressing the mental, social, cultural, and political circumstances.]²

Language criticism dates back as far as ancient Greece. Since then, the authority of language has been put into question by many great thinkers – Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, John Locke, David Hume, and George Berkeley, to name only a few. In the 20th century, studies on the relationship between words and meaning became so pervasive that language, formerly considered an epistemological tool,³ became practically synonymous with philosophy as a whole. As discourses on language

¹ Letter to Alan Schneider dated Dec. 29, 1957: "My work is a matter of fundamental sounds.... If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them." Harmon (1998), 24.

² Schiewe, Jürgen. *Die Macht der Sprache. Eine Geschichte der Sprachkritik von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*. Munich: Beck, 1998, 154.

³ Schopenhauer: "Werkzeug der Vernunft," cf. Schiewe, op. cit., 176-7. Fritz Mauthner: "Erkenntniswerkzeug": Cf. *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*. 3 Vols. 1923. Vienna: Böhlau, 1999. Vol. I. 91.

took center stage, philosophy came to be regarded as "a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language,"⁴ in Wittgenstein's much-quoted phrase. Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours linguistique* (1916) is considered the birth certificate of this paradigm change which Richard Rorty dubbed "Linguistic Turn." In the preface to the volume *The Linguistic Turn*, Rorty even goes so far as to call it a "philosophical revolution."⁵

What underpinned this increasing preoccupation with the correlation of language and reality was the fact that the major forces, no matter how conflicting, which have shaped modern philosophy arguably since the spread of industrial capitalism, have all engaged in debates on the authority of language.⁶ One major philosophical strand which endeavored to overcome metaphysics called for a scientific legitimization of the humanities. This gave rise to rationalist approaches to language as evident to some extent in linguistic Structuralism and in Rudolf Carnap's statements in *The Logical Syntax of Language*:

According to this view, the sentences of metaphysics are pseudo-sentences which on logical analysis are proved to be either empty phrases or phrases which violate the rules of syntax. Of the so-called philosophical problems, the only questions which have any meaning are those of the logic of science. To share this view is to *substitute logical syntax for philosophy*.⁷

Carnap and his fellow members of the Logical Positivist Vienna Circle (A. E. Blumberg, Herbert Feigl, Rudolf Carnap, Alfred Tarski) vigorously stressed their mathematical motivation, holding the view that only logical and empirical propositions may be classified as meaningful and verifiable. The Vienna Circle, founded in the 1930's, promoted the idea of a formal or ideal language, advocating a "purification" of natural languages as a *sine qua non* for employing them as a tool of logic-based analysis. They disagreed with the proponents of ordinary language philosophy on the question of what level of abstraction should be accepted in investigating the relationship between language and reality.⁸ From positivism, it has been asserted, Beckett inherited the "wish to escape connotation, rhetoric, the noncognitive, the irrationality and awkward memories

⁴ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations. The German Text, with a Revised English Translation*. Transl. G. E. M. Anscombe. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001, 40^e.

⁵ Rorty, Richard M., ed. *The Linguistic Turn. Essays in Philosophical Method*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 3.

⁶ Szanto, George H. *Narrative Consciousness*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972, 3-4.

⁷ Carnap, Rudolf. *The Logical Syntax of Language*. 1934. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949, 8. Italics added.

⁸ Hallett, Garth L. *Linguistic Philosophy – The Central Story*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008, 43-60.

of ordinary language."⁹

A response to the French Symbolist movement, this "exactness fanaticism"¹⁰ itself aroused new critical stances, which in turn found expression in the pursuit of subjectivity and introspection. This trend persisted in phenomenology and existentialism.¹¹ A longed-for return to metaphysics is evident in works published at the turn of the century, notably William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, which "claims to transcend both mechanism and finalism."¹² This group of intellectuals regarded subjective sensory knowledge, rather than scientific precision, as the only viable path to truth in an increasingly mechanized environment. The following passage from *Creative Evolution* reveals a strong antipathy toward the rigid syllogistic order and accuracy advocated by the thriving branches of science.

How comes it, then, that affirmation and negation are so persistently put on the same level and endowed with an equal objectivity? How comes it that we have so much difficulty in recognizing that negation is subjective[...]? [...] Whether I say "The ground is damp" or "The ground is not damp," in both cases the terms "ground" and "damp" are concepts more or less artificially created by the mind of man – extracted, by his free initiative, from the continuity of experience. On both cases the concepts are represented by the same conventional words. In both cases we can say indeed that the proposition aims at a social and pedagogical end, since the first would propagate a truth and the second would prevent an error. From this point of view, which is that of **formal logic**, to affirm and to deny are indeed two mutually symmetrical acts [...]. But how do we fail to see that the symmetry is altogether **external** and the likeness **superficial**?¹³

Referring to Bergson's *Time and Free Will*, Beckett, in 1931 lectured on the "idea of the inadequacy of the *word* to translate impressions registered by instinct."¹⁴

We will return to Bergson at a later point, since the young Beckett's keen interest in this trailblazer of modern French philosophy is documented by the lecture notes of Rachel Burrows, one of Beckett's students at Trinity¹⁵ and has often been corroborated in Beckett criticism.¹⁶ It was this spiritual view of language as an inadequate vehicle of knowl-

⁹ Cavell, Stanley. *Must We Mean What We Say?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, 120.

¹⁰ "Exaktheitsfanatismus." Müller, Bodo. "Der Verlust der Sprache: Zur Linguistischen Krise in der Literatur." *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 16.1 (1966): 226-43: 240.

¹¹ Berman, Art. *From the New Criticism to Deconstruction. The Reception of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 3, 70-3.

¹² Bergson, Henri. *Creative Evolution.* New York: Cosimo, 2005, 57.

¹³ *Ibid*, 317. Emphasis added.

¹⁴ Qtd. in: Gontarski, S.E. "Recovering Beckett's Bergsonism." *Beckett at 100: Revolving It All.* Eds. Linda Ben-Zvi and Angela Moorjani. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 93-106: 95.

¹⁵ Cf. Le Juez, Brigitte. *Beckett before Beckett.* Transl. Ros Schwartz. London: Souvenir Press, 2008, 44.

¹⁶ Cf. Brienza, Susan D. *Samuel Beckett's New Worlds.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987; Gontarski (2008); Hesla, David H. *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Pr., 1971, 57-58.

edge and experience, as a "language of unsaying,"¹⁷ which gave rise to the ideal of mystical silence, this is to say a "tradition of unspeakability"¹⁸ within a language-skeptical line of development that Bodo Müller categorizes as 'metaphysical doubt'¹⁹. This rift between scientific and metaphysical beliefs was not at all ubiquitous. C.G. Jung was visionary in positing that the study of the human psyche should involve both empiricism *and* speculation. This seemingly contradictory "either *and* or" concept was also adopted by modern physics (for example, in the study of light).²⁰ It is commonly known that, starting with the theory of relativity, modern physics put into question scientific concepts previously taken for granted in Western science,²¹ such as the dimensions of space and time, causality and logical deduction, suggesting instead that systematic knowledge could be obtained only through approximations. In addition, a popular conception of the Uncertainty Principle was the notion of the blurring line between subject and object, rendering the spectator "an integral part of the reality that is observed and an active participant in its creation."²² If Beckett notes in *Proust* that "the observer infects the observed with his own mobility,"²³ it is exactly this anthropomorphic interference to which he points. Degani-Raz notes that "we are trapped by our mental tools, trapped by our language, and this recognition alters the very perception of the task of physics. It is not nature we investigate but rather nature as exposed to our methods of questioning."²⁴

Werner Heisenberg embarked on elaborate linguistic discussions with the objective of devising a scientific vocabulary representing their revolutionary findings more faithfully than traditional scientific terms ("We cannot speak about the atoms in ordinary language"²⁵). Conversely, Edmund Husserl sought to transform psychology into a rigorous discipline by way of reconciling introspection with scientific objectivity, so as to yield

¹⁷ Dan, Joseph. *Kabbalah. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 9.

¹⁸ Müller (1966), 225.

¹⁹ "Metaphysischer Sprachzweifel." *Ibid.*

²⁰ Jacobi, Jolande. *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973, 62-3.

²¹ Heisenberg, Werner. *Physics and Philosophy. The Revolution in Modern Science*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2007, 174-5.

²² Degani-Raz, Irit. "Beckett's Worlds as Thought Experiments." *Drawing on Beckett. Portraits, Performances, and Cultural Contexts*. Ed. Linda Ben-Zvi. Tel Aviv: Assaph Book Series, 2003. 141-57: 153.

²³ SB, *Proust* (1970), 17.

²⁴ Degani-Raz, 150.

²⁵ Cf. Heisenberg, 153.

solid knowledge of human cognitive processes.²⁶ Finally, to many literary critics interested in the synchronic study of language, structural linguistics represented a longed-for missing link between scientific empiricism and literary theory.²⁷ As Roland Barthes commented on the effect of linguistics in 1968, "[it] has recently provided the destruction of the Author with a valuable analytical tool by showing that the whole of the enunciation is an empty process, functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors."²⁸

Linguistics, according to Barthes, thus contributed a great deal to the "Death of the Author" proclaimed in his celebrated essay, and, as will be seen, it is, at least in part, this self-eradication of the writer which Beckett also places at the core of his creative process.

What these discourses had in common was the simple yet crucial fact that language had become a focus of debate across the full range of academic disciplines.²⁹ Parallel to the aforementioned philosophical currents, literary works at the turn of the century displayed a new skepticism about language and discourse, heralding a period of metafictionally self-conscious literary texts that foregrounded their own process of composition. Needless to say, these tendencies in literature, which in turn preconditioned Beckett's stylistic development, run parallel to the philosophical tendencies outlined in the foregoing discussion.

Beckett assaulted the realist and naturalist traditions in the following terms: "Allusion been made to his contempt for the literature that 'describes', for the realists and naturalists worshipping the offal of experience, prostrate before the epidermis and the swift epilepsy, and content to transcribe the surface, the facade, behind which the Idea is prisoner."³⁰ The naturalist movement, attacked here in the same breath as the realist tradition, readily accepted the "primacy of the natural sciences," as Manfred Smuda argues.³¹ This is to say that artistic language primarily functioned as a tool for precise

²⁶ Prechtel, Peter. *Edmund Husserl zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius, 1998, 21.

²⁷ In particular to the New Criticism. Cf. Berman, op. cit., 58, 93-94.

²⁸ Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Image – Music – Text*. Transl. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978: 142-8: 145.

²⁹ Müller (1966), 240.

³⁰ *Proust* (1970), 78.

³¹ "Primat der Naturwissenschaften": Smuda, Manfred. *Becketts Prosa als Metasprache*. Eds. Max Imdahl et al. Munich: Fink, 1970 (= *Theorie und Geschichte der Literatur und der schönen Künste* 10), 21.

mimicry of everyday reality, as did paint and paintbrush according to naturalist painters such as Émile Zola.³²

Both Müller and Merger argue that the modern literary language crisis was anchored in French literature. Since the 18th century, Müller notes, the proliferation of the French lexicon emanating from an "inborn obsession with words" had spawned a quest for verbal precision, which resulted in a new creative ideal, the *mot juste*.³³ This self-imposed compulsion to find the "right word" in an act of revelation plunged poets into a deep impasse which, in due course, brought about a general language crisis. Given Beckett's expertise in Francophone literature and passion for the French language both as a student and lecturer in Dublin and Paris and as a writer, it seems appropriate to see his treatment of language in the light of the language skepticism of his French predecessors. Merger traces the evolution of the modern language crisis from its beginnings in French literature up to Beckett's contemporaries.³⁴ In doing so, she, along with Müller,³⁵ subscribes to the view that Diderot and Rousseau might be considered literary precursors of modern language skepticism, given it was they who first dissolved "the classical unity between aesthetics and ethics," considering the poet's imagination as a self-sufficient artistic standard and therefore giving priority to the writer's individual genius over the preservation of traditional forms.³⁶ Poets of the Romantic era, Merger then notes, still cast a positive light on the perceived discrepancy between the word and the world,³⁷ instilling in it a sense of *weltschmerz*. It was not until the beginning of modernism, in the works of Rimbaud, Baudelaire and Mallarmé, that a grievance against the fuzziness of words came to outweigh the Romantic enthusiasm about linguistic ambiguity, and language obsession transformed into language skepticism.³⁸ Henceforth, the contemplation of language was no longer thought to precede literary creation, but instead was incorporated into the creative act itself.³⁹

A more detailed overview of language-critical German Romantic precursors such as Heinrich von Kleist and Friedrich Hölderlin would be beyond the scope of the present

³² Ibid.

³³ Müller (1966), 241.

³⁴ Merger, Andrea. *Becketts Rhetorik des Sprachmißbrauchs*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1995.

³⁵ Müller, 237.

³⁶ Merger, 5.

³⁷ Ibid, 29.

³⁸ Ibid, 7.

³⁹ Ibid, 9.

work. It should be noted, however, that Beckett's linguistic crisis resulted not only from his absorption of language-skeptical stances whose origins might be found in the 18th century, the "century of (...) language criticism,"⁴⁰ but also from his translations of and research on German-language authors preoccupied with the limits of language, above all Fritz Mauthner.

2.1.2. Fritz Mauthner

The Austrian writer and philosopher Fritz Mauthner has been identified as a key figure of modern language skepticism and is believed to have exerted a decisive influence on several young authors at the beginning of the 20th century. More importantly, it has been argued that Beckett and Joyce were among those most profoundly affected by Mauthner's ideas.⁴¹ Interestingly, Morton Feldman was cognizant of Mauthner's ideas. In one of his notebooks, he wrote: "Language is only a convention, like a rule of a game: the more participants, the more compelling it will be. However it is neither going to grasp nor alter the real world. – Fritz Mauthner."⁴² This is probably Feldman's own paraphrase, for Mauthner's 2000-page opus *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, first published in three volumes at the turn of the century, has not been translated into English. Joachim Kühn has detected strong aesthetic affinities between the *Critique* and the works of Beckett, Joyce and a number of German authors.⁴³ In Hugo von Hofmannsthal's famous "Letter of Lord Chandos," a fictional young poet writes to Francis Bacon about his dissatisfaction with words

because the language in which I might be able not only to write but to think is neither Latin nor English, neither Italian nor Spanish, but a language none of whose words is known to me, a language in which inanimate things speak to me and wherein I may one day have to justify myself before an unknown judge.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Schiewe (1998), 67-8.

⁴¹ Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce*. New and revised edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982, 648-9; Skerl, Jennie. "Fritz Mauthner's *Critique of Language* in Samuel Beckett's *Watt*." *Contemporary Literature* 15.4 (1974): 474-487; Ben-Zvi, Linda. "Samuel Beckett, Fritz Mauthner, and the Limits of Language." *PMLA* 95 (1980): 183-200, and: "Fritz Mauthner For Company." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 9 (1984): 65-88; Hulle, Dirk [van]. "Beckett – Mauthner – Zimmer – Joyce." *Joyce Studies Annual* 10 (1999): 143-183.

⁴² He probably wanted to provide the participants of his orchestration seminar with historical context before discussing Pierrot Lunaire. PSS, MF 594/0322.

⁴³ Kühn, Joachim. *Gescheiterte Sprachkritik. Fritz Mauthners Leben und Werk*. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975.

⁴⁴ Hofmannsthal, Hugo von. *The Lord Chandos Letter and other writings*. Transl. Joel Rotenberg. New York: Review, 2005, 127-8.

Kühn conjectures that Hofmannsthal's skepticism about language echoed Fritz Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, although Hofmannsthal, much like Beckett, seemed to have explicitly denied this.⁴⁵

While poets welcomed Mauthner's attacks on language, the *Critique* merely offered a theoretical framework that failed to provide viable alternatives to the use of language – other than avoidance (silence) or ridicule (laughter). Mauthner himself admitted that linguistic skepticism could only be expressed by means of ordinary language, while linguistic self-destruction was inconceivable. In this, the language criticism of Mauthner, Hofmannsthal, Sack, and Morgenstern clearly differed from the linguistic destructions and re-creations of the Dadaist and Futurist poets. The Beckett/Mauthner relationship has been difficult to grasp given Beckett's reluctance to lay bare the extent of familiarity with Mauthner's *Critique*. Beckett first came into contact with the *Critique* in 1929 or 1930. It was Richard Ellmann who first drew attention to the fact that James Joyce had alerted Beckett to Fritz Mauthner. As it turned out later, Ellmann had given an imprecise account of how Beckett's contact with the *Critique* first came about: In the first edition of his book, he wrongly asserts that Beckett had read Mauthner to Joyce, which Beckett later invalidated in a letter to Linda Ben-Zvi, stating that he had "skimmed through" the volumes himself.⁴⁶ Even if he only skimmed through the *Critique*, it is fairly conspicuous that the same "linguistic centrality and nullity"⁴⁷ from which Mauthner's analysis departs forms a vital part of Beckett's aesthetic concerns, substantiating any parallels drawn so far by Beckett criticism between Mauthner's and Beckett's language skepticism.

The eight central points of the *Critique* mapped out by Ben-Zvi⁴⁸ and the analogies she draws to Beckett's work sufficiently back up the hypothesis that Mauthner's language-critical stances strongly informed Beckett's attitude toward language. They confirm that Beckett's works echo Mauthner's thoughts on linguistic relativity, conventionality and arbitrariness. Mauthnerian maxims such as "Language cannot be an artwork because it

⁴⁵ Kühn, 28.

⁴⁶ Letter from Beckett to Linda Ben-Zvi (1984), qtd, in: Ben-Zvi (1984), 66.

⁴⁷ Ben-Zvi (1980), 183.

⁴⁸ 1. Thinking and speaking are one activity. 2. Language and memory are synonymous. 3. All language is metaphor. 4. There are no absolutes. 5. The ego is contingent. It does not exist apart from language. 6. Communication between men is impossible. 7. The only language should be simple language. 8. The highest forms of a critique of language are laughter and silence. Ben-Zvi (1980).

its not the creation of a single mind"⁴⁹ or "There is no philosophy, there are only philosophies. There is no grammar, there are only grammars. There is no logic, there are only logics"⁵⁰ seem to underpin a number of Beckett's narrative techniques. Apart from this, it is fairly revealing that Beckett mentions Mauthner's name in *Rough for Radio II*, and although the occurrence of real names in Beckett's work is by no means as "rare" as Merger suggests,⁵¹ it is nevertheless worthy of note. Furthermore, the unknowability of external and internal reality and the view that language is an insufficient tool of knowledge are central ideas in both Beckett's and Mauthner's thinking. Certain images in Beckett's work, as for example Arsene's ladder metaphor in *Watt*, might be regarded as allusions to Mauthner, and it is also tempting to attribute Watt's "morbid dread of sphinxes"⁵² to a similar image in the *Critique*.⁵³ Also, Mauthner's comparison of language to "Laub und Asche" ("leaves and ashes") evokes a snippet from Vladimir's and Estragon's dialogue:

V: They make noise like feathers.
E: Like leaves.
V: Like ashes.
E: Like leaves.⁵⁴

It is also a given fact, however, that Beckett was firm in denying the philosopher's alleged imprint on his work. Although Beckett's letters to Ben-Zvi have, to some extent, corroborated Mauthner's influence, in another letter to Ruby Cohn, dated August 4, 1978, Beckett refutes the importance of Mauthner to his own work: "[It] would be doing me a kindness if you would tell her that this is a wild goose and a red herring. My contact with his work was of the slightest and I have nothing to offer on the subject."⁵⁵

If taken at face value, such denials might indeed be read as evidence against a major impact of Mauthner's *Critique* on Beckett's aesthetics. Elmar Tophoven, however, informed Müller that Beckett was still so enthralled by Mauthner around 1966 that he was in fact looking for a copy of the original German edition at the time.⁵⁶ Along similar lines, Hulle has noted that Beckett refers to Mauthner's quite extraordinary comparison

⁴⁹ Mauthner, Vol. I, 26. My own translation.

⁵⁰ Mauthner, Vol. III, 258. My own translation.

⁵¹ Merger (1995), 22.

⁵² *Watt* (1953), 251.

⁵³ Cf. Skerl, 480.

⁵⁴ CDW, 58.

⁵⁵ Beckett Collection, Reading, COH/135.

⁵⁶ Müller (1966), 242.

of scholastic nominalism and modern realism in his often-quoted letter to Axel Kaun.⁵⁷ Interestingly, Beckett does not mention Mauthner's name and, what is more, he states that he is not aware of anyone who made that comparison – an "act of camouflage," as Hulle argues.⁵⁸ Moreover, Beckett's harsh repudiations should be seen in the context of his other replies to questions concerning philosophical influences on his work, self-effacing understatements such as: "I am not a philosopher,"⁵⁹ or "I never read philosophers. [...] I never understand anything they write."⁶⁰ Rather than disguising the myriad stimuli from philosophers pervading his work, Beckett felt that his responsibility as a writer did not extend beyond the mere act of creation.

Furthermore, in light of Mauthner's low reputation in the intellectual circles of the first decades of the 20th century, it is even more evident why Hoffmannsthal would disclaim having read, why Beckett would admit only to have "skimmed through" the *Critique*. Disclosing any borrowings from Mauthner might have cast a poor light on their own output. Despite the mixed responses to his *opus magnum* and his "failed language criticism," as the title of Kühn's book suggests, Mauthner's influence on modern philosophy and literature remains little disputed. Clearly, however, Merger is right in stating that one must not extend the comparison between Beckett and Mauthner so far as to simply classify Beckett as a "Mauthnerian."⁶¹

2.1.3. The Beckett archetype: *enantiodromia*

A consensus of numerous publications dealing with Beckett's paradoxical standpoints on language has been that it perpetually fluctuates between extremes: between pauses and mechanical verbal proliferation, between the haiku-like concision of the *neither* libretto and the verbosity of Lucky's monologue in *Waiting for Godot*. Bryden notes: "[...] one can trace an extended preoccupation with compositional boundaries: between light and dark, audible and inaudible, perceptible and imperceptible – and, above all, between sound and silence."⁶² In addition, she suggests that Beckett's late writings are at once

⁵⁷ Hulle (1999), op. cit., 147.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Driver, Tom. Beckett By the Madelaine, *Columbia University Forum*, 4.3 (1961), 21-25: 23.

⁶⁰ D'Aubarède, Gabriel. Interview with Samuel Beckett, *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 16 February 1961, reprinted in: *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by London: Routledge and Keagan, 1997, 215-217.

⁶¹ Merger, 21.

⁶² Bryden, "Beckett and the Sound of Silence," *SBM*, 38.

"works of compression" and "works of infinite space."⁶³

Similarly, Merger points out the state of abeyance ("Schwebezustand") between "zwei unerreichbaren Polen, dem Ich und der Welt, dem Subjekt des Ausdrucks und seinem Gegenstand [two unattainable poles, the self and the world, the subject of expression and her object]."⁶⁴

At first glance these extremes appear irreconcilable: How can a novel like *Mercier and Camier* possibly be "an excellent illustration of [Beckett's] love of language, yet also of his critical attitude towards it," as Knowlson claims?⁶⁵ Or how could the author feel "no desire to express" yet succumb to "the obligation to express"?⁶⁶ This expressive antagonism, i.e. the maximum and the minimum of linguistic productivity, epitomizes Bruno's law of identical opposites. Bruno's correlation of opposite poles, creation and destruction, as demarcated and internalized⁶⁷ by Beckett, provides a clue for understanding Beckett's aesthetic vision in the sense that linguistic richness and paucity represent two sides of the same coin. Creative resignation paradoxically concurs with the desire to devise new modes of expression. In reference to St. Augustine's sentence "Do not despair, one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume, for one of the thieves was damned," Beckett once said to Raymond Federman that he liked its "perfect symmetry, the way it cancels itself."⁶⁸

This brings us to a pivotal idea, a dialectic principle which is both inherent in nearly all of Beckett's works as well as crucial to understanding their reception. It also became the core of the *neither* libretto, the "quintessence" in Feldman's or the "one idea" in Beckett's terms. Apparently Beckett was particularly prone to this outlook on life and art from his early years, discovering it not only in Bruno (as delineated above), in Augustine and Descartes,⁶⁹ but above all in Carl Gustav Jung, of whom he attended a

⁶³ Ibid, 40.

⁶⁴ Merger, 29-30.

⁶⁵ Knowlson (1996), 361.

⁶⁶ SB, *Proust* (1970), 103.

⁶⁷ In his letter to Axel Kaun, for example, he writes: "Unless perhaps Ascension to Heaven and Descent to Hell are somehow one and the same. How beautiful it would be to be able to believe that that indeed was the case." SB, *Disjecta*, 172.

⁶⁸ *The Imagery Museum of Samuel Beckett*, lecture delivered in February 2000 at the Kunsthalle in Vienna, <http://www.Samuel-Beckett.net/imagery.html> (last visited: Jan. 12, 2011). Cf. also: Driver (1961), 23.

⁶⁹ Ackerley, C. J. and S. E. Gontarski, eds. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*. New York: Grove Press, 2004, 153.

lecture in 1935. The psychologist suggested that "all in psychic life is governed by a necessary opposition:"⁷⁰

When the unconscious, for example, is left to take its natural course, positive and negative contents alternate. Often a fantasy representing the light principle is immediately followed by an image of the dark principle. In consciousness a great effort of thought often results in emotional reactions of a negative kind. These relations are regulated – the living tension between them is maintained – by the movements and transfers of psychic energy.⁷¹

That Jung's ideas loom large in many of Beckett's works is evident, for example, in the fact that the story of a female patient Jung related in his lecture in 1935 haunted him for years, appearing, for example, in the *Watt* addenda, and inspiring the character of May in *Footfalls*, which Beckett was rehearsing at the Schiller theater in Berlin in September 1976⁷² when Feldman came to visit and discuss plans for an opera with him. It hardly needs to be pointed out that this universal idea of an interplay between correlated opposites (manifesting in various dichotomies: light and dark, male and female, *ratio* and *emotio*, order and chaos, spirit and matter, identity and alterity, modesty and ambition, concept and sound) is suggestive and can be related to various cultural contexts. This explains analogies discerned between Jung's model of consciousness and the Taoist *yin yang*⁷³ and parallels found between Beckett and Zen Buddhism⁷⁴ or Beckett and Manicheism.⁷⁵ Whatever the individual interpretation may be, it seems fair to say that this dual archetype, to borrow Jung's term (suitably, Jung's archetypes themselves are bipolar, comprising negative as well as the positive aspects⁷⁶), is one which underlies and structures Beckett's entire output – including the interplay between language and music in his works, and the oscillation between "self" and "unself" in *neither*. It ties in

⁷⁰ Jacobi, op. cit., 53.

⁷¹ Ibid, 54.

⁷² Jung had talked about a young female patient who had "never been properly born" (Knowlson 1996, 616), which manifested in a lifelong desire to return to the womb, a trait shared by many of Beckett's characters, e.g. Belaqua's wish to go "wombtomb" (Beckett, Samuel. *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2006; hereafter: DFMW, 45), but which also troubled the author himself (Love, Damian. "Jung, Carl Gustav." *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, op. Cit., 290).

⁷³ Jacobi, 14. Beckett's interest in Taoism and music is documented in DFMW, where he used Chinese musical terms explained in Louis Laloy's *La Musique chinoise*. Cf. *Grove Companion*, 322. See also: Thompson, Kirill O. "Beckett's Dramatic Vision and Classical Taoism." *Beckett On and On...* Eds. Lois Oppenheim and Marcus Buning. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996. 212-225.

⁷⁴ Graham, Archie. "Art With Nothing to Express: Samuel Beckett and Zen." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 11.2 (2002): 20-55; Foster, Paul. *Beckett and Zen. A Study of Dilemma in the Novels of Samuel Beckett*. London: Wisdom Publications, 1989.

⁷⁵ On Beckett's manicheism cf.: Knowlson, James, ed. *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*, Vol. III: *Krapp's Last Tape*. London: Faber and Faber, 1992, xxi-xxv, 137.

⁷⁶ Jacobi, 42.

with other dialectic principles pervading his thinking and writing:⁷⁷ the paradox between the tragic and the comic that constitutes ontological experience,⁷⁸ the Sisyphean pursuit of meaning,⁷⁹ the Dantean antagonism between Democritus and Heraclitus⁸⁰ – the latter was the first to put forth the law of opposites and their perpetual interplay and flow, which Jung then called *enantiodromia*⁸¹ – and the much-quoted phrase from the dialogue with Georges Duthuit: "The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express."⁸²

Owing to its universal intelligibility, this notion of inextricable opposites also manifests in the fact that many of his characters occur in pairs that both attract and repel one another (or "pseudocouples," to use the Unnamable's expression for Mercier and Camier⁸³). Significantly, Beckett, referring to Hamm and Clov in a letter to Alan Schneider, used the Latin phrase *nec tecum nec sine te*.⁸⁴ As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, his idea of "neither with you nor without you" permeates nearly all levels of his works down to the relationship between linguistic sound and content.

Bruno's equation of the maximum and the minimum of opposites or the Heraclitan idea of a constant flux from one extreme to its opposite thus corresponds with the creative polarity inherent in Beckett's stylistic variants. That is, formal intellectual processes such as linguistic recursion turning into a highly sensuous sound experience (example 1 from *Watt*) versus minimalist syntactic constructions that allow for a variety of parsings, thus stimulating the reader's imagination (examples 2 and 3).

⁷⁷ Cf. Mercier, Vivian. *Beckett/Beckett: The Classic Study of a Modern Genius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, which investigates these dialectic principles.

⁷⁸ Pattie, David. *The Complete Critical Guide to Samuel Beckett*. London: Routledge, 2000, 108.

⁷⁹ Robinson, Michael. *The Long Sonata of the Dead: A Study of Samuel Beckett*. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1970, 301.

⁸⁰ Beckett, Samuel. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940*, eds. M. D. Fehsenfeld and L. M. Overbeck. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 (hereafter: LSB), 185. Beckett describes himself as "polarized" between Democritus and Heraclitus, who are depicted by Dante in the *Divina Commedia* as ridiculing and bemoaning human existence, respectively. Likewise, Beckett's heroes oscillate between self-pity and self-irony.

⁸¹ Jacobi, 54. Heraclitus is considered a precursor of modern Hegelian dialectics. Cf. Pleines, Jürgen-Eckart. *Heraklit*. Hildesheim: Olms, 2002, 85.

⁸² SB, *Proust* (1970), 103.

⁸³ Beckett, Samuel. *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*. New York: Grove Press, 1958, 297. See also: Shields, Paul. "Pseudocouples." *Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, 463-5.

⁸⁴ "Neither with you nor without you." Letter to Alan Schneider, Dec. 29, 1957, op. cit. See Ovid, "Sic ego nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum, et videor voti nescius esse mei.." *Amores*, III, xi, 39. Similarly phrased in Martial's *Epigram* XII, 46, 2: "Difficilis facilis iucundus acerbus es idem: Nec tecum possum vivere nec sine te."

1. And the poor old lousy old earth, my earth and my father's and my mother's and my father's father's and my mother's mother's and my father's mother's and my mother's father's and my father's mother's father's and my mother's father's mother's and my father's mother's mother's and my mother's father's father's and my father's father's mother and my mother's father's father's and my father's father's father's and my mother's mother's mother's and my other people's fathers' and mothers' and fathers' fathers' and mothers' mothers' and fathers' mothers'...⁸⁵

2. the tin broached put back in the sack or kept in the hand it's one or the other I remember when appetite revives or I forget open another it's one or the other something wrong there's the beginning of my life present formulation⁸⁶

3. No trace anywhere of life, you say, pah, no difficulty there, imagination not dead yet, yes, dead, good, imagination dead imagine. Islands, waters, azure, verdure, one glimpse and vanished, endlessly, omit.⁸⁷

Jung stipulates that the law of preservation of energy applies to any system with such an inherent dualism.⁸⁸ This idea is most evidently adopted by Beckett in the following sentence (from *Godot*): "The tears of the world are a **constant quantity**. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops."⁸⁹ As a result of this law, the pursuit of one extreme inadvertently leads toward its opposite, e.g. the torturer becoming the tortured and vice versa (e.g. in *How It Is* and *What Where*), that which is unattainable becoming the object of desire in *Act Without Words I*, the move toward the "self" resulting in the latter's inaccessibility in *neither*. Likewise, while the craving for silence ultimately requires words to express this wordless state, the artist's quest for words will result in silence. Though Watt's mind, "a kind of untiring logic-machine," generates "seemingly endless logical combinations,"⁹⁰ these linguistic automations inevitably run on empty. What is more, they are pervaded by countless logical errors.⁹¹ Ultimately, Watt's aphasia transforms his language into mere sounds: "Watt spoke also with scant regard for grammar, for syntax, for pronunciation, for enunciation, and very likely, if the truth were known, for spelling too, as these are generally received."⁹²

When Watt begins to "invert, no longer the order of the words in the sentence, but that of the letters in the word,"⁹³ it appears that the transformational structure in language

⁸⁵ Watt (1953), 46-7.

⁸⁶ SB, *How It Is*. New York: Grove Press, 1964, 2.

⁸⁷ Beginning of "Imagination Dead Imagine." Beckett, Samuel. *The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989*. New York: Grove Press, 1995 (hereafter: CSP), 182.

⁸⁸ Jacobi, 55.

⁸⁹ CDW, 33. Emphasis added.

⁹⁰ Hofer, Jacqueline. "Watt." *Samuel Beckett. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Martin Esslin. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1965. 62-76: 63.

⁹¹ Mood, John Jordan. *The Descent Into Self: An Interpretation of the Prose Fiction of Samuel Beckett*. Diss. University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, 1969, 133-8.

⁹² Watt (1953), 156.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 165.

explored by structuralist linguists (e.g. Zellig Harris), are taken ad absurdum. Beckett's derision of formal academic systems and schools of thought – be it logical positivism⁹⁴ or the Würzburg school of philosophy headed by Henry J. Watt, from whom Beckett might have borrowed the name⁹⁵ – points out that "systematic knowledge," as Culik notes, "is only a temporary stay against chaos."⁹⁶ Just as the Pythagorean comma, i.e. the shortcomings of well-tempered tuning, illustrates the incommensurability of the natural state of things⁹⁷ in *Watt*, so any attempt at formal systematization of irrational thought will turn out to be a Procrustean bed. In line with Bergsonian philosophy, cognition is doomed to fail in the face of the chaos of the organic matter from which it emerges. In an interview with Israel Shenker, Beckett stated:

With Joyce the difference is that Joyce is a superb manipulator of material – perhaps the greatest. He was making words to do the absolute maximum of work. There isn't a syllable that's superfluous. The kind of work I do is one in which I'm not the master of my material. The more Joyce knew the more he could. He's tending toward omniscience and omnipotence as an artist. I'm working with impotence, ignorance.⁹⁸

In this sense, Beckett's aim is to lay bare the "unrepresentable in presentation itself,"⁹⁹ making the impossibility of withdrawing from work and the world part and parcel of the creative process. There are many other manifestations of this paradigm in his works: As a side effect of Watt's mechanical language, a burlesque quality emerges. If read aloud (although Beckett "did not like his prose to be read out loud"¹⁰⁰), the comic effect of passages like the one quoted above arises from a friction between its rhythmic, sensual, Dionysian nature and the Apollonian (pseudo-)scientificity of linguistic transformations (as practiced, for example, by the logical positivist schools of linguistics). This causes the reader to oscillate between the two extremes of perceiving the words as semantically empty sound material and as purveyors of meaning, respectively. Similarly, the figures in the song Watt hears in the ditch in chapter 1¹⁰¹ dissolve into pure sound accompani-

⁹⁴ Cf. Hofer, Skerl, op. cit.

⁹⁵ Culik, op. cit., 149.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 140.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 133.

⁹⁸ Shenker, Israel. "A Portrait of Samuel Beckett, Author of the Puzzling *Waiting for Godot*." *The New York Times*, 6 May 1956, Section 2.1: 3.

⁹⁹ This is, according to Lyotard, an essentially postmodern trait. Cf. Lyotard, Jean-François. "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" *Postmodernism: A Reader*. Ed. Patricia Waugh. London: Edward Arnold, 1992. 117-25:124.

¹⁰⁰ Billie Whitelaw, qtd. in: Kalb, Jonathan. *Beckett in Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 236.

¹⁰¹ *Watt* (1953), 34-5.

ment in the lower voices. While the numbers are intelligible as such in the soprano voice, in the alto, tenor and especially in the bass part, syllables are lengthened and repeated in such a way that, parallel to the increasing sonority, the semantic content becomes nonsensical.

The Cartesian split of mind and matter, invoked from Beckett's earliest works onwards, always turns out to be a fallacy: Contrary to their aspirations to extract the 'within' from the 'without,' Beckett's characters eventually come to realize that the metaphysical and the physical are interdependent and inextricably bound up with each other. The exchange happens through a "channel" which brings to mind the role Descartes ascribed to the pineal gland:

Thus Murphy felt himself split in two, a body and a mind. They had intercourse apparently, otherwise he could not have known that they had anything in common. But he felt his mind to be bodytight and did not understand through what channel the intercourse was effected nor how the experiences came to overlap.¹⁰²

Thus, Murphy, whose name is suitably derived from the Greek word *morph* ('form'),¹⁰³ and the other protagonists, fail to fulfill their daydream of withdrawing into the self. Even so, this does not preclude Murphy from the fruitless undertaking (common to almost all of Beckett's characters) of attempting to free the mind from the body, insisting that "his mind was a closed system, subject to no principle of change but its own, self-sufficient and impermeable to the vicissitudes of the body."¹⁰⁴

Beckett's interiorization of narrative structure gradually progressed to a point where the external setting was either reduced to a minimum. This is most evident in his short prose, e.g. "Imagination Dead Imagine" (1965), "Ping" (1966), "Lessness" (1969) and the "Fizzles" (1973-75). Hassan asserts that this "inward turn" began in the late eighteenth century.¹⁰⁵ George H. Szanto argues that the interiorization of narratives in the late 19th and early 20th centuries finds its counterpart in Husserl's phenomenology.¹⁰⁶ With Beckett, the focus narrows in on the narrator's self-conscious account of what he perceives and reflects upon. However, his characters – and in this they diverge from the

¹⁰² SB, *Murphy* (1957), 109.

¹⁰³ Cohn, Ruby. *A Beckett Canon*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001, 73.

¹⁰⁴ SB, *Murphy* (1957), 109.

¹⁰⁵ Hassan, Ihab. *The Literature of Silence. Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, 72.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Szanto, op. cit.

objectives of Husserl's phenomenology – are unable to extricate their subjective experience from the objective reality surrounding them.¹⁰⁷ Quite the contrary: As much as they yearn for a solipsistic state of being, their introspection is inevitably informed by their being-in-the-world (In-der-Welt-sein¹⁰⁸) in the Heideggerian sense, thus they have no other choice but to put up with their situatedness in a pre-existing world. This Heideggerian (and, notably, Heisenbergian¹⁰⁹) critique of the Cartesian split figures prominently in Beckett's aesthetic. Withdrawing from the world into their mental microcosm, Beckett's individuals feel increasingly estranged from outside reality, and the more they slip into solitude, the more they lament the inaptitude of language. All the same, they cannot do without it. While the perceived asymmetry between the epistemological faculties of the mind on the one hand and verbal representation on the other compels the protagonists to pursue a state of interiority, the latter remains unattainable so long as the "desire to express" prevails. The more they long to avoid language, the more they depend on it and vice versa: *enantiodromia* applied to the creative act.

2.1.4. Evolution of Beckett's language skepticism

From his earliest writings, Beckett denounced the status quo of poetic, academic, and official language. In a letter to Axel Kaun dating from 1937, he deplored the current state of academic writing and poetry, finding in Beethoven's music a model for reforming aesthetic language, a task which he considered overdue. Here the path from language to musico-literary intermediality is most evident:

Grammatik und Stil. Mir scheinen sie ebenso hinfällig geworden zu sein wie ein Biedermeier Badeanzug [sic!] oder die Unerschütterlichkeit eines Gentlemans. Eine Larve. Hoffentlich kommt die Zeit, sie ist ja Gott sei Dank in gewissen Kreisen schon da, wo die Sprache da am besten gebraucht wird, wo sie am tüchtigsten missbraucht wird. Da wir sie so mit einem Male nicht ausschalten können, wollen wir wenigstens nichts versäu-

¹⁰⁷ Prechtel, op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ "Das Sich-vorweg-sein bedeutet nicht so etwas wie eine isolierte Tendenz in einem weltlosen "Subjekt", sondern charakterisiert das In-der-Welt-sein. Zu diesem gehört aber, daß es ihm selbst überantwortet, je schon in eine Welt geworfen ist. Die Überlassenheit des Daseins an es selbst zeigt sich ursprünglich konkret in der Angst." Heidegger, Martin. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemayer, ¹¹1967, 192.

¹⁰⁹ The physicist, like Heidegger, criticized the Cartesian partition, but for primarily scientific reasons: "...in the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum theory we can indeed proceed without mentioning ourselves as individuals, but we cannot disregard the fact that natural science is formed by men. **Natural science does not simply describe and explain nature; it is a part of the interplay between nature and ourselves;** it describes nature as exposed to our method of questioning. This was a possibility of which Descartes could not have thought, but it makes the sharp separation between the world and the I impossible." Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*, op. cit., 50-66 (emphasis added).

men, was zu ihrem Verruf beitragen mag. Ein Loch nach dem andern in ihr zu bohren, bis das Dahinterkauernde, sei es etwas oder nichts, durchzusickern anfängt – ich kann mir für den heutigen Schriftsteller kein höheres Ziel vorstellen. (...) Gibt es irgendeinen Grund, warum jene fürchterlich willkürliche Materialität der Wortfläche nicht aufgelöst werden sollte, wie z.B. die von grossen schwarzen Pausen gefressene Tonfläche in der siebten Symphonie von Beethoven (...)?¹¹⁰

It is also this letter in which he expresses his desire for a "literature of the unword" ("Literatur des Unworts"), a phrase which later became a catch-all phrase for Beckett's stylistic axioms. Strangely enough, Beckett's bilingualism and the fact that he abandoned the English language and turned to French for a number of texts in his middle period, starting with *Godot*, only seemed to reinforce his grievance against language as a means of expression: "The French brought me to a point where I felt I was saying the same thing over and over again. For some authors writing gets easier the more they write. For me it gets more and more difficult. For me the area of possibilities gets smaller and smaller."¹¹¹

Beckett's encounter with the Surrealists in Paris when he was in his early twenties seemed to have played no lesser part in his stylistic development than Mauthner's *Critique*. In 1929, at the age of 23, he published an essay entitled "Dante...Bruno. Vico...Joyce" defending James Joyce's *Work in Progress* (later entitled *Finnegan's Wake*). This essay already shows some of the aesthetic considerations that would later become prominent in Beckett's writing throughout his career. This is especially evident in a passage dealing with Vico's posture toward poetry:

Poetry, he says, was born of curiosity, daughter of ignorance. The first men had to create matter by the force of their imagination, and 'poet' means 'creator'. Poetry was the first operation of the human mind, and without it thought could not exist. Barbarians, incapable of analysis and abstraction, must use their fantasy to explain what their reasons cannot comprehend. Before articulation comes song; before abstract terms, metaphors.(...) Poetry is essentially the antithesis of Metaphysics: Metaphysics purge the mind of the senses and cultivate disembodiment of the spiritual; Poetry is all passion and feelings and animates the inanimate; Metaphysics are most perfect when most concerned with universals; Poetry, when most concerned with particulars. Poets are the sense, philoso-

¹¹⁰ "Grammar and Style. To me they seem to have become as irrelevant as a Victorian bathing suit or the imperturbability of a true Gentleman. A mask. Let us hope the time will come, thank God that in certain circles it has already come, when language is most efficiently used where it is being most efficiently misused. As we cannot eliminate language all at once, we should at least leave nothing undone that might contribute to its falling into disrepute. To bore one hole after another in it, until what lurks behind it – be it something or nothing – begins to seep through. I cannot imagine a higher goal for a writer today. (...) Is there any reason why that terrible materiality of the word surface should not be capable of being dissolved, like for example the sound surface, torn by enormous pauses, of Beethoven's seventh Symphony (...)" Beckett, "German Letter." Translation by Martin Esslin, *Disjecta*, op. cit., 171-2.

¹¹¹ Shenker, op. cit.

phers the intelligence of humanity. Considering the Scholastics' axiom: 'Niente è nell'intelletto che prima non sia nel senso.'¹¹²

Beckett's fascination with the notion put forth by Vico, i.e. that poetry is not so much a token of human intellectual progress as rather a *primeval* product of human cognitive development, together with the fact that it is ascribed to "barbarians" (rather than philosophers and intellectuals) clearly foreshadows the self-effacement that was to become such a fundamental Beckettian hallmark.

Although Maier maintains that "musical" structures in Beckett's work essentially sprang from his fascination with Schopenhauer¹¹³ in the 1930's, the foundation of this tendency was laid earlier. Encounters in the 1920's initiated his quest for aesthetic sensualism which, in turn, paved the way for structural analogies between his texts and musical forms. In 1927, author and critic Eugène Jolas founded the Parisian literary magazine *Transition*, a hub of transatlantic exchange between literary modernists: James Joyce, William Carlos Williams, H. D., Alfred Kreymborg, Franz Kafka, Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein. Jolas strove for a "Revolution of the Word," as proclaimed in his famous manifesto, published in a 1929 issue of *Transition*. Not having established himself as a writer and still in reluctant pursuit of an academic career, Beckett did not sign the document. However, he, like Joyce, ranked among its contributors, publishing his first prose texts "The Assumption" (1929) and his first poem, "For Future Reference" (1930) in *Transition*.¹¹⁴ Young and amenable to ideas from other writers, Beckett was apparently influenced by the linguistic innovations as proclaimed in Jolas' *Manifesto*. In 1932, Beckett, loosely associated although never a member of the Verticalist movement,¹¹⁵ signed the manifesto "Poetry is Vertical," which derives its title from L.-P. Fargue's "on a été trop horizontal, j'envie d'être vertical."¹¹⁶

¹¹² SB, *Disjecta*, 24.

¹¹³ Maier, Franz Michael (2006), 19.

¹¹⁴ In the same year, Cage, who was traveling through Europe, learned about *Transition*. Cf. Hines, Thomas S. "Then not yet 'Cage': The Los Angeles Years, 1912-1938." *John Cage: Composed in America*, Eds. Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman. Chicago, 1994. 81.

¹¹⁵ Brienza (1987), 10.

¹¹⁶ Fletcher, John. "Beckett's Verse: Influences and Parallels." *The French Review* 37.3 (Jan. 1964), 320-331: 320.

Poetry is Vertical

In a world **ruled by the hypnosis of positivism**, we proclaim the autonomy of the poetic vision, the hegemony of the inner life over the outer life.

We reject the postulate that the creative personality is a mere factor in the pragmatic conception of progress, and that its function is the delineation of a vitalistic world.

We are against the renewal of the classical ideal, because it inevitably leads to a decorative reactionary conformity to a factitious sense of harmony, to the sterilisation of the living imagination.

We believe that the orphic forces should be guarded from deterioration, no matter what social system ultimately is triumphant.

Esthetic will is not the first law. It is in the **immediacy of the ecstatic revelation**, in the alogical movement of the psyche, in the organic rhythm of the vision that the creative art occurs.

The reality of depth can be conquered by a voluntary mediumistic conjuration, by a stupor which proceeds from the irrational to a world beyond a world.

The transcendental 'I' with its multiple stratifications reaching back millions of years is related to the entire history of mankind, past and present, and is brought to the surface with the hallucinatory irruption of images in the dream, the daydream, the mystic-gnostic trance, and even the psychiatric condition.

The final disintegration of the 'I' in the creative act is made possible by the use of a language which is a mantic instrument, and which does not hesitate to adopt a revolutionary attitude toward word and syntax, going even so far as to invent a hermetic language, if necessary.

Poetry builds a nexus between the 'I' and the 'you' by leading the emotions of the sunken, telluric depths upward toward the illumination of a collective reality and a totalistic universe.

The synthesis of a true collectivism is made possible by a community of spirits who aim at the construction of a new mythological reality.

Hans Arp, Samuel Beckett,
Carl Einstein, Eugene Jolas,
Thomas McGreevy, Georges
Pelorson, Theo Rutra, James
J. Sweeney, Ronald Symond ¹¹⁷

Clearly, this is an example of what Müller dubs "metaphysical doubt," i.e. a turn against scientific positivism and aesthetic realism. "Mantic," meaning "of or relating to the faculty of divination" or "prophetic,"¹¹⁸ implies the Platonic, universal linguistic ideal pursued by the verticalists. What they strove for was immediacy of expression and emancipation of poetic language from conventional vocabulary. This "mantic" quality in Beckett's language has been investigated in a number of critical works. It is exemplified not only in the assonances, cadences, rhythms and meters, but also in the nursery language permeating his texts ("Didi" and "Gogo" in *Waiting for Godot*, "quaqua" in *How It Is* and *Waiting for Godot*, "Ballybaba" in *Molloy*. For further examples see Ann Banfield),¹¹⁹ which is reminiscent of what Beckett notes about Vico's conception of poetry: "The root of any word whatsoever can be traced back to some prelingual symbol"¹²⁰ and

¹¹⁷ Jolas, Eugene et. al. "Poetry is Vertical." *transition* 21 (1932): 148-149; emphasis added.

¹¹⁸ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Springfield, MA ¹¹2003. 757.

¹¹⁹ Banfield, Ann. "Beckett's Tattered Syntax." *Representations* 84 (2003): 6-29.

¹²⁰ SB, *Disjecta*, 25.

concur with Guy Debrook's contention that Beckett's use of language should be seen as primarily gestural.¹²¹

A partial return to this prelingual condition, the young Beckett remarks, could be achieved by means of a more sensuous language: "When the sense is asleep, the words go to sleep. When the sense is dancing, the words dance."¹²² This entails that, contrary to the *nomos* stipulation or Saussure's arbitrariness principle¹²³ and in line with Jolas' and the verticalists' manifesto, poetic language ought to be semantically and phonologically *motivated*.¹²⁴ In Peirce's terms, the lexicon is predominantly "abstract and general, because *habits* are general rules to which the organism has become subjected."¹²⁵ Beckett, on the other hand, strove for a mode of expression more indexical or even iconic. The phonetician Fónagy has pointed out the metaphoric origin of the Beckettian name "Mag" in *Molloy*: The contrast between the libidinal /ma/ sound and its association with motherhood on the one hand, and the aggressiveness and discomfort conveyed by /g/ on the other is a complete phonetic equivalent to Mag's character.¹²⁶ This is backed up by the following passage:

And I called her Mag because for me, without my knowing why, the letter g abolished the syllable Ma, and as it were spat on it, better than any other letter would have done. And at the same time I satisfied a deep and doubtless unacknowledged need, the need to have a Ma, that is a mother, and to proclaim it, audibly.¹²⁷

Beckett's preoccupation with the universal or archetypal properties of phonetic sounds is also in line with his propensity for linguistic immediacy and sensuousness, which in turn ties in with Vico's notion (as understood by Beckett) of poetry as a 'primitive' cultural product. This is underscored in a passage in *How It Is*, in which labial sounds are related to fetal instincts: "the moment when I would need to say and could not mamma papa hear those sounds slake my thirst for labials and could not from then on words for

¹²¹ Debrook, Guy. "The Word Man and the Note Man: Morton Feldman and Beckett's Virtual Music." *Samuel Beckett and the Arts: Music, Visual Arts, and Non-print Media*. Ed. Lois Oppenheim. New York.: Garland, 1999. 67-82.

¹²² SB, *Disjecta*, 27.

¹²³ Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Ed. C. Bally and A. Sechehayse. Transl. W. Baskin. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959, 67.

¹²⁴ on motivation cf. Ullmann, Stephen. *Semantics. An Introduction to the Science of Meaning*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972, 92.

¹²⁵ Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Writings of Charles S. Peirce*, Vol. 5: 1884-1886. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, 162-3.

¹²⁶ Fónagy, Ivan. *Die Metaphern in der Phonetik*. Den Haag: Mouton, 1963, 80.

¹²⁷ SB, *Three Novels* (1958), 17.

that moment and following vast stretch of time."¹²⁸ As the famous Lockean Sensualist aphorism "Nihil est in intellectu, quod non sit prius in senso," quoted in "Dante...Vico. Bruno...Joyce" – and taught to a parrot in the much later text *Malone Dies*¹²⁹ – indicates: Literature, just like music, should be experienced sensually before it appeals to the intellect.

From the 1970's onward, critics increasingly took notice of the formal aspects of his art. Al Alvarez was one of the first Beckett scholars to elaborate on the author's renunciation of allegorical content.¹³⁰ Likewise, Kenner embarks on a formalist approach in lieu of a hermeneutical one. He observes that Beckett's language is "shaped into phrases, orchestrated, cunningly repeated."¹³¹ As will be explored in detail in the next chapter, formalist exegeses focusing on self-referentiality often compared his language aesthetic to music, evoking Walter Pater's notion that "all arts aspire to the condition of music."¹³² Nevertheless, the content, the meaning, is not to be dismissed. In an interview with Tom Driver, in which he made his much-quoted declaration "I am not a philosopher," Beckett made the following assertion regarding the relationship between form and content: "That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now."¹³³

That Proust made "no attempt to dissociate form from content"¹³⁴ had already left a strong impression on the young Beckett, and it is likewise this merging of form and content that became a hallmark of the Theatre of the Absurd, as Martin Esslin has suggested. In this, the art of the Theatre of the Absurd differs from existentialist theatre:¹³⁵ "While Sartre or Camus express the new content in the old convention, the Theatre of the Absurd goes a step further in trying to achieve a unity between its basic assumptions

¹²⁸ SB, *How It Is* (1964), 108.

¹²⁹ Parrot speech was deployed as a metaphor of the insignificance of language by Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice*: "How every fool can play upon the word! I think the best grace of wit will shortly turn into silence, and discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots[.]" (III,5) London: Methuen, 1955, 218.

¹³⁰ Alvarez, op. cit.

¹³¹ Kenner, Hugh. *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1973, 37-8.

¹³² Pater, Walter. *Selected Writings*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: New American Library, 1974, 55.

¹³³ Driver (1961), 23. Curiously, John Cage, in his "Lecture on Nothing" (1951) said: "We really do need a structure, so we can see we are nowhere" (*Silence. Lectures and Writings by John Cage*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973, 125). A structure is defined by Cage as "a bridge from nowhere to nowhere" (*Silence*, 124).

¹³⁴ SB, *Proust* (1970), 88.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 25.

and the form in which these are expressed."¹³⁶

This is already evident in Beckett's early theoretical observations. On Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, he remarked: "It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*,"¹³⁷ which is in keeping with Billie Whitelaw's observation on Beckett's aesthetic in *Rockaby*, which similarly likens it to music:

I say, "Trust the Words." Because to me it seems that Beckett doesn't write *about* something – about an emotion, about some old lady rocking herself to possible death in the chair – he actually writes it, he writes that thing itself. He's done ninety percent of the work for you by writing the actual emotion on the page as a composer will write an emotive passage in a piece of music. It's there.¹³⁸

Reflections on the duality of the linguistic sign, i.e. the sign itself as against its purport, can be traced back to Plato's *Cratylus* written 2,500 years ago. In this dialogue, three characters, Cratylus, Socrates, and Hermogenes, converse about the exactness and the truthfulness of names. While Hermogenes promotes the idea of arbitrariness and conventionality, a position known as the *nomos* hypothesis, Cratylus believes that the names of things are generally constituted by attributes these referents exhibit, which is referred to as the *physei* hypothesis.¹³⁹ In many ways it is exactly this age-old discord between *nomos* and *physei* that was reinvigorated in modern and postmodern aesthetic discourses. The Saussurean dissociation between signifier and signified served as a starting point for Derrida's deconstruction of the linguistic sign. Due to the constant deferral of a sign's meaning both in time and in relativity to other signs, which Derrida referred to as *différance*, an absolutely present meaning is never accessible to the receiver.¹⁴⁰ If the pure signified is out of reach at all times, then the idea of texts as conveyors of meaning is also put into question, and the focus of criticism is bound to shift from content to form. Oscar Wilde, who in 1890 presaged this dissociation of form from content by claiming that "[a]ll art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beyond the surface do so at their peril,"¹⁴¹ and the French symbolists may be thought of as precursors of the 20th century formalization and "musicalization" of literary forms.¹⁴² In

¹³⁶ Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Revised and enlarged edition. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, 24.

¹³⁷ SB, *Disjecta*, 27.

¹³⁸ Billie Whitelaw, qtd. in: Kalb (1989), 238.

¹³⁹ Schiewe, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Bradley, Arthur. *Derrida's Of Grammatology*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 2008, 71.

¹⁴¹ Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London: Penguin, 1985, 4.

¹⁴² cf. Stoianova, 53.

postmodern discourse, formal readings were also spurred on by the tenet of de-intellectualizing the study of literature: Susan Sontag was among those who most fervently advocated what she dubbed an "erotics of art." In Western intellectual history, Sontag notes, the Greek theory of art as mimesis of reality gave rise to aesthetic axioms such as "[t]o understand is to interpret."¹⁴³ According to her, "the idea of content is today mainly a hindrance, a nuisance, a subtle or not so subtle philistinism."¹⁴⁴ She reproaches what she refers to as a "hypertrophy of the intellect."¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, Sontag claims that "[b]y reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting *that*, one tames the work of art. Interpretation makes art manageable, comfortable."¹⁴⁶ It is, however, the sensuous, untamable quality of the aesthetic surface that deserves critical attention, Sontag suggests. "We must learn to *see* more, to *hear* more, to *feel* more."¹⁴⁷ As to Beckett's work, which "has attracted interpreters like leeches,"¹⁴⁸ in Sontag's phrase, it has been pointed out above that he portrayed poets as "the sense" of humanity in *Dante...Vico. Bruno...Joyce*. However, as has also been mentioned above, Beckett's downplay of the importance of meaning is seen best in the context of Bruno's law of opposites or Jung's *enantiodromia*, as similarly phrased by Eco: "There is nothing more meaningful than a text which asserts that there is no meaning."¹⁴⁹

In his 1953 study *Die Unzulänglichkeit der Sprache*, Niklaus Gessner identifies the following modes as agents of disintegration in Beckett's works:

1. misunderstandings, 2. monologues (as a result of misunderstandings or failed dialogues), 3. clichéd collocations, 4. telegraphic style, 5. searching for the right word, 6. accumulations of words, 7. juxtaposition of synonyms, 8. overemphasis (of single words), 9. verbal chaos, 10. deliberately meaningless punctuation.¹⁵⁰

A look at Beckett's complete output, however, reveals that the collapse of language occurred at multiple layers and stages of his œuvre, which makes it all the more difficult to pin down. Where does linguistic 'destruction' start? Might one go so far as to say that even his Joyce-like neologisms and hermetic code, as in his early poem "Whoroscope,"

¹⁴³ Sontag, Susan. "From *Against Interpretation*" (1982). In: Waugh (1992), 51.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 49.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 55.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 52.

¹⁴⁹ Eco (1990), 7.

¹⁵⁰ Gessner, Niklaus. *Die Unzulänglichkeit der Sprache*. Zürich: Juris, 1957, 44. My own translation.

or idiolects, such as the bizarre German-English used by the character Smeraldina-Rima in DFMW, bear a certain destructive element, given the degree of inherent presupposition and their status as a "non-style"¹⁵¹? After all, these stylistic particularities inhibit the reader's ability to follow beyond the point of shared or general knowledge on the one hand (e.g. of Latin words, Greek philosophers, places in Germany, previously read authors) and the familiarity of Beckett's world on the other, i.e. a particular repertory of recurrent symbols, metaphors, characters, representing a sort of code shared with his loyal readers.¹⁵² Furthermore, the propensity for silence¹⁵³ is an aspect overlooked by Gessner although it forms an integral element of Beckett's language and language criticism, as demonstrated most evidently in his plays *Act Without Words I and II*, *Quad I and II*, as well as in the omnipresent pauses interspersed in the works for stage and radio.¹⁵⁴ The privileged status of silence in 20th-century literature, whose earlier manifestations are by far too heterogeneous to be examined in detail in the present work, also seems to be an outcome of the language crisis outlined above. According to Hassan, the discovery of the "languages of silence" coincided with the rise of mentalist literature dating back to the 18th century.¹⁵⁵ As with skepticism about verbal communication, it seems to have emanated from a broad cluster of aesthetic, mystical, and – if seen against the backdrop of the atrocities of the two World Wars – political and ethical¹⁵⁶ implications. It may also betray strands of influence from Zen Buddhism on Beckett¹⁵⁷ and on composers such as John Cage and Toru Takemitsu. In the French drama tradition, Beckett followed the model of a "school of silence" surrounding the French dramatist Jean-Jacques Bernard, stage director Gaston Baty, and Antoine Artaud, a pioneer of the Theater of the Absurd.¹⁵⁸ As Müller suggests: "Das Schweigen als innerstes Formprinzip zieht eine Dramaturgie des Schweigens nach sich, das heißt: die Inszenierung der

¹⁵¹ Coe, Richard N. "Beckett's English." *Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives*. Eds. Morris Beja et al. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983. 36-57: 45.

¹⁵² Calder, John. *The Philosophy of Samuel Beckett*. London: Calder, NJ: Riverrun, 2001, 87.

¹⁵³ associated with "aphasia" and "Ent-sagen" (refraining or abstaining from) by Mauthner in his chapter on Language Criticism, Mauthner, Vol. III, 630-31.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Brinzeu, Pia. "'Without a Word': Pauses in Beckett's Drama." *Samuel Beckett Today – Beckett in the 1990s*. Eds. Martin Buning and Lois Oppenheim. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993. 229-234.

¹⁵⁵ Hassan, 72.

¹⁵⁶ Siegfried Mauser: "Absage an Affirmation und Machtanspruch," *Morton Feldman. Der Klang und sein Schatten*. TV documentary by Klaus Voswinckel. Bayrischer Rundfunk, 2002 (first broadcast October 19, 2002); cf. Götsche, Dirk. *Die Produktivität der Sprachkrise in der modernen Prosa*. Frankfurt on the Main: Athenäum, 1987, 5-6.

¹⁵⁷ Graham, Archie, op. cit.

¹⁵⁸ Müller (1966), 235.

Pause."¹⁵⁹ This "staging" of silence is carried to extremes by Federico García Lorca, who determined the precise duration of the pauses.¹⁶⁰

At the time Gessner published his study, the most radical works in terms of language aesthetics, including *How It Is*, *Lessness*, *Ping*, *Imagination Dead Imagine*, *Company*, *Ill Seen Ill Said* and *Worstward Ho* had not yet been published. These narratives probably reveal the most salient feature of Beckett's language, which was already present in rudimentary form in his early works: the disintegration of syntactic unity. In Beckett's later fictions, syntactic structures of utterances function as outward manifestations of his characters' minds: The disintegration of syntax mirrors the breakdown of logical reasoning, which in turn indicates a failure of the mind. This is most evident in what is said about *Watt*'s mental disposition: "that there was perhaps *more than a reversal of discourse*; that the *thought* was perhaps inverted."¹⁶¹

From the early 1950's onwards, iconicity is found less in the vocabulary than in the syntax of Beckett's texts. His later novels are "narratives about narrating"¹⁶² in which metafictional narrators tackle various problems of storytelling. Above all, the self-conscious narrators have trouble defining their own status in relation to their fictional tale – i.e. their narrative perspective – which is reflected in the self-effacement of the first-person narrator. Prior to both *Transition* and the verticalists, Mauthner considered the subject the "most superfluous part of the sentence,"¹⁶³ and Beckett increasingly eschews grammatical subjects and verbs with person marking, as he does in the *neither* text. Although Beckett's 'novels of consciousness' seem to rule out by definition any alternatives to the first-person narrator, the *Unnamable* considers the abolition of "I": "I shall not say I again, ever again, it's too farcical. I shall put in its place, whenever I hear it, the third person."¹⁶⁴

The scope of linguistic self-referentiality in Beckett's late fiction is comprehensively illustrated by Brienza,¹⁶⁵ who pinpoints the relationship between syntactic form and content: For example, she relates the use of present-participle verbs or the complete ab-

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 235.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ *Watt* (1953), 164 (italics added).

¹⁶² Brienza (1987), 4-5.

¹⁶³ Mauthner, Vol. III, 205. My own translation.

¹⁶⁴ *Three Novels* (1958), 355.

¹⁶⁵ Brienza (1987). By the same author: "Imagination Dead Imagine: the microcosm of the mind." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 8 (1982): 59-74.

sence of verbs to the motionlessness and the collapse of syntax to the contraction of the universe, both described in the *Fizzles*.¹⁶⁶ In the short prose text "Imagination Dead Imagine," the Bergsonian act of creation out of a state of chaos is mimicked in Beckett's syntax by passives and the lack of copular verbs, indicating the absence of a creator. At the end of the story, the active voice and copular verbs abound, revealing the completion of the product of imagination: "Beckett filled the empty space created by the omission of the real world and the death of the imagination with mere words, and his stylistic problem in this piece was to use language that would conjure up something and yet create Nothing at the same time."¹⁶⁷

Being most immediately associated with logic, the "desire for order in the midst of chaos,"¹⁶⁸ as Fritz Mauthner phrased it, it is all too evident why, of all linguistic parameters, syntax is the one most radically disintegrated. This is particularly concrete in the short prose: Nearly devoid of copular or auxiliary verbs and replete with syntactically ambiguous garden-path sentences and shorthand style, these texts verge on the unparsable, indicating both the limits of language and those of cognition. As opposed to the comical recursive sentence constructions in Beckett's early novels, his later prose works are free from syntactic proliferation. Linguistic creativity is confined to the closed or functional parts of speech of the lexicon, e.g. prepositions, conjunctions, and pronouns.¹⁶⁹

Moreover, Beckett's impervious syntactic constructions most plainly reveal the enantiomorphic interaction of language and intellect: Not only does language fail to properly reflect the mental self of Beckett's characters, but their fictional minds in turn also prove incapable of proper linguistic, i.e. syntactic operations. As is said in *Malone Dies*: "There is no use indicting words, they are no shoddier than what they peddle."¹⁷⁰ The intellectual aporia of Beckett's characters is mirrored in "tattered syntaxes" (*All Strange Away*) and "midget grammar" (*How It Is*), in short: fragmented language representing fragmented mental realities.

¹⁶⁶ Brienza (1987), 197-216.

¹⁶⁷ Brienza (1982).

¹⁶⁸ Mauthner, Vol. III, 299.

¹⁶⁹ Banfield, op. cit.

¹⁷⁰ *Three Novels* (1958), 195.

2.2. Music

Poetry atrophies when it gets too far from music.

There are three kinds of melopoeia, that is, verse made to sing; to chant or intone; and to speak.

The older one gets the more one believes in the first.

Ezra Pound¹⁷¹

As many critics have explored, Beckett's refined musical expertise is manifested in the myriad references to compositions and musical cultures permeating nearly his entire output. In addition, his inclination to music is apparent in the structural analogies to musical writing, in the meticulous organization of speech sounds and in the balance he strikes between sound and silence in his texts. Based on the premise that Beckett's own advances toward intermediality are one of the reasons why composers felt close to his work, it is these two domains that will be explored separately in the present chapter, following the template of Wolf's distinction between "overt" or "direct" intermediality¹⁷² according to which "a form in which at least in one instance more than one medium is present in an artifact, whereby each medium appears with its typical or conventional signifiers, remains distinct and in principle separately 'quotable,'"¹⁷³ and, on the other hand, "covert" or "indirect" intermediality, denoting an

involvement of (at least) two conventionally distinct media in the signification of an artifact in which, however, only one (dominant) medium appears directly with its typical or conventional signifiers, the other one (the non-dominant medium) being only indirectly present 'within' the first medium as a signified (in some cases also as a referent). It is, as it were, 'covered' by the dominant medium (...), and hence the two media cannot be separated from each other, as in the case of overt/direct intermediality.¹⁷⁴

In keeping with Mary Bryden's contention that "in order to compose, one has to be a listener first,"¹⁷⁵ a brief musical biography of the author will follow, including examples of what Wolf terms "contextual thematization,"¹⁷⁶ i.e. direct references of the author to the medium of music in the context of his writings, and indirect evidence or "elements outside the text[s] under discussion that are suitable for making a musicalization of fic-

¹⁷¹ *The ABC of Reading*. 1934. New York: New Directions, 1992, 61.

¹⁷² echoed in Rajewsky's differentiation between explicit system mentioning and system mentioning *qua* transposition. Cf. Rajewsky, 79-117.

¹⁷³ Wolf, in: Bernhart et al. (1999), 42-3.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 44.

¹⁷⁵ Bryden, SBM, 24.

¹⁷⁶ Wolf (1999), 56.

tion appear plausible."¹⁷⁷ This will serve as a backdrop against which musical terms and descriptions and extra-textual musical references (the "telling" mode¹⁷⁸) in Beckett's work will be selectively demonstrated. The final section will examine in-built, covert musicality, exploring some of the language-music interfaces put forward by Scher, notably "word music," "verbal music" as well as "structural analogies."¹⁷⁹

Many of Beckett's works, above all, his radio plays, are permeated by ostinati of ambient sounds or environmental music.¹⁸⁰ Although in unison with contemporaneous musical-philosophical concepts such as "musique concrète" and the Cagean axiom that "everything is music,"¹⁸¹ these sounds and soundscapes will, for the sake of concision, not be considered in the present work.

2.2.1. A brief musical biography of Beckett

Der Künstler ist der Ursprung des Werkes. Das Werk ist der Ursprung des Künstlers. Keines ist ohne das andere. [The artist is the source of the work. The work is the source of the artist. Neither can exist without the other.]

Martin Heidegger¹⁸²

Anyone examining the role of music in Beckett's work will inevitably cross the boundary between the author's life and his creative output more than once. As with many of the names of places and characters, the music in his narratives and plays occurs as an "amalgam of realism and symbolism."¹⁸³ In searching for clues to the role of music in his life and works, one will ultimately be "beckoned back and forth" as it is phrased in the *neither* libretto, albeit with the awareness that parallels between life and art are not to be found in the "biographical trivia" for which Martin Esslin scolded one of Beckett's biographers,¹⁸⁴ but rather in Beckett's impressive knowledge of different musical cultures and the lives and works of various Western composers. As with Murphy's Cartesian illusion outlined in the previous chapter, this interrelation of art and artist repre-

¹⁷⁷ Wolf (1999), 73.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Hutcheon (2006), Wolf (1998), 133.

¹⁷⁹ Scher suggests that music has found its way into literature in three different forms. He discriminates between "Wortmusik" (word music), structural parallels, and descriptions of music which he terms "verbal music." Scher (1984), 14.

¹⁸⁰ Morgan (1991), 453.

¹⁸¹ cf. Feldman, "The Anxiety of Art," GMR, 29.

¹⁸² Heidegger, Martin. *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*. Stuttgart: Reclam jun., 2008, 7.

¹⁸³ Coe, op. cit., 47.

¹⁸⁴ Esslin, Martin. *Meditations. Essays on Brecht, Beckett, and the Media*. London: Methuen, 1980 166. Esslin refers to Deirdre Bair's biography, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography*, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

sents an aporia that Ihab Hassan described in the following terms: "It is as if Beckett were saying that art and artist long to be free of one another; yet it is only in their mutual bondage that both exist to will their reciprocal destruction."¹⁸⁵ It would thus appear that the relation between Beckett is again of an *enantiodromic* nature. By interweaving even tiny portions of original compositions into his "poésie du souvenir" (as Robbe-Grillet dubs this autofiction¹⁸⁶), he often expressed his profound appreciation of their composers. As with the childhood memories in the late novel *Company* or in *Krapp's Last Tape*, we can never be certain as to whether the tunes haunting the protagonists are not in fact musical memories lingering in the mind of the author himself. Although, as Knowlson argues, these "personal elements cannot simply be pinned down (...) to comfortable real-life equivalences" as they "convey more universal feelings,"¹⁸⁷ one might go so far as to state that the coalescence of fact and fiction is such that it raises questions as to the "fictionality of the world outside the fictional text."¹⁸⁸ To be sure, this interplay of life and art ties in with the meta-fictionality, self-similarity and other self-reflexive strands in the texts.¹⁸⁹

Beckett was both a gifted musician and an astute listener. Growing up in a musical family, he took piano lessons at his home in Foxrock from his early childhood. As his cousin John Beckett, a professional musician and composer (who had composed the first score for *Words and Music* in 1962), recalled, "[m]y father was a good pianist, a very good sight-reader, but also the sort of person who could go to the cinema and hear a song and come back and play it. The piano was in the dining room of our house and he and Sam would play for hours."¹⁹⁰

Clearly, music lessons formed as much part of Beckett's Protestant middle-class up-

¹⁸⁵ Hassan, 164.

¹⁸⁶ Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *For a New Novel*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989.

¹⁸⁷ Knowlson (1996), 445.

¹⁸⁸ Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction. The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction*. London: Methuen, 1984, 2. Cf. also Odo Marquard's insightful essay "Kunst als Antifiktio": "Dem arbeitet eine Wirklichkeit zu, die - seit sie exklusiv zum "Gegenstand möglicher Erfahrung" ernannt wurde (Kant) - weithin für den Einzelnen gerade aufhört, Gegenstand möglicher eigener Erfahrung zu sein: nicht nur, weil in der wandlungsbeschleunigten Welt Erfahrung schnell veraltet, sondern vor allem auch, weil die Erfahrung als wissenschaftlich artifizielle Empirie zur Sache apparativ ausgestatteter Sonderexperten wird: man macht seine Erfahrungen nicht mehr selber, man bekommt sie gemacht. Darum beruht die Mentalgestalt unserer Welt zunehmend auf Hörensagen: sie wird zum Gerücht, das - zum Teil - die Medien verwalten. Die moderne Wirklichkeit erhält in wachsendem Maße jene Färbung von Halbwirklichkeit, in der Fiktion und Realität ununterscheidbar werden." Marquard, Odo. "Kunst als Antifiktio - Versuch über den Weg der Wirklichkeit ins Fiktive." *Aesthetica und Anaesthetica. Philosophische Überlegungen*. Munich: Fink, 2003, 82-99: 94.

¹⁸⁹ Scheffel, in particular, rejects the view that self-reflexive narration and realist fiction by necessity exclude one another (Scheffel, 4, 234).

¹⁹⁰ Knowlson (1996), 7.

bringing as did sports and games such as cricket, tennis, golf or chess. His love of music was such that it lasted a lifetime. When he moved into his student apartment at Trinity College, "Beckett hired a piano which stood in the sitting room. He played it only before close friends like Geoffrey Thompson or when no one was there. One of his enthusiasms at this time was French music."¹⁹¹

Thompson recalled that as a young scholar, Beckett was particularly fond of the music of Debussy, one of his favorite piano pieces being *La fille aux cheveux de lin*.¹⁹² At the École Normale in Paris, presumably in lieu of a piano, he practiced the tin whistle by night, much to the dismay of his housemates.¹⁹³ Whenever he visited the Sinclairs in Kassel, they would sing and play the piano together. During his London years, he played piano duets with Hester Dowden, his friend Thomas MacGreevy's landlady, who also took him to a few concerts. He admired Mozart,¹⁹⁴ especially his A minor sonata KV 310, after he returned home to Dublin in 1932 and resumed taking piano lessons. Much later, in a letter to Ruby Cohn, dated Ussy, 3 September 1970, he wrote about his efforts to learn Haydn's Sonata in G minor while at the same time working on a new text.¹⁹⁵ This testifies to the interplay of music-making and literary creativity in Beckett's life. Not only does he mention having written "200 sentences all different anything from 20 to 30 words apiece" in this letter, but he then draws a connection, albeit indirectly, to the Haydn sonata by observing it is composed of "200 bars."¹⁹⁶ Therefore, Beckett regarded playing the piano both as a *divertissement* and as an inspirational force. This explains why in the spring of 1967 he purchased a piano for his otherwise sparsely furnished creative haven, the small cottage in Ussy-sur-Marne,¹⁹⁷ where he found the leisure and calmness to write. In the late 1970's, he still played his Schimmel piano, practicing Chopin, Schubert, Haydn, Beethoven, and modern composers – Bartók's *Microcosmos* and Satie's *Entertainment* were found on top of the piano after his death.¹⁹⁸ Apart from his own music-making, frequent visits to concerts and theatrical events as well as numerous friendships with musicians enabled him to develop a distinguished

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 65.

¹⁹² Ibid, 65-6.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 94-5.

¹⁹⁴ Cronin, Anthony. *Samuel Beckett. The Last Modernist*. London: Flamingo, 1997, 183.

¹⁹⁵ Probably *Comment C'est/How It Is*.

¹⁹⁶ Beckett collection, Reading, COH/060

¹⁹⁷ letter to Herbert dated 21 April 1967. Beckett collection, Reading, HER/023.

¹⁹⁸ Knowlson (1996), 655.

taste. "Listening to music was essential to him," his friend Avigdor Arikha recounted.¹⁹⁹ Although the fact remains that Beckett's chief interest lay in the œuvre of Classical and Romantic composers, it should not be overlooked that he was well-versed in a wide range of musical periods and cultures²⁰⁰ including compositions of his contemporaries. Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil, his longtime companion who later became his wife, was an accomplished pianist and teacher. She had studied at the École Normale de Musique in the 1920's and had perfect pitch. It was through her that Beckett met pianist Monique Haas and her husband, the Romanian-born composer Marcel Mihalovici. Haas, who on many occasions played the works of modern composers such as Hindemith, Bartók, Debussy, Ravel, Webern, and Stravinsky, expanded his horizons in 20th-century composition in a similar manner as had Maryjo Prado, whom he had heard play Scriabin, Prokofiev, and Dohnanyi in 1935.²⁰¹ Above all, Beckett valued Haas' interpretation of Bartók's Third Piano Concerto, and the Hungarian composer appears to have been "the greatest inspiration for his late creation."²⁰² As has been discussed,²⁰³ Mihalovici composed three Beckett-inspired works, *Krapp* (1959-60),²⁰⁴ *Music for Cascando* (1963),²⁰⁵ and his Fifth Symphony op. 94 (1972).²⁰⁶

In light of the musical talent in his family, it is only natural that Beckett would take an interest in composers and musicians from his childhood days in Dublin. Knowlson²⁰⁷ and Cronin²⁰⁸ report that Beckett's grandmother, Frances Beckett née Crothers, was an accomplished harmonium player who set a number of poems to music, including Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar*. Other family members, including his uncle Gerald, his cousins John, Walter,²⁰⁹ and Morris "Sunny" Sinclair, a proficient pianist,²¹⁰ seemed to have inherited Frances's musical talent. As a child, Beckett saw a few Gilbert and

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 495.

²⁰⁰ His knowledge of the medieval troubadour repertory is evident in many titles of his early poems such as "Alba" and "Enueg." In DFMW he draws on Chinese music culture.

²⁰¹ LSB, 245.

²⁰² Grindea, Miron. Beckett's Involvement with Music. SBM. 183-5: 183.

²⁰³ Fournier, Edith. Fournier, Edith. "Marcel Mihalovici and Samuel Beckett: Musicians of Return." SBM. 131-9.

²⁰⁴ Published in Paris: Heugel & Cie.

²⁰⁵ Not published. Original Manuscript: Harvard University Library.

²⁰⁶ Prefaced with the French version of a Beckett poem, "que ferai-je..." Score published in Paris: Heugel & Cie.

²⁰⁷ Knowlson (1996), 7.

²⁰⁸ Cronin, 4.

²⁰⁹ Beckett, Edward. "Foreword." SBM, v-vi.

²¹⁰ LSB, 712.

Sullivan productions of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company at the Theater in Dublin.²¹¹

Beckett's putative dislike of programmatic music is reflected in his stance against ballet music in a letter to Morris Sinclair between July 13 and August 2 1934:

Do not believe that ballet is music. It is precisely because music has a subordinate part in it that ballet annoys me. For serious music cannot be of use. To represent a piece of music in a particular way, by means of dancing, gestures, settings, costumes, etc., is to degrade it by reducing its value to mere anecdote. There are people who cannot achieve satisfaction unless they can see. As for me, to my misfortune no doubt, I cannot go off unless my eyes are closed.²¹²

At first glance, there is plenty of evidence for Beckett's disdain of programmatic music, e.g. his devotion to Schopenhauer, whose work he had consulted for the first time in July 1930 in search for an "intellectual justification of unhappiness."²¹³ In 1931 his study *Proust* was published, in which he meditated upon the philosopher's perception of music:

Schopenhauer rejects the Leibnizian view of music as "occult arithmetic," and in his aesthetics separates it from the other arts, which can only produce the Idea with its concomitant phenomena, whereas music is the Idea itself, unaware of the world of phenomena, existing ideally outside the universe, apprehended not in Space but in Time only, and consequently untouched by the teleological hypothesis.²¹⁴

This also explains why he dubs opera a "hideous corruption of this most immaterial of arts," if the concrete or substantial nature of words is associated with a form of art that is "perfectly intelligible and perfectly inexplicable,"²¹⁵ a paradox that had been similarly phrased by Eduard Hanslick in the 19th century.²¹⁶ "Music had always been for him the art form that came closest to pure spirit," Knowlson states.²¹⁷ Gontarski connects the above-quoted passage to Bergsonian thought. As he argues, it recalls Bergson's *durée*,

²¹¹ Knowlson (1996), 27-8.

²¹² LSB, 215. This response to ballet music most likely referred to a revival production of the *Ballets russes* that he saw during his first year in London (Knowlson 1996, 193). Curiously, this is exactly the opposite of what Stravinsky later said in his biography: "Denn ich habe immer einen Abscheu davor gehabt, Musik mit geschlossenen Augen zu hören, also ohne daß das Auge aktiv teilnimmt. Wenn man Musik in ihrem vollen Umfange begreifen will, ist es notwendig, auch die Gesten und Bewegungen des menschlichen Körpers zu sehen, durch die sie hervorgebracht wird." (Stravinsky, Igor. *Mein Leben*. Munich: List, 1958, 68.)

²¹³ LSB, 33.

²¹⁴ SB, *Proust* (1970), 92.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Hanslick, Eduard. *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen. Ein Beitrag zur Revision zur Aesthetik der Tonkunst*. Leipzig: Rudolph Weigel, 1858, 41.

²¹⁷ Knowlson (1996), 654.

the "pure, seamless, temporal simultaneity"²¹⁸ which can only be intuited, but never apprehended by the intellect. Representing the bedrock of Bergsonian philosophy, *durée* is downgraded by intellectual spatialization.

Along the same lines, Beckett admired the absolute music of the triumvirate of the Classical era – Haydn, Mozart, and particularly Beethoven, whom he deemed a fellow sufferer. Despite his passion for the piano works and the Seventh Symphony – "the dearest of the nine"²¹⁹ – which is cited in *Dream* and in his much-quoted letter to Axel Kaun in 1937,²²⁰ he first had his reservations about the chamber works: "I feel that Beethoven's Quartets are a waste of time. His pigheaded refusal to make the best of a rather petty-fogging [*for* pettifogging] convention annoys me. He needed a piano or an orchestra," he wrote to Thomas MacGreevey on 24 February 1931 after hearing Beethoven's String Quartet in Eb op. 127.²²¹ However, a concert series three years later by the Busch Quartet in London piqued his interest in Beethoven's string quartets, as he commented on the fifth movement ("Cavatina") of Quartet no. 13 in Bb major op.130: "A movement which in calm finality and intensity goes beyond anything I have ever heard by the venerable Ludwig, and which I would not have believed him capable of."²²² Having thus enjoyed the concert, Beckett looked forward to the Quartet no. 16 in F major, performed at the last concert of the series. Fascinated with the epigraph of the final movement, "Der schwer gefasste Entschluss," he copied the famous text snippet of the score into the letter,²²³ and in addition, he incorporated it into his poem "Malacoda" written in 1933 after his father's death ("must it be it must be it must be"²²⁴).

This appropriation of programmatic musical material from a piece of prototypical chamber music is symptomatic of a paradox underlying Beckett's attitude toward music as a principle: While one might deduce from his ideas as put forth in *Proust* and in personal letters suggesting that pure or absolute music epitomized the ultimate form of artistic expression, many of his favorite works do not, in fact, fall under this category. Al-

²¹⁸ Gontarski (2008), 98-9.

²¹⁹ Letter to Thomas MacGreevey, qtd. in: Knowlson (1996), 453.

²²⁰ See previous chapter.

²²¹ LSB, 68-9.

²²² LSB, 197.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Beckett, Samuel. *Collected Poems in English and French*. New York: Grove Press, 1977, 26. It is this three-note motive that the text is set to, followed by its inversion, which Schönberg uses to explain mirror form in basic sets in his lecture "Composition with Twelve Tones" (1941). Schönberg, Arnold. *Style and Idea*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1950. 110-111. Beckett might as well have found this musical inversion, analogous to the word order transformation, particularly noteworthy.

ban Berg's *Wozzeck*, for example, was much revered by Beckett,²²⁵ as was *The Marriage of Figaro*.²²⁶ More crucially, he had a deep fascination with Schubert's *Lieder*; a passion he shared with his mentor Joyce and with his wife Suzanne. This gave rise to the conjecture, put forth by Pilling, that the "listener who, being an impure subject, insists on giving a figure to that which is ideal and invisible" depicted in *Proust*²²⁷ was in fact Beckett himself.²²⁸ As Maier has pointed out, Schopenhauer's influence on Beckett to a certain degree conflates with Proust's in that all three writers depicted music as an ideal, connecting force.²²⁹ However, while Schopenhauer's focus lay on the cognitive abilities that enabled the listener to connect single tones to an entity, i.e. a melody ("intellectual" is, in fact, equated with the ability to perceive something as being "connected as a whole"²³⁰), Proust takes a more psychological view on music, employing it as a means of reflecting and portraying social behavior,²³¹ as an interface between imagination/fiction and reality²³² as well as a self-reflexive device.²³³ As a common denominator, though, both Schopenhauer and Proust emphasized music's capacity to establish coherence, be it between perceptual events, past and present states of mind, or between individuals.²³⁴ Beckett takes up this idea and puts an ironic spin on it: Much like composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann's collage-like structures, the evocation of music of the past expresses the relativity of time and the fragmentation of reality.²³⁵ "The reality of the individual [...] is an incoherent reality and must be expressed incoherently," as the Mandarin says in DFMW.²³⁶ The idea that music represents an Other marked by an imaginary totality, vis-à-vis the fragmentary nature of language (i.e. of the self), could be likened to the Lacanian mirror stage, a paradigm delineating the relation between identity and alterity: The Other or mirror image of the self is merely a *fictional* totality

²²⁵ Knowlson (1996), 194.

²²⁶ Knowlson (1996), 253.

²²⁷ SB, *Proust* (1970), 89.

²²⁸ Pilling, John. "Proust and Schopenhauer: Music and Shadows." SBM, 173-8: 174.

²²⁹ Maier (2006), 23.

²³⁰ Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Idea III*. Transl. R. B. Haldane. London: Kagan Paul, 1909, 335.

²³¹ Maier (2006), 43.

²³² Ibid, 24.

²³³ Ibid, 120-1.

²³⁴ Maier (2006): "menschliche[s] Verbundensein[...]," 25.

²³⁵ on Zimmermann cf. Morgan (1991), 411.

²³⁶ DFMW, 101.

that always remains beyond reach.²³⁷ This will be further explicated in the next chapter. Beckett himself apparently experienced music as a type of 'social glue.' Listening to records is often said to have been the very ritual that connected him, the loner, to other people. At Ussy, he and Suzanne would listen to the *Winterreise* recording with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau.²³⁸ "They were at their closest while they were sharing such moments of musical pleasure,"²³⁹ Knowlson reports. Music's socializing potential was also identified by his friend, the painter Avigdor Arikha, as an important ingredient of their friendship:

During the fifties we used to listen to music (mainly Beethoven's chamber music, Schubert) during the day in my studio 10 at Villa d'Alésia (where I lived 1955-64). [...] After dinner we listened to music. Concerning pianists, his favourites were Yves Nat, Cortot, Schnabel, Solomon, Serkin, but not only [these]. [...] We had a period during which we listened to quite a bit of dodecaphonic music – Schönberg, Berg, Webern (before 1959). But he always returned to romantic music – from Haydn to Brahms. He disliked Wagner and also Mahler – actually antithetical to his sense of 'less is more.'²⁴⁰

This is reflected in some of Beckett's output, in which music often establishes proximity. In *Words and Music*, a radio play in which, like in *Cascando* language and music appear as *dramatis personae*, it is Joe (Words) who refuses to be combined with Bob (Music), and it is Bob who welcomes the idea of a joint performance, patiently suggesting tune after tune until Joe finally joins in. At the end of *Cascando*, Opener takes pleasure in one of the moments in which Voice and Music sound together "as though they had linked their arms," expressing his satisfaction by saying "Good."²⁴¹ In *Ghost Trio*, Beethoven's *Geistertrio* sounds whenever the camera zooms in, intensifying the intimacy between the viewer and the protagonist. Vladimir sings his dog song in *Godot* when Estragon is absent. Finally, musical terms are utilized for the depiction of sexual relations in *Murphy*, in which the narrator describes his nights with Celia as "serenade, nocturne and albada,"²⁴² and Wylie's kiss is "like a breve tied (...) over bars times its

²³⁷ Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Eds. Vincent B. Leitch et al. New York: Norton, 2001. 1285-1290.

²³⁸ Knowlson (1996), 425.

²³⁹ Ibid, 426.

²⁴⁰ Fax to James Knowlson, qtd. in: Knowlson (1996), 495-6.

²⁴¹ CDW, 303.

²⁴² *Murphy* (1957), 74.

equivalent in demi-semiquavers."²⁴³ Still, Beckett's conception of the language-music correlation is not quite as straightforward as that, as will be shown in the following.

2.2.2. Music from without: extralinguistic music

Was it a song in my head or did it merely come from without?

Beckett, *The End*.

Sensual experience figures prominently in Beckett's works. In keeping with Baudrillard's contention that the postmodern aestheticization of reality has led to a state of "hyperreality"²⁴⁴ and Marquard's observation that by the same degree that the fictionalization of the world outside fiction (i.e. hyper-realization) progresses, art de-fictionalizes itself, shifting from "expectation" to "experience,"²⁴⁵ this emphasis on the sensory here-and-now in Beckett's phenomenological novels and plays may be thought of as a symptom of this amalgamation of fiction and reality.

As said above, on the surface, the embedded aural experiences in Beckett's works (i.e. listening to a story in *Ohio Impromptu* or musical memories in the form of well-known tunes and compositions by Beethoven and Schubert) seem to serve as ties between characters and listeners/spectators as well as between different temporal planes. Sometimes they conjure up relationships and places of the characters' past to which the protagonists attach a personal value. For example, in the midst of his memories of an old love, Krapp remembers the hymn "Now the day is over" by Sabine Baring-Gould (1867), which is also referred to in DFMW and in *Watt*.²⁴⁶ On a similar note, in *Words and Music*, a detailed description of the lover's body is followed by a sudden "irrepressible" eruption of music.²⁴⁷ "Like the jazz melody in Sartre's novel *La Nausée*, music retains an autonomy which cuts adrift from the past in order to colonize the present, or to inaugurate an alternative present of its own,"²⁴⁸ Bryden notes. Along these lines, the sounding epipha-

²⁴³ Ibid, 117.

²⁴⁴ Baudrillard, Jean. "From *Simulations*." In: Waugh (1992), 186-9: 186.

²⁴⁵ Marquard (2003), 98. See also Wolf, Werner (1999), 183-5. This notion also underlies what Cage said about the relationship between life and contemporary music/art, i.e. that everything is music *by necessity*: "When we separate music from life what we get is art (a compendium of masterpieces). With contemporary music, when it is actually contemporary, we have no time to make that separation (which protects us from living), and so contemporary music is not so much art as it is life." *Silence*, 44. This notion also informed Christopher Small's concept of "musicking": *Musicking. The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Press, 1998.

²⁴⁶ Maier (2006), 170; DFMW (2006), 134; *Watt* (1953), 57.

²⁴⁷ CDW, 292.

²⁴⁸ Bryden, SBM, 31.

nies of Beckett's characters create the illusion of a musico-temporal matrix capable of transcending the here-and-now like a "bridge" to the future.²⁴⁹ They might be likened to Mikhail Bakhtin's *chronotope*, by which the critic denoted a structural building block of a narrative serving as a "primary means for materializing time in space."²⁵⁰ As it is interrelated with space, time becomes "palpable and visible."²⁵¹ Analogously, Beckett's Music without materializes as a fusion of time, sound, and space, rendering time and space audible. Furthermore, memories, "intersection[s] of mind and matter" (Bergson),²⁵² represent crossroads between consciousness and the physical world, in other words: between the frame story and embedded narratives. One is led to regard them as equivalents to the photographs in *Film* or the story in *Ohio Impromptu*, since they form part of what Gilles Deleuze termed *langue III* – a language "dehors du langage"²⁵³ of visual and auditory images employed in his television dramaticules – some of which are replete with intermedial references. Deleuze considered the presence of *langue III* the culmination of Beckett's skepticism about language. He posits that: "Cette langue III ne procède pas seulement avec des images, mais avec des espaces."²⁵⁴ That Deleuze's *langue III* encompasses acoustic images as well as spaces corresponds with our chronotope analogy. These sound-time-space-conglomerates occurring in Beckett's work represent an alterity, temporalized and spatialized by a subject so as to overcome the unendurable present. Their antipode is a plethora of ambient sounds in Beckett's work (foot-falls, breath, etc.) representing the flow of time as it is experienced in its purest, but also in its most implacable form. These strata of environmental sounds, as opposed to the musical quotations, are most closely related to Bergson's *durée*.

However, while language is depicted as an insufficient means of subjective experience, the musical quotations occurring in Beckett's works are beset with the opposite dilemma: Being intimately interwoven with the protagonists' individual memory, their semantic content and significance is too private to be communicated, let alone to be recollected in their original form. This is best illustrated by Watt's ditch song: As Watt's

²⁴⁹ Bryden (2004), 229.

²⁵⁰ Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Transl. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, 250.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*, New York: Cosimo, 2007, xii.

²⁵³ Deleuze, Gilles. "L'Épuisé." *Quad et autre pièces pour la télévision suivi de L'Épuisé' par Gilles Deleuze*. Paris: Minuit, 1992. 55-105: 74.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

head is hit by a stone, his mnemonic abilities deteriorate, as is manifested by the only "musical composition" ever written by Beckett himself: the soprano part of the Threne heard by Watt in the ditch, which is included in the Addenda. In view of the bass clef dots beside the treble clef sign and the odd key signature (the two accidentals, if the song is in the key of D major or B minor, are in reverse order, and the first accidental is in the wrong staff position) this song seems at first glance entirely nonsensical, a "study in unrelation," as Susan Field Senneff²⁵⁵ has suggested. Along similar lines, Lees correlates this faulty notation to the discrepancies between the three incongruous domains juxtaposed in the novel: the laws of acoustics, the Western system of tuning, and human perception.²⁵⁶ Yet, while Maier maintains that continuity "is completely absent"²⁵⁷ in the Threne, which he deems "a bitter comment on Schopenhauer's enthusiastic praise of melody,"²⁵⁸ one must not overlook the fact that the eleven repetitions of the same motive are deviations of an unheard melodic prototype and thus all relate and refer to each other, forming a continuum of melodic derivatives. In a Derridean sense, each repetition carries traces of the others. This is to say that the rhythmic pattern and melodic contour of each of these reiterations is constituted by *différance*. Or, as Deleuze posited, representation is but a sequence of repetitions which are, in turn, inhabited by difference.²⁵⁹ Thus, each melodic motive is a reconstruction of a virtual prototype, and the Threne as a whole is a reconstruction of Watt's mental image, in turn making this a (re)construction of the author-creator. On the one hand, this process foreshadows Morton Feldman's memory forms. On the other, Beckett could scarcely have offered a better parody of mimetic re-presentation than this grotesque self-similar embedment of subjective memories and their written-down representations.²⁶⁰

Whenever musical or otherwise encoded memories are conjured up, they leave the characters unsatisfied. Rather than fulfilling desires, they create new ones. This shortcoming is evident in the characters' recording, repeating, rewinding, and fast-forwarding, in short: their failed attempts at invoking these visual or acoustic images to their satisfaction, which, in a circular manner, returns them to their initial state of mind – despair,

²⁵⁵ Senneff, Susan Field. "Song and Music in Samuel Beckett's *Watt*." *Modern fiction studies* 10 (Summer 1964): 137-150: 142.

²⁵⁶ Lees, Heath. "Watt: Music, Tuning and Tonality." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 9 (1984): 5-24: 21.

²⁵⁷ Maier (2006), 384.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 383.

²⁵⁹ Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Transl. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 76.

²⁶⁰ Deleuze argues that repetition "belongs to humour and irony." (*Ibid*, 5.)

isolation and unfulfilled emotional needs. Beckett's musical chronotopes thus intensify the impression of *multiphrenia* common to many of his characters. The term *multiphrenia* was introduced by Kenneth J. Gergen to denote "the splitting of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments"²⁶¹ due to the ubiquitousness of media of communication and entertainment – "technologies of relationship,"²⁶² as he calls them. As real and technological experiences amalgamate, they circularly reinforce each other's hold over the individual. As Gergen phrased it in his study of communication in the postmodern world, "there is a cyclical spiraling toward a state of *multiphrenia*. As one's potentials are expanded by the technologies, so one increasingly employs the technologies for self-expression; yet, as the technologies are further utilized, so do they add to the repertoire of potentials."²⁶³

In our context, one would have to replace the term "technologies" by "media," in the sense in which it is elucidated by Werner Wolf, i.e.

not in the restricted sense of a technical or institutional channel of communication but as a conventionally distinct means of communication or expression characterized not only by particular channels (or one channel) for the sending and receiving of messages but also by the use of one or more semiotic systems.²⁶⁴

Thus, having (pre-existing) music and other "found objects" of various media at his disposal, the Beckettian character avails himself of these devices in order to arrive at a state of artistic and emotional saturation. Conversely, these forms of entertainment create new desires, and so forth, *ad infinitum*. The depiction of this artificial, technology-induced hedonism is held by Paul Foster to indicate Beckett's preoccupation with Buddhist thinking:

The situation of suffering and dissatisfaction is brought about by desire (Beckett's hypothetical imperative). It can be described as a thirst (Sanskrit, *tanha*), the basic motivation in all human beings for seeking satisfaction. But this thirst for satisfaction, Buddhism claims, is misdirected. It fastens upon the wrong objects for relief, wrong because they are misguided. They are misguided since in the end they do not bring the lasting satisfaction that the mind craves.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Gergen, Kenneth J. *The Saturated Self. Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*. New York: Basic Books, 2000, 73-4.

²⁶² *Ibid*, 74.

²⁶³ *Ibid*.

²⁶⁴ Wolf, Werner. "Musicalized Fiction and Intermediality. Theoretical Aspects of Word and Music Studies." In: Bernhart et al. (1999), 37-58: 40.

²⁶⁵ Foster (1989), 28.

Likewise, John Cage, who was prone to Zen Buddhist ideas, said the following about objects of art (as opposed to tools of art production):

And it seems to me I could listen forever to Japanese shakuhachi music or the Navajo Yeibitchai. Or I could sit or stand near Richard Lippold's *Full Moon* any length of time. Chinese bronzes, how I love them. But those beauties, which others have made, tend to stir up the need to possess and I know I possess nothing. **Record collections, that is not music. The phonograph is a thing, not a musical instrument. A thing leads to other things, whereas a musical instrument leads to nothing.**²⁶⁶

Laws thus rightly dismisses the idea that music is an "element of expressiveness and consolation"²⁶⁷ in Beckett's works. Furthermore, as Lawley has posited and as is evident in Beckett's entire output, companionship is double-edged in that it is a source of both pleasure and pain.²⁶⁸ In the novel *How It Is* and in the short story *First Love*, music by no means assumes the role of a "humble muted adsum" as in *Words and Music*.²⁶⁹ Instead, singing is associated with the act of torturing, the pain inflicted by the characters upon one another:²⁷⁰ "the day when he clawed in the armpit instead of crying he sings his song the song ascends in the present it's off again in the present."²⁷¹ In other words, music, just as language, is a medium of ambiguity: Celia's perception of Murphy's words as "difficult music heard for the first time"²⁷² betrays a remoteness between the lovers. Just as mind and matter seek escape from one another despite their interpenetration, Celia, short for Cecilia, the Roman patron of music, and Murphy, whose name is derived from the Greek word for "form," *morph*, are incompatible yet inseparable. Likewise, Beckett's language never occupies a position either superior or inferior to the sounds incorporated into his works. It is fair to say that rather than serving as decoration or supplements to the text, intermedial references and music in particular are employed by Beckett as a self-reflexive stratum reinforcing the "expression that there is nothing to express," even with multiple media and their obvious medial differences and specificities at the creative self's disposal.²⁷³

²⁶⁶ "Lecture on Nothing" (my emphasis), *Silence*, 125.

²⁶⁷ Laws (2003), 200.

²⁶⁸ Lawley, Paul. "'The Grim Journey': Beckett Listens to Schubert." *Samuel Beckett Today – Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000*. Eds. Angela Moorjani and Carola Veit. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001. 255-266.

²⁶⁹ SB, *Words and Music*, CDW, 287.

²⁷⁰ Lawley, 258.

²⁷¹ *How It Is* (1964), 63.

²⁷² *Murphy* (1957), 40.

²⁷³ On "Mediendifferenz" and "Spezifität": cf. Rajewsky, 36.

First and most apparently, sound-spaces formally disintegrate the literary medium into which they are embedded ("deconstruction as construction,"²⁷⁴ as Maier has referred to this technique). That is, melodies break open textual structures, thus musical continuity precipitates literary discontinuity. There are, likewise, instances in which broken continuities *within* the songs and musical quotations mimic the disruption of narrative structures, e.g. Vladimir clearing his throat after the first verse and brooding after the second one in the dog song, or the gradual blurring of the text in the ditch song heard by Watt. In fact, whenever Beckett borrowed musical material, he incorporated only snippets from recordings and scores.

Second, in some contexts, melodic coherence is employed as parody: In a fairly ironic manner, the closed form of Winnie's song in *Happy Days*, "Lippen schweigen" from Franz Léhar's *Die lustige Witwe*, is juxtaposed with lines of disjointed speech, thus highlighting the incoherence of the dialogues.²⁷⁵

Third, Vladimir's dog song in *Waiting for Godot*, an embedded story which is in itself a *mise en abyme* of the play's structure, mirrors the infinite possible reproductions of the dramatic plot,²⁷⁶ leading to either circularity *ad infinitum*²⁷⁷ or to what Hassan called a "spiral toward zero"²⁷⁸ in quite the same manner as Watt's linguistic permutations serve as a structural *mise en abyme* of the narrative. In Genette's terms, musical chronotopes represent a "narrative in the second degree" or "metadiagetic" events,²⁷⁹ that is, embedded narratives, which, as he stipulates, often occur as forms of "nonverbal representation."²⁸⁰ In *Dream*, only one bar from the score of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is quoted, which serves as a metaphor for discontinuity throughout the novel ("the only unity is involuntary"²⁸¹).

²⁷⁴ Maier (2008), 373.

²⁷⁵ Maier (2006), 242.

²⁷⁶ Wolf, Werner. "Mise en abyme." *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, ed. Ansgar Nünning. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1998. 373. *Mise en abyme* features prominently in other Beckett works, e.g. in *A Piece of Monologue*, as Ruby Cohn has shown (Cohn, 1993, 1).

²⁷⁷ In 1960, Stockhausen envisioned musical works performed permanently over longer periods of time, during which the audience is free to walk in and out of the venue as though in a picture gallery. He believed this so-called "infinite form" to be a seminal concept as it grants the listener far more freedom than traditional closed forms. To conclude his thoughts, he quotes Beckett's *The Unnamable*. See Stockhausen, Karlheinz. "Momentform." *Texte zur elektronischen und instrumentalen Musik*, Vol. 1. Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1963, 189-210: 205, 210.

²⁷⁸ Hassan, 163.

²⁷⁹ Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983, 228.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 231.

²⁸¹ DFMW, 133.

In a more conventional manner, Music from without also illuminates, echoes, or intensifies certain plot or subplot elements. In *Nacht und Träume*, the last seven bars of Schubert's song represent a bridge between the character's conscious state and his dreams. It is quite revealing, however, that in some cases, Beckett discarded the songs which he had first incorporated into his texts, for example Krapp's "Now the Day is Over"²⁸² or Clov's song "Joli oiseau."²⁸³ In the first case, the message might have been too blatant, its allusion to death all-too obvious.²⁸⁴

Music from without remains close yet unattainable, recallable yet ineffable. As an immaterial vehicle of personal memories or aesthetic ideals it is merely a stopgap, amplifying desires rather than fulfilling them. Broadly speaking, premodern *naïveté*, the Romantic ideals of the essential self and the escapist purity of *Lieder ohne Worte*, are taken ad absurdum. As with other external media occurring in Beckett's works, musical quotations serve as mirrors of the fragmented self, leading, as said above, to a "spiral toward multiphrenia." If indeed Beckett said that "music always wins," it appears that it was not so much the medium's aesthetic or expressive primacy over its "sister art" language which he had in mind (as will also be argued in the following chapter), as its resistance to being put into the service of the text. Extralinguistic music, in other words, perpetuates the process of aesthetic ambiguation. Thus, Beckett's extra-linguistic music, summoned up by desolate dramatic or narrative subjects as a consolatory companion, in the end represents a self-ambiguating, non-appropriatable alterity. In Lawley's phrase, its "otherness nourishes indefinition."²⁸⁵

²⁸² Maier (2006), 254.

²⁸³ Ibid, 219-30.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 254.

²⁸⁵ Lawley, 262.

Music in Beckett's art – references to real composers and musical pieces (examples):

<i>Watt</i>	Buxtehude bust
<i>All That Fall</i>	Franz Schubert: Death and the Maiden Quartet
<i>Endgame</i>	<i>Joli oiseau (quitte ta cage)</i>
<i>Krapp's Last Tape</i>	Sabine Baring-Gould: <i>Now the Day is Over</i>
<i>Happy Days</i>	Franz Léhar: <i>Lippen schweigen</i> from <i>Die Lustige Witwe</i>
<i>Ghost Trio</i>	L.v. Beethoven: Geistertrio, op. 70, no. 1, 2 nd movement
<i>Nacht und Träume</i>	Franz Schubert: <i>Nacht und Träume</i> , op. 43,2/D 827
<i>What Where</i>	allusions to Schubert's <i>Winter Journey</i>

2.2.3. Music from within: linguistic euphony

I feel that Sam, with his musical knowledge – he was a competent pianist – conceived and wrote his works in a rhythmical fashion as if they were music. Words to him were notes. They had to be clear to the ear and at the same time create a word picture. The sound was to be carried from one word to the next in the same way that an accomplished singer carries the sound, on the breath, through from one note to the next.²⁸⁶

With Beckett's creative trajectory shifting away from the allegorical plane to the sound structure of the plays, prose and poems, hermeneutical discourses informed by reports from actors and directors, increasingly focused on in-built musicality. In the present chapter it will be demonstrated that, as with the references to pre-existing music discussed in the previous chapter, the sonorization of language serves as a meta-medial device of defamiliarization²⁸⁷ and self-reflexivity.

There have been quite a number of different attempts to explore the sounds and soundscapes in Beckett's texts, many of which invoke "music" or "musicality" as an umbrella term for formal-aesthetic readings and stagings of the plays and fiction. Esslin, for example, described Beckett's plot structures as "essentially polyphonic."²⁸⁸ The actress Billie Whitelaw likened Beckett's plays to musical scores.²⁸⁹ As a director, Beckett was apparently less concerned with character depth and development than with the "pace,

²⁸⁶ Beckett, Walter. "Music in the Works of Samuel Beckett." SBM. 181-2.

²⁸⁷ "Generally, the existence of the symptoms of musical imitation [...] results in a certain defamiliarization (*Verfremdung*) of the respective narrative with respect to the typical and ordinary use of narrative language and conventions." Wolf (1999), 75.

²⁸⁸ Esslin, *Theatre of the Absurd*, 44.

²⁸⁹ Qtd. in: Kalb, 238.

tone and, above all, rhythm"²⁹⁰ of his actors' vocal delivery, as Knowlson reports. Furthermore, he argues that "'[c]onducting' is a more appropriate word for what he was doing as a director,"²⁹¹ given his usage of musical terms such as *piano*, *fortissimo*, *andante*, *allegro*, *da capo* and *cadenza*.²⁹² The actor David Warrilow noted that plays such as *Ohio Impromptu* were performed "like art songs."²⁹³ It is also known that Beckett discussed the possibility of notating the tempo in his stage plays with Stravinsky.²⁹⁴ Talking about the Polish stage production of *Krapp*, director Antoni Libera explained his own way of working with Beckett texts:

1. Approaching a play (both the text and the stage activities) as if it were a musical score. Perceiving everything in formal categories. Establishing how many times a given theme, word, or gesture reoccurs. Insuring that all types of repetitions are like echoes, refrains – that is, seeing to it that they are performed in exactly the same or a very similar manner.
2. Attempts at bringing out the melody and rhythm of the text. Treating each text as if it were poetry. Proper placing of logical accents.
3. (...).
4. The pace of acting and speaking. The majority of the plays were intended to be acted or played quickly (*allegro*, *presto*). Playing Beckett's plays too slowly kills them. Pauses marking a falling silence should be distinctively different from pauses that mark a change of tone (or topic).
- 5.(...).
6. (...).
7. The spirit of German romanticism: paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, the music of Franz Schubert, German romantic poetry.²⁹⁵

Eric Park labeled Beckett a "verbal musician."²⁹⁶ Playwright Edward Albee stated that "[a]ny director who does not understand the music of Beckett, who can't hear in that way, who doesn't have the training and ability to think musically, would be incapable of directing Beckett properly."²⁹⁷ Finally, composers have been fascinated with the "musicality" of Beckett's works: "I've always thought, even before working on *Sinfonia*, that Beckett's writing is very musical," Luciano Berio reported,²⁹⁸ and an abundance of similar statements have been made by other composers and critics.

But do these purportedly sonorous qualities justify the label "music"? Rajewsky has pointed out, after all, that what she calls an "update" ("Aktualisierung"), a re-configuration of one semiotic system according to the rules of another is inconceivable,

²⁹⁰ Knowlson (1996), 502.

²⁹¹ Ibid, 668.

²⁹² Ibid, 655.

²⁹³ Qtd. in: Kalb, 225.

²⁹⁴ Bryden (2004), 226.

²⁹⁵ Cf. *Directing Beckett*. Ed. Lois Oppenheim. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1994, 108-9.

²⁹⁶ Park, Eric. "Fundamental Sounds: Music in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* and *Watt*." *Modern fiction studies* 21 (Summer 1975): 157-171: 61.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Oppenheim (1994), 86-7.

²⁹⁸ SBM, 189.

owing to the *intermedial gap*, i.e. the differences between the media.²⁹⁹ Is it perhaps not similarity relations between the media, but rather antagonistic forces, i.e. the non-referentiality of pure sounds versus the referentiality of words, which engage in a dialectic interplay in Beckett's "word music"?

A closer look at such comments as the ones cited above reveals that the term "musicality" has been employed as a catch-all metaphor for various types of speech sound organization, with parameters no less various serving as *tertium comparationis* between Beckett's writing and music. They have, not least due to the author's own use of musical terminology, led to an inflationary use of a rather poorly defined term. Regardless of the perennial question of whether language and music should be compared at all, this raises the issue of whether the term "musical" has not, in fact, led to exegeses on shaky semantic ground. Wolf maintains that "[...] musical terms such as 'fugue', 'counterpoint', etc., which both authors and critics use lavishly with reference to literature, should be used with caution and can, strictly speaking, only be regarded as heuristic **metaphors** [...]."³⁰⁰

Scher took a similarly critical stance on such uses of musical terminology.³⁰¹ Furthermore, Brown points out that certain musical terms, such as *leitmotive* or *counterpoint*, have a different history, and thus refer to different things in literature and music despite their origin in musical terminology.³⁰² Scher bemoans the resultant "terminological chaos, usually in the form of inexact, indiscriminating and often highly idiosyncratic borrowings from a vocabulary which properly belongs to musical analysis; and appellations such as melody, harmony, counterpoint, cadence, orchestration, syncopation and modulation abound."³⁰³

Thus, the various usages of musical metaphors in literature, due to their imprecision, have come to be somewhat hackneyed, and indeed many of the terms borrowed from music that have been incorporated into literary analysis tend to be used almost randomly, as revealed in following flowery passage from a study on *Lessness*: "These haphazardly-conceived themes are fragmented and rearranged for melodic development. Gradually, passion is transformed into rhapsody with reiterations of various verb forms

²⁹⁹ Cf. Rajewsky, 70, 84, 123, 204. Cf. also: Wolf (1999), 33.

³⁰⁰ Wolf (1999), 33-34.

³⁰¹ Scher, Steven Paul. "How Meaningful is 'Musical' in Literary Criticism?" *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 21 (1972): 52-56.

³⁰² Wolf in: Bernhart et al. (1999), 55.

³⁰³ Scher (1972), 53.

of "imagine." A triadic second theme ascends from the subject's anxiety [...].³⁰⁴

As an alternative to 'musical,' Scher suggested *euphonious* (vs. *cacophonous*): "By euphonious I would mean the poetic use of smooth, mellifluous sound patterns; and the adjective cacophonous would characterize the poetic use of non-euphonious sound effects, from the strident through the sibilant to the muted."³⁰⁵

It might, first of all, be worthwhile to tease apart some of the 'musical' elements which have been discovered in the prosody and structure of Beckett's work:

1) *Rhythmic* or *metric* properties, apparent, for example, in the combinatorial patterns from *Watt* quoted above

And the poor old lousy old earth, my earth and my father's and my mother's and my father's father's and my mother's mother's and my father's mother's and my mother's father's and my father's mother's father's and my mother's father's mother's and my father's mother's mother's and my mother's father's father's and my father's father's mother and my mother's father's father's and my father's father's father's and my mother's mother's mother's and my other people's fathers' and mothers' and fathers' fathers' and mothers' mothers' and fathers' mothers'...³⁰⁶

have been conjoined with the notion of 'musicality' in a number of studies and memoirs, although neither is *a priori* a musical parameter. Actor Roger Blin noted about the plays that "just the rhythm of those short, sharp, banal sentences alone makes a symphony. There is a musical quality, which is very important and which he caught in French."³⁰⁷ During rehearsals for the 1977 Berlin production of *Krapp*, Beckett insisted that Rick Cluchey perform his movements and speech as rhythmically as possible so as to imitate Heinrich von Kleist's marionette model.³⁰⁸ In 1971 he had referred to an actress playing Winnie to von Kleist's essay "Über das Marionettentheater," holding that precision and symmetry in movement and speech would achieve a degree of elegance³⁰⁹ which he would not put past human actors. This was, in fact, another way of imposing more control upon his actors, for the same reason that Maurice Maeterlinck wrote some of his plays for marionette theater. Just as with other musical terms used by Beckett as a theat-

³⁰⁴ Cantanzaro, Mary. "Musical Form and Beckett's *Lessness*." *Notes on Modern Irish Literature* 4 (1992): 45-51: 48.

³⁰⁵ Scher (1972), 56.

³⁰⁶ *Watt* (1953), 46-7.

³⁰⁷ Cf. Oppenheim (1994), 301-314.

³⁰⁸ Herren, Graley. "Ghost Duet, or Krapp's First Videotape." *Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000*. 159-68: 162.

³⁰⁹ Knowlson (1996), 584.

rical director, rhythm was in fact synonymous for control, thus heteronomy³¹⁰ and artificiality. As Bakhtin has written on the nature of poetic rhythm: "*Rhythm, by creating an unmediated involvement between every aspect of the accentual system as a whole* (via the most immediate rhythmic unities), destroys in embryo those social worlds of speech and of persons that are potentially embedded in the word."³¹¹

It might be conjectured that, like Maeterlinck, Beckett leaned toward a marionettesque choreography in order to depict tragic characters whose actions are governed by fate rather than by their own free will. Yet such character depictions are also imbued with a sense of comedy if read – yet again – in the light of Bergson's definition of the comic, i.e. the "mechanical inelasticity"³¹² of "character, of mind and even body." Bergson goes on to argue that "[t]his rigidity is the comic, and laughter is its corrective,"³¹³ and also: "The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine."³¹⁴ When correlated, the Maeterlinckian and the Bergsonian theoretically underpin the performative manifestation of the Beckettian tragic-comic/self-unself dichotomy. Furthermore, it is fair to say that the movements of these "almost mechanical puppets"³¹⁵ (Martin Esslin) are symptomatic of the same metaleptic auctorial interrelation between the extradiegetic and the diegetic in Beckett's later novels and also in the plays, where, as mentioned above, characters deliberately invoke acoustic images. According to Genette, *metalepsis* denotes an "intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (...) or the inverse,"³¹⁶ which "produces an effect of strangeness that is either comical (...) or fantastic."³¹⁷ This intrusion may, at first sight, bear a certain resemblance to Brecht's technique of defamiliarization. The latter, however, constitutes a means to a specific ideological end, "revolutionary pedagogics,"³¹⁸ in Eco's words, while in Beckett the aspect of defamiliarization is not used to steer the spectator's attention to any particular

³¹⁰ For a detailed account on heteronomy in Beckett's late plays, see: Tönnies, Merle. "Players, Playthings and Patterns: Three Stagings of Heteronomy in Beckett's Mature Drama." *Samuel Beckett Today – Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000*. 194-201.

³¹¹ Bakhtin, Mikhail M. "Discourse in the Novel." *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Eds. Vincent B. Leitch et al. New York: Norton, 2001. 1186-1220: 1218.

³¹² Bergson, Henri. *Laughter. An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. Transl. C. Brereton et al. New York: Dover, 2005, 5.

³¹³ *Ibid*, 11.

³¹⁴ *Ibid*, 15.

³¹⁵ Esslin (1972), *op. cit.*, 22.

³¹⁶ Genette (1983), *op. cit.* 234-5.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, 235.

³¹⁸ Eco (1989), 11.

social or political issues. Rather, it illustrates Beckett's artistic paradigm of *enantiodromia*, in this case, the (implicit) narrator and the world represented on stage. In analogy to Genette's term *narrative metalepsis*, we may refer to this technique as *dramatic metalepsis*. In addition, the artificiality of the movements underscores the metafictional foregrounding of the plays' status as artifacts.

2) On the issue of *timing* or *tempo* in *Godot*, Asmus recounts a precarious act of balance between speaking "faster than real life" and becoming "cold and mechanical. You start to understand certain sequences not from the meaning of the words but from the music – or they go together, the meaning of the words and the music of exchanges. And that's a perfection one starts to strive for."³¹⁹ Concerning tempo, David Warrilow commented (with reference to rehearsing *Ohio Impromptu*): "[T]he issue was tone and tempo, because the way the author hears that piece is somewhat different from the way it lies in my being."³²⁰

Tempo, that is, reading pace, also plays an elevated role in the more complex phrase structures of his later short prose pieces. As the syntax moves towards more complex patterns, the parsing of these works slows down tremendously. This is to say that, as with Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, short moments in time are expanded by the length of the reading process. While in *A la Recherche* this is a quantitative deceleration (i.e. the reading process is slowed down by the number of sentences and paragraphs), in Beckett it is a perceptive or cognitive deceleration.

3) As to the significance of *dynamics* in Beckett's works, they might, for example, be discernible in the stage directions of *Play* resembling dynamic indications in music: "Voices toneless except where an expression is indicated," "Voices faint, largely unintelligible."³²¹ Beckett spoke to Bernold of a "vocal shadow" and a "white voice."³²² Just as composer Morton Feldman, he was concerned with minimal sound, *sous-entendement*,³²³ characterized by a not-quite absence and not-quite presence demarcat-

³¹⁹ Qtd in: Kalb, 183.

³²⁰ Qtd. in: Kalb, 224.

³²¹ CDW, 307.

³²² Bernold, André. *L'Amitié de Beckett*. Paris: Hermann, 1992, 83.

³²³ Term used by Charles Krance in: "Beckett Music." *Samuel Beckett and the Arts*, 57-8. By *sous-entendement* ("hearing beneath"), Krance means "implication, innuendo."

ing the sphere of his idiosyncratic acoustic expression "neither here nor there."³²⁴ Bryden has noted: "In Beckett's drama, voices are often frail but tenacious, threatened with extinction and yet committed to utterance."³²⁵ Thus, the musical concept of "dynamics," even if, in some instances, it gives an impression of how Beckett worked with his actors, can be reduced to his obsession with silence, which figures so prominently throughout his entire œuvre.

4) With regard to his plays, there have also been several reports on *pitch* or *tonality*. As a director, Beckett was eager to determine the precise pitches of the actors' voices. Once, in the midst of a rehearsal, Asmus recounts how he had a piano brought in so as to strike the keys of the tones he had in mind for their vocal delivery, but later changed his mind.³²⁶

5) As regards *instrumentation*, Beckett himself once said to Bernold that he "had always written for a voice."³²⁷ In their interpretation of *Endgame*, Fletcher and Spurling hold the view that Hamm and Clov correspond not so much to characters as to musical instruments insofar as their vocal delivery does not so much carry forward the plot as "carry as it were pitch and timbre, to give off matching or dissonant tones and colours."³²⁸ Consequently, they discriminate between solo, duo and trio passages.³²⁹ Similarly, Whitelaw asserts that actors played the role of musical instruments in Beckett's plays,³³⁰ and Cantanzaro notes that "the voice in *Lessness* is used as an instrument that performs the detritus of memory."³³¹ Kenner describes Beckett's language as being "orchestrated," and he also raises structural issues, claiming that it is "shaped into phrases, [...] cunningly repeated."³³²

6) As this last point reveals, some scholars have detected *structural analogies* between Beckett's texts and music. Hildesheimer, for example, noted that *Play* lends itself to

³²⁴ Whitelaw, qtd. in Kalb, 235.

³²⁵ SBM, 28.

³²⁶ Kalb, 183.

³²⁷ Bernold, 83.

³²⁸ Fletcher, John and John Spurling. *Beckett. A study of his plays*. London: Methuen, 1972, 72.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Kalb, 235.

³³¹ Cantanzaro, 46.

³³² Kenner (1973), 37-8.

musical-structural analysis.³³³ His exegesis of *Godot* draws on the concept of musical variation.³³⁴

This line of formal-musical analysis of *Play* was continued, amongst others, by Gaburo.³³⁵ Some of his observations apply with equal force to a number of other Beckett's plays, such as the "antiphonal" performance of the voices,³³⁶ the permutational order of successive individual utterances, the cyclic "ritornello" recurrence of text elements, toneless parlando-style voices, exact tempo and timing, and "word ostinati."³³⁷

In his examination of *Molloy*, William E. Grim likened the Schönbergian term "developing variation" to the "illusory nature of [...] progress"³³⁸ as embodied by the two main characters, Molloy and Moran. Drawing on Beckett's affinity to Schönberg, he argues that "[s]o consistent an application of the specific details of the developing variations procedure must be judged as being more than coincidental."³³⁹ Yet, it is evident even from *Molloy*'s much-quoted passage, in which he describes a work "with a beginning, a middle, and an end as in the well-built phrase and the sonata of the dead,"³⁴⁰ a description in itself incongruous with the novel's binary structure, that no such specific musical technique served as a formal template. As with other musical forms that have been compared to Beckett's art, the developing variation inevitably denotes a formal compositional strategy applied to the musical material, i.e. the surface structure. What Grim stresses, by contrast, is not so much the transformation on the formal plane as the variation of verbal semantics. Furthermore, it seems somewhat paradoxical to correlate Beckett's monologues to the melodic autonomy of Schönberg's developing variation, inasmuch as the critic applies one of Schönberg's most vital aesthetic paradigms, i.e. the self-sufficiency of relational musical structures, to a domain from which the composer

³³³ Hildesheimer, Wolfgang. *Wer war Mozart?, Becketts ‚Spiel‘, Über das absurde Theater*. Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp 1978, 74.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Gaburo, Kenneth. "The Music in Samuel Beckett's *Play*." *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Vol 7.2 (1987): 76-87.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid, 76.

³³⁸ Grim, William E. "The Developing Variation in Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*." *Romance Studies* 11 (1987): 47-52: 51.

³³⁹ Ibid, 52.

³⁴⁰ *Three Novels* (1958), 31.

originally sought to divorce composition and which by definition defies autopoiesis:³⁴¹ the referential nature of language.³⁴²

It has to be noted, however, that Beckett himself provoked discourses on "word music" in his methods of literary composition by providing what Rajewsky terms "markers"³⁴³ of intermediality, i.e. explicit references to music and through paratextual allusions: By calling *Quad* "a static fugue,"³⁴⁴ he drew a structural parallel between his writings and music. The text of *Lessness* is composed of twenty-four paragraphs, each containing seven sentences. Beckett did not use more than sixty sentences altogether, and as Cohn reported, he wrote down each sentence "on a separate piece of paper, mixed them all in a container, and then drew them out in random order twice."³⁴⁵ Provided that Beckett's account of his compositional method can be taken at face value, this is indeed reminiscent of serial composition as well as aleatoricism, and in this regard, Beckett's new approaches to language might be viewed as "demonstrations of the infinite possibilities of artistic language – something very similar to the dodecaphonic musical language," as O'Hara³⁴⁶ and, in similar terms, composer Wolfgang Hufschmidt have noted.³⁴⁷ In fact, these quasi-serial processes in Beckett's works extend beyond the linguistic plane. This is evident in the hat exchange in the second act of *Godot*, the sucking stones episode in *Molloy*, and when *Murphy* muses about the order in which to consume his biscuits. What is more, Beckett's painstaking determination of single parameters, as shown above, brings to mind the total control composers of dodecaphonic music sought over musical parameters never before serialized, evident in Milton Babbitt's *Three Compositions for Piano* (1947), Olivier Messiaen's *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités* (1949-50) or Karel Goeyvaerts' *Nummer 2* (1951). More than any other work, the novel *Watt* is pervaded by serialism as an ordering principle: "the series of dogs, the series of men, the

³⁴¹ "One can call a system self-referential [autopoietic] if it itself constitutes the elements that compose it as functional unities and runs reference to this self-constitution through all the relations among these elements, continuously reproducing its self-constitution in this way." Luhmann (1995), 33.

³⁴² "Schönberg sucht [...] weder eine formale Übertragung oder Anlehnung an syntaktische Sprachstrukturen noch eine Parallele zur Sprache in der ausdrucksmäßigen Mitteilung, sondern begreift Musik aus sich heraus als Sprache [...]." Gruhn (1978), 46.

³⁴³ Rajewsky, 200.

³⁴⁴ Bernold, 83.

³⁴⁵ Cohn, Ruby. *Back to Beckett*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, 265.

³⁴⁶ O'Hara, J. D. *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Molloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970, 74.

³⁴⁷ Hufschmidt, Wolfgang. *Struktur und Semantik. Texte zur Musik 1968-1988*. Saarbrücken: Pfau, 1994, 421.

series of pictures."³⁴⁸ As discussed in the previous chapter, many of the serial configurations of words and sentences that Watt utilizes as an epistemological tool often turn out to be marked by errors. By contrast, the much-discussed "Frog Song" in which three frogs croak at different intervals (Krik on every third, Krek on every fifth and Krak on every eighth beat), displays a regular serial structure with the three patterns of croaks coinciding at fixed points, namely at their smallest common multiples. Susan Field Senneff surmises a reference to Aristophanes' Frog Song in which he ridicules Dionysian love poetry,³⁴⁹ suitable to the context in which Watt hears this song. Gilbert and Sullivan also quoted the Frog Song in *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879)³⁵⁰ which makes it all the more likely that Beckett, indubitably cognizant of this opera, deliberately alluded to Aristophanes. As has, to my knowledge, never been pointed out before, the frog concert, like Lucky's and the *How It Is* narrator's "quaqua,"³⁵¹ recalls the onomatopoeic fable in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which Latona has transformed the Lycian peasants into frogs and even after that never cease to croak ("sub aqua, sub aqua")³⁵² – a perfect allegory of incessant speech which is so prominent a theme in Beckett. While Maier cites Rameau's opera *Platée* (1745) as a possible model for Beckett's frog choir (while admitting that "[i]t is not clear whether Beckett knew Rameau's opera"³⁵³), he overlooks Ovid's strong influence on the opera plot: Apart from the frog fable, *Platée*'s frog choir, repeating the last syllables of the aforesaid, unquestionably evokes the legend of Echo. While Senneff maintains that the frog song epitomizes the preponderance of sound over meaning, Lees argues that the temporal intervals of the Frog Song are just another variation of the Pythagorean comma dilemma: "Against the background of acoustic theory, the song becomes an ironic sign of the fact that even in music itself, attunement is more illusory than real. The intervals of 3rd, 5th and 8th, the very basis of Western tonal concord, will never cohere unless fixed in a pre-distorted musical system."³⁵⁴

Thus, just as language and tuning systems, the temporal organization of the frog croaks

³⁴⁸ Watt (1953), 136.

³⁴⁹ Senneff, 142.

³⁵⁰ In the famous patter song of the Major-General, where latter's complacent display of knowledge is caricatured by means of interpolated pauses in which the Major-Genral dwells on the last word of each verse.

³⁵¹ A parody of "Quintilian's logical categories, which reduce all propositions to basic components." It may also be an innuendo of "Quoiquoiquoiquoiquoiquoiquo!" in *Finnegan's Wake* or to the German word "Quatsch," occurring in DFMW, 19. Cf. *Grove Companion to Beckett*, 472.

³⁵² "[Q]uamvis sint sub aqua, sub aqua maledicere temptant": Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book VI, 313-81.

³⁵³ Maier (2006), 391.

³⁵⁴ Lees, 15.

represents a Procrustean bed, a failed attempt at measuring the incommensurable. Indeed, as opposed to the serialists, Beckett's "statistical" composition is not so much an end in itself as a (self-)parody of the writer's Sisyphean desire to create order out of chaos. It is the artist's attempt to find a way out of his creative bottleneck and his characters' attempt to master the incommensurability of experience, as delineated in the previous chapter. As Molloy says: "You invent nothing, you think you are inventing, you think you are escaping."³⁵⁵ Although Harry White maintains that the "serial technique offers an instructive paradigm for those procedures by which Beckett attempts to resolve that crisis of meaning which he discerns in language and which he himself deliberately foments,"³⁵⁶ it would appear that Beckett was not so much prone to "resolve" this linguistic crisis as to "*mettre en abyme*" any such attempt. While language is taken ad absurdum, it is not replaced by any poetic meta-language, which is confirmed by what he stated in an interview: "Perhaps, like the composer Schönberg or the painter Kandinsky, I have turned toward an abstract language. Unlike them, however, I have tried not to concretize the abstraction – not to give it yet another formal context."³⁵⁷

In this, he was at one with anti-serialist composers such as Rochberg, who commented on Schönberg:

The mistake would be to believe, and continue to believe, that a prescriptive approach can remove the uncertainty of composing or that, given the security of preconceived abstract order, invention, clarity, and musical inevitability will automatically follow. Schönberg was the first to fall into this trap of his own devising.³⁵⁸

Kenner compares the sound-silence intervals in the Frog song occurring in *Watt* to early songs by John Cage. Indeed, the word-silence alternation of what Gruhn might dub a "language composition" (*Sprachkomposition*³⁵⁹) conjures up Cage's *Lecture on Something/Lecture on Nothing*. Likewise, Cohn draws a parallel between the plot structure in *Murphy* and John Cage's chance operations.³⁶⁰ Cantanzaro senses a connection between Beckett's "deliberate application of randomness" and the *I Ching*,³⁶¹ which also

³⁵⁵ *Three Novels* (1958), 32.

³⁵⁶ White, Harry. "'Something is taking its course': Dramatic Exactitude and the Paradigm of Serialism in Samuel Beckett." *SBM*. 159-72: 162.

³⁵⁷ Gruen, John. Samuel Beckett talks about Beckett, *Vogue*, 127.2 (Feb. 1970), 108, qtd. by Bryden in: *SBM*, 41.

³⁵⁸ Rochberg, Gerorge. *The Aesthetics of Survival*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Pr., 2004, 48.

³⁵⁹ Gruhn (1978), 152.

³⁶⁰ Cohn, Ruby (2001), 80.

³⁶¹ Cantanzaro, 45.

underpins John Cage's *Music of Changes*. Apart from these structural similarities, the plethora of ambient sounds permeating the dramatic writings, e.g. the sound dragging or shuffling feet in *All That Fall*, *Quad*, and *Footfalls*, recalls John Cage's axiom that practically everything can be perceived as music.³⁶²

As has become clear, there are pitfalls involved in subsuming the various parameters of sound organization under the category of 'musicality.' From what we have delineated above, we can conclude that some fundamental musical parameters, notably melody and harmony, are inevitably absent from discourses on Beckett's euphony, while others, such as rhythm and meter tend to be used *pars pro toto* for the domain of music as a whole. Regardless of the terminology, the fact remains that strict sound organization was of vital importance in Beckett's works. Although we have discussed the heteronomous effect of rhythmic speech and movements, the question remains: to what end? Some critics, e.g. Gontarski, have maintained that Beckett's ultimate ambition was "to move the drama closer to the spirit of music and away from its mimetic, referential level,"³⁶³ so that "its mainstay is its own relational structure."³⁶⁴ He argues that those linguistic qualities "associated with ritual, dance, and music"³⁶⁵ were employed by Beckett so as to to undermine the Apollonian primacy or logocentricism maintained throughout the 19th century (not least by Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*). Likewise, Albright likens the tension between sense and intellect in Beckett's to the musical contest between the satyr Marsyas and Apollo. Marsyas, like Dionysos, embodies ritual, ecstasy, and (blasphemous) pandemonium. "In the end, Apollo is the victor over Marsyas in Beckett's works,"³⁶⁶ Albright concludes, since, despite his preoccupation with disorder, the author/narrator always takes "delight in the symmetry of chaos itself."³⁶⁷ As to the antagonism between sound and content, Branigan asserts that "[i]n his preoccupation with musical and vocal qualities, he often gives priority to rhythm or vocal timbre over the sense of his text,"³⁶⁸ thus subscribing to the same view of a victory of one concept over the other. It would seem, however, that by highlighting or "giving priority to" the sound

³⁶² Cf. Bryden, SBM, 25.

³⁶³ Gontarski (1985), 184.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, 11.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Albright (2003), 46.

³⁶⁷ Ibid, 45.

³⁶⁸ Branigan (2008), 51.

qualities of his texts at the expense of its substance, Beckett would have mitigated or even done away with the very equilibrium that marks a cornerstone of his work. This is to say that, it is the bilateral presence and instability of sound and meaning, external and internal referentiality, the very dialectic inherent in language itself, which is paramount to Beckett's artistic vision.³⁶⁹ As Beckett actor Alvin Epstein suggested in an interview,

(...) no matter how abstract and disconnected you want to keep yourself from the meaning of the text, it still has meaning; it's not notes in music, where you can keep your distance. These are specific words, they say things, they have referential meaning (...). And so I think that it isn't quite sincere to call it "music."³⁷⁰

In unison with the principle of *enantiodromia*, Beckett's language is marked by a dynamic dialectic interplay, rather than hierarchy, between the opposite poles of form and content, sound and substance. Despite their interdependence, they reciprocate, and potentiate, each other's uncertainties. As opposed to merely combining speech sounds like musical notes in language compositions (as did, for example, the Dadaists), Beckett's aesthetic in every respect exploits the dual nature of the linguistic sign by means of a not-quite absence and a not-quite presence of both referentiality and non-referentiality. This concurs with a notion put forth by Roland Barthes, the "rustle," i.e. the sonorization of language. The crucial point is that the "rustle," manifested in "stammering," is envisaged as a way out of the malfunction of language, in other words: the language crisis.

The rustle of language forms a utopia. Which utopia? That of a music of meaning; in its utopic state, language would be enlarged, I should even say *denatured*, to the point of forming a vast auditory fabric in which the semantic apparatus would be made unreal; the phonic, metric, vocal signifier would be deployed in all its sumptuousness, without a sign ever becoming detached from it (ever *naturalizing* this pure layer of delectation), but also – and this is what is difficult – **without meaning being brutally dismissed, dogmatically foreclosed, in short castrated.** Rustling, entrusted to the signifier by an unprecedented movement unknown to our rational discourses, language would not thereby abandon a horizon of meaning: meaning, undivided, impenetrable, unnamable, would however be posited in the distance like a mirage, making the vocal exercise into a double landscape,

³⁶⁹ An analogy of this would be Ligeti's deliberation on musical notation at the interface between music and visual art. He distinguishes between notational "Zeichen" ("signs," semantically charged, external referentiality) and "Zeichnungen" ("drawings"/"graphics," internal referentiality), contending that, in hybrids of "Zeichen" and "Zeichnungen," the difference between these two forms of notation is not intended to be blurred, but, conversely, accentuated: "Die Existenz von Mischformen bedeutet jedoch nicht, daß die Trennung von 'Zeichen' und 'Zeichnung' verwischt werden soll. Im Gegenteil: daß innerhalb der Mischformen der Zeichenanteil und der graphische Aspekt sich trennen lassen, zeigt gerade, daß es sich um zwei grundverschiedene Kategorien handelt." (Ligeti, György. "Neue Notation – Kommunikationsmittel oder Selbstzweck?" *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik: Notation*. Ed. Ernst Thomas. Mainz: Schott, 1965. 35- 50: 42.

³⁷⁰ Kalb, 194.

furnished with a "background"; but instead of the music of the phonemes being the "background" of our messages (as happens in our poetry), meaning would now be the vanishing point of delectation. And just as, when attributed to the machine, the rustle is only the noise of an absence of noise, in the same way, shifted to language, it would be that meaning which reveals an exemption from meaning or – the same thing – that non-meaning which produces in the distance a meaning henceforth liberated from all the aggressions of which the sign, formed in the "sad and fierce history of men", is the Pandora's box.³⁷¹

It is, furthermore, interesting that Barthes points out certain approaches to "rustling" in postserial music,³⁷² which, to be sure, converges with our observations on the types of musico-literary interaction presented in the following chapters. This constant flux of perception between sound and meaning precludes the presence of any unidirectional causal relation between the two. In a sense, this resounds with John Cage's Zen-informed rejection of the principle of causality:

That there is no cause and effect, what is meant is that there are an incalculable infinity of causes and effects, that in fact each and every thing in all of time and space is related to each and every other thing in all of time and space. This being so there is no need to cautiously proceed in dualistic terms [...].³⁷³

Thus, as delineated in "The Rustle of Language," it is important to stress that "without meaning being brutally dismissed," the formal-semantic bilateral instability of Beckett's language precludes any notion of pure, transcendental, or "absolute music"³⁷⁴ on the one hand and the possibility of language to be read as a carrier of unequivocal messages on the other.

Two examples will illustrate this point: If Beckett's preoccupation with linguistic sonority partly stemmed from his examination of Joyce's *Work in Progress*, he indeed seemed to have inherited from Joyce the technique of utilizing repetitions, refrains³⁷⁵ and echoes.³⁷⁶ This is apparent in the following stichomythic dialogue from *Waiting for Godot*, whose sonority derives not only from phonetic patterns, but also from parallel syntax.

³⁷¹ Barthes, Roland. "The Rustle of Language." *The Rustle of Language*. Transl. Richard Howard. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. 76-9: 77-8. Emphasis added.

³⁷² Ibid, 78.

³⁷³ *Silence*, 47.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Cf. Cohn, Ruby. *Just Play. Samuel Beckett's Theater*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. 102-5.

³⁷⁶ Knowlson (1996), 106.

Estragon: In the meantime let us try and converse calmly, since we are incapable of keeping silent.
 Vladimir: You're right, we're inexhaustible.
 Estragon: It's so we won't think.
 V: We have that excuse.
 E: It's so we won't hear.
 V: We have our reasons.
 E: All the dead voices. // Toutes les voix mortes.
 V: They make a noise like wings. // Ça fait un bruit d'ailes.
 E: Like leaves. // De feuilles.
 V: Like sand. // De sable.
 E: Like leaves. // De feuilles.
 [Silence.]
 V: They all speak together. // Elles parlent toutes en même temps.
 E: Each one to itself. // Chacune à part soi.
 [Silence.]
 V: Rather they whisper. // Plutôt elles chuchotent.
 E: They rustle. // Elles murmurent.
 V: They murmur. // Elles bruissent.
 E: They rustle. // Elles murmurent.
 [Silence.]
 V: What do they say? // Que disent-elles?
 E: They talk about their lives. // Elles parlent de leur vie.
 V: To have lived is not enough for them. // Il ne leur suffit pas d'avoir vécu.
 E: They have to talk about it. // Il faut qu'elles en parlent.
 V: To be dead is not enough for them. // Il ne leur suffit pas d'être mortes.
 E: It is not sufficient. // Ce n'est pas assez.
 [Silence.]
 V: They make a noise like feathers. // Ça fait un bruit de plumes.
 E: Like leaves. // De feuilles.
 V: Like ashes. // De cendres.
 E: Like leaves. // De feuilles.
 [Long silence.]³⁷⁷

There are three passages with iambic meter in this stichomythic passage from "like wings" to the first silence, from "they whisper" to the second silence and from "like feathers" to the end of the passage. Each of these passages dealing with auditory impressions are marked by a sequence of three different vowel sounds, so that the phonic pattern is /i/ - /i:/ - /æ/ - /i:/ for the first, /i/ - /ʌ/ - /ɜ/ - /ʌ/ for the second, and /e/ - /i:/ - /æ/ - /i:/ for the third one. As is apparent, Beckett exploits the possibilities of linguistic sonority so as to merge the text's substance with the iconic potential of its own sound material, which he did in the original French version as well. The only difference is the complementary distribution of the sibilant and nasal sounds in "rustle"/"bruissent" and "murmur"/"murmurent."

However, the euphony or evenness of sounds in this dialogue is comparatively short-lived (as compared to the dialogue as a whole): Lacking the creativity to think of other metaphors for a poetic depiction of the dead voices, Didi and Gogo disrupt their dialogue after each passage of similes, and what follows is silence, before they start over

³⁷⁷ CDW, 58. French text: *En attendant Godot*. Paris: Minuit, 1966.

again. As a result, euphony serves as an ordering principle that offers only a *temporary* stay against the meaninglessness of the human condition and the tedium of (co-)existence. Overall, content is not outdone by form or vice versa.

The sonority in our second example, a paragraph from the prose piece *Worstward Ho*, is created by assonances, notably by frequent use of the phonemes /ʊ/, /u:/, /ɔ/ thus of back vowels, and closing diphthongs /aʊ/ and /oʊ/.

Somehow again on back to the bowed back alone. Nothing to show a woman's and yet a woman's. Oozed from softening soft the word woman's The words old woman's. The words nothing to show bowed back alone a woman's and yet a woman's. So better worse from now that a shade a woman's. An old woman's.³⁷⁸

The /u:/ sound in "Oozed," bringing to mind Krapp's dwelling on the vowel sound in the word "spool," betrays Beckett's playful enjoyment in the semantic deployment of speech sounds and his appreciation of the iconic potential of spoken language. This also becomes manifest in his poetry: "Rarely in Beckett's best poems does a word that is semantically crucial find itself phonetically isolated,"³⁷⁹ Harvey notes. In view of the results of Iván Fónagy's phonetic research, one could go so far as to state that his use of certain speech sounds is instantly understood (and intuitively as well) even by someone having no command of English. According to Fónagy's study, individuals of all ages and various cultural backgrounds feel that the phonemes /o/ /u/ carry a "dark" connotation,³⁸⁰ which is indeed easily verified in a variety of onomatopoeic poems of the European literary tradition. It might be owing to this inseparable combination of sound and meaning that Beckett considered *Worstward Ho* untranslatable.³⁸¹ In *Molloy*, Beckett describes syllables starting on /o/ sounds (ose, oy, one, oc) as "very thick, as though gobbled by the first [syllable]."³⁸² Furthermore, a character by the name of Moll embodies a type of love interest in *Malone Dies*. With its mellow sound, the consonant /l/ is often used as a metaphor for love, even in the word "love" itself. In this, Beckett revealed an extraordinary sensitivity to the semantic potential of speech sounds affirming the phonetician's research results. This concern with speech sounds is also evident in *Not I* or *How It Is*, where language is debunked as being no more than a series of

³⁷⁸ SB, *Nohow On*. New York: Grove Press, 1996, 108.

³⁷⁹ Harvey, Lawrence. *Samuel Beckett. Poet and Critic*. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1970, 247.

³⁸⁰ Fónagy (1963), 60-4.

³⁸¹ Gontarski, S. E. "Introduction." *Nohow On*, xi.

³⁸² *Three Novels* (1958), 112.

"movements for nothing of the lower face" (*How It Is*³⁸³) rather than as an intellectual product. Mouth gets "half the vowels wrong," and as we have seen above, "labials" are brought up in *How It Is*. Returning to the passage quoted above, the thick, "masculine" /o/ and /u/ sounds stand in stark contrast to the "feminine" softness of the bilabials /w/ and /b/.³⁸⁴ By meditating on the "softness" of "the word woman's," Beckett's narrator merges interiority and acoustic reality or substance and form, adhering to what he admired about Joyce's writing, notably that it "is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*."³⁸⁵ However, neither sound nor message are closed systems, and neither is prior or posterior to the other. If the two 'channels' opened by the linguistic sign, signifier and signified, are simultaneous, such that causality is out of the question, a certain degree of equivocality is already built into the linguistic material on which composers draw. In metafictional terms, Beckett endows his text with discontinuous sonority (which one may or may not call "musicality") so as to mirror the broken continuity of the purport and in order to disrupt continuities within the literary framework as a whole. Yet, just as Murphy's body and mind and Beckett's other "pseudocouples," sound and meaning are inextricably bound up together in an aesthetic microcosm in which the Cartesian partition between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* has become obsolete, and any conception of reality has come to be accepted as being "invented"³⁸⁶ *a priori*. Returning to Bruno's principle of identity of opposites and Jung's *enantiodromia*,

[...] if differences are identical, this also means that if we want to get rid of a certain part of reality we can never succeed by simply turning to its opposite: we are trapped, and the only way out is to oscillate between two given opposites and search for a gateway to what is behind or beyond; this is Beckett's situation.³⁸⁷

In Beckett, composers have found a writer who deployed his linguistic material in such a manner that its referential and self-referential sides seem equally present, yet equally volatile, the emphasis here being on "equally." That this de-hierarchization resonates with the idea of having the text "participate" in the music, as Bernard Rands put it,³⁸⁸ in lieu of "setting" it, will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

³⁸³ *How It Is* (1964), 108.

³⁸⁴ Compare the bilabial "mother" sound /m/, cf. Fónagy (1963), 71.

³⁸⁵ SB, *Disjecta*, 27.

³⁸⁶ Cf. Watzlawick, Paul, ed. *The Invented Reality: How Do We Know What We Believe We Know? Contributions to Constructivism*. New York: Norton, 1984.

³⁸⁷ Rathjen, Friedhelm. "The Magic Triangle: James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Arno Schmidt." *Samuel Beckett Today – Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000*. 92-102: 95.

³⁸⁸ "One gets the text to participate in an exploration of itself." Rands, qtd. in Tassel (1991), 34.

The image of a "hall of mirrors" is used by both Mary Bryden³⁸⁹ in reference to music in Beckett's work and by composer Walter Zimmermann, who uses it to explain his approach to operatic word-setting in general:

Man projiziert wieder Text, Musik aufeinander, aber in einer Weise, daß man nicht die Eigenform, die Eigenautonomie zerstört. Dadurch entsteht, wenn man sich das Ganze von einem Feld umgeben denkt, das wie ein Spiegelkabinett beschaffen sein kann, ein Raum voller Spiegel. So gibt es Projektionsflächen, auf denen sich Facetten dieser Text-Musik-Projektion abbilden. [Once more, text and music are projected onto one another, yet in a way that preserves their individual forms and autonomy. If we imagine the entirety of this process as being surrounded by a field with the properties of a hall of mirrors, a space full of mirrors is created. As such, we can see individual facets of this text-music projection as they appear on various surfaces within the field.]³⁹⁰

It is this shift away from the causality-governed scheme of *prima le parole, dopo la musica* (or vice versa)³⁹¹ doubling the expressive content, toward a de-hierarchization and equivocality of inter-artistic relations that may at least partially, account for Beckett's wide appeal to composers. It can easily be seen that the writer's own strategy of dispersing or 'multi-channeling' meaning or enhancing aesthetic openness by means of different semiotic systems mirroring one another³⁹² down to the smallest components of his language generates a tremendous hermeneutical elasticity across cultures, generations and social strata, encouraging the addressee to "*make the work* together with the author."³⁹³

³⁸⁹ SBM, 28.

³⁹⁰ Zimmermann, Walter. "Das Spiegelkabinett," op. cit., 118.

³⁹¹ Stoianova (1988), 52-67.

³⁹² This evokes Barthes' delineation of the symbolic content of the mirror in East as opposed to the Western function of a mirror: "In the West, the mirror is an essentially narcissistic object: man conceives a mirror only in order to look at himself in it; but in the Orient, apparently, the mirror is empty; it is the symbol of the very emptiness of symbols [...]: the mirror intercepts only other mirrors, and this definite reflection is emptiness itself (which, as we know, is form)." "The Incident." *Empire of Signs*, 77-80: 79.

³⁹³ Eco (1989), 21.

3. Morton Feldman: *neither* (1976/77)

3.1. "Allowing the sounds to be free": Feldman's aesthetic trajectory

The last ten years have seen American composers, painters and poets assuming leading roles in the world of international art to a degree hitherto unexpected. Led by the painters, our whole cultural milieu has changed and is still changing. The "climate" for receptivity to the new in art has improved correspondingly, and one of the most important aspects of this change has been the inter-involvement of the individual arts with one another. (Frank O'Hara, 1972)¹

3.1.1. The New York School

In the winter months of 1950, Morton Feldman, at the age of 24, was introduced to a circle of New York painters, sculptors, composers, poets, dancers, choreographers, and musicians later to become known as the "New York School(s)."² In many respects, Feldman's compositional ideas are rooted in the creative achievements of the abstract expressionist painters, with whom, at least in aesthetic terms, he felt much closer than with John Cage. Equipped with a great amount of creative freedom, a broadminded attitude,³ and a strong pioneer spirit, this vanguard movement soon advanced to becoming a hub of artistic activity, on a par with Paris. After the Second World War, the New York School (NYS) "took the world by storm," as Feldman put it.⁴ "To understand the intellectual climate in which the music of 'chance' first emerged, one must know something of the renaissance happening to painting in the early 1950's in New York City. It was a sort of frontier atmosphere in which an extraordinary *laissez faire* prevailed," the composer reported.⁵

¹ "New Directions in Music: Morton Feldman." *Give My Regards to Eighth Street. Collected Writings of Morton Feldman* (hereafter GMR). Cambridge, Mass.: Exact Change, 2000. 211-7: 211.

² Cf. *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, ed. Steven Johnson. New York: Routledge, 2002. Johnson uses the plural, discriminating between visual artists, writers and composers. Nicholls, furthermore, stresses that "there was no single group style, but rather a number of independent styles." (Nicholls, David. "Getting Rid of the Glue: The Music of the New York School." *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, op. cit., 17-56: 17). Notwithstanding, the present author uses the singular form so as to emphasize the cross-fertilization and interconnectedness of different artistic media.

³ "Während z.B. in Frankreich Diskussionen stets in Gruppierungen stattfanden, deren Vertreter gewisse gemeinsame Grundannahmen teilten, entspann sich in New York der Dialog innerhalb eines völlig heterogenen, losen Zusammenschlusses ungeduldiger Individualisten." Saxer, Marion. *Between Categories. Studien zum Komponieren Morton Feldmans von 1951 bis 1977*. Munich: Pfau, 1998, 23.

⁴ Feldman, "Give My Regards to Eighth Street." GMR. 93-101: 100. See also Bernstein, David W., "John Cage and the 'Aesthetic of Indifference.'" *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, op. cit., 113-133: 114.

⁵ Feldman, "A Life without Bach and Beethoven." GMR, 15-18: 15.

As with the postmodernism debate (s. chapters 4.1.3 and 5.1.3.), the art critics Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg engaged in heated debates as to whether the aesthetic ideas of the NYS (painters) were "part of the continuum of Modernism" (Greenberg's position) or whether they should be regarded as a "break with a past; a rupture with tradition" (Rosenberg's position).⁶ It appears that their arguments are equally valid: A center of artistic innovation, transmedial and transdisciplinary inspiration and exchange, this creative 'think tank' indubitably owed much to the European modernist movement, despite its desire to cut loose from European tradition: John Cage, after all, was strongly influenced by the creative innovations of Marcel Duchamp and modernist architecture, above all the Bauhaus architects.⁷ Furthermore, to many composers, French émigré Edgar Varèse assumed the role of a spiritual father. Hans Hofmann or Feldman's teacher Stefan Wolpe implicitly and explicitly shaped the ideas circulating in the intellectual climate of the New York School. Above all, antecedents of the ideas put forward by Feldman and Cage concerning the liberation of sounds, the quest for immediacy, new instrumental timbres, the problem of notation etc. had already received much attention and given rise to spirited discussions in European musical modernism.⁸ To be sure, these cultural flows were an outcome of strengthening social, political, and economic ties. Emigration from Europe to the US in the 1930's and 40's fostered the construction of an American identity under the influence of European art and artists at the same time as it maintained the aesthetic umbilical cord between Europe and America.

Apart from Feldman, Varèse, Hofmann, or Wolpe, prominent members of the New York School included the composers John Cage, LaMonte Young, Earle Brown, the painters Willem de Kooning (Dutch-born), Franz Kline, Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Mark Rothko, Philip Guston, Jackson Pollock, and Clyfford Still, and the poets Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler, Barbara Guest, and John Ashbery, among many others. Through Wolpe, a "catalyst for the younger New York

⁶ Kleebblatt, Norman L. "Action, Abstraction, Reaction." *Action/Abstraction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 1-13: 4.

⁷ As Christopher Shultis wrote, "[...] there is remarkable irony to the fact that important aspects of what was upsetting to Cage's audience, and what separated him from the mainstream of the post-war European musical avant-garde, were ideas that he had first discovered many years before in Germany." Cf. "Cage in Europe." *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*. Ed. David Nicholls. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 20-40: 23.

⁸ This is evident, for example, in Ferruccio Busoni's *Ideen zu einer Neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst*. Leipzig: Insel, 1916.

School musicians,"⁹ Feldman got to know Varèse, Tudor, and some of the painters.¹⁰ It was primarily John Cage, however, who introduced him to the circle of artists¹¹ that assembled regularly in bars and restaurants in lower Manhattan, mostly on Eighth Street. One of these venues of discussion and exchange was the *Cedar Bar*.¹² Other encounters took place in John Cage's apartment on the top floor of an old building on the East River Drive and Grand Street.¹³ Feldman soon became Cage's housemate. It was "a sort of pre-hippie community. But instead of drugs, we had art," he recalled.¹⁴

Most of the NYS artists became members of the legendary "Club."¹⁵ This was not only a locus of experimentation and a marketplace of creative ideas, but also a sanctuary for the artistic avant-garde and their controversial art. It was, after all, the heyday of national self-confidence, the rise of mass culture, and Eisenhowerian anti-intellectualism,¹⁶ when teenage idols and actors such as Marilyn Monroe and James Dean, rock 'n' roll and Pop Art were equidistant from older generations on the one hand, and Cold War mobilization and McCarthyism on the other, challenging the ethical values of both. In the years following the Second World War, Stravinsky and Copland, arguably the most widely-received living composers of art music in the U.S. at that time, turned to serialism. This appears to have been one important reason why public interest in art music was either on the wane or rather on the conservative side, while the popular music industry was experiencing a boom. Likewise, broadcasting stations and filmmakers preferred the repertoire of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to contemporary works.¹⁷ It was not without sullenness that Feldman remarked in 1969 that "social life doesn't give a damn about art."¹⁸ By contrast, in a late interview, Feldman reveals a

⁹ Johnson, Steven, "A Junction at Eighth Street." *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, op. cit. 1-15: 5.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Feldman, "Liner Notes." GMR. 4-7: 4-5; "A Life Without Bach and Beethoven," 15.

¹² Feldman, "Give My Regards to Eighth Street," 97.

¹³ Ibid, 94.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ A private, informal association of artists who, from late 1949, met regularly in a loft on 39 E. Eighth Street for discussions, lectures, and conferences. Cf. Sandler, Irving. "The Club." *Abstract Expressionism. A Critical Record*, eds. Shapiro, Cecile and David Shapiro. Cambridge: CUP, 1990. 48-58.

¹⁶ Hofstadter, Richard. *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. NY: Vintage, 1963. 3-5.

¹⁷ Warthen Struble, John. *The History of American Classical Music. MacDowell Through Minimalism*. NY: Facts on File, 1995, 285.

¹⁸ Feldman, "Neither/Nor." GMR, 80-2: 82

more reconciliatory attitude toward these circumstances, stating that "there is something about capitalism and democracy that worked very well for American art."¹⁹

Within the American cultural context, then, the vanguard NYS may certainly be viewed as an intellectual counterculture or bohemia.²⁰ Not only are the music and the art emanating from the New York School indicative of the transatlantic flows of aesthetic ideas in the 1930's and 40's; they also reveal *ex negativo* much about the cultural mainstream in the U.S. if seen as a reaction to it, i.e. if the tolerance and open-mindedness which the artists appreciated in one another are set against the backdrop of the "manichean trap"²¹ of binary ethics and the public climate of intolerance they perceived in their sociocultural situation. Although Feldman was, at least overtly, the least political composer discussed in the present work,²² the NYS's self-containment is perhaps more political an issue than any artistic work openly criticizing the political status quo could have possibly been.²³ "Can we say this man is really disengaged? His chief occupation seems to be this very disengagement,"²⁴ Feldman wrote as a response to Messiaen's political ignorance, which one could say equally about the New York composers. The notion that Feldman's work is antithetically embedded in its socio-cultural context was put forth by Mauser, who suggested that Feldman's compositions, with their slow tempi, sounds on the verge of being inaudible, and extreme lengths, represent an alternate, sensual uni-

¹⁹ Feldman, Morton. "I'm reassembling all the time." *Morton Feldman in Middleburg. Words on Music/Worte über Musik*. 2 Vols. Ed. Raoul Mörchen. Cologne: Edition MusikTexte, 2008 (hereafter MFM). 46-155: 100.

²⁰ As Kleeblatt describes the situation of the New York painters in 1940, around the time when Greenberg's "Towards a Newer Laocoon" appeared: "In its bohemia, the avant-garde was clearly separated from, even elevated above, the banality of both the bourgeoisie and the anti-bourgeoisie. Paradoxically, though, the avant-garde remained financially dependent on the ruling class, though it was neither controllable enough nor useful enough to serve totalitarian regimes." (*Action/Abstraction*, 5).

²¹ Term coined by the historian Detlef Junker to describe the dualistic modes of thinking often associated with U.S. American culture and mentality. Cf., for example: Junker, Detlef. "Die manichäische Falle. Das Deutsche Reich im Urteil der USA, 1871-1945." *Das Deutsche Reich im Urteil der Großen Mächte und europäischen Nachbarn (1871-1945)*. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995. 141-58.

²² "[...] I do feel that *Kunst* reflects society, that within a controlled society you cannot have a free *Kunst*. But yet *Kunst* is separate, the way chemistry is separate from other physical things, separate but related. [...] For you to talk about society is as if I had a bunch of dishes and you asked me for a match [...]" Feldman, "XXX Anecdotes and Drawings." *Morton Feldman Essays*, ed. Walter Zimmermann, Kerpen: Beginner Press, 1985 (hereafter MFE). 114-180: 170. It appears, furthermore, that Feldman, very much like Beckett, felt the need to work in utmost seclusion ("Conversation between Morton Feldman and Walter Zimmermann." MFE 229- 44: 243-4).

²³ Shapiro/Shapiro (1990), 11. Cage's attempt to reconcile art and society was ridiculed by Feldman: "Cage's idea, summed up years later in the words "Everything is music," had led him more and more toward a social point of view, less and less toward an artistic one." "Give My Regards to Eighth Street." GMR, 99.

²⁴ "Neither/Nor," 80.

verse to the noisy and fast-paced urban environment in which they were conceived.²⁵ What intensified this aesthetic hermeticism, alienation and quest for non-relational art (which, as Shapiro and Shapiro assert, parallels existentialism in European literature, including the writings of Beckett²⁶) was that, after the Second World War the NYS was "under attack from all sides including the European avant-garde" (Christian Wolff²⁷), which is evident in Feldman's fiercely polemical remarks about the Darmstadt composers. For example, in 1965 he wrote about their differences: "Our work did not have the authoritarianism, I might almost say, the terror, inherent in the teachings of Boulez, Schoenberg, and now Stockhausen."²⁸

Notwithstanding the influences from Surrealism and Freudian theory,²⁹ initial exchanges with European or European-born artists such as Marcel Duchamp or Edgar Varèse, it would be misleading to view the NYS as an enclave of European vanguard movements and, along these lines, Feldman's music as merely an offspring thereof. Rather, his attitude exhibits traits that are deeply rooted in American academic history and cultural memory, i.e. anti-professionalism,³⁰ self-reliance,³¹ his empiricist, intuitive approach to composition,³² or his and his fellow composers' credo of what one might call 'individualism of sounds': enhancing the status of individual sound events vis-à-vis the texture as a whole. As John Cage once phrased it: "Where people had felt the necessity to stick sounds together to make a continuity, we four [i.e., Christian Wolff, Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, and Cage himself] felt the opposite necessity to get rid of the glue so that the sounds would be themselves."³³ From the outset, Feldman felt more at home with the non-relational art of the abstract expressionists³⁴ than with contemporary

²⁵ *Morton Feldman. Der Klang und sein Schatten.* TV documentary by Klaus Voswinckel, 2002 (first broadcast on Bayerischer Rundfunk on October 19, 2002).

²⁶ Shapiro and Shapiro (1990), 4.

²⁷ Smith, Nicola Walker. "Feldman on Wolff and Wolff on Feldman: Mutually Speaking." *The Musical Times* 142.1876 (2001): 24-27: 27.

²⁸ "The Anxiety of Art." *GMR*, 21-32: 22.

²⁹ Shapiro/Shapiro (1990), 1.

³⁰ This, of course, calls to mind Charles Ives' double career. Feldman too did not give up working at his father's factory until he was in his forties. (Zimmermann, Walter. "Morton Feldman – Der Ikonoklast," *MFE*, 10-23: 10; cf. also: Blum, Eberhard. "Über Morton Feldman sprechen. Vier Artikel von Eberhard Blum." *Positionen* 11 (1992): 29-33: 33). "If you don't have a job in Europe, you are professional." ("XXX Anecdotes and Drawings." *MFE*, 157).

³¹ Cf. Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Self-Reliance." *Ralph Waldo Emerson. Selected Essays, Lectures, and Poems.* Ed. Robert D. Richardson. New York: Bantam, 2007. 150-75.

³² Empiricism: cf. Saxer, 147-61, on the influence of William James on Feldman's aesthetic views. Intuition: Cf. Christian Wolff on Feldman: Smith, op. cit., 25.

³³ Cage, *Silence*, op. cit., 71.

³⁴ For a compact analysis of the impact of abstract expressionist non-relational art on Feldman's thinking, cf. Saxer's chapter 2 (pp. 30-53).

musicians or other composers, let alone the musical heritage: "As an American I don't even think about a tradition," he said in 1987.³⁵ With John Cage he rarely talked about music³⁶ or other composers, not even about Ives.³⁷ Musicians, except for David Tudor, even "felt threatened" (Wolff³⁸) by Feldman's music. As John Cage said in his *Lecture on Something* about the kinship between music and the visual arts:

Mostly, right now, there is painting and sculpture, and just as formerly when starting to be abstract, artists referred to musical practices to show that what they were doing was valid, so nowadays, musicians, to explain what they are doing, say, "See, the painters and sculptors have been doing it for quite some time."³⁹

There was, however, one composer in whom Feldman saw a father figure: Edgar Varèse, to whom Feldman was introduced by Stefan Wolpe in 1944.⁴⁰ Feldman once wrote that, in his view, the twentieth century started with *Ionisation* and that he was much intrigued by Varèse's empirical approach, i.e. his preoccupation with the sounding result rather than with the formal architecture of the composition.⁴¹ Varèse had recommended Feldman to "think about the time it takes from the stage to go out there into the audience."⁴² This prompted him to focus more on the construction than on the perception of his music. His concern with the acoustic reality of his works marks an unmistakable shift from conceptual to reception- and process-oriented composing. In this, Feldman's approach was equidistant from serialism on the one hand and John Cage's indeterminacy on the other. It was also equidistant from what he called the "popular" style of the minimalists on the one hand and the "academic" approach to composition taught at universities.⁴³ Although Feldman never engaged in electronic experimentation, let alone scientific research, his individualism of sounds and his emphasis on the inner life of timbre converge to a certain degree with those of later empirical schools such as the French spectralists (who carried the penchant for composition based on acoustic reality

³⁵ Feldman, "Neither European Nor American." MFM, 634-705: 664.

³⁶ "Liner Notes," 5.

³⁷ "Neither European Nor American," 664.

³⁸ Smith (2001), 27.

³⁹ *Silence*, 144.

⁴⁰ Claren, op. cit., 523.

⁴¹ Feldman, "Die Avantgarde: Fortschritt oder Stillstand?" (German translation) MFE, 44-45: 45.

⁴² Feldman, "The Future of Local Music." GMR, 157-95: 170.

⁴³ Moore, Thomas. "'We Must Pursue Anxiety.' An Interview with Morton Feldman." *Sonus* 4.2 (1984): 14-19: 16.

to extremes) rather than with the minimalists (a label that he himself rejected⁴⁴). The same idea is echoed in Cage's professed goal of "knowing more and more not what I think a sound is, but what it actually is in all of its acoustical details and then letting this sound exist, itself, changing in a changing sonorous environment."⁴⁵ Nonetheless, there is an indisputable aesthetic kinship between some of Feldman's and Stockhausen's compositional ideas. Revealingly, Feldman felt the need to set himself apart from the German composer's "Gargantuan eclecticism."⁴⁶ David Tudor, performing new works both East and West of the Atlantic, appears to have acted as an intermediary between European and North American composers, and, most likely, as a transmitter of ideas. Recalling that Stockhausen had come up with the notion of incorporating indeterminacy into his *Klavierstück No. 11* immediately after Feldman had written his *Intersections*, Tudor reported that he had informed Stockhausen about Feldman's idea and, notwithstanding, encouraged him to write the piece regardless.⁴⁷ This example points to the mutual fertilization of the NYS and the Darmstadt school, which tended to be downplayed, if not denied, on either side. Significantly, the *tabula rasa* or "clean slate" (Cage)⁴⁸ maxim of the NYS was paralleled by the "zero hour of music" (Dibelius⁴⁹) of the Darmstadt school. Feldman, whom Zimmermann dubbed an "iconoclast,"⁵⁰ a label which Feldman himself repudiated,⁵¹ once quoted De Kooning's dictum "History doesn't influence me. I influence it."⁵² What is more, Feldman spoke out against the de-contextualization and subsequent canonization of compositional techniques and idioms:

The mistake of the traditionalist lies in taking from history what he needs, without realizing that Byrd without Catholicism, Bach without Protestantism, and Beethoven without the Napoleonic ideal, would be minor figures. It is precisely this element of "propaganda" – precisely this reflection of a *zeitgeist* – that gave the work of these men its myth-like stature.⁵³

⁴⁴ Feldman on Minimalism: cf. "Between Disney and Mondrian." MFM, 592-633: 596; "Neither European nor American." 664-8.

⁴⁵ Cage, John. *A Year from Monday. New Lectures and Writings by John Cage*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Pr., 1969, 100.

⁴⁶ "A Life without Bach and Beethoven," 17-8.

⁴⁷ Schonfield, Victor and David Tudor. "From Piano to Electronics." *Music and Musicians* 8 (1972): 24-6: 25. In Middleburg, Feldman accused Stockhausen of "ripping that piece off": cf. "I'm reassembling all the time," 98-100.

⁴⁸ "Lecture on Nothing," *Silence*, 116.

⁴⁹ Dibelius, Ulrich. *Moderne Musik nach 1945*. Munich: Piper, 1998, 23.

⁵⁰ Zimmermann, MFE, 11.

⁵¹ "The Anxiety of Art," 23.

⁵² "The Anxiety of Art," 32.

⁵³ "A Life without Bach and Beethoven," 17.

In another essay, Feldman polemicizes: "For centuries we have been victimized by European civilization."⁵⁴

The NYS's solipsism and skepticism toward the European tradition and American mass culture may also be seen as an attempt to construct a national identity in and through art music⁵⁵ following in the footsteps of Charles Ives. As Shapiro and Shapiro wrote about the painters of the NYS, "they were to be not the midwives of regenerated art but the first cause. They aimed to create something utterly unexampled, entirely their own, and yet completely American."⁵⁶ This might provide another explanation for Feldman's harsh attacks upon European contemporaries, of whom Boulez, "who is everything I don't want art to be" (Feldman⁵⁷), was most frequently the target. Reminiscent of Richard Wagner's remarks about Giacomo Meyerbeer, he once denounced the French composer in the following terms:

Recently I heard news from Europe that Boulez is adopting the chance techniques of John and perhaps myself. Like Mathieu, he is going to show us Katzenjammer Kids how an ambitious Frenchman can really do it. It was easy for Napoleon to reach Moscow. And it will be curious to observe Boulez straggling home to Darmstadt.⁵⁸

As with "Wagner vs. Meyerbeer," Feldman's hostility toward Boulez was not without cause: Apparently, the young composer took offense at Boulez' repudiation of the early scores that Feldman had sent him, followed by an argument over the title *Structures*, which both Feldman and Boulez chose for a composition written in the same year.⁵⁹ Representing the antipode of Feldman's envisioned sensuality, Boulez was, according to Feldman, "not interested in how a piece sounds, only in how it's made."⁶⁰ By contrast, Feldman' music was "sometimes too beautiful," even "erotic,"⁶¹ as John Cage put it. While Cage for many years maintained friendly ties with Boulez (notwithstanding the gradual cooling down of the friendship as revealed by their correspondence⁶² and

⁵⁴ "Neither/Nor," 80.

⁵⁵ Which had received its initial impetus from Antonin Dvořák, who had encouraged American composers to incorporate Indian and African-American folk songs into their compositions, and was then continued by Arthur Farwell's 'arrangements' of Indian folk songs and, of course, Ives, who died in 1954.

⁵⁶ Shapiro/Shapiro (1990), 9.

⁵⁷ "Predeterminate/Indeterminate." GMR, 33-36: 33.

⁵⁸ "Sound, Noise, Varèse, Boulez." GMR, 1-2: 1.

⁵⁹ Claren, 527. Boulez's is a composition for two pianos (1951-2), Feldman's one for string quartet (March 1951).

⁶⁰ "Predeterminate/Indeterminate," 33.

⁶¹ Cage, "Lecture on Something." *Silence*, 128.

⁶² Boulez, Pierre and John Cage. *Correspondence et Documents*. Ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez. Winterthur: Amadeus, 1990 (= Publications of the Paul Sacher Foundation 1).

Boulez' open criticism of Cage's chance techniques⁶³), Feldman distanced himself from the French composer right from the outset.

As is evident, it is his quest for non-relationality that paradoxically relates Feldman to his own tradition and *Zeitgeist*. This is to say that the composer's anti-dogmatism and aesthetic pragmatism – a mindset placing him in an American philosophical lineage⁶⁴ – are no less anchored in its social and historical context (anti-collectivism, libertarianism⁶⁵) than Byrd's or Beethoven's music. Likewise, Cage's and Feldman's incorporation of silence and noises – the latter are referred to as "underdogs" in Cage's *Lecture on Nothing* – and the promotion of the individual sounds, along with their dismissal of prior musical knowledge, are symptomatic of the postmodern *desideratum* of "crossing the border – closing the gap,"⁶⁶ of "post-exclusivism" (Sloterdijk) or "anti-elitism" (Kramer). As Herman Sabbe maintains, it is the act of listening, hence the listener himself, whom Feldman liberated and, by doing so, to whom he taught an important lesson about life.⁶⁷

His anti-consumptive, noise-reducing art – in which each successive sound or sound configuration is the outcome of a decision, an act of invention – embodies one of the great lessons in morality given in this century through the metaphors of music: the pairing of liberty and responsibility, of caring, longing attention and the disposition for loneliness, of tolerance and the virtue of 'patientia'.⁶⁸

3.1.2. Indeterminacy and graphic notation

Under the spell of egalitarian models of society, Cage was keen to eradicate his compositional self (in accordance with Barthes' 'death of the author') through indeterminacy or

⁶³ "Alea." *Werkstatttexte*. Frankfurt on the Main: Ullstein, 1972, 100.

⁶⁴ Although Saxer takes the so-called "Metaphysical Club" of William James, Charles S. Peirce, and others as a starting point for her discussion of Feldman's pragmatism, anti-dogmatism and pragmatism might almost be considered cultural archetypes of the United States. Richard Hofstadter (1963) views these traits as deriving from the "egalitarian spirit" of the evangelical religions of the first settlers. In 1840, Alexis de Tocqueville addressed this issue in his study on the United States: "In America the purely practical part of science is admirably understood, and careful attention is paid to the theoretical portion which is immediately requisite to application. On this head the Americans always display a clear, free, original, and inventive power of mind. But hardly anyone in the United States devotes himself to the essentially theoretical and abstract portion of human knowledge. In this respect the Americans carry to excess a tendency which is, I think, discernible, though in a less degree, amongst all democratic nations." *Democracy in America*, Chapter 10. Ed. Richard D. Heffner. New York: Signet Classic, 2001, 164.

⁶⁵ As delineated, e.g., by the writer and philosopher Ayn Rand, whose writings, at that time, were ubiquitous in New York.

⁶⁶ Cf. Fiedler, op. cit.

⁶⁷ Sabbe, Hermann, op. cit., 14.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

aleatoricism. Equally impressed by this idea at the outset of his career,⁶⁹ Feldman gradually abandoned, or rather refined and controlled indeterminacy, not least because he realized that having the performer select the tones implicated no more than a transfer of responsibility from the composer to the instrumentalist/singer.

Although Feldman's credo "For art to succeed, its creator must fail"⁷⁰ was virtually in unison with Beckett's "fidelity to failure,"⁷¹ Feldman's notational procedure in the early 1950's, first took a different turn than Beckett's language. While Beckett eschewed abstraction, Feldman, although never prone to twelve-tone operations, devised a new formal system by utilizing graph paper, which he deemed an adequate tool of "liberating" sounds. As with Cage, he sought to give up control over the coming-into-being of the work, manifesting a desire for "Freiheit, von Zeit-Haben [freedom and of having time]"⁷² and of overriding the constraints imposed by compositional conventions. In addition, Feldman's graphic notation, deeply inspired by new painting techniques, such as drip and action painting,⁷³ was geared to "a sound world more direct, more immediate, more physical than anything that had existed before"⁷⁴ by means of a pointillistic procedure,⁷⁵ that is, by unhinging musical linearity and causality. It is a common misconception that John Cage was the inventor of graphic notation, for, as Nicholls notes, it was Feldman who first presented his fellow composers and painters of the NYS his first graphic piece *Projection I* for solo violin in 1950 – before Cage set about composing his precisely notated *Music of Changes*.⁷⁶ Claren even argues that it was Feldman's *Projection I* that piqued Cage's interest in the *I Ching* in the first place.⁷⁷ Feldman himself

⁶⁹ In his second sketch book (1950-1951), Feldman writes that the "basic materials" of sound experience are in a "state of complete equality." In this state, sounds are "divorced from harmony as well as counterpoint and melody." Composers, he adds, are concerned with the "degradation of sound." (archive of the Paul Sacher Foundation, hereafter: PSS, MF 0459/998-1000). This clearly points to the sociopolitical considerations underpinning Cage's and early Feldman's quest for indeterminacy.

⁷⁰ "The Anxiety of Art," 27.

⁷¹ SB, *Proust* (1970), 125.

⁷² Zimmermann, MFE, 10.

⁷³ Holzaepfel, John. "Painting by Numbers. The 'Intersections' of Morton Feldman and David Tudor." *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, op. cit., 159-172: 160.

⁷⁴ Feldman, "Autobiography." MFE, 36-40: 38.

⁷⁵ The term "Punctual Music" (Punktuelle Musik, *musique ponctuelle*), referring to the isolation of individual sound events as opposed to groups, chains, in short: *Gestalten* of sounds, was coined by Stockhausen. As opposed to Boulez, Stockhausen insisted on "punctual" rather than "pointillistic" in order to avoid confusion with impressionist pointillism. Nevertheless, both terms have been used interchangeably. Cf. Stockhausen, Karlheinz. "Es geht aufwärts." *Karlheinz Stockhausen II: Die Werke 1950-1977*. Ed. Rudolf Frisius. Mainz: Schott, 2008, 338-95: 366-7.

⁷⁶ Nicholls, David. "Getting Rid of the Glue: The Music of the New York School." *The New York Schools...*, 17-56: 26.

⁷⁷ Claren, 48, 525.

put this in more general terms: "I was on my way before I met Cage – my music didn't change when I met Cage, in fact it's opposite: his music changed when he met me."⁷⁸ However, the idea to write music on graph paper was originally neither Feldman's nor Cage's, but had already been circulated among composers in the early 1940's as a result of Joseph Schillinger's ambitious attempt to transform the study and composition of music into a rigorous science and thus to make it "available for the first time to all persons regardless of inborn ability."⁷⁹ Ironically, as with the term musical *patterns*, which was also used by Schillinger, graph notation derived from a cerebral, scientific context, but is rendered by Feldman into an epitome of musical sensuality.

Projection 1 is notated in squares and rectangles delineating tonal spaces. Feldman only supplies the performer with two instructions: The tonal range of individual spaces are to be determined by the performer, and any tone may be selected within a given space. Thus, the pitches are not determined, as opposed to other parameters such as dynamics (soft throughout), instrumentation (for solo 'cello), or durations (indicated by dotted squares the duration of which is approximately four beats at a tempo of 72 beats per minute). The sounding result is, therefore, literally a 'projection' or rendering of the composition's formal layout. As with Earle Brown's graphic pieces, such synaesthetic works represent the performer's transformation of the visual material into sound. Feldman's vision was "to project sounds into time, free from a compositional rhetoric."⁸⁰ In other words, time is the canvas onto which sounds are pointillistically applied, much like paint.

In January and February 1951, four more *Projections* were conceived, as well as the first piece of the *Intersections*. In many regards, the latter contains the most radical innovations: Not only pitch and instrumentation, but also dynamics and rhythm are left up to the performer. As John Cage commented: "The function of the performer in the case of *Intersection 3* is that of a photographer who on obtaining a camera uses it to take a

⁷⁸ "Morton Feldman Talks to Paul Griffiths." *Morton Feldman Says. Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964-1987*. Ed. Chris Villars. London: Hyphen Press, 2006 (hereafter MFS). 46-50: 46.

⁷⁹ Schillinger, Joseph. *The Schillinger System of Musical Notation*. 2 Vols. New York: Carl Fischer, ³1946 (first ed.: 1941), XXII. Although his approach is a descriptive rather than a prescriptive one, he asserts: "The history of creative experience shows that even the greatest composers have been unnecessarily limited in their rhythmic patterns because they thought in terms of ordinary musical notation." (1) Moreover, Schillinger also used rectangular shapes in his notations. Although Earle Brown states that Schillinger's notation was not a radical reform, he concedes that his system was reasonable, clear, and practical. Moreover, he calls Schillinger's graphs "famous," which points to their prominence in the 1940's (cf. Brown, Earle. "Notation und Ausführung Neuer Musik." *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik 9: Notation*. Ed. Ernst Thomas. Mainz: Schott, 1965. 64-86: 73).

⁸⁰ "Autobiography," 38.

picture."⁸¹ Feldman explained: "(...) that's why I called them *Intersection*, to me time was the distance, metaphorically, between a green light and a red light. It was like traffic, it was control. So I always controlled the time, but I didn't control the notes."⁸²

It should be noted, however, that despite certain tendencies, Feldman's aesthetic trajectory was not at all linear. Although less an eclecticist than Kim (s. chapter 4.1.2.), Feldman experimented with different forms of notation, exhibiting a great deal of stylistic versatility in the 1950's and 60's. His often neglected film scores – the earliest one written in 1950-1 – and an unpublished Minimalist composition for two pianos dated April 8, 1958,⁸³ already foreshadow the varied repetitions that later became integral to his *pattern* technique, and thus should not be overlooked; nor the fact that, for most of his works written in 1951-2, he used conventional notation, with the exception of *Marginal Intersection* for orchestra (completed July 7, 1951) and *Intersection 2* for piano (completed in August of the same year). In 1953 Feldman composed both precisely (*Extensions*, *Eleven Instruments*) and graphically notated pieces (*Intersections 3* and *4*). Although this is not particularly suggested by Feldman's commentaries, the title *Intersection* might also refer to the crossover between painting and music, or, as Stockhausen said about his own work, whose title was indubitably inspired by the *Intersections*, i.e. *Kreuzspiel* (fall 1951): between "temporal and spatial events."⁸⁴ Pointing to the high degree of abstraction in David Tudor's interpretations, Holzaepfel asserts that Feldman, in the last two *Intersections*, "came closest to the action painting of Jackson Pollock."⁸⁵ Again, it is Feldman's own comment which best corroborates this observation:

In thinking back to that time, I realize now how much the musical ideas I had in 1951 paralleled [Pollock's] mode of working. [He] placed his canvas on the ground and painted as he walked around it. I put sheets of graph paper on the wall; each sheet framed the same time duration and was, in effect, a visual rhythmic structure.⁸⁶

Although Feldman would, soon thereafter, abandon graphic notation, the notion of a *visual rhythmic structure* (clearly related to John Cage's strictly temporal *rhythmic structure*) was retained throughout his oeuvre, becoming an essential constructive principle in *neither*. The art critic Harold Rosenberg, who coined the term "Action Paint-

⁸¹ *Silence*, 36.

⁸² "XXX Anecdotes and Drawings," 158.

⁸³ PSS, MF 458/782.

⁸⁴ "Kreuzspiel." *Texte zur elektronischen und instrumentalen Musik*. Vol. 2, 11.

⁸⁵ Johnson, "A Junction at Eighth Street," 171.

⁸⁶ "Crippled Symmetry." GMR, 134-49: 147.

ing," suggested to view the canvas of the American action painter as an "arena in which to act – rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze, or 'express' an object, actual or imagined."⁸⁷ With Feldman, therefore, the score paper or "time canvas" becomes the "arena" in which to compose.

3.1.3. Free durations

As mentioned above, Feldman very soon realized that graphic notation granted the performer more leeway rather than allowing the sounds to unfold freely: "After several years of writing graph music I began to discover its most important flaw. I was not only allowing the sounds to be free – I was also liberating the performer."⁸⁸ Thus, to Feldman, aleatoricism was a step into the wrong direction in the sense that it transferred the creative responsibility from the composer to the performer.⁸⁹ Ironically, his compositional antipode, Pierre Boulez, had put forth the same argument against the same technique.⁹⁰ A first move away from John Cage's paradigm of indeterminacy, this insight ultimately led to what Sabbe has dubbed the "Feldman paradox"⁹¹: the view that more control on the part of the composer is necessary in order to arrive at his ideal of individual sound events. The key to obviating musical continuity or preconceived forms or *Gestalt*⁹² perception, namely, lay not in the performance, but in the phenomenology of music, which required meticulous planning. Trusting his artistic instincts⁹³ rather than objective procedures or artificial intelligence, Feldman posed himself the challenge of organizing sounds in such a manner that the listener would perceive individual sound events in isolation from one another rather than as part of a collective or totality. Precise notation thus seemed to be the only means to the end of "freeing the sound and not the

⁸⁷ Shapiro/Shapiro (1990), 76.

⁸⁸ "Liner Notes," 6.

⁸⁹ Cf. also: "Morton Feldman Talks to Paul Griffiths," 49.

⁹⁰ Boulez, "Alea." Op. cit.

⁹¹ Sabbe, 14.

⁹² The phenomenon of holistic perception, investigated by the school of Gestalt psychology, was obviously a matter of interest to Beckett: Kurt Koffka, one of the pre-eminent Gestalt psychologists, is mentioned in *Murphy* (1957: 48; cf. also: Knowlson, 737), probably as a result of Beckett's earlier encounters with psychological and psychoanalytical schools and theories (Knowlson 218). Feldman also talked about the "gestalt" of a musical drone (PSS, MF 0299.1/0059). On Gestalt theory cf., for example, the chapter "Gestalt Theory" in: Hamlyn, D. W. *The Psychology of Perception. A Philosophical Examination of Gestalt Theory and Derivative Theories of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979. 48-75. An analogy of *Gestalt* is the Jungian archetype. Cf. Jacobi, 43-5.

⁹³ Cf. the anecdote of Feldman's and Cage's first meeting, about which Feldman wrote: "[...] I sometimes wonder how my music would have turned out if John had not given me those early permissions to have confidence in my instincts." "Liner Notes," 5.

performer,"⁹⁴ i.e. to yield the desired "homology of aesthetic production and reception"⁹⁵ that seemed out of reach as long as the performer was interpolated as an additional compositional decision-maker. As Feldman paraphrased his aversion to shared compositional authorship in a 1983 interview: "Composition is not democratic."⁹⁶ By way of re-claiming control over his work after his early graph pieces, the reception of the music is promoted to being the *raison-d'être* of its production, while the performative aspect is devalued. Despite this latter aspect, Feldman's emphasis on sensual perception – not of a specific social group, but of *any* human listener – is, essentially, another effort to de-intellectualize the art of composing, since the authority he wields over his works is underpinned by his quest for free sounds and thus non-relational music, equally comprehensible to educated and uneducated audiences. The composer's emphasis on the acoustic result (if seen as a reaction to Darmstadt formalism and academism) clearly resonates with the "post-exclusivism"⁹⁷ that Sloterdijk identified as a central trait of postmodernism.

For the majority of works written between 1951 and 1956, Feldman used precise notation.⁹⁸ He was, however, reluctant to consider this move a "return": "I never really 'returned' to traditional notation. If you ever look at my list of works, I always alternated between one and the other."⁹⁹ That is, Feldman utilized whatever notational practice he considered apt for a particular piece.¹⁰⁰ After his first graphic pieces, *Ixion* (1958; for Merce Cunningham's choreography *Summerspace*), *Atlantis* (1959), *Out of 'Last Pieces'* (1961), *The Straits of Magellan* (1961), and *In Search of an Orchestration* (1967) were also written out as graphs. In *Atlantis* and *Out of Last Pieces* he was keen to use a "more vertical structure where soloistic passages would be at a minimum."¹⁰¹ *In Search of an Orchestration* grants the performer even more freedom than the earlier pieces by leaving the register unspecified. In addition, instruments may enter more freely than in the *Intersections*. As opposed to the early works, which were constructed as a "horizontal

⁹⁴ "H. C. E. (Here Comes Everybody). Morton Feldman in Conversation with Peter Gena." MFS, 115-34: 122.

⁹⁵ Saxer, 245.

⁹⁶ Moore, Thomas (1984), 17.

⁹⁷ Sloterdijk, 49.

⁹⁸ Saxer, 56.

⁹⁹ Feldman et al. "Soundpieces Interview: Col Gagne and Tracy Caras." MFS, 87-94: 91.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "Autobiography," 39.

row of events,"¹⁰² Feldman's new preoccupation was to explore the tone "in its depth, i.e. vertically."¹⁰³ For, as he argues, any horizontal, linear organization of tones requires a disintegration by pitch (in keeping with the Gestalt law of proximity¹⁰⁴) in order to preclude the tones from being heard as a teleological continuity in favor of a perception as individual acoustic events¹⁰⁵ or pointillistic music. In other words, his goal was to undo any coherence such that the inner life of the sounds, rather than their function in a string or hierarchy of sound, may take center stage. From this point of view, it is hardly surprising that the registers in *In Search of an Orchestration* are not specified, since pitch differentiation is guaranteed by a variety of instrumental pitch ranges and timbres. By drawing the listener's attention away from the linearity toward the vertical organization of sound events, Feldman sought to divorce musical experience from any objective temporal restrictions, thus aiming for what Bergson called *durée*. "[Stockhausen] wanted time measured out, and I wanted time felt, a more subjective feeling for time [...],"¹⁰⁶ he said. Although Saxer sees a stronger connection between William James' thought and Feldman's compositional pragmatism, it might equally have been the work of Bergson, whose influence on James Saxer also discusses,¹⁰⁷ and whom Feldman mentions in his *Darmstadt Lecture*,¹⁰⁸ that left a mark on Feldman.

While extending the duration of his pieces to the utmost – his Second String Quartet takes several hours to perform – he did not go so far as to seek a maximum divergence between sound and time (an extreme example of this would be the Halberstadt experiment). Rather, he thought of sounds as hovering "*between categories*. Between time and space."¹⁰⁹ As to the spatial character of his works, Feldman called them "time canvasses in which I more or less prime the canvas with an overall hue of music."¹¹⁰ The layout of

¹⁰² "...Out of 'Last Pieces.'" MFE, 138. Translation from the German, which is, in turn, a translation from the Swedish (in lack of the English original).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Applied to auditory perception, cf. Wright, James K. and Albert S. Bregman. "Auditory stream segregation and the control of dissonance in polyphonic music." *Contemporary Music Review* 2 (1987), 63-92.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ "XXX Anecdotes and Drawings," 160.

¹⁰⁷ Saxer, 109-15, 148-9. Wilhelm Jerusalem commented on the kinship between Bergson's "durée" and James' "stream of consciousness": "Was Bergson "*la vraie duree* [sic!], die wahre Dauer nennt, das bloß [sic!] zeitliche, aber dennoch lebendig inhaltvolle seelische Geschehen, das schneeballartig alles Vergangene in vollkommener Durchdringung in sich enthält und als schöpferische Entwicklung [sic!] immer Neues, Unvorhersehbares hervorbringt, Das [sic!] ist so ziemlich das Selbe wie James' "Strom des Bewusstseins" [sic!], "William James," *Die Zukunft* 73.6 (5 November 1910): 186-90, reprinted in: *Cambridge School of Pragmatism*, Vol 2, 205-8: 206.

¹⁰⁸ "Darmstadt Lecture." MFE, 180-213: 184.

¹⁰⁹ "Between Categories." GMR, 83-9: 88.

¹¹⁰ "Between Categories," 88.

the *neither* will amply demonstrate this point. Conversely, some of the painters Feldman befriended regarded their paintings as actions taking place in time, rather than as objects occupying spaces,¹¹¹ thus approaching a domain until then restricted to music and other performing arts. Although Feldman took pains to distance himself from Stockhausen, his ideas about the spatial and temporal dimensions of his music to a degree intersect with Stockhausen's *Momentform*. Parallel to Feldman's methodological approach, which is based on "vertical" and "horizontal" sound organization, Stockhausen differentiates between static and dynamic moments and a combination of the two. In dramatic, final forms, these moments are connected so as to form a causal, coherent development, whereas in the open form, they are equally intense and self-sufficient at any point in time. In these works, "beginning and end are open."¹¹² This move away from linear causality in its essence corresponds with Feldman's quest for a "vertical" structure and, as a result, points to a transatlantic cross-fertilization that the composers in question were apparently keen to camouflage.

From 1957 onwards, Feldman additionally employed free durations, as in his *Piece for Four Pianos* (part of the five-part series *Durations*) from 1957. By 1969, he wrote 34 free-durational pieces in total. This third notational practice was incited by the insight that differences in articulation and duration are determined not by abstract signs and symbols, but by the natural characteristics of the different instruments. As a consequence, Feldman reversed the principle underlying his first graphic pieces: determining the pitches, but writing out only the approximate length of the notes so that the asynchronous tone endings create the impression of "reverberations from an identical sound source."¹¹³ As the composer commented this instrumental naturalism: "In *Durations* I arrive at a more complex style in which each instrument is living out its own individual life in its own individual sound world."¹¹⁴ The free duration pieces are written on regular staff sheets.

In the years 1963-69 Feldman often combined all three notational styles. An example of this is *De Kooning* (1963, for horn, percussion, piano/celesta, violin and 'cello), written to accompany a film about the painter,¹¹⁵ or *Vertical Thoughts* (1963, 7 parts, 6 and 7

¹¹¹ Shapiro/Shapiro (1990), 77.

¹¹² Stockhausen, "Momentform," op. cit., 199. Note that in the same essay, Stockhausen quotes *The Unnamable* (210).

¹¹³ "Autobiography," 39.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ *Willem de Kooning, the Painter*. Directed by Paul Falkenberg, Hans Namuth, 1966.

unpublished). The primary concern behind this cycle was, yet again, to extract time from musical ideas, so that musical progression may be perceived as a non-directional "image" rather than as a teleological "movement."¹¹⁶

A superimposition and combination of different notational systems within individual parts first occurs in the first *Piece for Three Pianos* (1965). While the upper two parts are notated freely, the third one alternates between precise and free notation.

Claren asserts that in two works written later in that decade, *Between Categories* (1969) and *False Relationships and the Extended Ending* (1968), more emphasis is laid on vertical synchronicity.¹¹⁷ This coincidence of discrete sound events within a texture otherwise characterized by asynchronous entries and heterogeneous durations, he claims, shows that objective temporal demarcation points became of increasing importance in the later works.¹¹⁸ It might as well be construed as a first step toward the rug-inspired *crippled symmetry* of the 1970's works. Concomitant to the abandonment of graphic notation, this vertical synchronicity marked another shift away from indeterminacy toward a compositional mode largely dispensing with the experimental idiom of the early works. In other words, Feldman increasingly defined freedom in qualitative rather than quantitative terms.¹¹⁹ That is, rather than maximizing the material ("the more the better"¹²⁰), he sought for new and finer means of differentiation within a limited scope of material ("the better the more"¹²¹). This "Ptolemeian" (Sloterdijk) reduction of tonal supplies is reminiscent of Beckett's later prose. As Feldman commented: "Earlier in my life there seemed to be unlimited possibilities, but my mind was closed. Now, years later, and with an open mind, possibilities no longer interest me. I seem content to be continually rearranging the same furniture in the same room."¹²² This essentially foreshadows the compositional strategy he embarked on in *neither*.

¹¹⁶ "Vertical Thoughts." GMR, 12-4: 13.

¹¹⁷ Claren, 79.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Dierksmeier, Claus and Michael Pirson. "The Modern Corporation and the Idea of Freedom." *Philosophy and Management* 9.3 (2010).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² "The Anxiety of Art," 30.

3.1.4. Controlling silence: conventional notation

In lack of a notational system that invariably fit his demands, Feldman returned to precise notation in 1970, after he had written mostly free-durational pieces from 1957 to 1969.¹²³ In an interview with Walter Zimmermann, he explained:

One of the big problems in my work was that, you know, as everything started to go into motion, I always felt that the performers in a sense were sensitive as to how to play the sounds, but they were not listening. And they were not sensitive to the pauses I give. So, the reason my music is notated is I wanted to keep control of the *silence*, you see.¹²⁴

Over the years, the balance between intervals of sound and silence became of ever greater importance to Feldman. In a lecture he said: "[S]ilence is my substitute for counterpoint. It's nothing against something." This dichotomy between "nothing" and "something" resounds with Cage's ideas in his *Lecture on Nothing* and *Lecture on Something* (on his own music and Feldman's, respectively), both of which he delivered at the "Club" in 1951. Feldman said afterwards that *Lecture on Nothing*¹²⁵ would have been a more appropriate title for a talk on his music. It goes without saying that, in this respect, John Cage's aesthetic represented an important link between Feldman and Beckett. Despite the fact that Cage and Beckett approached the concept of silence from opposite poles (from an affirmative and negative point of view, respectively), the closeness between Cage's optimist Zen-informed outlook on composition and Beckett's nihilist "impotence / ignorance" approach to writing is evident. If Beckett wrote in DFMW that "the experience of my reader shall be between the phrases, in the silence, communicated by the intervals, not the terms, of the statement," he certainly did not, in the first place, subscribe to the "anything goes"¹²⁶ paradigm that John Cage embarked on, for example, when narrating his anechoic chamber experience¹²⁷ or composing *4'33"*. Rather, silence figures as an ultimate withdrawal from the medium of language (in Mauthner's sense), manifesting a negative view that is at odds with Cage's inclusive, noise-appropriating

¹²³ See table in: Saxer, 56.

¹²⁴ "Conversation between Morton Feldman and Walter Zimmermann," 232.

¹²⁵ Claren, 526.

¹²⁶ Feyerabend, Paul. *Against Method. Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*. London: NLB, 1975.

¹²⁷ *Silence*, 8.

modus operandi,¹²⁸ although the result is the same.

For Mauser, the proclivity for silence in literature and music was underpinned politically by the dictatorships and wars in Europe and thus symbolizes an "Absage an Affirmation, an Machtanspruch [renunciation of affirmation, of claims to power]."¹²⁹ However, Eric de Visscher has shown that silence, as an aesthetic tool and ideal, had emerged as early as the turn of the century (i.e. parallel to Mauthner's notion that silence is the most potent form of language criticism), in a pre-Dadaist literary circle called *Les Incohérents*, and, moreover, in the first decade of the 20th century in theoretical discussions of the futurists.¹³⁰ This suggests that, apart from political implications, the encroachment of silence on musical composition, parallel to empty canvasses in painting, is symptomatic of the development toward implicative art or open-work and participatory aesthetics. In quite the same vein, Ferruccio Busoni wrote in 1916:

Was in unserer heutigen Tonkunst ihrem Urwesen am nächsten rückt, sind die Pause und die Fermate. [...] Die spannende Stille zwischen zwei Sätzen, in dieser Umgebung selbst Musik, läßt weiter ahnen, als der bestimmtere, aber deshalb weniger dehnbare Laut vermag. [Those elements in today's musicology that come closest to its primal core are the pause and the fermata. (...) The tantalizing silence between two movements, which in this setting is itself music, is far more telling than the more definite, but correspondingly less flexible sound.]¹³¹

Interestingly, Busoni defined artistic creation in general as an *ex nihilo* process ("ein Formen aus dem Nichts [a formation from scratch]"),¹³² antedating both Beckett's *Imagination Dead Imagine* and Cage's and Feldman's Zen-inspired sound-silence interdependence.

The dialectic juxtaposition of intervals of sound and silence that Feldman envisioned calls to mind traditional compositional means of creating contrast, whether they be based on harmony (consonance and dissonance), instrumentation (solo vs. tutti) or pitch. In Feldman's works, sound and silence serve a dramaturgical purpose, creating tension by way of disintegrating the horizontal sound layer, thus leaving the audience

¹²⁸ Tom Johnson put forth a wider definition of "silent music": "So kann man "silent music" als eine Musik definieren, in der Klänge, immerhin unvermeidlich, nichts zu tun scheinen und einfach als Hintergrund oder Umgebung gehört werden." ["'Silent music' can then be defined as a type of music in which sounds, which are ultimately unavoidable, seem to have no purpose and are perceived as nothing more than a background or setting."] This includes drones, minimal melodic progression, repetition, extremely soft tones etc. Cf. "Silent Music." *Positionen* 11 (1992): 33-5.

¹²⁹ Morton Feldman. *Der Klang und sein Schatten* (2002).

¹³⁰ "Fragmente einer Geschichte der Stille. Wenig bekannte Konzepte zwischen Marinetti und Cage." *Positionen* 10 (1992): 8-12: 8.

¹³¹ *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst*. Op. cit., 36.

¹³² *Ibid*, 34.

hovering between "expectance and realization."¹³³ Less radically than John Cage's utilization of silence, Feldman's silences are just long enough to eschew horizontal coherence of sound events in favor of 'vertical' perception, erasing what has been stated before from the listener's short-term memory and thus preventing any connection between the immediate past and the immediate future. As Cage put it,

[t]he nothing that goes on is what Feldman speaks of when he speaks of being submerged in silence. The acceptance of death is the source of all life. So that listening to this music one takes as a spring-board the first sound that comes along; the first something springs us into nothing and out of that nothing arises the next something; etc. like an alternating current. Not one sound fears the silence that extinguishes it. And no silence exists that is not pregnant with sound.¹³⁴

Apart from his return to precise notation, Feldman started to use quasi-motivic material in his compositions, as in his *The Viola in My Life 1-4* for viola solo and chamber ensembles. Claren observed that different melodic fragments occur at the beginning, in the middle part and at the end of the pieces,¹³⁵ suggesting a traditional syntactic use of motivic material, which Feldman, however, had denied.¹³⁶ Nor were repetitions of these melodic lines meant to follow a teleological process¹³⁷ (although they indubitably call to mind Schönberg's concept of *developing variation*). Moreover, as the composer explained in the "Darmstadt Lecture":

[...] I'm working with two aspects which I feel are characteristic of the 20th century. One is change, variation. [...] The other is reiteration, repetition. [...] So I'm involved with both. I don't make a synthesis, but they're going on at the same time. The change then becoming that which becomes the reiteration, and the reiteration is changing.¹³⁸

In other words, there is no exposition of preconceived or *a priori* material which is subsequently altered and varied by a certain preconceived technique. Instead, the material and the process are identical and simultaneous. The only *raison-d'être* of this development, therefore, appears to be the process of permanent variation *per se*.

¹³³ Feldman, "The Viola in My Life." GMR, 90-1: 91.

¹³⁴ *Silence*, 135.

¹³⁵ Claren, 92.

¹³⁶ "The recurrent melody serves no structural function." ("The Viola in My Life," 91.)

¹³⁷ Cf. Feldman, "I'm reassembling all the time," 96

¹³⁸ Feldman, "Darmstadt Lecture," 212. This was similarly phrased in a master class in Middleburg in 1986: "How do we write our own music?" MFM, 336-387: 338.

3.1.5. Memory, motion pictures, metaphors

Using melodic repetitions was Feldman's first move toward pattern composition, which the composer himself commented as follows: "My earlier pieces were an empty white room. Now I've added a few pieces of furniture."¹³⁹ These patterns were, as Feldman himself explained many times, inspired by Anatolian carpets.¹⁴⁰ However, it should be noted that this compositional paradigm did not occur to Feldman as a revelation. Rather than an *a priori* inspiration causing a creative turning point, the rugs seem to have been an *a posteriori* analogy for a compositional practice that had its origins in his earlier functional music, notably his film scores. *Jackson Pollock* (1950-1), with its partly percussive, irregular rhythms much indebted to John Cage's pieces for prepared piano,¹⁴¹ already shows traces of this later *pattern* language.

In any case, when Feldman moved away from New York in the 1970s, the carpets superseded the abstract expressionists' conceptual influence on his work. Feldman was fascinated with these hand-knotted abrasms for both ethical and aesthetic reasons: On the one hand, there was the authenticity, lonely craftsmanship, and above all, the work ethic he personally associated with the rugs, all of which struck a chord with him. As he said in 1983:

I know that with my own concern about rugs, I know that to me the fantastic rug is a rug where the person is working a few months on end, and resigned to the work at hand, and the work gets concentrated and the choices are simple and humble and you begin to feel the aura of the rug emerge as a very beautiful thing. Of course, like anything else, not all the time [...]. But it is the work, the monotony of the work, the loneliness of the work. Do you know what that is?¹⁴²

On the other hand, he was impressed by the vividness of asymmetries and slight color variations as opposed to symmetrical patterns and even coloring, since the inconsistencies attract the viewer's attention to details rather than to the carpet pattern as a whole,

¹³⁹ Bernas, Richard and Adrian Jack. "The Brink of Silence." *Music and Musicians* 6 (1972), repr. in: MFS, 43-5: 44.

¹⁴⁰ Cf., for example, "Philip Guston: 1980/The Last Works." GMR 128-32: 130; "Crippled Symmetry," 138-9.

¹⁴¹ Feldman obviously emulated Cage's style because the filmmakers, Hans Namuth and Paul Falkenberg, had first asked Cage to write music for the documentary on Pollock. Cage had refused and recommended Feldman. Hans Namuth seems to have been pleased with the result, for twelve years later, he commissioned another score from Feldman for his film on Willem de Kooning. Cf. Wilson, Peter Niklas. "Canvasses and time canvasses. Comments on Morton Feldman's film music." Liner notes for the album *Morton Feldman. Something Wild: Music for Film*. Kairos, 2001 (0012292KAI).

¹⁴² Conversation with John Cage, Bunita Marcus, Francesco Pellizzi. PSS, MF 0299.1/0074.

decentralizing (top-down) rather than centralizing (bottom-up) perception. In other words, holistic or *Gestalt* perception is avoided in favor of irreducibility. In his essay "Crippled Symmetry," Feldman draws on Mondrian's art to illustrate this point: "What I'm after is somewhat like Mondrian not wanting to paint 'bouquets, but a single flower at a time.'"¹⁴³ Or, in different terms: "As a composer, I am involved with the contradiction in not having the sum of the parts equal the whole."¹⁴⁴ In the mid-1960's, Feldman was already engrossed by the idea of "breaking the pattern," as sketches for his *Four Lectures New York Style* reveal.¹⁴⁵ As has been stated in the introductory chapter, this penchant for irreducibility and decentralization, although variously implemented, is a point of contact between all four composers discussed in this study.

Asymmetries are produced naturally by the manner in which the rugs are knotted: The completed part is flapped down such that it becomes invisible to the carpet weaver as he or she reproduces the same pattern from memory. Thus, the new patterns are deviations from rather than replicas of prior ornaments. This causes slight inconsistencies in the weaving process.¹⁴⁶ In the 1970s, memory took center stage in Feldman's compositional thinking. In two of his late lectures¹⁴⁷ he talks about having read *The Art of Memory* by Frances Yates in the late 1970's.¹⁴⁸ Mnemonics provided an impetus for writing longer pieces.¹⁴⁹ The strategy delineated by Yates of impressing *imagines* (thoughts, notions) on memory by means of *loci* (places) so as to be able to store a greater amount of information seems to have exerted a major influence on Feldman's *pattern* composition,¹⁵⁰ i.e. in the sense that his *visual rhythmic structure* thrives on the nexus between musical *imagines* (ideas or material) and their spatial deployment in the score (*loci*). Since the sense of sight is the dominant one, it plays a vital role in retaining perceptions.¹⁵¹ Thus Feldman's *visual rhythmic structure* is not merely a remnant of his graphic pieces and his contacts with visual artists, but also a practical aide-memoire to the composer. While the classical art of memory, as part of the field of rhetoric, was a device enabling an ora-

¹⁴³ "Crippled Symmetry," 135.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 137.

¹⁴⁵ "When you break the pattern, this is when you get a glimpse of that physical, almost metaphysical presence which is the medium." PSS, MF 0299.1/0153.

¹⁴⁶ Zimmermann, MFE, 15-6.

¹⁴⁷ "Darmstadt Lecture," 205; "Doing it one way and doing it another way." MFM, 450-93: 472-8.

¹⁴⁸ London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966. Cf. "Darmstadt Lecture," 205.

¹⁴⁹ "Doing it one way...", 474.

¹⁵⁰ Claren, 163-7.

¹⁵¹ Yates, op. cit. 4.

tor to deliver long speeches, Feldman's art of memory designates a compositional strategy by which clear-cut units of musical material are memorized and reassembled throughout the compositional process. In contrast to Earle Brown's kinetic or "open form" (and, similarly, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati's "Mobiles"), in which the arrangement of modules of fixed content is left up to the performer, Feldman took control over the re-organization himself, engaging in a private mnemonic 'game' and, by doing so, 'haphazardly' giving rise to an aesthetic product (although his sketches reveal that his compositional process was not quite as fluent and single-minded as the carpet analogy above would suggest). It is, therefore, hardly surprising that he asserts that the melody recurring in *The Viola in My Life IV* "comes back as 'memory' rather than as something that moves the work along."¹⁵² Claren draws a plausible connection between the kabbalistic influences or Lullist *ars combinatoria* put forth by Yates¹⁵³ and Feldman's Jewish background.¹⁵⁴ Feldman, however, admitted to employing techniques he associated with the Kabbalah – memorizing and re-arranging –, while denying that he was actually "using" the Kabbalah as such.¹⁵⁵

This technique of approximate reproduction from memory, of modification through temporal delay, constitutes a key concept in Feldman's compositional strategy: metaphors. Feldman once wrote: "Art is only a metaphor," a "personal contribution" to history.¹⁵⁶ In this case, the term metaphor denotes "das Vage, das Sich-Erinnern, die Gedächtnisarbeit, etwas Vergangenes wieder hereinzuholen." ["the vague, the remembering, the memory work of retrieving something from the past."]¹⁵⁷ In this threefold sense it is also used in the three Latin text sources Yates discusses in *The Art of Memory*.¹⁵⁸ Traditionally, of course, a metaphor is construed as a shift from one semantic domain onto another, made possible by a *tertium comparationis*. Or, in Charles Jencks' broader

¹⁵² "The Viola in My Life," 91.

¹⁵³ "It is my opinion that there was a Cabalist element in Lullism from the start," Yates, 188.

¹⁵⁴ Claren, 164-7.

¹⁵⁵ When asked by a Romanian composer about the Kabbalah, Feldman replied: "I said, 'You mean, do I memorize my material and mix it all up?' – which is the Kabbala – I said, 'Yes.' It doesn't mean that I'm using the Kabbala, it is just that I'm memorizing my material." "I'm reassembling all the time," 110. It has to be noted, however, that the term "kabbalah" is used in such a variety of contexts that it is rather difficult to determine what concept Feldman or Zimmermann referred to. Adherents of the New Age phenomenon often associate it with "magic, alchemy, and astrology. In this context the kabbalah is conceived as a universal phenomenon, and it seems that today it is the most potent and dominant usage to the term 'kabbalah', despite the variety of meanings attached to it." Dan, Joseph, op. cit., 112.

¹⁵⁶ "Neither/Nor," 82.

¹⁵⁷ Zimmermann, MFE, 16.

¹⁵⁸ Yates, 35.

definition, it is a cognitive device that helps comprehend the unfamiliar by comparing it to a familiar concept.¹⁵⁹ Key to musical metaphors, however, is their ephemerality, "their semantic imprint lasting only as long as the moment in which they are written, the oration in which they are invoked."¹⁶⁰ Thus, each of Feldman's "memory forms" represents only a temporary metaphor of its predecessor.

The notion that any process or motion can be broken down to a sequence of static images perceived over time is, as we shall see, an aesthetic link between Feldman and Kim, although the latter was inspired to this idea by a different medium, film. The correlation between time and space, the bottom line of Zeno's arrow paradox, was one of Henri Bergson's pivotal concerns: It is hardly a coincidence that he was one of the first philosophers to write on film¹⁶¹ and that, as has been stated above, Bergsonism seems to have been a key influence not only on Beckett, but also on Feldman's thought. Even though the composer played down the influence of cinematic art on his *œuvre*,¹⁶² it is not to be neglected, given he wrote several film scores. In addition, one can learn from one of his notebooks that he visited Norman McLaren, the Canadian filmmaker, on Nov. 6-7, 1951. Feldman's notes contain detailed instructions on how to write a film soundtrack.¹⁶³ Beckett was no less interested in the medium (as suggested by his *Film*). J. M. B. Antoine-Dunne, who reports that Beckett was "immersed in Soviet film aesthetics,"¹⁶⁴ argues:

For Beckett, as for Eisenstein, film's magic lies in its capacity to extract new images through movement, and at a point where space and time become identical, that is at the interstices. Through the process of fragmentation and reconstitution, the mind of viewer/auditor takes a leap into a new dimension, into the realm of the concept.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Jencks, Charles A. *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*. London: Academy Editions, 1977, 40.

¹⁶⁰ Swain, Joseph P. *Musical Languages*. New York: Norton, 1997, 99.

¹⁶¹ Most prominently in the last chapter of *Creative Evolution*. New York: Cosimo, 2005 (originally published by Modern Library, 1911).

¹⁶² "I Met Heine on the Rue Fürstemberg," GMR, 112-21: 114.

¹⁶³ Feldman, Sketchbook 2, PSS, MF 459/1021.

¹⁶⁴ Antoine-Dunne, J. M. B. "Beckett and Eisenstein on Light and Contrapuntal Montage." *Samuel Beckett Today – Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000*. Eds. Angela Moorjani and Carola Veit. Amsterdam: Rodopi 2001. 315-23.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 322.

Mentioning Bergson by name in his *Darmstadt Lecture*, Feldman argues that the concept can never precede the percept¹⁶⁶ since the former, i.e. preconceived ideas of how something *should* sound, tends to impair active perception of the *actual* sound product. Elevating the intuitive (the percept) above the intellectual (the concept), naïvety¹⁶⁷ above prior knowledge, Feldman closely followed Bergson's model. Joseph Schillinger also deserves mention at this point since his entire system of teaching musical composition pivots on the assumption that music is reducible to space-time patterns manifesting in sound, and thus, as he points out repeatedly, a sequence of illustratable motions.¹⁶⁸ What also seems to underpin Feldman's "memory forms" is the idea of an interface between memory and perception which Bergson puts forth in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, notably that perception is informed by individual memory: the longer one's past, the more memories one has accumulated. Each moment is added to earlier ones in the memory store. This is why each new image perceived, even if it is the same, is perceived differently. In short, memory gives rise to difference.¹⁶⁹

The compositional process is thus de-hierarchized or decentralized in the sense that the pattern units relate to one another rhizomatically¹⁷⁰ (i.e. each unit is linked to a variable number of other units by a variable amount of properties), rather than being welded together by an overarching compositional method or practice.¹⁷¹ Thus, with Feldman, composition is a process, unfolding as the work is written (as Feldman put it, "thinking

¹⁶⁶ In his Darmstadt lecture, Feldman said: "But if we take Henri Bergson seriously, he reminds us that there are essentially only two ways of expressing ourselves; one is perceptually, and the other by way of images," probably referring to Bergson's distinction between perception (images) and memory (concepts) in *Matter and Memory*. Cf. "Darmstadt Lecture," 184-5. Furthermore, in the sketches for his *Four Lectures in NY Style* (ca. 1966) he wrote down a note about Bergson's *élan vitale* (PSS, MF 0299.1/155). Cf. also: Claren, 119-20.

¹⁶⁷ Naïvety as defined in phenomenology, i.e. "pure experience without any sophistication" (Hamlyn, 14). This also seems to align with Husserl's notion of "'bracket[ing] off' all presuppositions so as to leave the experience in its purity." Ibid, 43.

¹⁶⁸ Schillinger, op. cit.

¹⁶⁹ *Einführung in die Metaphysik/Introduction à la métaphysique*, op. cit., 8-11.

¹⁷⁰ "Rhizome" is the title of the introductory chapter of Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, where the authors make a case against traditional, hierarchical models of knowledge, represented by trees, which rest on the premise of self-similarity. The authors draw on the model of a "rhizome" as an alternative. "Rhizome" signifies a radicle system where "the principle root has been aborted [...]; an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development." *A Thousand Plateaus*. London: Continuum, 2010, 6. More on rhizome in the chapter on Richard Barrett.

¹⁷¹ As Stockhausen delineated serial thinking in 1953: "Den jeweiligen Ordnungsprozess so gründlich zu betreiben, daß alles in einem Werk Existierende systematisch erfaßt und von einem einheitlichen Prinzip geleitet ist. [...] Offenbar geht heute die Selbstbesinnung und das Bewußtsein von einer universellen, geplanten Ordnung 'weiter, als je vorher', und damit auch das Verlangen, dem einzelnen Ton jenen ganz bestimmten Sinn zu geben, der über die momentane Saturierung und den bloßen Spieltrieb des Organisierens und Kombinierens hinaus reicht; den Sinn nämlich, *Musik* jeweils *als Vorstellung jener umfassendsten 'globalen' Struktur* zu verstehen, *in die alles einbezogen* ist." "Zur Situation des Metiers (Klangkomposition)." *Texte zur elektronischen und instrumentalen Musik*, Vol. 1, 45-62: 46-7.

as I'm writing"¹⁷²), rather than an *a priori* paradigm. Just as Barthes' "modern sriptor," the composer "is born simultaneously with the text [...]," (viz. the score).¹⁷³

The temporal aspect inherent in the difference of signs is also pertinent to Derrida's term *différance*. Referring to this connection, Gregor Herzfeld argues that the composer could be placed among the ranks of poststructuralist/postmodern thinkers such as Foucault, Barthes, or Lyotard.¹⁷⁴ The concept of *différance*, notably the emphasis on the differences between signifiers (pattern modules, in Feldman's case) on the one hand, and on their transformation over time on the other, concurs with Feldman's approach, much as the melody fragments in Watt's ditch song (discussed in previous chapters), which, curiously, serve as an image of memory loss. In fact, Feldman almost explicitly alluded to this concept in his Darmstadt Lecture: "The thought said in another way. And many times another language. The language of another register, the language of another color. And I want to use 'differentiation,' you see."¹⁷⁵ In this, Feldman's *modus operandi* converges with Beckett's difference-*qua*-translation (i.e. repetition) approach. Deleuze, who in *Difference and Repetition* argued against traditional metaphysical concepts of identity and representation, postulated that an "Idea" (which he capitalizes), rather than constituting a monolithic concept, is best regarded as a structure, "a 'complex theme', an internal multiplicity – in other words, a system of multiple, non-locatable connections between differential elements which is incarnated in real relations and actual terms."¹⁷⁶ That is, identity is not a static unit based on a central idea (a notion which clearly prefigures his rhizome theory). Rather, evoking Nietzsche's concept of eternal return, identity unfolds in a sequence of repetitions which are, in their turn, marked by difference.¹⁷⁷ It is the imagination's role "to draw something new from repetition,"¹⁷⁸ a process which Deleuze designates *passive synthesis*. This is how he explains the repetitive structures in Beckett's works:

In all his novels, Samuel Beckett has traced the inventory of peculiarities pursued with fatigue and passion by larval subjects: Molloy's series of stones, Murphy's biscuits, Malone's possessions – it is always a question of drawing a small difference, a weak gener-

¹⁷² Morton Feldman in an interview with Han Reizinger, October 1985, broadcast June 18, 1987, Radio 4, VPRO, qtd. in: Claren, 516.

¹⁷³ Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, op. cit., 145.

¹⁷⁴ Herzfeld (2006), 526.

¹⁷⁵ "Darmstadt Lecture," 186.

¹⁷⁶ *Difference and Repetition*, op. cit., 183.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 76.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 76.

ality, from the repetition of elements or the organisation of cases. It is undoubtedly one of the more profound intentions of the 'new novel' to rediscover, below the level of active syntheses, the domain of passive syntheses which constitute us, the domain of modifications, tropisms and little peculiarities.¹⁷⁹

Although it has never been confirmed that Beckett used to work in the way Feldman describes it, the method of translating was regarded by Feldman as a major point of contact between himself and the writer.¹⁸⁰

[Samuel Beckett] would write something in English, translate it into French, then translate that thought back into the English that conveys the thought. And I know he keeps doing it. He wrote something for me in 1977 [AN: the *neither* text], and I got it. I'm reading it. There's something peculiar. I can't catch it. Finally I see that every line is really the same thought said in another way. And yet the continuity acts as if something else is happening. Nothing else is happening. What you're doing in an almost Proustian way is getting deeper and deeper saturated into the thought.¹⁸¹

At the same time, this convergence was both symptom and synecdoche of the *zeitgeist*, as can also be inferred from Herzfeld's deliberations.

In more general terms, this preoccupation with a language of musical metaphors or images – i.e. representations rather than re-presentations – is reflected in Feldman's attitude toward the European heritage and tradition – "kabbalah" in its literal sense, i.e. something that is "received,"¹⁸² i.e. imprinted in what one might call cultural DNA and unconsciously transmitted. Instead of re-discovering tradition and re-inventing the past, Feldman positions himself "between categories," creating not musical forms (conscious) but metaphors thereof (intuitive): personal memories of the cultural memory¹⁸³. "So what I try and do is make it close to, maybe not an art form, but a metaphor [...]."¹⁸⁴ This can be seen as a point of contact with the Zoharic worldview, i.e. one of the central ideas of the book of Zohar, notably that

everything is the reflection of everything else. The verses of scriptures reflect the emanation and structure of the divine world; as does the human body, in the anthropomorphic conception of the *sefirot* [ten divine emanations], and the human soul, which originates

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 79.

¹⁸⁰ Many thanks to Robyn Schulkowsky for alerting me to the great significance of Beckett's translation work to Feldman.

¹⁸¹ "Darmstadt Lecture," 184.

¹⁸² Dan, 3: "'Kabbalah' in the Hebrew religious vocabulary means nonindividual, nonexperiential religious truth, which is received by tradition."

¹⁸³ In the sense in which Jan Assmann uses the term: The cultural memory of a social group, which transforms historical facts into myths, and constitutes its collective identity. Cf. Assmann, Jan. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005, 52-3.

¹⁸⁴ "Darmstadt Lecture," 208.

from the divine realm and in its various parts reflects the functions and dynamism of the *sefirot*.¹⁸⁵

3.1.6. Music of change

Biographical circumstances reveal that it was not only Feldman's memory-based procedure that gave rise to longer compositions: When he became Snee professor at SUNY Buffalo in 1972 (which would become the permanent Edgar Varèse Chair in 1974, a position he occupied until his death in 1987), he had more time for composing: "I feel that my plunge into the longer and longer pieces had a lot to do with the change in my lifestyle. The fact that I have more time to compose now means that I'm asking myself different questions."¹⁸⁶

One of these questions Feldman obviously tackled in his longer pieces had to do with how to keep focused and how to maintain the performer's and the listener's attention throughout the work.

Your also have to develop your own paraphernalia to hold it together, rather than maintain the conventional idea that what develops might hold a piece together. That's what I meant earlier by problem solving: to get through a big piece, you don't come with any kind of prearranged schema; you find ways to survive in this big piece. And the most important survival kit is concentration.¹⁸⁷

It was not only from himself, but also from his interpreters and audiences that Feldman expected utmost attention at any time during the compositional process and the acoustic realization: First, his works are known for their low dynamic level, so that the sounds are, in fact, 'perceived' rather than heard. Second, it goes almost without saying that the pattern technique and sound-silence alternations are extremely demanding in terms of both discerning and playing the subtle modifications within material that, at first glance, looks identical – much like a "spot the mistakes" picture puzzle –, and varying lengths of pauses. As with Beckett, material once introduced is instantly altered. "I would have the same thing come back again, but I would just add another note. Or I have it come back and I take out two notes. And I would vary the notes and keep the pulse, but very subtle."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Dan, 33.

¹⁸⁶ "The Viola in My Life," 91.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 92.

¹⁸⁸ "XXX Anecdotes and Drawings," 178.

Likewise, the listener, when confronted with these constant variations, is precluded from memorizing and thus being lulled in by recurring mantra-like ostinato figures. In psychological terms, as opposed to *ostinati*, Feldman's constantly changing *patterns* are not subject to habituation.¹⁸⁹ As a kind of *trompe-l'oreille*, they were described by Feldman as "a conscious attempt at 'formalizing' a disorientation of memory."¹⁹⁰ He goes on to state that "there is a *suggestion* that what we hear is functional and directional, but we soon realize that this is an illusion; a bit like walking the streets of Berlin – where all the buildings look alike, *even if they're not*."¹⁹¹ In one of his early notebooks, Feldman wrote: "Music seems more and more to me to be an hallucination easily managed."¹⁹²

Although it has been pointed out above that Feldman was keen to set himself apart from minimalism, certain convergences and mutual influences, especially with respect to additive techniques, polymetric and polyrhythmic layering, modules, or "phases," are undeniable.¹⁹³ Although Glass' inspirational sources were highly different from Feldman's,¹⁹⁴ it is no secret that many contemporary composers are prone to presenting very similar ideas under different, more personal labels (e.g. Kim's/Kurtág's/Holliger's label "palindrome" for "retrograde," Haubenstock-Ramati's "Mobiles" versus Brown's "kinetic" or "open forms").

What distinguishes the *Viola in My Life* cycle (1970-1) from earlier Feldman works is the extensive use of *crescendi* and *decrescendi*. Considering Feldman's penchant for dynamic continuity and silence, this expressivity is surely surprising. In Zimmermann's view, this change is symptomatic of Feldman's increasing susceptibility to extra-musical influences. He deems it an expression of "pain and grief" over the untimely death of Schubert and the "extinction of Jewry."¹⁹⁵ A number of compositions conceived in the early 1970's relate to concrete events, which is evident in titles such as *Madam Press Died Last Week at Ninety* (1970), or *I Met Heine on the Rue Fürstemberg* (1970). In

¹⁸⁹ Spitzer, Manfred. *Musik im Kopf, Hören, Musizieren, Verstehen und Erleben im neuronalen Netzwerk*. Stuttgart: Schattauer, 32003, 125.

¹⁹⁰ "Crippled Symmetry," 137.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 138.

¹⁹² PSS, MF 459/1056.

¹⁹³ Feldman explicates Reich's strategy in *Four Organs* in his essay "Crippled Symmetry," 135.

¹⁹⁴ E.g. Indian folk music and the music of Ravi Shankar.

¹⁹⁵ Zimmermann, MFE, 15.

1970, Mark Rothko committed suicide. His untimely death, along with the "Rothko Chapel" in Houston which the painter himself did not live to see inaugurated, prompted Feldman to compose *Rothko Chapel* (1971), into which he incorporated autobiographical references.¹⁹⁶ In short, Feldman dismisses in these works his idea of non-relationality, at a time when he also became increasingly interested in the musical heritage, above all, Schönberg.¹⁹⁷ In addition, he permanently returned to precise notation. Claren observed that some of Feldman's compositions of the 1970's written before *neither* are far more heterogeneous in that they are divided into sections, each of which has a dominant pattern or "theme." This applies to: *Cello and Orchestra* (1972), *String Quartet and Orchestra* (1976), *Piano and Orchestra* (1975), and *Oboe and Orchestra* (1976).¹⁹⁸ It is easily seen, then, that *neither* forms part of a continuous compositional development rather than marking a turning point in Feldman's trajectory.

3.1.7. Instrumentation

Feldman's compositional sketches reveal that his first step in devising the sound material was to determine the number of measures and systems for each page. But above all, like a painter who prepares and mixes certain pigments, colors, and shades before beginning his work, Feldman carefully selected the instrumentation for specific passages and pages. As he said in a lecture in 1984,

I think what really makes a composer distinguished from another composer, except for Stockhausen, is one's instrumentation. [...] And this is something that I know my most sophisticated students never talk about, no one ever thinks about. [...] You see, I feel that orchestration is another gift. And Varèse once said to me, 'Orchestrators are born.' He never said composers are born, he used the word *orchestrators* are born. And I really feel it's another gift and few people have that gift. [...]
[An old man] asked me what I thought composition was, he heard my piece, he liked it, though he thought it was too 'colorful.' And I said, 'I'm not interested in color.' I said, 'My definition of composition is: the right note in the right place with the right instrument!'"¹⁹⁹

Apart from containing the usual attacks on the Darmstadt school, this statement points to two important paradigm changes in Feldman's aesthetic trajectory between 1950 and the early 1980s: First, a shift (that seems fairly radical but occurred gradually over a pe-

¹⁹⁶ Feldman, "Rothko Chapel." GMR, 125-6.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Herzfeld, Gregor. "Historisches Bewusstsein in Morton Feldmans Unterrichtsskizzen." *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 66.3 (2009). 218-33.

¹⁹⁸ Claren, 9.

¹⁹⁹ "XXX Anecdotes and Drawings," 146.

riod of three decades) from indeterminacy to meticulous control over all musical parameters, especially pitch and duration ("the right note in the right place"). Second, an increasing preoccupation with instrumental timbres and resources ("with the right instrument"). Elsewhere, Feldman equated orchestration with the compositional process *per se*²⁰⁰ and consequently referred to himself as being a teacher of orchestration rather than composition.²⁰¹ To be sure, this is symptomatic of his hands-on, acoustic-reality-oriented compositional paradigm. He never grew weary of experimenting with, combining and re-combining timbres of different instruments and instrumental groups. "If I was interested in organizing anything, it was timbre,"²⁰² he said.

What is more, in keeping with the low-key dynamics permeating his body of work, he stressed the importance of instrumental discreetness which he sought to achieve by employing each instrument "in the natural way."²⁰³ Like his friend, the painter Philip Guston, who used to say that he was not interested in colors, but rather in gradations,²⁰⁴ Feldman rejected obtrusive tone-colors. In his essay "A Compositional Problem," he discussed the problem of individual timbres in the following terms:

In music it is the instruments that produce the color. And for me, that instrumental color robs the *sound* of its immediacy. The instrument has become for me a stencil, the deceptive *likeness* of a sound. For the most part it exaggerates the sound, blurs it, makes it larger than life, gives it a meaning, an emphasis it does not have in my ear.²⁰⁵

In this respect, Feldman and Richard Barrett are at opposite poles, as will be shown in the last chapter: While Feldman strove for an immediate sound experience, Barrett in a way caricatures the pursuit of such an ideal by foregrounding the awkwardness and imperfection of instrumental practice. As is obvious, Feldman subscribed to a metaphysical view of music comparable to the one Beckett described in *Proust*. This notion, reminiscent of Josef Matthias Hauer's statement that an abstract musical idea, which he simply calls "melody," is absolutely pure in its mental state and becomes impurified by in-

²⁰⁰ "Morton Feldman Talks to Paul Griffiths," 48.

²⁰¹ Moore, Thomas (1984), 17.

²⁰² "Morton Feldman Talks to Paul Griffiths," 46.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 48.

²⁰⁴ Bernard, Jonathan W. "Feldman's Painters." *The New York Schools...* 173-215: 185.

²⁰⁵ "A Compositional Problem." *GMR*, 109-11: 110.

strumental realization,²⁰⁶ corresponds to Beckett's contention (in *Proust*) that musical ideas are corrupted by the extra-musical reality (s. chapter 2.2.1.). As is known, at all periods, instrumental conventions and stereotypes, as collected and systematized, for example, in Christoph Friedrich Daniel Schubart's *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, have endowed musical compositions with additional semantic content, so that the instrumental timbre has always borne the potential of being associated with an extramusical frame of reference even in absolute music, e.g. woodwind ensembles evoking pastoral settings. Decades before Feldman,²⁰⁷ in his *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, Ferruccio Busoni had discussed the asymmetry between the transcendental sphere of sound and the physicality of instruments – which again shows the transatlantic flow of European modernist ideas and their reception by the NYS. Naturally, the concrete associations evoked by instruments were at odds with the ideal of non-relational music. Apart from this, Feldman bewailed that instrumentalists were distracted from the music due to the technical demands. The dominance of the instrument, he argues, resulted in a type of role-switching: "you're not playing the instrument, the instrument is playing you."²⁰⁸

Despite all this, Feldman did not go so far as to draw on electronic sounds, which would have been a natural consequence of his skepticism about the timbres of conventional instruments. Apart from his *Intersections* for tape (1951), he dispensed with technological means. In an interview he explained that electronic music reminded him of artificial lights.²⁰⁹ It appears, however, that this was less the result of a conservative attitude than of the need to distinguish himself from the "*kinder* hanging around Darmstadt,"²¹⁰ first and foremost Stockhausen.

The "natural way" or "anonymity" of instruments he envisaged for his works was one in which instrumental entries are played at an extremely low dynamic level²¹¹ and "with-

²⁰⁶ Hauer, Josef Matthias. *Vom Wesen des Musikalischen*. Ed. Viktor Sokolowski. Berlin-Lichterfelde: Robert Lienau, 1966. "Weil die 'Realisierung' der 'ideellen' Klänge in den Klangkörpern niemals vollkommen ist." On "melody," cf. pp. 7-8. Cf. also: Christensen, Thomas. *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*. Cambridge: CUP, 2002, 604.

²⁰⁷ "Die Instrumente sind an ihren Umfang, ihre Klangart und ihre Ausführungsmöglichkeiten festgekettet, und ihre hundert Ketten müssen den Schaffenwollenden mitfesseln." Busoni, 35.

²⁰⁸ "Soundpieces Interview," 88.

²⁰⁹ "Morton Feldman Talks to Paul Griffiths," 48.

²¹⁰ "The Future of Local Music," 172.

²¹¹ About his predilection for *pianissimo*, Feldman said that, to him, loud sounds carry an "emotional or dramatic or psychological connotation." Interview with Robert Ashley, March 1963. PSS, MF 0299.1/382.

out too much attack."²¹² At first glance, it may seem paradoxical that Feldman kept writing for traditional instruments despite his complaint about trite timbral semantics, just as it might appear counterintuitive that he returned to precise notation. Notwithstanding, this strategy of "rearranging furniture," of seeking freedom in qualitative rather than quantitative terms,²¹³ new possibilities within commonplace compositional tools, is an idiosyncrasy that undeniably represents an objective point of contact between the composer and Beckett's formal conservatism, i.e. the author's reluctance to create "yet another formal context."

3.2. *neither*

3.2.1. Feldman and Beckett tête-à-tête

Feldman's comments on Beckett and his work after their meeting in Berlin bespeak a deep reverence for the writer's style and personality: "I spent one afternoon with Beckett, it will be with me forever. Not his work, not his commitment; not his marvelous face, but his attitude," he said in 1980.²¹⁴ In the year of Feldman's death they collaborated again on *Words and Music* (1987). Feldman's penultimate piece, *For Samuel Beckett* (1987), is a work-in-homage.

What fascinated Feldman about Beckett's work, as he said in the same interview, was the balance between a perceived hermeticism on the one hand, and universality on the other ("you don't feel the sense of an egoism," or as Frost rephrased this thought: "that so many people find things in Beckett to relate to").²¹⁵ This shows that Feldman, like many other postserial composers, was keen to work with a multi-interpretable, polysemous text that left enough interstices for him to communicate his own aesthetic viewpoints. He was, in other words, looking for an open work. Beckett's transfer of hermeneutical and, by extension, ontological responsibility to the reader was described by Feldman in the much-quoted phrase: "you're just left there holding this hot potato which is life."²¹⁶

In retrospect, the chain of events that led to the genesis of *neither* more or less haphaz-

²¹² "Morton Feldman Talks to Paul Griffiths," 48.

²¹³ Dierksmeier/Pirson op. cit.

²¹⁴ "Soundpieces Interview," 94.

²¹⁵ Frost, in: SBM, 49.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 51.

ardly is as impossible to reconstruct and as "impenetrable" (to quote from the libretto) as the exact date of the premiere is difficult to determine.²¹⁷ This is owing, first, to Feldman's own variegated versions of the meeting with Beckett in different interviews, second, to the possibility of mistranslations (since the interviews were held in different languages) and misunderstandings,²¹⁸ and third to the absence of statements of any kind on Beckett's part. To begin with, the commission itself resulted from a misunderstanding – if we believe Feldman's version, that is: Having heard about the composer's plans to work with a Beckett text, the director of the Roman Teatro dell'Opera, Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi, called Feldman in the spring of 1976 to inquire about his opera project, i.e. at a time when Feldman had not even contacted Beckett, let alone started work on *neither*. In fact, this phone conversation took place even before Feldman had even composed his preparatory Beckett trilogy.²¹⁹ Nonetheless, the composer answered in the affirmative.²²⁰ In Tomasi's version of the story, the commission for an opera was given over dinner at the Venice Biennale,²²¹ most likely in mid- or late July 1976, thus around the time or even after he finished his trilogy.

Oddly enough, it was a negative starting point – their shared antipathy toward the operatic genre – which served as a common ground between the "note man" and the "word man," and as an icebreaker for their conversation. These circumstances make their get-together on September 20, 1976 appear as a paradigmatic Play of the Absurd. The amusing anecdote of their first encounter at the Schiller theater and, afterwards, a bar in Berlin – at that time, of course, divided and under occupation of the Allied powers – was related by Feldman himself in numerous interviews.²²² In one version, he said:

[Beckett] was very embarrassed - he said to me, after a while, "Mr Feldman, I don't like opera." I said to him, "I don't blame you!" Then he said to me, "I don't like my words being set to music," and I said, "I'm in complete agreement. In fact it's very seldom that I've

²¹⁷ Initially the premiere was planned for May 13, but postponed, first to the "next season," then to June 10th, as can be gleaned from two telegrams by Tomasi (PSS, MF 0206.1/1806-7). A review by William Weaver that appeared in the International Herald Tribune from June 13, 1977, suggests that the performance took place on June 12 (PSS, MF 0299.1/0827-8). However, from the Italian reviews, which were not available to the present author, Claren concludes that the premiere took place no later than June 8. Cf. Claren, 15-22, 428-434.

²¹⁸ Cf. Claren, 15-21.

²¹⁹ In July 1976 Feldman completed what he called a "trilogy" of works based on Beckett: *Orchestra* (completed on July 3), *Elemental Procedures* (dated July 18) and *Routine Investigations* (completed July 24). In all three works, the composer used what he calls "Beckett material," a continuous melodic line. Cf. Claren, 15.

²²⁰ Qtd. in Claren, 15.

²²¹ Cf. Schiffer, Brigitte. "Neither." *Music and Musicians* 25 (August 1977): 49-50: 49.

²²² Cf. Claren, 15-21.

used words. I've written a lot of pieces with voice, and they're wordless." Then he looked at me again and said, "But what do you want?" And I said, "I have no idea!" He also asked me why I didn't use existing material. We had a mutual friend who told him I wanted to work with a Beckett text. He wrote back to this friend suggesting various things. I said that I had read them all, that they were pregnable; they didn't need music. I said that I was looking for the quintessence, something that just hovered.²²³

According to Beckett's biographer James Knowlson, Beckett then wrote the "one theme" of his life into the score of *Elemental Procedures*, which Feldman had shown Beckett so as to provide him with a first impression of his musical ideas: "To and fro in shadow, from outer to inner shadow. To and fro, between unattainable self and unattainable non-self."²²⁴ He then commented: "It would need a bit of work, wouldn't it?"²²⁵ They parted without further ado, their non-committal attitude appearing as a perfect embodiment of the loose interplay between their arts. Neither the "word man" nor the "note man" knew what would come out of this most bizarre tête-à-tête. In fact, Beckett was not even familiar with Feldman's music until, shortly after meeting the composer, he heard a Feldman piece on the radio, which he apparently liked very much.²²⁶ Feldman said that "after meeting [Beckett] in Berlin, I didn't know if he was going to send me anything or not."²²⁷ In the end keeping his word, Beckett sent a postcard to Feldman that month. The composer, who was still in Berlin, was working on the overture while "waiting for the text."²²⁸ On the back of the postcard, Feldman found Beckett's miniature libretto – an epitome of his language-skeptical attitude, taking Feldman's request for "the quintessence" quite literally. It consisted of no more than ten verses, on which, on the front of the card, Beckett commented in his usual laconic manner: "Dear Morton Feldman. Verso the piece I promised. It was good meeting you. Best. Samuel Beckett."²²⁹ The postcard is dated "31.9.76"²³⁰ [sic!]: A more appropriate date for such an ambivalent beginning of an ambivalent liaison between literature and music seems scarcely imaginable.

²²³ Cf. Skempton, in: MFS, 75.

²²⁴ Knowlson, 631.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Knowlson, 631.

²²⁷ "Pie-Slicing and Small Moves. Morton Feldman in Conversation with Stuart Morgan." MFS, 79-86: 83.

²²⁸ "I discovered what an overture is: waiting for the text!" Feldman, qtd in: Skempton, MFS, 75.

²²⁹ Knowlson, 631.

²³⁰ PSS, MF 0206.1/0168.

While Claren conjectures that Feldman had first contemplated working with a Beckett text at the end of June 1976 at the latest,²³¹ it seems somewhat likely that he had played with the idea for much longer, given that he considered Beckett a "Fifties writer."²³² Indubitably, he had gotten wind of other composers' Beckett-based works – after all, he was personally acquainted with Rands, Reynolds, and Csapó (who was his student). Philipp Glass had written music for Mabou Mines' productions of several of Beckett's plays and the theater company's successful stage adaptations of *The Lost Ones* (a prose text which is quoted in several of Feldman's manuscripts²³³) and *Cascando* in New York in 1975 and 1976, respectively.²³⁴ Maybe it was even because he was familiar with Glass' pieces that he drew on Beckett for the first time in a work commissioned by the Westdeutsche Rundfunk for the "New Simplicity" festival in 1977: In *Elemental Procedures* (dated July 18, 1976), namely, Feldman had used a passage from the prefatory remarks of Beckett's *Film*: "All extraneous perception suppressed, animal, human, divine, self-perception maintains in being. Search of non-being in flight from extraneous perception breaking down in inescapability of self-perception."²³⁵ As to commonalities between *Film* and *neither*, the enantiomorphic dilemma of interpenetration between "self" and "unself" features as the central theme in both. *Film* suggests that seeking escape from the perception of others will ultimately result in a state of self-perception. Sartre devoted an entire chapter to visual perception in *Being and Nothingness*, maintaining that the gaze or stare has the disturbing property of objectifying the perceived (ergo the name "O" in the *Film*).²³⁶ That is, it reminds the subject of its thing-ness – "unself" in *neither* – and transience, hence causing a cognitive dissonance in the subject that believes itself non-objectifiable. This is why the "eye" appears as a menace to the perceived subject in the *Film*. The homophony of "eye" and "I"²³⁷ reveals their interconnectedness. Thus, Berkeley's dictum *esse est percipi*, the motto of the *Film*, is recontextualized so as to turn the empiricist idea of perception (that is, as verification of exis-

²³¹ Claren, 16.

²³² Frost, in: SBM, 53.

²³³ Cf. PSS.

²³⁴ *The Lost Ones* was a great success. For his performance, David Warrilow won an Obie Award in 1976. Cf. Smith Fischer, Iris. *Mabou Mines. Making Avant-Garde Theater in the 1970s*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011, 109-10; 213.

²³⁵ CDW, 321.

²³⁶ Sartre, Jean-Paul. "The Look." *Being and Nothingness*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992, 340-400.

²³⁷ Cf. Kalb, *Cambridge Companion to Beckett* (1994), 136.

tence) on its head, rendering perception not a verification of life, but a ubiquitous *memento mori*. In other words, the Cartesian split is debunked as a myth, and visual perception is depicted as a most poignant reminder of this delusion. This inextricability of the individual and the world essentially resounds with Heidegger's concept of "being-in-the-world."²³⁸

The existential angst inherent in this *Geworfenheit*²³⁹ ("being thrust") of Beckett's scenario is not at all present in Feldman's compositional thinking. Rather, what seems to have fascinated Feldman about *Film* was its emphasis on perception as a fundamental constituent of consciousness,²⁴⁰ which converged with his sensualistic approach, one which he equally admired about Varèse.²⁴¹ It appears that Feldman construed the word "self-perception" not as self-objectification or self-delusion, but rather in a positive sense, as a type of Emersonian self-reliance: Emerson's essay on that topic is an ode to originality and individuality, in which he encourages young intellectuals to break with European literary traditions and advises the common American not to dwell on past traditions and experiences so as to be unencumbered by its burdens in the present: "It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day."²⁴² As is evident, it is Feldman's refusal to feel humbled by tradition that justifies labeling him an "Emersonian." The transcendentalist's imperative "trust thyself"²⁴³ thus appears as an apt description of Feldman's take on the *Film* quotation.

Claren infers from Feldman's program notes for *Elemental Procedures* that this extramusical reference is correlated with concrete musical material: The composer explicitly refers to "Beckett material," which he vaguely delineates as a long, continuous melodic

²³⁸ Cf. Heidegger, Martin. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 11967, 62.

²³⁹ Cf. Heidegger (1967), 391.

²⁴⁰ In Marion Saxon's view, this represents an important convergence between Feldman's and Beckett's aesthetic vision, in that "das Denken beider von einer bewusstseinstheoretischen Fragestellung geleitet wird." (244).

²⁴¹ "Die Avantgarde: Fortschritt oder Stillstand?," 44.

²⁴² Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (1830), op. cit., 157. While Feldman and Cage "never talked about Emerson," whom Feldman associates with the East-Coast "WASP-establishment" (MFM, 664), he does mention Thoreau in "Neither/Nor" as a positive example of "moral" involvement based on intuition, rather than "political indignation" based on "the mythology of a system." "Neither/Nor," 80. Furthermore, the American transcendentalists have been described as "especially influential to Cage" by Shultis (op. cit., 20), which, of course, they also were to Charles Ives (see, for example, his second piano sonata).

²⁴³ Emerson, "Self-Reliance," 151.

line.²⁴⁴ Claren relates this description to a specific repeated sequence of four chromatic neighboring tones, C, Db, D, and Eb, in which triplets produce the effect of slight accelerations and decelerations, thus irregularities, similar to the erratic beats of the accompanying voices.²⁴⁵ He identifies this as the "Beckett material" on the grounds that it is underlaid with the passage from *Film* mentioned above; moreover, this material recurs in *Routine Investigations*.²⁴⁶ It is easily seen, however, that regardless of the recurrence of the identical pitches, Feldman's nebulous description of it makes it rather difficult to put one's finger on the exact passage he referred to: In *Elemental Procedures*, the soprano starts singing circling chromatic lines on three other pitches, E, F, and Gb in m. 177, well before the *Film* quotation occurs. In this context, then, the "Beckett material" in the strings appears more as a continuation or even imitation of the soprano line than as a new episode. Moreover, while Feldman claimed that he did not use it in *neither*,²⁴⁷ there are several passages in the opera that come fairly close to the material in *Elemental Procedures*, which is also admitted by Claren.²⁴⁸ Whether the "Beckett material" indeed arose from Feldman's fascination with Beckett is similarly debatable. While it appears perfectly plausible that such continuous chromatic lines were prompted by Beckettian idiosyncrasies such as enclosed spaces, circular monologues (compare the chromatic lines in Kurtág's *What is the Word* opp. 30 a/b), and *ad infinitum* structures, the assumption that Beckett's oeuvre was an outside influence triggering what Claren calls a "turning point"²⁴⁹ in his compositional career seems rather questionable. After all, Feldman had displayed an increasing proclivity for horizontal sound organization in the form of melodies and ostinati from the early 1970's onwards, possibly also under the influence of minimalist composers (e.g. the vibraphone and celesta ostinato in *The Rothko Chapel*). Second, such melodic progressions recur in later works such as *Patterns in a Chromatic Field*, *Triadic Memories* (both 1981), or *Clarinet and String Quartet* (1983)²⁵⁰ that were not overtly based on Beckett. Although covert forms of intermediality can never be ruled out, it seems problematic to think of the "Beckett material,"

²⁴⁴ Program notes for the concert "Musik der Zeit III: Neue Einfachheit." Cologne 1977, qtd. (in German) in: Claren, 15.

²⁴⁵ Starting in m. 147 in *Routine Investigations* and in m. 253 in *Elemental Procedures*.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁴⁷ Claren, 15.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 380-1.

²⁴⁹ Claren, 9.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 472.

and of Feldman's Beckett-based works in general, as an emulation or, as Laws dubs it, a "translation"²⁵¹ of Beckett's language or ideas that came to Feldman in a heureka moment in the 1970's. After all, Feldman already found Beckett and himself in a state of "complete agreement about many, many things"²⁵² when they met for the first time, by which he implies that he did not make major adjustments to match Beckett's aesthetic. Despite the ostensible responsiveness of his music to the text and the emergent qualities of this aesthetic encounter, Feldman also continued a path he had chosen for himself earlier in his life.

3.2.2. Beckett's 'librettino'

Continuing the absurd chain of events preceding the premiere of *neither*, Feldman jotted down on a piece of paper (probably a sketch for a program note) that the Beckett text arrived "on November 31"²⁵³ [sic!], although he must have received the postcard by beginning of November, when he wrote his letter thanking Beckett. In any case, the 'librettino' which Feldman found hastily scribbled on the back of the postcard in Beckett's spidery handwriting read as follows:

neither
to and fro in shadow from inner to outer shadow

from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself
by way of neither

as between two lit refuges whose doors once neared gently close, once turned away from
gently part again

beckoned back and forth and turned away

heedless of the way, intent on the one gleam or the other

unheard footfalls only sound

till at last halt for good, absent for good from self and other

then no sound

then gently light unfading on that unheeded neither

unspeakable home²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Laws, Catherine. "Morton Feldman's *neither*: A Musical Translation of Beckett's Text." SBM, 57-86.

²⁵² Skempton, MFS, 75.

²⁵³ PSS, MF 0206.1/0177-9.

²⁵⁴ Original postcard: PSS, MF 0206.1/0168.

Compared to the "one thought" Beckett had written into the score of *Elemental Procedures*, it becomes apparent that the positions of the words "inner" and "outer" in the first verse were reversed. Claren suggests that Beckett settled on this version in order to exclude the appearance of a withdrawal into the "self" and to avoid the chiasmus "outer-self"/"inner-unself" in favor of a parallel structure,²⁵⁵ thus reinforcing the impression of a single, repeated thought in lieu of a narrative arc. The most striking point about this text is that it completely lacks both a lyrical and a grammatical subject, much as Beckett's other later short and long prose texts. It is due to its succinctness, abstractness, and enigmatic imagery that the text opens up a universe of polysemies, dovetailing with what Beckett wrote about Giordano Bruno as a young writer, namely that "corruption is generation" (see chapter 1.2). The title *neither* as well as the various negative prefixes the text is replete with ("un-self," "im-penetrable," "un-heard," "ab-sent," "un-fading," "un-heeded," "un-speakable") are marked by the same dialectic or antinomy, as Herzfeld has suggested,²⁵⁶ as that of self and unself. If the text encapsulates the *idée fixe* or the "quintessence" of Beckett's work and thought, it is consistent with our observations in the first two chapters that *neither* contains no more and no less than the archetypal duality of inextricable, complementary opposites or *enantiodromia*, which, as we have argued, is an all-pervasive idea in Beckett's œuvre. This archetypal scheme may be filled with various "actualized archetypes," in Jung's terminology,²⁵⁷ i.e. individual mental images. Those listeners who are cognizant of Beckett's entire body of work might draw intertextual connections between the "self" and Murphy's "little world,"²⁵⁸ i.e. the microcosm of the mind. Consequently, "unself" corresponds to the "big world," everything outside mental reality. Also in *Murphy*, an entire chapter is devoted to the topography of the character's mental sphere, which consists of three zones: "light, half light, dark."²⁵⁹ The first one represents consciousness, cognitive faculties or what Schopenhauer referred to as the "will to life,"²⁶⁰ the fundamental aspect of existence, space and

²⁵⁵ Claren, 242.

²⁵⁶ Herzfeld, 521.

²⁵⁷ Jacobi, 40.

²⁵⁸ *Murphy*, 178.

²⁵⁹ *Murphy*, 111.

²⁶⁰ Cf. *Grove Companion to SB*, 513-4.

causality.²⁶¹ "Half-light" designates "states of peace,"²⁶² in which the will has been quieted somewhat, e.g. as when a limited form of transcendence has been attained. This in turn appears to correspond to the state of mind that is, according to Schopenhauer, brought about by aesthetic contemplation.²⁶³ In the dark zone or "matrix of surds," finally, Murphy is "a mote in the darkness of absolute freedom."²⁶⁴ In this state of unconsciousness, the will is brought to rest, reminiscent of what Schopenhauer wrote about the loss of consciousness in sleep and death: "Der tiefe Schlaf ist vom Tode (...) gar nicht verschieden, sondern nur für die Zukunft, nämlich in Hinsicht auf das Erwachen. Der Tod ist ein Schlaf, in welchem die Individualität vergessen wird."²⁶⁵ Beckett's expression "absolute freedom" is double-edged in that the self is indeed liberated from the will at the same time as losing its autonomy, an idea already figuring in Beckett's early play *Eleutheria*. Knowlson notes that the notion of three zones of consciousness "arises from the convergence of Beckett's readings in psychology, psychoanalysis and philosophy."²⁶⁶ This implies a psychological reading as part of this intertextual perspective, that is, if the Murphyan model is construed as a confluence of Freudian and Jungian theories. (In chapter 2.1.3. we briefly touched upon Carl Gustav Jung, one of whose lectures Beckett had attended in 1935²⁶⁷ and whose ideas markedly structured and shaped Beckett's narrative worlds.) As Damian Love writes on the structure of the human mind as put forth by Jung in the 1935 lecture: "Jung showed a diagram he had used earlier, which became for SB a virtual archetype of the mind. It is strikingly simple: a series of concentric spheres representing gradations of the mind from the outer light of ego consciousness to the dark center of the collective unconscious."²⁶⁸ Darkness may, furthermore, be related to the darkness of the womb and thus to the Jungian "never been properly born" dilemma that Beckett invoked several times.

No less Beckettian is the movement of the doors, closing whenever approached and opening whenever abandoned, that is, the complementarity of the self's will and its ef-

²⁶¹ Schopenhauer, Arthur. *Sämtliche Werke Vol. I: Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*. Ed. Wolfgang Frhr. v. Löhneysen. Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp, 1986, 381. As said before, Beckett first turned to Schopenhauer in July 1930 in search for an "intellectual justification of unhappiness." LSB, 33.

²⁶² *Murphy*, 112.

²⁶³ *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, 372.

²⁶⁴ *Murphy*, 112.

²⁶⁵ *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, 384.

²⁶⁶ Knowlson, 218.

²⁶⁷ Knowlson, 176; cf. also: Love, Damian. "Jung, Carl Gustav." *Grove Companion to SB*, op. cit. 289-92: 290.

²⁶⁸ Love, 290. Cf. also: Jacobi, 30-6.

fect, which is also found in the two *Acts Without Words*. This is the principle of conservation of energy within a closed system, which Jung applied to the equilibrium of consciousness, and which is likewise seen in Bergson's image of the two spools. In this context, it entails an epistemological and ontological dilemma, i.e. the mutual exclusion of self-knowledge and knowledge of the material world, or the illusion of a Cartesian split. Comprehending the objective reality outside the bounds of one's own consciousness by empirical means presupposes de-subjectifying one's knowledge of it. Yet owing to the interpenetration of the "little world" and the "big world," i.e. the fact that the mind is partly or entirely physical, the mechanisms of consciousness lie beyond intellectual scrutiny, which is what John Searle has referred to as "ontological subjectivity."²⁶⁹ On the other hand, introspection fails to yield objective knowledge of mental processes. While Beckett does not provide a solution to this dilemma, ending up with "neither," Jung envisioned a holistic "either *and* or" epistemology, including both empirical data and metaphysical speculation.²⁷⁰ Feldman obviously construed this door imagery as an antagonism between reason and emotion or sense, as revealed by a personal note on a sketch sheet: "A happy thought: If you begin a life of feeling[,] [...] you leave the human race."²⁷¹

The word "shadow" is a metaphor of its own vagueness. In Jung's theory, *shadow* designates "our 'other side,' our 'dark brother,' who is an invisible but inseparable part of our psychic totality,"²⁷² its development paralleling the development of the ego. As is well known, "ego and shadow" or the *doppelgänger* is a ubiquitous archetype in literature:²⁷³ Cain and Abel, Faust and Mephisto, Dante and Virgil, Shakespearean siblings, and, not to forget, Beckett's "pseudocouples": Murphy and Celia, Mercier and Camier, Words and Music etc. This notion, not unlike the duality-within-unity concept of *yin yang* (see chapter 2.1.3.), dovetails with Feldman's use of the word *shadow*, of which John Cage speaks in his Zen-informed *Lecture on Something*: "I remember now that Feldman spoke of shadows. He said that the sounds were not sounds but shadows.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Searle, John. *Mind, Language and Society*. New York: Basic Books, 1999. 73-4. Cf. also: *The Mystery of Consciousness*, New York: NYREV, 1997. 95-131.

²⁷⁰ Jacobi, 62.

²⁷¹ PSS, MF 0458/0966.

²⁷² Ibid, 109.

²⁷³ Jacobi, 111-2.

They are obviously sounds; that's why they are shadows. Every something is an echo of nothing."²⁷⁴

Another point of contact between Beckett and Feldman is Giordano Bruno. Friedhelm Rathjen contends that Bruno's principle of the identity of opposites, explicated in chapter 2.1.3., is most tangible in the *neither* text.²⁷⁵ As to Feldman, what may have come to his mind when reading *neither* was the title of Giordano Bruno's *Shadows (De umbris idearum)* as expounded in Yates *The Art of Memory*,²⁷⁶ where the 'shadows' are described as "intermediary between the ideal world above the stars, and the objects and events in the lower world."²⁷⁷ This points to a fundamental belief Bruno inherited from Hermeticism, notably that the "above" and the "below," the macrocosm and the microcosm, are interconnected.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, "[t]he memory system aims at unification on the star level as a preparation for reaching the higher Unity."²⁷⁹ Feldman, whose penchant for memory forms has been delineated above, talked about Bruno's memory systems in a lecture years later in 1986,²⁸⁰ which suggests that he was highly engrossed by this chapter.

The concept of an indeterminable destination nullifying the subject-object interdependence might evoke the condition depicted in Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Idea* as the subject's "vollkommenste Erkenntnis seines Wesens" ("most perfect knowledge of its own nature")²⁸¹ achieved through contemplation.²⁸² While this is only one association readers of the libretto may have, this concept illustrates the connection – drawn by the Schopenhauer himself – between Western and Eastern thought, which also represents a point of contact between Beckett and Cage, as well as Beckett and Kim. However, it is self-evident that the idea of salvation concomitant to this state of "most perfect knowledge" is absent from the Beckettian universe. Instead, the "lyrical subject" is left hovering in a state of mystery due to its ignorance of the final asylum. Language, reduced to the utmost to begin with, in the end disqualifies itself by means of the ex-

²⁷⁴ *Silence*, 131.

²⁷⁵ Rathjen, Friedhelm. "The Magic Triangle: James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Arno Schmidt." Op. cit., 95-6.

²⁷⁶ Yates, 199-230.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 223.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 225.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Feldman, "Doing it one way...", 474.

²⁸¹ Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, 327; my own translation.

²⁸² Ibid.

pression "unspeakable," which is itself polysemous in that it has (at least) the following three meanings:

- 1 a: incapable of being expressed; unutterable
 b: inexpressibly bad: horrendous
- 2 that which may not or cannot be spoken²⁸³

It is easily seen, then, that the penultimate expression in Beckett's text carries a number of positive or negative connotations on its own, from "unutterably sublime" to "extremely terrifying."²⁸⁴ It also does not rule out more neutral readings such as "unfathomable" or "beyond understanding." As a modifier of the noun "home," it becomes doubly ambiguous, as does the latter word, depending on what the individual reader associates with it. In his compositional sketches, Feldman first wrote down the word "unbearable" before changing it to "unspeakable,"²⁸⁵ which, to be sure, sheds light on his personal interpretation of the penultimate word of the text.

The back vowel "o" of the last word refers back to those of the first line, although the text as a whole does not display the circular structure of, say, the poem "Roundelay." That the speech-sound structure is no less carefully crafted and no less inextricable with the semantics than that of other late prose texts is evident, for example, in the repetition of back vowels at the beginning (to and fro in shadow) or in the fact that Beckett chose the unwieldy five-syllable-expression "impenetrable," the longest one in the text, to capture the paradox of hopeless, yet endless human effort, his personal creative *leitmotive* and, equally, that of the addressee trying to make sense of his work. After all, the observations above tie in with another complementary phenomenon we have come across earlier: maximizing the number of equally contingent interpretations by minimizing the material, i.e. presenting an almost "blank canvas" (Alvarez²⁸⁶) as a projection screen for the recipient's personal concerns.

Although *neither* shares a line with the poem "Roundelay," which was written around the same time, it is, unlike the poems of the 1970's, devoid of metric patterns. Nor can it be classified as a dramatic monologue, which is why stage directions are absent, as

²⁸³ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield, MA ¹¹2003, 1373.

²⁸⁴ A parallel might also be drawn to the kabbalistic concept of *ein sof* ("endless," "infinite"), a divine, timeless entity whose realm is beyond language. Cf. Dan, *Kabbalah*, 40.

²⁸⁵ PSS, MF 0458/0961-1018.

²⁸⁶ Alvarez, op. cit., 123.

Claren is right to point out.²⁸⁷ This explains why Beckett objected to publishing it in the *Collected Poems*, saying that it was a prose text rather than a poem.²⁸⁸ The similarity to some of the poems written in the same decade and earlier is not only due to the extreme terseness of Beckett's 'librettino,' but also to its metaphors. The door image already occurs in an early poem (written in the late 1940's), one which was set by Rands in ...*among the voices*.... "A door that opens and shuts" is the last line. Gontarski has suggested to read the poem as a metafictional "critique of genre."²⁸⁹ As we will argue, this interpretation might provide a key to *neither* seen within the generic context of the opera. In *Watt*, the protagonist also walks "to and fro"²⁹⁰ between a front door and a back door, both of which are, at first, locked, until suddenly he finds the back door open. In the end, "his science of the locked door"²⁹¹ is his only recourse for explaining this incident. If we conceive doors as being as much part of "Beckett country"²⁹² as bicycles, dustbins, and other things, and thus presume that there is a certain continuity behind this image, then Gontarski's metafictional reading of the poem is substantiated by the fact that the narrator in *The Unnamable* also speaks of a "door that opens **on my story**" (my emphasis). "Opening" and "closing" is also a prominent dichotomy in the radio play *Cascando*, in which context it might also refer to the creative act as a whole:²⁹³ "There's nothing in my head./I don't answer any more./I open and close."²⁹⁴ Here the opening and closing (a story) assumes the function of an alternative to artistic expression. Most simply, it denotes the ritual of marking the beginning and the end of a work of art, which is evident throughout the play: Whenever Opener says "I open"/"I open the other"/"I open both" etc., he unleashes a stream of words, sounds or both. This is to say that if the artist is in the position of having "nothing to express" (no message worthwhile sharing), and even if he abandons any means of expression (artistic media) and chooses to remain silent, the only creative task left is to delineate the frame – be it temporal or spatial – of his artifact. In other words, the "form that accommodates the mess"

²⁸⁷ Claren, 26.

²⁸⁸ CSP, Notes on the Texts, 284.

²⁸⁹ Gontarski (2006), 479.

²⁹⁰ *Watt*, 36.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² This has been established as a term for "SB's psychological landscape." Cf. Ackerley/Gontarski, *Grove Companion to SB*, 41-2.

²⁹³ Cf. Zilliacus, who argued that *Cascando* is "a work for the radio medium about the radio medium." 140.

²⁹⁴ CDW, 300.

(Beckett) is the only remnant of the artist's creativity in a state of self-imposed speech- or songlessness. This can be for destructive (B-effect) reasons, as in Beckett, or constructive (C-effect)²⁹⁵ ones: When John Cage had the performer do nothing but open and close the piano lid in *4'33"*, his primary motive was, of course, not to *exclude* or deny creative expression, but to *include* the audience's individual perceptions. In *Play*, it is not doors, but eyes that open and close on the character M, which causes him to wonder "Am I as much as...being seen?"²⁹⁶ This is, no doubt, one of the central lines of the play, and it could also be seen as a metafictional deliberation of the character on its own status, the reader's perception, much like the "eye" in the *Film*, is his sole *raison-d'être*. If we think of Beckett as following Bruno's model²⁹⁷ in opening up a sheer infinite number of interpretational worlds by means of a brief text that "just hovers" (Feldman), we have admittedly delineated a fairly small number of conceivable readings and thus barely scratched the surface of *neither's* multivalence. If, as the present author would suggest as a conclusion, the text does not at all refer to any *topos* outside, but only *within* itself in the first place – that is: if it self-reflexively and meta-aesthetically portrays the aporia of the creative process – then, in keeping with the principle of *enantiodromia*, this only increases the number of contingent extrinsic references and thus interpretational freedom. Finally, if Feldman indeed asked for "the quintessence,"²⁹⁸ in other words: the archetype of Beckett's work, then the significance of this arcane, dense, hermetic and yet open prose text can hardly be overestimated.

3.2.3. Feldman's musical response

A comprehensive analysis of Feldman's music has been undertaken by Claren.²⁹⁹ This will allow us to focus on the opera's idiosyncrasies and shed light on particular aspects in each section. In keeping with Feldman's informal nomenclature, the 10-page instrumental introduction will be referred to as the "overture" (though not titled as such). Although the entire composition is devoid of formal subdivisions (in keeping with his ax-

²⁹⁵ Zurbrugg, op. cit.

²⁹⁶ CDW, 317.

²⁹⁷ The connection between Beckett's and Bruno's thought has been discussed in chapter 2.1. On Bruno, cf. also: Waley Singer, Dorothea. *Giordano Bruno. His Life and Thought. On the Infinite Universe of Worlds*. NY: Henry Schuman, 1950. 46-9.

²⁹⁸ Skempton, MFS, 75.

²⁹⁹ Claren (2000), 357-427.

iom that the "conceptual" follows the "perceptual"), the work will be discussed in eight sections. Following Claren's template, the passages in which the soprano pauses will be called "Interludes."

The 'Overture' (pp. 1-10)

While Feldman was waiting to receive the text, he set out to compose the "overture," as he called it. That is, obviously his and Beckett's initial conversation in Berlin, along with the "one idea" which the author had written into the score of *Elemental Procedures*, seemed to have provided him with enough ideas to begin the piece. This is yet another reason to regard *neither* as two interlocking aesthetic monologues rather than as a dialogue between Feldman and Beckett.

By the time Feldman started composing *neither*, he had largely abandoned graphic notation. One remnant of this Pollock-inspired approach is, however, evident in the *visual rhythmic structure*, the spatial organization of musical ideas, which, as mentioned above, might as well have been an outcome of his interest in mnemotechnics. It is thus the visual impression of the score that bespeaks a structural layout which is based not on the number of bars or objective time (as in Richard Barrett's *I Open and Close*), but on score pages. After a *tutti* introduction with an exposition of the most important musical material on p. 1, each new section, be it a variation of melodic or rhythmic material or a reconfiguration of instrumental timbres, starts on a new page. Thus each page represents a metaphor of what has been stated before, a representation rather than a representation. This *visual rhythmic structure* is only abandoned from p. 53 onwards after the verse "halt for good," thus this change is prompted by the turning point in the text, after which the Feldmanian memory forms are superseded by de-spatialized time or the Bergsonian ideal of *durée*. Above all, this juxtaposition of *visual rhythmic structure* and a non-spatial deployment of musical material illustrates Feldman's self-proclaimed goal of composing "*between categories*. Between Time and Space. Between painting and music. Between the music's construction and its surface."³⁰⁰ Imbued with both sensuous immediacy and constructive principles, "it is to be looked at **and** listened to,"³⁰¹ as Beckett said about Joyce's works. Another peculiarity is the absence of pause signs pointing to Feldman's (and Cage's) propensity for terms such as "nothing" or "silence,"

³⁰⁰ "Between Categories," 88.

³⁰¹ SB, *Disjecta*, 27.

implying discontinuity (as opposed to "pause," continuity). The acknowledgment of the "nothing" becomes the basis of creation, just as in Beckett's *Imagination Dead Imagine*. To use Beckett's words again: "from naught come to naught gone."³⁰² In this way, linearity is eschewed in favor of a verticalization of sound.

The overture falls into three sections: In the first one (pp. 1-5) sustained chords in open and close position are predominant. In the second one (pp. 6-7) these chords appear in fragmented, "staggered"³⁰³ (Feldman) form. In the last section (8-10), percussion instruments and the harp take center stage, bringing in new timbres, while wind instruments and high strings pause, only joining in again on page 10. The three sections comprise 5, 2, and 3 pages respectively. On the microstructural plane, the numbers 5, 2 and 3 also feature prominently. The overture starts with a 5/16 measure, after which the time signatures 5/8, 2/4, and 3/8 alternate irregularly: 5-2-3-2-3-2-5-2-3-2-5 on the first page. Likewise, periodical crescendi and decrescendi (similar to those in *Routine Investigations*, 1976) occur at temporal intervals of five eighth notes in the flute voice, two eighth notes in the oboes, and three eighth notes in the clarinets. Though Zimmermann does not rule out the possibility of an underlying "intuitive kabbalism"³⁰⁴ in Feldman's scores, these numbers also reveal a fairly pragmatic use of the three smallest prime numbers to generate the greatest possible irregularity achieved by creating indivisible units so as to prevent individual voices from coinciding at any time – polyphony in the most literal sense of the word. A similar kind of 'organized irregularity' is seen in the double-bass part, barely audible as it is, where, at the onset of which each note is played by a different number of instruments, so that dynamic differentiation goes beyond the decrescendo and *ppp* markings. Irregularities also permeate the parameters of rhythm or tempo: The 2/4 measures of the harp ostinato on the first page are written as quintuplets, the 3/8 ones as quadruplets. This causes a periodical acceleration and deceleration, producing an irregular 'pulse.'

These examples already provide sufficient evidence of Feldman's firm grip over even the smallest, barely audible sound events, which could not be further removed from his early indeterminate style. While he creates minute gradations, the material as a whole is retained over large sections. This is indicative of what he described metaphorically as

³⁰² Watt, 248.

³⁰³ Letter dated November 4, 1976, PSS, MF 0206.1/0164. Claren mistranslates "staggered" as "taumelnd" (staggering) rather than "gestaffelt," "aufeinanderfolgend" (Claren, 367).

³⁰⁴ Zimmermann, MFE, 15.

"re-arranging furniture": seeking the greatest variability within a limited scope of material. Feldman did not subscribe to the serialist stipulation that *all* possibilities suggested by the material have to be exploited systematically in re-combinations; as discussed above, he pursued quite the opposite end, i.e. decentralization and incalculability of the compositional process. However, his compositional sketches³⁰⁵ reveal that, only a few years later in the late 1970's, he was experimenting a great deal with pitch class set transformations and scale material similar to the style of Milton Babbitt or Messiaen (s. chapter 4.1.5.).

It is not until page 5 that all twelve tones have sounded at least once. The *patterns*, on the other hand, are introduced in their entirety on the first page, after which they recur in different instruments and different octaves, each *pattern* re-appearing as an image of itself. For example, the harp ostinato of the first page is played by the 'cello, bass clarinet and double-bass bassoon and the 'cello alone in the first and second system of the second page, respectively. On page 6, the first violin takes over the open position chord previously played by the oboe, while the second violin is given a motive played before by the flute and the viola takes over the chord of the clarinet. This is where the passage begins that Feldman might have had in mind when he spoke of "various durations of simultaneous breathing"³⁰⁶ in a letter to Beckett. Two letters before rehearsal number 8, we find an example of a technique akin to contrapuntal voice exchange, which Feldman, using his own terminology, described in one of his lectures as "criss-crossing":³⁰⁷ The viola part is abruptly transferred to the second violin, the chord of the second violin appears in the first, and that of the first violin in the viola voice. This is followed by rhythmic modifications, as though this voice trade caused a moment of confusion. A similar exchange occurs four bars after rehearsal number 9. Though, as has been argued, this musical language is not entirely unprecedented and thus cannot be attributed to Beckett's influence alone, the excessive use of *patterns*, as well as the extension of the concept of polyphony to the entire range of parameters – polyrhythm, polydynamics, (implicit) polymeter, etc. is essentially a novelty in Feldman's work.³⁰⁸ In addition, it is revealing that Feldman used the allusive phrase "various durations of simultaneous breathing," thereby attributing a programmatic content to his work and also, deliberately

³⁰⁵ Sketches for *Violin and Orchestra*, 1979. PSS, MF 0459/0753-4; 0770-1.

³⁰⁶ PSS, MF 0206.1/0164. Full letter quoted below.

³⁰⁷ "Crippled Symmetry," 141.

³⁰⁸ Claren, 366.

or not, drawing a connection to Beckett, notably *Breath*, and other anthropogenic sounds (e.g. footfalls) that give rise to repetitive structures. In *Elemental Procedures*, the chorus is instructed to produce a "breath tone" (m. 156) reminiscent of the harp tone in *neither* (starting on p. 1, lower staff).

Despite Feldman's quest for non-relationality – between sounds and between music and reality – it is almost impossible to ignore the socio-political overtones inherent in his compositional ideal or "self": Arguably, the heterogeneity of voices, the maximization of polyphony, and the pursued individuality of sound events within a fixed spatial and temporal grid are, notably, indicative of values underpinning the United States's multiculturalism in general and reflect social models echoing the place (New York) and the time (of the Cold War) in particular, be it *e pluribus unum*, the salad bowl analogy, anti-collectivist postures,³⁰⁹ or simply a purely musical note-for-note implementation of the postmodern quest for "radical plurality."³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ In a lecture held in Toronto in 1982, Feldman called Stefan Wolpe a "Proletariat twelve-tone composer" (PSS, MF 0299.1/0262), which sheds light on the connotations the twelve-tone method bore in his opinion, a view shared by other American opponents to dodecaphony (s. chapter 4.1.4.).

³¹⁰ Welsch, 4.

Neither
opera in one act
for soprano and orchestra (1977)



Morton Feldman
(1926 - 1987)

neither
to a text by samuel Beckett

63-66

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Ex. 1: Morton Feldman „Neither“ © Copyright 1977 by Universal Edition (London) Ltd. London/UE 16326, p.1

Verses 1-3 (pp. 11-19)

Although Feldman did not write as extensively for voice as did Earl Kim or Bernard Rands, the third and the fifth of his *Vertical Thoughts* pieces were written for soprano and instruments. In several works for voice up to 1963, he had already shown a predilection for soprano, e.g. in *Journey to the End of the Night* (1949), *Four Songs to e.e. cummings* (1951), *Wind* (1960; to a poem by the Nobel laureate Boris Pasternak), or *For Franz Kline* (1962). Only two compositions were written for bass/baritone before the *Vertical Thoughts* series: *Intervals* (1962) and the *O'Hara Songs* (1962). That Feldman, like Earl Kim, preferred soprano voices proved to be an ideal precondition for his collaboration with Beckett. As demonstrated above, Beckett's vocal ideal was a kind of soprano voice which he called "white voice."

On November 4, 1976, Feldman had obviously received the *neither* postcard, for he wrote the following letter to Beckett:

Dear Mr. Beckett,
How thrilled I was to receive "Neither".
Many thanks – and I will see to it that everything connected with its performance is just right.
The day I got back to Buffalo I was introduced to Federman!³¹¹ There must be an omen there somewhere, we are now buddies and have wonderful talks together.
I have found a way to utilize your text quite naturally. Remember the underpainting I showed you – showed the various durations of simultaneous "breathing" along with the continuous curious staggered rhythm – on top of this the voice sneaks in and dissolves out quite constantly on a high G.

[*sketch of the first six measures of the soprano part*]

Eventually the pitch will change and sometimes there will be longer pauses in between. The tone is sung beautifully and there will be no feeling of a parlando-like approach. She is singing yet it is not directional. Time makes the line, the connection. Time itself becomes what is lyrical. It would be as if she is singing a tune but it's not there. Well, back to work on "Neither", and I thank you with all my heart. Morton Feldman.³¹²

The symmetrical layout of the first two verses of text sung by the soprano disrupts the organized 'anarchy' of the overture. Unlike the "various durations of simultaneous breathing" that marked the initial scenario, the first lines of text exhibit a clear structure in Feldman's view: "First of all, like a conventional composer, I started to scan the first sentence: *To and fro in shadow from inner to outer shadow*; it seemed to me as one long period of time. And I noticed that it fell into a grid."³¹³

³¹¹ Raymond Federman (1928-2009), Beckett's friend and literary critic. Cf., e.g., Federman, Raymond. *Journey to Chaos: Samuel Beckett's Early Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.

³¹² PSS, MF 0206.1/0164.

³¹³ Qtd in: Skempton, 75.

However, the spatial layout of the overture is regular not from the moment the voice enters, but before that, as each page comprises exactly twelve bars, although this regularity is only arrived at on the second page owing to the erratic alternation of a number of time signatures. Despite the seemingly amorphous distribution of sound events, this structural discipline is a trait which Feldman had in common with the Schönberg disciples Cage and Kim. When the soprano enters, the regular alternation of 2/4 and 3/8 is continued. Each line of the first two verses is allotted a "grid" of twelve bars. Although Feldman's comment seems to imply that it was the text structure that gave rise to the musical structure, it was actually the other way around: Despite the varying number of syllables (6 in the first line, 8 in the second, 15 in the third, 5 in the fourth), he retains the 2x6 bar period structure, thus dividing each score page or system into two approximately identical halves. This almost ideal symmetry is undercut by minor deviations in the accompanying voices, the "underpainting," as Feldman calls it in his letter. Claren points out the similarity between this passage in the soprano voice and a part of the setting of the *Film* passage in *Elemental Procedures* (starting m. 441-454), where, however, the soprano sings an Ab instead of a G.³¹⁴ In a compositional sketch, the first verse is not set to a monotonous line as in the final version. While "to and fro" is sung on G, the remainder of the verse is set to the neighboring tones A, Ab, and Bb.³¹⁵ Thus in this early version this material foreshadowed the chromatic progression of the "unself" material starting on p. 29 (which will be discussed below). Although the setting is strictly syllabic at this point, adhering to the prosodic features of natural speech, the comprehensibility of the text is impaired significantly by the long notes, high register and low volume (*ppp* is suggested by Feldman in brackets). In the letter quoted above, Feldman assured Beckett that "there will be no feeling of a parlando-like approach," that the soprano "is singing, yet it is not directional" and that "[t]ime makes the line, the connection." This strategy is in keeping both with Feldman's endeavor to "liberate" sounds by way of eschewing melodic coherence and with Beckett's vocal ideal as outlined in chapter 2.2.3.: "Voices toneless except where an expression is indicated," "Voices faint, largely unintelligible"³¹⁶ (in *Play*), "vocal shadow," and "white voice."³¹⁷ Feldman

³¹⁴ Claren, 368.

³¹⁵ PSS, MF 0458/995.

³¹⁶ CDW, 307.

³¹⁷ Bernold, *L'Amitié de Beckett*. Paris : Hermann, 1992. (German edition : *Becketts Freundschaft*, transl. by Ulrich Krafft, Berlin: Berenberg, 2006. 83.)

added that it was as though the soprano was singing a melody, "but it's not there," and instead of "coming in," the soprano "sneaks up and dissolves out quite constantly on a high G." Since the musical material of the overture is retained in this section, the soprano is, indeed, simply added to the soundscape. As aforementioned, natural syllable lengths and emphases are mostly taken into consideration at this point.

Overall, score passages, tones, or pages appear as "metaphors" of preceding ones. The F# played by the flute at rehearsal number 15, for example, harks back to the pizzicato note at the very beginning, and p. 13, with the sustained close chords in the wind section and the "breathing" pattern returning in the strings, is an approximate restatement of p. 6. The last line of the second verse is yet again pseudo-symmetrical, only being different in one note value ("by" and "of"). After a short interlude of "breathing," the initial "grid" of the voice is abandoned as the first line of the third verse is stretched out over a period of thirteen instead of twelve bars, the soprano coming in one bar "early."

That Feldman's text-setting is particularly sensitive to the depiction of sense impressions in Beckett's text is evident for the first time in the musical context of the word "lit": On page 15, the orchestral texture is reduced to two sustained dyads in the 'celli, a trombone chord, both of which gradually fade away, and a single A in the harp. Meanwhile, the vocal part is interrupted by one-bar pauses between each syllable. "Lit" is sung without any accompaniment. For the first time, therefore, the orchestral sound dies away completely. This reveals the great importance Feldman ascribed to the light metaphor, which he might have understood in a transcendental sense, as a symbol of wisdom (in the Platonic sense) or as the "most perfect knowledge" (the Schopenhauerian ideal). Notwithstanding this one instance of fairly straightforward semantization of the text; it is easily seen that up to this point that the music, rather than concretizing the text, enhances its "non-idea"³¹⁸ (Feldman) the most, i.e. its ambiguity and polysemy. This means, as Laws argues, that one seeks in vain for one-to-one relations between text and music.³¹⁹ The parallel lies in the ambiguity and 'crippled symmetry' of the music, and the recipient's restless quest for order and meaning in response to these vicissitudes and irregularities,³²⁰ which is in accordance with the Sisyphean sense-making of Beckettian characters and likewise of his readers and critics. What Feldman does, then, is create

³¹⁸ "XXX Anecdotes and Drawings," 163.

³¹⁹ Laws, Catherine. "Morton Feldman's *neither*: A Musical Translation of Beckett's Text." SBM, 57-86: 60.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, 67.

illusions of regular structures – pseudo-symmetries in which the placement of sound events, although they may at first appear to be identical, never follow a general rule. As Feldman himself put it, "there is a *suggestion* that what we hear is functional and directional, but we soon realize that this is an illusion; a bit like walking the streets of Berlin – where all the buildings look alike, *even if they're not*."³²¹ In other words, symmetry is never palpable, but always palpably close.

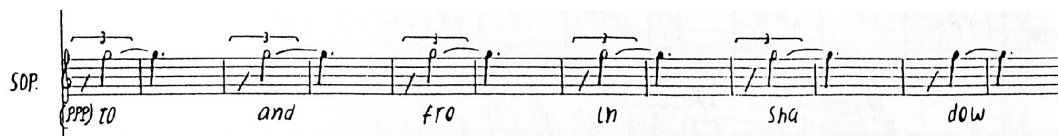
The next line, "whose doors...", appears in an even more fragmented form. As on p. 14, the soprano starts after an 11-bar instrumental interlude, but then the rest of the verse is deferred until p. 17, interrupted by a sustained dyad played by the 'cello similar to the one sounding before "lit" (in lieu of Bb and Eb, we now hear A and D), and the return of the "breathing" pattern in the second half of the page. On p. 17 the verse is continued, now in a melismatic fashion, i.e. set to a repeated chromatic three-tone set, F#-G-Ab and, like the first two verses, accommodated in a regular twelve-bar grid. Meanwhile, the double-bass sustains a minor-second dyad due to its high pitch and flageolet quality at the brink of silence. The text-setting mode, shifting from syllabic monotonous declamation to a chromatic melody, marks a first stage of the soprano's development from monosyllabic, prosody-oriented text treatment toward longer, more ornate melodic patterns and vocalises, with intelligibility gradually fading during the process. Although Feldman vowed "to treat each sentence as a world," and avoid a "cause-and-effect" coherence,³²² there is a sense of continuity or sameness that goes along with the steady repetition of musical material, in the present case, three tones.

The next verse, "once turned..." is also disintegrated by a pause of six bars. As opposed to the sensitivity to natural speech patterns in the first two verses, especially in the line "from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself," the last part of the verse ("away from gently part again") set to the five repetitions of the same three-tone sequence as before is anything but responsive to the prosodic features (the first syllable of "away" and "again" is falls on a strong beat). In this way, it blurs its own semantic content. Thus we can tentatively conclude that Beckett's idiosyncratic bilateral instability of word and sound (cf. "Music from within") is echoed in Feldman's text treatment inasmuch as the verbal plane is neither entirely disassembled nor de-semantized so as to serve solely as sound material; similarly, Feldman did not invariably pay heed to the text's syntactic

³²¹ "Crippled Symmetry," 138.

³²² Skempton, MFS, 76.

and semantic integrity. Instead a seesaw effect arises up to this point between word and sound, much like Roland Barthes' "rustle of language."



Ex. 2: Morton Feldman „Neither“ © Copyright 1977 by Universal Edition (London) Ltd. London/UE 16326, p. 11.

Interlude – Verse 4 – Interlude (pp. 20-28)

Another manifestation of Feldmanian "betweenness" unfolds in the instrumental interlude following the first three verses. Listeners familiar with Feldman's oeuvre preceding *neither* and his aesthetic concerns will most likely perceive the 'pointillistic' compositional mode starting on p. 20 as a Feldmanian idiosyncrasy, whereas those who have never encountered a work by the composer might hear musical gestures in it which illustrate one of the movements or trajectories conveyed by the text: opening and closing doors or the "to and fro" pacing reminiscent of Beckett's play *Footfalls*. Bearing a faint resemblance to Schönberg's *Klangfarbenmelodie*, this even and slow timbral "pulse" produced by a discontinuous succession of variously orchestrated homorhythmic tone constellations calls to mind the horizontal disintegration in favor of a vertical, timeless sound structure that Feldman pursued in the 1960's,³²³ notably his "nothing against something" paradigm.³²⁴ On the other hand, its fairly gestural and evocative quality does not appear to rule out concrete metaphorical associations either. It is, yet again, best regarded as hovering "in between" introspective self-expression on the one hand and programmatic outreach on the other. In the overall dramaturgy of the opera, this static contemplation provides a cathartic caesura, or retarding moment, hinged between the continuous erratic movement of the overture, culminating in the three-tone melodic cell sung by the soprano, and the strictly horizontal sound organization starting on p. 29. Clearly, since Feldman related to Howard Skempton that he did not want "a kind of glue that would take me from one thought to another,"³²⁵ this episode is interpolated to avoid continuity. The subsequent passage is then created almost *ex nihilo*. As Cage said on

³²³ Explicated in "Vertical Thoughts," 12-4.

³²⁴ "The Future of Local Music," 181.

³²⁵ Skempton, MFS, 76.

Feldman's music, "the first something springs us into nothing and out of that nothing arises the next something; etc. like an alternating current."³²⁶

The editors of the two volumes *Words and Music* conjectured that the 'cello solo mentioned by Feldman in Middleburg in reference to a conversation with Aaron Copland³²⁷ is the one at the beginning of *Cello and Orchestra*. Claren, however, believes that Feldman was referring to *neither*.³²⁸ Although the interlude in *neither* does not last "ten minutes"³²⁹ (Feldman), the description "back and forth" would speak for *neither*, in which case the regular sound pulse could indeed be said to serve the programmatic content of a "back and forth" movement. However, this conjecture cannot be verified.

On the first system of page 23, pauses have been reduced to the first beat of the 2/4 bars, which are subdivided into triplets. In the second system, in which percussion instruments join in, the sound-silence alternation is superseded by a continuity, ending with a sustained flageolet octave in the double-bass. On pp. 24-5, the regular sound pulse returns, with pauses gradually shortening on p. 25. On p. 26 the patterns of the first and second system of p. 23 – the Gb in the solo 'cello, the harp dyads, and the staggered entries of the percussion instruments – are combined. As the voice enters, echoing the 'cello's Gb, only the percussion instruments carry on. As in the beginning, the verse ("beckoned back..."), an alliteration to Beckett's name, is sung on a single note, one semitone lower and split into two symmetrical halves or periods of six bars. On p. 27 the sustained open chords of the overture return in the timpani, which are played until the end of this interlude while the violins and wind instruments reiterate the "breathing" pattern. The first system of p. 28 is filled with old material – the open sustained chord in the timpani, the closed chords in the winds, the harp tones first used on p. 1 (second harp). A new pattern, played by the double bass, is added in the second system: flageolet glissandi between two neighboring semi-tones, notated in two complementary voice parts (i.e. The upper voice moving down from A to G# while the lower voice simultaneously moves up from G# to A). While this pattern foreshadows the upcoming chromatic five-tone pattern, there is a stark discrepancy between the extremely scrupulous linear notation and its acoustic effect, in which the horizontal and vertical distinctness are, of

³²⁶ *Silence*, 135.

³²⁷ "I'm reassembling all the time," 92-4.

³²⁸ Claren, 377.

³²⁹ "I'm reassembling all the time," 94.

course, not at all perceptible. This peculiarity will resurface in a number of upcoming passages.

Interlude (continued) and Verse 5 (pp. 29-36)

That Feldman's exegesis of the Beckett text is a highly self-reflexive one, finding articulation in his idiosyncratic musical language, is evident in his conceptions of "self" and "unself." As he reported in his conversation with Howard Skempton, he found it easy to relate to the "self" and far more difficult to devise an equivalent for "unself." This is no great wonder, given his penchant for intellectual self-reliance and artistic independence: In an article for the *Sunday Times* from 1967, for example, he wrote: "Technique is the ability to know what is needed in order to be oneself."³³⁰

As to Beckett's libretto, Feldman "saw the unself as a very detached, impersonal, perfect type of machinery."³³¹ In the program note he wrote: "The music fluctuates between a very personal style ("impenetrable self") and a very impersonal style ("impenetrable unself")."³³² It is not clear from his comments, however, at what point he "invented"³³³ the "unself." While on the one hand he speaks of "superimposing" a "periodic element," which would suggest that the rigid periodicity of the soprano part embodies this "unself," on the other hand he also says that "it wasn't until page 30 that I had a glimpse of what *To and fro* is in the text" and, what is more, that "there's a new element here."³³⁴ One is thus led to assume that the periodicity of the soprano set against the irregular instrumental pulses was Feldman's first attempt at devising a self-unself-dichotomy, but as he went along, "thinking as he was writing," i.e. developing his ideas while composing rather than beforehand, he found a new musical equivalent for it, just as he felt that the Beckett text expressed the same thought over and over again, yet clothed in different vocabulary.³³⁵ If by page 30 he actually meant page 29, it might as well have been the five-tone pattern, then occurring for the first time, that he had in mind when he talked about the "perfect type of machinery." Given the fact that Feldman did not like to make corrections once his compositions were written down, using permanent ink from the

³³⁰ Qtd. by Louise Varèse in a letter to Feldman, dated 5 March, 1967. PSS, MF 0207.1/0966

³³¹ Skempton, MFS, 76.

³³² Manuscript, PSS, 0206.1/0177/0179. Also quoted in: Schiffer, Brigitte. "Neither." *Music and Musicians* 25 (August 1977): 49-50.

³³³ Skempton, MFS, 76.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ "Darmstadt Lecture," 184.

start, it is rather unlikely that he left the staff of the soprano voice blank until he could imagine what "unself" really denoted. In addition, the similarity between the soprano part in *neither* and that in *Elemental Procedures* would suggest that this could hardly have been material which Feldman considered antipodal to his "personal style." Nevertheless, what appears somewhat alien compared to his other works is indeed the repeated pattern starting on p. 29: F-G-F#-G#-A-F-G-G#-F#. Although a chromatically circling figure of this kind is neither a novelty in Feldman's oeuvre in general nor in this piece in particular, this blatantly simplistic orchestral treatment exhibits a stark contrast to the polyrhythmic and polydynamic situation as well as the wide scope of pitch material employed in the first part of the composition. It seems, however, unlikely that the part of the "unself" would generally be ascribed to the orchestra, with the soprano invariably representing the "self," as Albright has suggested.³³⁶ Needless to say, such a concrete role assignment would be at odds with the betweenness that underpins both Beckett's text and Feldman's music. An alternative to Albright's interpretation would be to view the soprano – malleable, yet maladjusted as it is – as embodying the grammatically camouflaged lyrical subject (or rather, "Not-I") of the text – present, yet floating, sometimes wordless, sometimes voiceless, between the two poles of existence until, at the end, it is led into the "gentle light."

It is above all fairly apparent why Feldman would consider this pattern the antithesis to his personal style of "liberating" sounds: These nine-tone periods, played in unison with changing orchestration and repeated 18 times before the soprano sings the next verse, allow nothing but a horizontal sound perception. The vertical dimension is virtually extinguished as individual voices amalgamate into a single homophonic collective. The *Gestalt* of a melodic period assumes priority over the perception of individual sounds. The articulation of every one of these nine tones is identical, and the timbres of individual instruments merge into one. Notwithstanding the changing instrumentation, this ostinato is subject to perceptual habitualization, i.e. the attention of the audience and the concentration of the performer are likely to wane – essentially the opposite of what Feldman sought to achieve in his longer pieces.

Nevertheless, several questions arise: First, if Feldman indeed sought to create an equivalent to Beckett's "unself" in the form of "machinery," what was his rationale be-

³³⁶ Albright (2003), 150.

hind using nine tones rather than an even number? Second, why did he adhere to his strategy of altering the orchestration section-wise? Third, why does the double-bass continue playing an irregular pulse, a flageolet dyad (G and Ab 4) that is drowned out by the unison pattern anyhow? It has been argued in previous chapters that the paradox of inseparable dualisms, the interdependence of subject and object, spirit and form, mind and matter, Murphy's "little world" and "big world," a theme permeating Beckett's creative output, also lies at the core of his *neither* 'librettino,' representing the "quintessence" of this text and perhaps his entire work. Neither can be fathomed in isolation from the other. Both remain unattainable. Feldman's response follows this idea to the extent that the musical alterity or "unself" is imbued with traces of his creative "self," and vice versa – at least from p. 29 onwards, if not from the beginning of the soprano voice and its regular grid that is juxtaposed with the irregular "breathing." Therefore, rather than portraying the "self" and the "unself" as autonomous antithetic units, they are musically depicted as inextricable, contingent upon one another. Thus it does not seem correct to assume that the "unself" 'merges' in the end into the self.³³⁷ Rather, a synthesis is never attained, since elements of both "self" and "unself" make themselves manifest – either visibly or audibly – throughout the remainder of the opera. On p. 29, this is evident in the double-bass' irregular pulse, in the odd number of tones constituting a phrase, and in the fact that, due to changing instrumentation, variation is not entirely absent. Two other features reveal the presence of "self." First, the grouping of the nine tones into a 4/5 and a 5/5 meter, which represents yet another dichotomy between the visual and the audible: The recurring motive F-G within the phrase is most likely to be heard as marking the beginning of a phrase, thus becoming a temporary syntactic metaphor for phrase onsets,³³⁸ or the G# could be heard as a leading tone to A, in which case A would mark the end of a phrase. In any case, the first five notes are most likely to be 'parsed' or perceptually grouped as a continuous line, even in a deadpan performance, which was obviously what Feldman intended. The another irregularity that is visible but not audible is the legato slurs grouping together six notes in the English horn, seven in the bass clarinet, and four, three, and five notes in the trombone voices – another silent protest of Feldman's confident compositional "self" against the "unself."

³³⁷ "Ein Aufgehen des 'Unselbst' im 'Selbst.'" Claren, 389. He contradicts himself, however, by arguing elsewhere that "die Möglichkeit einer 'Synthese' zwischen 'Selbst' und 'Unselbst' ausdrücklich verneint wird." (Ibid, 426)

³³⁸ Swain, op. cit., 99.

This horizontal texture is interrupted by the entry of the soprano, singing the fifth verse on a rhythmic modification of the three-tone module starting on p. 17. Just as the third verse, it is disintegrated by an instrumental interlude on p. 31. Not until p. 36 does the second part of the verse follow. The polyrhythmic organization of the overture returns on p. 31. Abandoning the 12-bar "grid" and increasing the heterogeneity of the instruments' voices even more through polymetric superimposition might or might not represent another interpretive move of the composer in response to the phrase "heedless of the way." On the following pages, a close juxtaposition of the polyphonous "self" and the "unself" promotes the impression of a dramatic conflict between these two compositional modes. The "unself" pattern returns rhythmically diminished, with a *bourdon* of harmonic fourths played by the solo violin, and continues on p. 33. The next page marks a temporary climax in the self-unself-conflict. Here the "self," the "unself" and the glissando pattern from the double-bass passage on p. 28 are superimposed. This dramatic tension is intensified by the flutter-tonguing of the flute.

Subsequent to this we find a series of recurrences: On p. 35 the orchestration is reduced to strings, playing the "breathing" pattern and sustained dyads. The 12-bar grid returns. Again, the technique of "criss-crossing" or voice exchange (e.g. in m. 59) is exploited as a form of variation. The orchestral disposition co-occurring with the second half of the verse harks back to p. 24, while the soprano returns to its initial G. In addition, the rhythmic and periodic organization of the first verse is reiterated. In sum, the setting of the first half of the 'librettino' does not close without a hint of cyclic unity.

46

E.HN. *ppp*

B.CL. *ppp*

TBN. *ppp*

CB. *ppp*

47

48

TRP. *ppp*

CEL. *ppp ped.*

VLA. *ppp*

CB. *ppp*

Interlude and Vocalise (pp. 37-50)

Just as Earl Kim in *Rattling On*, Feldman interpolated vocalises between the verse settings.³³⁹ Deploying a soprano voice as a "leading instrument" (Claren³⁴⁰) is an idiosyncrasy to which Feldman alerted Beckett when they met in Berlin.³⁴¹ The first vocalise starting on p. 37 is framed by an imitation of the "breathing" pattern in the percussion section, transformed into a lugubrious, mysterious foreboding by the tam tams. Starting out like the setting of the fourth verse ("whose doors..."), the melodic pattern is gradually extended so as to include all semitones between the tritone range of F5-B5. Notwithstanding its rhythmic irregularity, this chromatic meandering recalls the "unself" pattern, reiterating all of its five pitches. The following passage is another display of Feldman's fine sense of dramaturgy: The 'pointillistic' orchestral interlude (bottom of pp. 38-39) provides another point of rest or retarding moment, although the sudden strong crescendi in the woodwinds and tuba herald the beginning of another more densely composed section. The following two pages represent a metaphor of p. 34, exhibiting the same polymetric superimposition of the "unself" melody, sung by the soprano and doubled by the piano, and the polyrhythmic sound organization characterizing the "self." The metric alternation between 2/4 and 3/8 signatures on p. 42 is the same as on pp. 2-27, while the soprano vocalise reiterates the three-tone motive first heard on p. 17. The soprano's Ab is echoed a by a C6 played by the high strings, which foreshadows the extremely high string parts following the verse "absent for good from self and other" that is, yet again, highly evocative.

Even though the 3/8 meter is, for the first time, retained for a period of 18 bars on p. 43, and, moreover, all instruments remain on the same pitches, deliberate asymmetries are created by irregular instrumental entries. This suggests another depiction of the self-unself-interfusion. The following diagram, a visualization of the distribution of sound-silence intervals on p. 43, provides an idea of the concept of *crippled symmetry*. It reveals Feldman's strategy of organized disorganization, of creative control, eschewing holistic or *Gestalt* perception by violating the Gestalt law of symmetry and thus stimu-

³³⁹ Feldman had written several vocalise pieces in the years before *neither*: in *The Rothko Chapel* (1971), *Chorus and Orchestra I and II* (1971-2), *Voice and Instruments I* (1972) and *II* (1974), *Voices and Instruments I and II* (1972), *Voices and Cello* (1973), and *Voice, Violin and Piano* (1976).

³⁴⁰ Claren, 390.

³⁴¹ Skempton, MFS, 75.

lating 'top-down' perception from the totality of sound events to the individual note. Conversely, the "unself machinery" draws the performer's and recipient's attention "bottom-up," from the individual note to relations, from sounds to groups and the "collective" of sounds, thus triggering holistic perception.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Fl.	■	■	■	■	■					■			■			■		
Ob.	■	■					■	■			■			■	■			■
Cl.					■	■	■				■	■				■		
Bn.					■	■					■	■						■
Db.- Bn.					■	■					■	■	■	■				■
Hn.	■	■					■	■			■					■		
Trp.			■					■	■			■			■			■
Tbn.	■	■	■	■	■					■				■	■			■
Tba.	■	■					■				■				■			■
Cb.			■				■	■	■				■	■				■

Fig. 1: sound-silence pattern, p. 43. Black = sound, white = silence

The following pages present a number of recurrences of previous material: the "breathing" pattern in the strings and the chromatic meandering of the soprano on p. 44, the sustained notes or chords in open position referring back to the overture on p. 45, the "back and forth" of the solo 'cello (p. 21) sung by the soprano on p. 46, the dark fabric of tam tam sounds on pp. 46-47, the return of the "unself" on p. 48, the harp "pulse" with the same pitches as in the overture, and the glissandi introduced by the double-bass in the lower system of p. 28. Another climax of the "unself" occurs on p. 46 in the form of larger orchestration and in the sense that any audible irregularity is absent. It is not without irony, however, that Feldman divided each of the five wind instruments into three parts, although everything is played in unison. Nor does the different placement of repeat signs in the bottom staves make any difference in the acoustic implementation. Whether this is another example of Feldman's silent protest against totalizing compositional schemes, against 'sound collectivism,' or against the "show business"³⁴² (Feldman) of the minimalists, with whom Feldman apparently associated long repeated

³⁴² Moore, Thomas (1984), 16.

phrases,³⁴³ may be determined only by those who read the music. This is not unlike Bach's visualizations of religious programmatic content, which were likewise a highly subjective display of personal belief(s). As Cage put it, "An ear alone is not a being.' Thus, more and more, we encounter works of art, visual or audible, which are not strictly speaking either paintings or music."³⁴⁴ One might even choose to call Feldman's scores 20th-century "eye music."³⁴⁵ In any case, what cannot be denied is that such divergences between the visual and the aural impression of his art do not fail to live up to Feldman's credo of composing "between painting and music." It is, literally, *neither*. Yet, it is also both, since only by the interplay of both arts and both senses can the constructive depth of his music be unraveled.

Verses 6 and 7 (p. 50-p. 53, no. 98)

To be sure, it is in keeping with Feldman's and Beckett's common conception of the aesthetic product as a chiefly sensuous, rather than intellectual experience, that one of the few text parts that Feldman repeated in his setting is the sixth verse, "unheard footfalls only sound." What is more, after the second repetition, "sound" is pluralized, separated from the verse, and repeated twice. Owing to the lower register, the soprano text is now markedly more intelligible and, due to the *secco*-like orchestral chords, stands out more prominently against the orchestral texture than in the verses before, despite the strong orchestral *sforzati*. As in the first three verses, syntactic and semantic coherence is left intact, and the setting is responsive to the prosodic features of the text. The section as a whole contrasts starkly with the low-key quality, thin texture, and low registers of the former one (pp. 49/50 top system), marking another musical turn of events in the overall dramaturgy. Furthermore, the *sforzati* and subsequent decrescendo, apart from underscoring the trochaic meter of the verse, reinforce the oxymoron of "unheard" and "sound." Two bars after rehearsal number 93, the English horn returns to its Ab from p. 50. Subsequently, the clarinet, bassoon and trumpets reiterate not only the chords in

³⁴³ Claren, 244.

³⁴⁴ *A Year From Monday*, 30-6: 32.

³⁴⁵ Originally applied to madrigals: "Musical notation with a symbolic meaning that is apparent to the eye but not to the ear." Dart, Thurston. "Eye music." *New Grove* 8, 482. Cf. also: Ambros, August Wilhelm. "Augenmusik." *Culturhistorische Bilder aus dem Musikleben der Gegenwart*. Leipzig, ²1865. 251-4; Einstein, Alfred. "Augenmusik im Madrigal." *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 14 (1912-13): 8-21.

open and closed position from the overture, but also the pulsation effect generated by quick crescendi and decrescendi.

The next verse, "till at last...," is set to a rhythmic augmentation of the three-note "doors" figure first appearing on p. 17, yet in a regular grid of 2x6 bars, accompanied by brass chords of equal duration in open and closed position. The decrescendi on each chord recollect, once again, those at the beginning of verse 6. The regular alternation of sound and silence returns us to a vertical sound structure, whose gaps, however, are filled by the sustained tones of the soprano, thus forming a continuum.

Heralded by the bassoon and the trombone which play sustained chords in open position, and rhythmically deployed in such a manner that they appear as a slowed down version of the "breathing" pattern, the second part of the seventh verse is set to a four-note chromatic circling figuration that is apparently a sound metaphor or memory form of the vocalise (starting on p. 37). The high strings' response appears as a variation of the "breathing" pattern, also consisting of a set of six chromatic neighboring tones in an extremely high register (F#6–B6) with simultaneous in lieu of successive entries. Notwithstanding Feldman's early rejection of iconicity in music, the view that this musical scenario, i.e. the stagnation of the "breathing" along with the opening of a new sphere of sound (the higher register), evokes a final standstill of the oscillation between complementary opposites that constitutes existence, does not seem far-fetched. Other compositions written prior to and after *neither* such as *The Rothko Chapel* and *Triadic Memories*³⁴⁶ are, after all, imbued with equally allusive, lyrical, and autobiographical qualities.

Interlude with soprano vocalise (p. 53, 3rd system-p.65)

A new pattern is introduced at rehearsal number 98. A melodic figure, Db-C-A-B, is sung by the soprano in two alternating metric and rhythmic variants (with the note values of the second twice as long as those of the first). Repeated four times, this figure in turn alternates with the harp ostinato tones and trombone chords in the "vertical," static style, i.e. it is interrupted by pauses of equal length. The last repetition of this short motive leads over directly to a woodwind trio, in which formal notation and acoustic reality are, yet again, antipodal. A similar passage is found in *Piano and Orchestra* (1974-5; s. oboe and piccolo, mm. 277-88). The high registers of the instruments are foreshadowed

³⁴⁶ Feldman himself wrote the word "autobiography" next to the initials of Philipp Guston, John Cage, and himself into a sketch for *Triadic Memories*. PSS, MF 0459/0350.

by the string section following "absent for good from self and other," and the closeness of the voices is reminiscent of the 'glissando' pattern. However, the meticulous arrangement of the four chromatic neighboring tones F-F#-G-Ab in a hermetic system of time signature permutations is new. It is, moreover, emblematic of the subtle means by which Feldman parodied or at least re-interpreted serial techniques, a *modus operandi* which demands almost microscopic exactitude from performers and musicologists: If Feldman had indeed employed "four time signature permutations" in this system of three times four bars, as Claren asserts,³⁴⁷ this would suggest that there are precisely three occurrences of each permutation. Given Feldman's antagonism toward serial techniques, however, it is obvious that he was keen to circumvent such regularity. As Feldman once said, "one of the problems that I have with a lot of music, especially of the past sixty years, is that there are no mistakes. [...] It's a fantastic refuge where you don't make mistakes."³⁴⁸ Given his own law of "crippled symmetry," it is hardly surprising that there are "mistakes," that is, five permutations. As the compositional sketches reveal, Feldman plotted out the distribution of these measures before filling them with actual tonal content.³⁴⁹ Each of these has at least one counter-piece, while only one, the penultimate measure in the lowest voice, is unique (illustrated below). This propensity for "mistakes," for destroying the illusion of regularity, thereby calling into question the mechanical implementation of rules, is essentially in unison with the countless errors in Watt's pseudo-logical enumerations (see chapters 2.1.3. and 2.1.4.). Put differently, an ostensible automatism, which could be thought of as another manifestation of what Feldman associated with the "unself," is pervaded by properties Feldman considered characteristic of his own idiom or "self." Above all, this could be viewed as another display of the enantiodromic interpenetration of the automatic and the irregular, self and unself, or simply as an instance of Feldman's idiosyncratic evasion of polarity.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ "vier Taktpermutationen." Cf. Claren, 405.

³⁴⁸ "I'm reassembling all the time," 46.

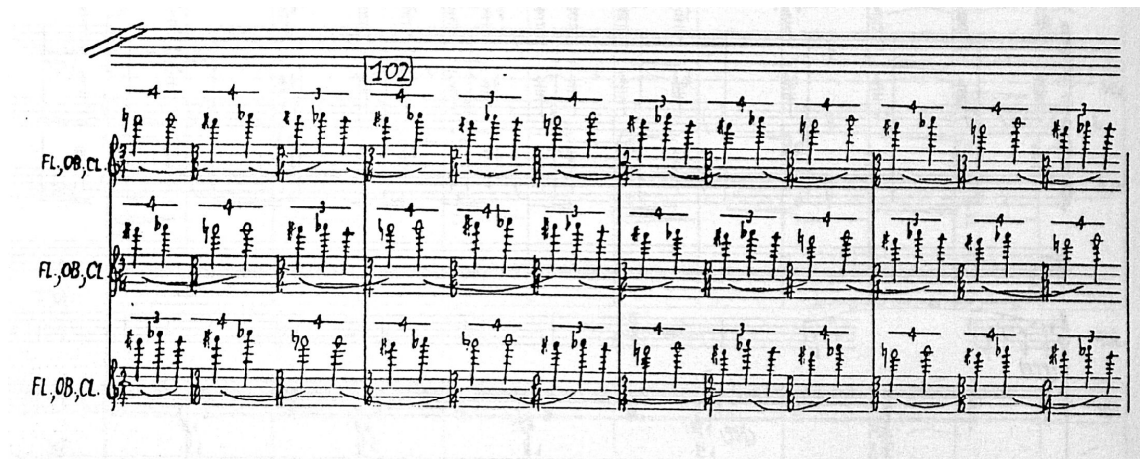
³⁴⁹ PSS, MF 0458/0961-1018.

³⁵⁰ Cf. "The Future of Local Music," 157-95: 183.

A = 3/4, 3/8, 2/4 **B** = 3/8, 2/4, 3/4 **C** = 2/4, 3/8, 3/4 **D** = 3/8, 3/4, 2/4
X = 3/4, 2/4, 3/8

A	B	C	D
D	A	B	C
C	D	X	A

Fig. 2: time signature permutations of woodwind trio, p. 53



Ex. 4: „Neither“, p. 53, woodwind trio.

What is audible is no more than a static cluster of sounds, rather than the neat melodic progression in three parts that is seen in the score. Due to small intervallic distances within a minor third, the pitches blur into a single acoustic stream that bears a certain likeness to white noise. This is, in fact, an allusive analogy, given that white noise is the acoustic equivalent to white light, from which it obviously draws its name. Although there is no clear evidence that Feldman was indeed intent to create such an evocative soundscape as a postlude to the verse "absent for good from self and other," it may give rise to certain associations, particularly if one considers his treatment of the word "lit" (p. 15).

On p. 55 the self-unself dichotomy takes yet another form: uniformity on the vertical plane produced by lavishly orchestrated homorhythmic beats; diversity on the horizontal plane produced by the irregular succession of beats. This, along with the extensive use of percussion instruments, might evoke Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* – perhaps a eulogy to the Russian composer who had died in 1971.

104

105

FL.

OB.

CL.

BN.

DB. BN.

HN.

TRP.

TBN.

TBA.

HP.

PF.

GLOCK.

XYL.

PERC.

GUIRO (HIGH)

trmp.

VN. VLA.

VC.

CB.

55.

Ex. 5: Morton Feldman „Neither“ © Copyright 1977 by Universal Edition (London) Ltd. London/UE 16326, p. 55

In the second recurrence of the "white noise" passage on p. 56, it is the last bar of the bottom voice part that only occurs once. Although pressed notation-wise into this matrix of pseudo-systematic time signature permutations, the soprano stands out against the

woodwinds, which is due to the lower register and the pauses in the other instrumental voices. A suggestion of irony is inherent in its rhythmically inconsistent version of the "unself" pattern. This is followed on the next page by a slower, less erratic succession of notes, while the woodwinds' "white noise" pattern is superseded by a recurrence of the "breathing" played by the violin and viola and passed on to the woodwinds that come back in on p. 58. The woodwinds, however, play the homorhythmic version of the "breathing" and are joined by the high strings on p. 60 and the brass section (playing chords in close position) on p. 61. Meanwhile, the durations of the soprano notes are gradually extended so as to create the illusion of a deceleration. Pp. 62-5 return us to the "staggered" voice entries characteristic of the original "breathing" pattern, as more and more instruments join in. The violin sound is rendered more dense by an extra *diviso* part, so that the violin voices alone play eight different pitches, B, Db, Gb, C, D, E, A, and Eb. What is more, the synchronous, yet irregular beats of the percussion instruments, piano, and tuba on pp. 63-4, a recollection of the material on p. 55, embodies both "self" and "unself," as delineated above. From p. 57 onwards, the soprano sings rhythmic augmentations and diminutions of a three-tone sequence in fixed order: G-Ab-F#. This sequence is interrupted at rehearsal number 114, when F# and Ab are reversed and the three-tone sequence is subsequently extended by Bb and B around no. 115. The breathing pattern now appears in full orchestration, with three blocks of instruments assigned with three successive points of entry: horn, trumpet, trombone, and viola constituting the first, the woodwinds with the exception of the contrabassoon the second, and the string section with the exception of the viola the third. Contrabassoon, tuba, harp, piano, and percussion instruments continue with the irregular synchronous beats. Two measures before the end of the page, all instruments stop; only the strings continue, together with the soprano, until no. 120.

Indubitably, in this section Feldman created the most expansive dramatic arc, carrying the audience through a fairly quick succession of a variety of contrasting patterns. In the course of this acceleration and culmination of events, vertical sound structures are dispensed with, as is the preference for spatial sound organization. In lieu of a quiet contemplation on individual sound events, we witness increasingly complex layerings, combinations, and re-combinations of patterns previously introduced. Rather than viewing the unself as faltering and dissolving into the self, or vice versa, it seems fair to say

that both are present until the very end, increasingly interwoven with each another, which also results in an increase in musical complexity and density. One could go so far as to say that the illusion of the Cartesian split, the quest for a solipsistic state of being, diminishes as the "will" (in Schopenhauer's sense of the word) fades. In *Murphy*, the protagonist's last moments (i.e. before he commits suicide) are depicted as follows:

Slowly he felt better, astir in his mind, in the freedom of that light and dark that did not clash, nor alternate nor fade nor lighten except to their communion. The rock got faster, shorter and shorter, the gleam was gone, the grin was gone, the starlessness was gone, soon his body would be quiet. Most things under the moon got slower and slower and then stopped, a rock got faster and faster and then stopped. Soon his body would be quiet, soon he would be free. (...) Soon his body was quiet.³⁵¹

Thus this section of the opera is strewn with the most evocative and allusive passages, bringing to mind concrete images and sounds, even at one point suggesting a reference to Stravinsky's idiom. They show, once again, Feldman's very personal take on the text and the programmatic content he ascribed to it. In her review of the first performance, Schiffer calls *neither* "a work full of doubt and anxiety."³⁵² By assigning names to some of the patterns, we have, of course, purposely underscored their possible concreteness. It therefore needs to be pointed out again that none of the patterns, apart from the "breathing" pattern, have been explicitly referred to as such by the composer.

Verses 8-10 (p.66-end)

Of the eight pitches played *divisi* by the violins on p. 65 (B, Db, Gb, C, D, E, A, Eb), five are carried over to the next page: Db, Gb, C, E, and A. From there, the constellation found in the second violin, the tetrad C-F-Db-Gb, is transferred to the first violin on p. 67. This violin pattern is derived from the "various durations of simultaneous breathing" and only stops after the ninth verse. Claren cautiously suggests to view it as a "musical metaphor"³⁵³ of the "unfading light" – rather than the "white noise" pattern as was posited above. Another instance of the increasing evocativeness of Feldman's musical language toward the end is the orthodox manner in which he set the eighth verse, "then no sound," the vocal declamation being literally surrounded by silence and interrupted by two general pauses. It is furthermore revealing that Feldman, who usually shunned the

³⁵¹ *Murphy*, 252-3.

³⁵² Schiffer (1977), 50.

³⁵³ "musikalische Metapher": Claren, 427.

repetition of longer phrases – apparently he was afraid that *ostinati* might move his music closer to the minimalists³⁵⁴ – has the soprano repeat the fifteen tones played by the flute on p. 66 in identical order on p. 67, as though the unspecified narrative voice were now submissively following a clear path indicated by the solo instrument. The void of "no sound" is also illustrated by a large gap between the extremely high register and the low glissando pattern of the 'celli in the second system. Gradually the vocal range is extended up- and downwards, so that by no. 125 all twelve pitches have come into play. Melodic continuity is broken by longer pauses and shorter tones. Juxtaposed with the disintegration of sound layers and the soprano's syllabic stammering in the next verse, the double-bass from p. 69 plays a Gb drone. The last word of the verse, the centerpiece and the title of the opera, is separated from the verse by a pause and recited not in eighth-, but in sixteenth-notes. Like the verse "unheard footfalls only sound," it is repeated, sounding nine times in total. After six repetitions, the chromatic four-tone figure A-G-Ab-Bb is reduced to the last two tones Ab-Bb (p. 72). The voice, and along with it the language, literally falters in the face of the "unspeakable." As it dies away, it gives way to two musical flashbacks: the tam tam pattern of p. 37 and the English horn's Ab of pp. 50-1. This is followed by a contemplative episode marked by 'pointillistic' sound organization (reminiscent of the first interlude on p. 20), another retarding moment before the final verse. Meanwhile, the latter is prepared by single beats in the timpani, brass instruments, and harp, which eventually lead over to the polymetric beat pattern accompanying the soprano's declamation of "unspeakable home." Curiously, Feldman drew the Christian monogram, the chi-rho symbol, under the word "home" on one of his sketch sheets.³⁵⁵ Though it could have been scribbled on the page with no serious intention, it nonetheless may give an idea of how concrete the images were that Beckett's words brought to the composer's mind. By extension, it throws light on the allusiveness and the dramatic tension of the last verses.

The final verse is treated differently than those preceding it inasmuch as almost every syllable is set to a melisma. Juxtaposed with the polymetric "underpainting" associated with the "self," the stratum of high frequencies – clusters of three clarinet tones, interrupted by three intervals of silence – contributes to the blurring of the phrases in the vocal part. With its discrepancy between the graphic and the perceptive planes, a back-

³⁵⁴ Ibid, 244.

³⁵⁵ Cf. PSS, MF 0458/0989.

reference to both the "white noise" and glissando patterns, this is perhaps the last remnant of the "unself." As Feldman noted at the top of p. 74, each of the various metric layers consists of 47 quarter-notes – another prime number, as is the last rehearsal number, i.e. 137. Toward the end, the declamation returns to the syllabic mode of the beginning.

Each of the ten repetitions of the last verse is unique in melody, rhythm, and metric sequence, so that each time different morphemes are foregrounded. To use Feldman's terminology, each one is a "metaphor" or a "memory form" of its predecessor, which illustrates the unknowability of the final sanctuary. Combined with the melismatic distortion mentioned above, this constant variation ultimately erases any trace of semantic content, so that only sound material is left. Notwithstanding, the verse is repeated ten times, and interestingly, the last repetition is rendered more intelligible by a syllabic setting. A note on one of Feldman's sketch sheets reveals that the composer had difficulties deciding how to conclude the piece: "My problem is deadening which out: the narrative or end abstractly. Maybe the whole damn thing should come crashing down on us."³⁵⁶ The setting of the repetitions of the last verse both dismantles and emphasizes its referential quality, and it would seem that this double-edged representation is underscored by the presence of both "self" and "unself" in the instrumental over- and undercurrents at the end of the opera. The composer does not sway from his principle of composing "between categories" – between language and music.

³⁵⁶ PSS, MF 0458/1017.

137

CL.

BN.

DB. BN.

HN.

TBN.

TBA.

HP.

SOP.

un speak a ble home un speak a-ble—home un speak a ble un speak a ble—home u-n speak a ble home

timp.

timp.

PERC.

timp.

timp.

76

1/30/77

Ex. 6: Morton Feldman „Neither“ © Copyright 1977 by Universal Edition (London) Ltd. London/UE 16326, last page

3.2.4. The question of genre: opera/anti-opera/non-opera?

The fact that both Feldman and Beckett repudiated the genre of opera inevitably raises the question of generic categorization. Feldman himself simply titled the work *neither*. *To a text by Samuel Beckett*, as though *neither* in itself were either a genre *sui generis* or a work requiring no genre designation. If this were the case, one would be led to assume that "opera" was a label added later, in reference to the venue of its first performance. Then again, Feldman himself referred to the project as "the Beckett opera"³⁵⁷ in 1984, which points to Carl Dahlhaus' observation that by the early 1980's at the latest the term "opera" was no longer frowned upon by composers.³⁵⁸ Yet it is in keeping with Feldman's credo of the percept always preceding the concept³⁵⁹ that he refrained from dubbing his work "opera."

What is problematic is that *neither* eludes even the most trite and broad definition of opera that one can find in a dictionary, such as "a drama in which the actors sing throughout."³⁶⁰ It is easily seen that *neither* is neither a "drama," nor does it include "actors," and that the dramatic "action" is not given and, if anything, is left up to the production team: For example, a 2011 production of *neither* in New York featured a choreography.³⁶¹

The problem of classification starts at the level of the text: As often with Beckett (cf. "Beckett's poetry"), the 'librettino' falls through the cracks of conventional genre categories. Feldman called it a "poem" that "is not a narrative, it becomes like a narrative"³⁶² – when combined with his music, that is. Given that Beckett considered it a prose work rather than a poem, *neither* could be described as an orchestra-accompanied sung prose work in an operatic context. After all, in Feldman's setting the declamation of the tenor 'librettino' is extended to a total duration of approximately an hour, and the dramatic arc of his music also brings it closer to a musical "narrative." Still, this does not seem to justify the use of traditional terminology such as 'prose turned into opera' on the

³⁵⁷ "The Future of Local Music," 178.

³⁵⁸ Dahlhaus, Carl. "Diskussion." *Für und Wider die Literaturoper*. Ed. Sigrid Wiesmann. Laaber, 1982. (= Thurnauer Schriften zum Musiktheater 6), 57-63: 58.

³⁵⁹ "Darmstadt Lecture," 184-5.

³⁶⁰ Mayer Brown, Howard. "Opera." *New Grove* 18, 416.

³⁶¹ New York City Opera, 25 March – 8 April 2011. Directed by Michael Counts. Choreography: Ken Roht.

³⁶² "Pie-Slicing and Small Moves," 83.

one hand or do justice to the work's peculiarities on the other.

It does not require much historical understanding to see that the traditional length of stage works was largely a result of socio-cultural conventions. Before the advent of mass media, theater and opera were expected as the predominant modes of entertainment to provide evening-long amusement in return for high admission charges. In theater, the tradition of the "well-made play," as represented by George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950), J. B. Priestley (1894 – 1984), Somerset Maugham (1874 – 1965), and Noël Coward (1899 – 1973) did not outlive the social stratum for which it was conceived, the middle class.³⁶³ That from the late 1940s onwards theatrical entertainment (parallel to the opera) was superseded by the mass media, and, as a result, theater stages became a new playground for avant-garde experimentation is evident in a play such as *Godot*, in which, as Mercier famously phrased it, "nothing happens, twice,"³⁶⁴ or in Beckett's *dramaticules*.

The attempt of comparing *neither* to other operatic or music-theatrical forms emerging in the second half of the 20th century also turns out to be fruitless. The predominantly German genre and label "Literaturoper," questionable as it is in view of its academic proponents' narrow focus, i.e. their disregard of broader phenomena³⁶⁵ such as the *intermedial turn*,³⁶⁶ would be a rather inadequate label for *neither*, even if we follow Petersen's and Winter's rather broad definition:

Der Terminus "Literaturoper" bezeichnet eine Sonderform des Musiktheaters, bei der das Libretto auf einem bereits vorliegenden literarischen Text (Drama, Erzählung) basiert, dessen sprachliche, semantische und ästhetische Struktur in einen musikalisch-dramatischen Text (Opernpartitur) eingeht und dort als Schicht kenntlich bleibt. [The term "Literaturoper" describes a special form of opera in which the libretto is based on a previous literary text (drama or narrative), the linguistic, semantic and aesthetic structure of which is integrated into a musical-dramatic text (the opera's score), where it remains recognizable as a structural layer.]³⁶⁷

As a functional distillation of Beckett's previous output, i.e. a meta-text encapsulating Beckett's aesthetic solely for the purpose of being set to music, *neither* is clearly not

³⁶³ Fletcher (2000), 14.

³⁶⁴ Mercier, Vivian. "The Uneventful Event." *The Irish Times*, 18 Feb., 1956: 6.

³⁶⁵ even though Petersen/Winter identify intertextuality as a core criterion, cf. Petersen, Peter and Hans-Gerd Winter. *Büchner-Opern. Georg Büchner in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang, 1997 (= *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 14), 12.

³⁶⁶ Wolf (1999), 2.

³⁶⁷ Petersen/Winter, 10.

based on any pre-existing autonomous work. It does retain integrity in the sense that the entire text is used. Yet we have seen that its structural constituents and phonetic and syntactic elements are often veiled by the text-setting modes employed by Feldman. Furthermore, Feldman's motives behind drawing on the work of a, by then, world-famous author were of a personal kind. Rather than paying homage to Beckett, using his name to 'en-Nobel' his music, or intending to render his compositions more accessible to a broader audience, as would be typical of a *Literaturoper*,³⁶⁸ he claimed that his interest in working with a text sprang from mere solitude (and, perhaps, tedium) in the years of his Edgar Varèse professorship at Buffalo.³⁶⁹

It goes without saying that, as an anti- or postserial composer, Feldman was unencumbered by the serialists' "crisis of the opera" that Adorno spoke of in his lecture *Bürgerliche Oper* delivered in Darmstadt in 1955.³⁷⁰ His reservations toward the genre seem rather to have been due on the one hand to the genre's status as a European invention,³⁷¹ and to his pursuit of non-referentiality (as outlined in chapter 3.1.1.) on the other. Thus, *neither* cannot be viewed as an attempt to rehabilitate *Bürgerliche Oper*.

Other new categories such as instrumental theater or "anti-opera" are equally poor labels for *neither*; the latter because it carries the connotation of a more radical break from tradition than Feldman and Beckett would have intended. Examples are Michel Butor's and Henri Pousseur's *Votre Faust* (1969)³⁷² and the Beckett-based *Spiel* by Roman Haubenstock-Ramati (1968). Rather than an antipode or a radical outcry against the opera genre as such, *neither* is more aptly described as a constructive self-criticism of the genre, transcending the traditional operatic frame without entirely abandoning it, and thus seeking a balance, a dialectic form of communication, between tradition and innovation. Although both Beckett and Feldman were masters in devising "that which is difficult to categorize" (Feldman³⁷³), the operatic genre remains latently present all along – as a trace or "metaphor," as Feldman might have put it – not least because of the "over-

³⁶⁸ Heister, Hanns-Werner. "Literarisierung und 'Literaturoper.'" *Musiktheater im 20. Jahrhundert*. Ed. Siegfried Mauser. Laaber, 2002 (= Handbuch der musikalischen Gattungen 14). 315-27:17.

³⁶⁹ Claren, 17.

³⁷⁰ Adorno, Th. W. "Bürgerliche Oper." *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 16: *Musikalische Schriften I-III*. Ed. R. Tiedemann. Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp, 1978, 25.

³⁷¹ Similarly, John Cage never wrote any operatic works before his *Europas I-V* (1987-1991), which in turn are an outright parody of the genre.

³⁷² Kager, Reinhard. "Experimentelles Musiktheater: Von John Cage und Mauricio Kagel bis Helmut Lachenmann." *Musiktheater im 20. Jahrhundert*. Ed. Siegfried Mauser. Laaber, 2002 (= Handbuch der musikalischen Gattungen 14). 329-42: 337.

³⁷³ "Crippled Symmetry," 147.

ture," the largely traditional orchestration and soprano voice, and the appearance of the singer on the stage.³⁷⁴ These traditional elements apparently created the impression of a traditional opera at the premiere in June 1977,³⁷⁵ and the audience started to protest after about ten minutes,³⁷⁶ when they became aware of the absence of dramatic action. Brigitte Schiffer reports:

The Italian audience, feeling cheated because an opera without drama, aria and prima donna is hardly an 'opera' (certainly not a *dramma per musica*) and not even a piece of music-theatre, this audience was not ready to submit itself to the spell of a music so nude, so stark, so pure. Laughing and booing was their spontaneous reaction – a reaction due not only to conventional habits and tastes, but also to the nervous tension created by nearly one hour of timeless immobility and which demanded an immediate release.³⁷⁷

It has to be taken into account, however, that the premiere fell in a period of political tension and heavy protest against Tomasi,³⁷⁸ for which reason the performance had been deferred in the first place.³⁷⁹ What is more, *neither* formed part of an evening program of works largely inspired by painters bearing the misleading title "Ballet de Peintres," along with Stravinsky's *Feu d'Artifice*, *Work in Progress* by Niccolò Castiglioni, Aldo Clementi and Bruno Maderna, and Eric Satie's *Mercur*.³⁸⁰ This is to say that the audience must have been doubly dumbfounded when they expected a ballet evening – at the Opera – and were presented instead with what had been announced as an "opera" among three mostly danceless works – at the Opera – and finally found themselves looking at an almost empty and dark stage on which an immobile, solitary soprano rarely sings more than three notes – at the Opera. In lieu of a ballet *or* an opera, the audience was confronted with, literally, *neither*.

As Morgan contends, there was a general tendency, from the 1960's onwards to merge music and drama, calling into question traditional genre conventions or rituals. This, he

³⁷⁴ Martha Hannemann in the original performance, wearing a wide white gown, with lights on her forearms, not moving throughout the entire performance. The sets were designed by Michelangelo Pistoletto. In a letter from Lanza Tomasi, dated 13 September 1976, Jasper Johns is mentioned as a possible set designer. Cy Twombly was the second artist asked to do the job. On March 5, 1977, however, Lanza Tomasi reports that Twombly had suffered a "nervous breakdown" and traveled to Egypt, where he was "unreachable." He then suggested Pistoletto. (PSS, MF 0206.1/1801-6).

³⁷⁵ Claren, 428.

³⁷⁶ Cf. "Pie-Slicing and Small Moves," 83.

³⁷⁷ Schiffer (1977), 50.

³⁷⁸ Weaver, William. "Ballet Music Without Dancers." *International Herald Tribune*, 14 June, 1977 (no page no.).

³⁷⁹ telegram by Tomasi in which he writes about "unexpected Rome Opera unrest." PSS, MF 0206.1/1806-7.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

argues, "achieves perhaps its most consequential form in works in which the performance or concert situation itself is treated as a dramatic or **ritualistic** occurrence. (Here again Cage can be considered a forerunner: his *4'33''*, in confronting the audience with silence, is literally "nothing" if not theatrical)."³⁸¹ Morgan sees a typical example of this phenomenon in Berio's *Recital I* (1966, 1972) for soprano and chamber orchestra.³⁸² With the dramatic action pared down to the vocal recital, this monodrama is not dissimilar to the disposition we find in *neither*.

Although one might not go so far as to say, as Jan Assmann did, that opera is a ritualistic art form by definition because it de-emphasizes the signified (*what* is presented) at the same time as it foregrounds the signifier (*how* it is presented),³⁸³ *neither*, much like other meta-operatic works of the 20th century avant-garde,³⁸⁴ is perhaps best understood as a display of the operatic genre's ritualistic status. However, its meta-operatic character is less overtly rebellious, for it lies not so much in the opera as a whole as within its two major components, language and music. Encapsulating the substance of Beckett's own artistic vision, the 'librettino,' as we have argued, could be read as a meta-aesthetic text in which the creative process is represented by an image depicting the artist's cardinal rule and ritual, that of opening and closing "doors" – of time (as in John Cage's *visual rhythmic structure*), fact and fiction, interior and exterior reality, etc. Furthermore, the text exhibits Beckett's idiosyncratic *enantiodromia*: the interplay of opposites. Feldman's use of his own style as an equivalent to Beckett's "self" is no less self-referential, as is his "thinking-as-I'm-writing" approach, where score pages, deployed as "memory forms," bear witness to the development of the composer's ideas throughout the piece. Thus *neither* is essentially an interplay of two media that, although combined formally (i.e. institutionally and by agreement), self-referentially demarcate and comment on their respective aesthetic territory. Richard Wagner famously envisaged an ideal synthesis of individual media serving a common purpose, striving to maximize the expressive unity of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* regardless of medial differences. One could

³⁸¹ Morgan (1991), 446.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ "Sie stellt ihren Kunstcharakter zur Schau und läßt über der ästhetischen Präsenz des Signifikanten das Signifikat, die Handlung in den Hintergrund treten." Assmann, Jan. *Die Zauberflöte. Oper und Mysterium*. Frankfurt on the Main: Fischer, 2008, 30.

³⁸⁴ György Ligeti's *Aventures* (1962), *Le Grand Macabre* (1974-77); Mauricio Kagel's *Aus Deutschland* (1977-80); John Cage's *Européras 1-5* (1987-91). Cf. CD-Compilation *Musik in Deutschland 1950-2000: Meta-Oper*. Deutscher Musikrat/BMG 2004. See also Berio's *Opera* (1970), Maurizio Kagel's *Staatstheater* (1971) or Henri Pousseur's *Votre Faust* (1967). Going back further in music history, the prologue of R. Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912) could already be viewed as a reflection of the genre on itself.

argue that Beckett's and Feldman's refusal to submit to such a common purpose – not even the purpose of a common revolt against the genre – in favor of an individualization of the media, is a common purpose *sui generis*.

As is said in *Godot*: "They all speak together./Each one to itself."

4. Earl Kim: *Exercises en route* (1961-70) and *Narratives* (1973-8)

Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Tonalität, mit der Thematik, mit der Symphonie, der Oper und was der Phänomene mehr sein mögen, entspringt einem Bewusstsein umfangreicher historischer Beeinflussung und Belastung sowie der Erkenntnis, dass sich mit derselben zwar sehr schwer, gegen diese aber gar nicht überleben lässt [Concerning oneself with the tonality, with the theme, with the symphony, the opera and whatever other phenomena there may be, stems from an awareness of extensive historical influences and strains, and from the recognition that, though it may be quite hard to survive in the face of these burdens, it would be impossible to do so without them].

Manfred Trojahn¹

If, as Peter Sloterdijk has suggested, the term postmodernism can be taken as synonymous with "postexclusivism,"² it is hardly surprising that, in recent decades, the distinction between "highbrow" and "lowbrow" has been regarded as *passé* by many a composer. Likewise, classifications into compositional schools, movements, or idioms have become somewhat problematic. Regardless of evident stylistic parallels and influences, such as the incorporation of graphic aspects into compositional practice,³ categorical thinking is generally met with suspicion, such that music critics and journalists purporting to detect general trends or teleologies are often faced with the accusation of premature compartmentalization. Those composers who have championed an undogmatic "closing-the-gap" approach (from either side) to artistic creation, dread that in the heat of prejudice-laden debates their own creative voice might be ignored and their idiosyncrasies streamlined by analogies.

In reaction to the term "New Simplicity," for instance, which emerged in the late 1970's in the context of a concert series in Cologne,⁴ Wolfgang Rihm indignantly stated that any such superficial label would amount to an utter extinction of the composer's individual freedom.⁵ Otto Kolleritsch maintains that the term "New Simplicity" is less revealing about the stylistic properties of this "new inwardness" (*Neue Innigkeit*) than it

¹ "Formbegriff und Zeitgestalt in der 'Neuen Einfachheit.' Versuch einer Polemik." *Zur "Neuen Einfachheit" in der Musik*. Ed. O. Kolleritsch. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1981 (= Studien zur Wertungsforschung 14). 83-89: 89.

² Sloterdijk (1987), op. cit., 49.

³ Feldman (s. previous chapters), Kim (s. below), Roman Haubenstock-Ramati (two Beckett-based compositions: *Credentials*, 1960; *Comédie/Play*, 1968)

⁴ Statements by seven composers on this term were published in: *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 1 (1979), 6-25.

⁵ Rihm, Wolfgang. "Die Klassifizierung der 'Neuen Einfachheit' aus der Sicht des Komponisten." In: Kolleritsch (1981), 79-82. Pietro Cavalotti suggested the term "New Subjectivity" in lieu of "New Simplicity": *Differenzen. Poststrukturalistische Aspekte in der Musik der 1980er Jahre am Beispiel von Helmut Lachenmann, Brian Ferneyhough und Gérard Grisey*. Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2006, 19. Cf. also: Dahlhaus, Carl. "Vom Einfachen, vom Schönen und vom einfach Schönen." *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* 17 (1978): 22-33.

was about the nostalgic proclivity for transparency through clear taxonomy on the part of the critics.⁶ Concomitant to such polemical discussions unanimously stigmatizing the concept of compositional 'schools' (not least with regard to Darmstadt), composers have sought their own niches within an overall climate of aesthetic relativism in which "anything goes." In lieu and in lack of a 'sense of belonging,' many composers have, in the process of constructing their own compositional identities, eluded taxonomization and categorization by glancing backward and sideways: They have, for example, sought inspiration in ethnicity or contemporary politics, relied upon their personal perception of past styles – or turned to the "sister arts."⁷ Contrary to the Darmstadt-born stipulation of composing *ex nihilo*, closely-knit textures of stylistic references and homages to the strongholds of Western music history – tonal, atonal, and serial –, to various authors and painters, in short: to the cultural memory⁸ of their generation, have become the *raison-d'être* of their works. This approach, although distinct in its respective implementation, is common to the two composers who rank among the pre-eminent "Beckett composers," Earl Kim and Bernard Rands. The two men met for the first time at Princeton in 1966 and became close friends afterwards. For a major part of their careers, both occupied prestigious teaching positions at Harvard. Unlike Feldman in his early years and Barrett, these composers readily admit to drawing a great deal of inspiration from fellow composers as well as compositional schools of the past and present.

4.1. "Multiplicity becomes unity": Kim's aesthetic trajectory

Spent this morning with Earl Kim, listening to him play his Beckett-set-to-music, which I understand you have approved. They are lovely. [...] I like Earl very much. (Alan Schneider, letter to Samuel Beckett⁹)

One of Earl Kim's many prominent disciples, the composer Paul Salerni, once described his teacher's style as "austere and desolate, although there are wonderful moments of humor and virtuosity."¹⁰ These hallmarks were also the very qualities which he valued

⁶ Kolleritsch, Otto. "Zur Wertbesetzung des Begriffs der 'Neuen Einfachheit.'" In: Kolleritsch (1981). 9-16.

⁷ Term dates back to the 18th century. It was used in the title of an article by Hildebrande Jacob's: "Of the Sister Arts (1734)." Cf. Schueller, Herbert M. "Literature and Music as Sister Arts: An Aspect of Aesthetic Theory in Eighteenth-Century Britain." *Literatur und Musik. Ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines komparatistischen Grenzgebietes*. Ed. Steven Paul Scher. Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1984, 61-70.

⁸ Assmann: See chapter 3, footnote 183.

⁹ Harmon (1998), 335.

¹⁰ Lecture at the Verona Conservatory, April 10, 2010.

most about Beckett's works, notably that, as Kim put it, "things are reduced to their maximum."¹¹



Fig. 3: Earl Kim. Courtesy of Martha Potter Kim.

The Korean-American composer first came upon Beckett's oeuvre at a time when, aspiring to step out of the long shadows cast by his eminent teachers (above all, *übertvater* Arnold Schönberg), he was eager to define his own compositional identity. In the process of composing 'through' Beckett's oeuvre, probably more comprehensively than any other composer to date, Kim's aesthetic trajectory was shaped considerably by the multitudinous facets he treasured about Beckett's art.

In some ways, Earl Kim's biography epitomizes the national ethos of his home country, the American dream: First, his outstanding career took him all the way to a full professorship at Harvard, the fountainhead of American musical academia.¹² Second, his social rise – from a poor childhood on the West Coast marked by considerable friction between different ethnicities to the tremendous artistic achievement and admiration that accompanied his years as a professional composer – leaves virtually nothing to be desired. Nevertheless, more than a decade after his death, one point that puzzles those who have come to appreciate Kim's exquisite, skillfully crafted works, which performers, composers and musicologists alike, is the asymmetry between his compositional mastery on the one hand and the lack of enduring public recognition of his compositional legacy on the other. After all, many prominent 20th-century composers, such as Sir Pe-

¹¹ Jeon (1987), op. cit., 8.

¹² In 1862, John Knowles Paine was the first composer to be appointed as music instructor at Harvard College. The Boston/Cambridge area was also the center of the so-called "Second New England School." Cf. Struble, John W. *The History of American Classical Music. MacDowell Through Minimalism*. New York: Facts on File, 1995, 30, 32.

ter Maxwell Davies, David Del Tredici, Sir Harrison Birtwistle and John Adams, rank among Kim's students. In addition, a number of celebrated actors and musicians have performed his works, including Irene Worth (who performed the Voice part in *Eh Joe* at the premiere), Yo Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman (who commissioned the *Violin Concerto* and the *Twelve Caprices*), and Dawn Upshaw. In Beckett criticism, the composer deserves no less attention, since Kim's Beckett settings disclose a broad knowledge of the author's literary output, an extraordinary acuteness to his aesthetic vision, and a unique responsiveness to his idiosyncrasies.

4.1.1. Socio-political context

In view of the hitherto small quantity of publications on the composer, it seems reasonable to open this chapter with a few biographical remarks: Earl Kim was born in Dinuba, California on January 6, 1920, the third son of Korean immigrants who had moved to California via Hawaii. Being poor and socially underprivileged, his parents endeavored to provide their children with an excellent education, and very early in life, Kim came to realize that academic success was the only way out of poverty.

At the age of nine, he started taking piano lessons with the church pianist of the Methodist community that he and his family were affiliated with. After about a year, a friend of the family introduced him to the pianist Homer Grunn, who took on Kim as a student free of charge. Kim remained under Grunn's tutelage for seven years, acquiring what must have been an extraordinarily delicate dexterity, which his later student and friend Anthony Brandt remembers in the following terms: "[...] I've never heard a pianist with Earl's touch. His performance of Schubert lieder basically ran circles around anyone else."¹³

It is hardly surprising, then, that before Kim set out to become a composer at Los Angeles City College in 1937, he pursued a career as a pianist. Martha Potter Kim recounts his superb sight-reading abilities and how he and his composer friends would spend hours at the piano, Kim playing samples of their latest compositions and his own.

With many Jewish-German expatriate musicians and composers (e.g. Schönberg, Zemlinsky, Korngold, Klemperer) arriving, Los Angeles in the 1930's became the crossroads

¹³ Brandt, Anthony. E-mail received on July 1, 2008.

between American and European musical academia, as is seen in Leon Kirchner's vivid account:

Los Angeles during the middle thirties had become a vortex of musical activity. The Los Angeles Symphony was then under the dynamic and brilliant leadership of Otto Klemperer. A concert was an event: the balconies served as the meeting place for the young and ambitious talents of the city. On Sundays the elite performers of Hollywood, seeking a *raison d'être*, formed themselves into a superb reading orchestra and the known and obscure held forth in open rehearsals. Musically the predominant fare was the 19th century. But in the vast reaches of the city were small pockets of composers, everywhere feverishly absorbed in the mysteries of their art. For a city honored by the presence of a Schoenberg and a Stravinsky this was not difficult to understand. Pronunciamentos of the apostles figuratively littered the concert halls and the young listened with reverence and zeal to the words carried by the 'chosen ones,' the 'intimates,' as they sententiously revealed the latest treasures and fabulous ores of the prophets.¹⁴

It was in the midst of these cultural stirrings and clashes between the Old and New World on the American West Coast that Kim received his first piano lessons and later went on to study music in College. Being a musically talented member of an immigrant community that was eager to assimilate to the American lifestyle, Kim suffered tremendous hardships. Aspiring to be musician in a Korean immigrant society was considered "scandalous,"¹⁵ as he recalled in an interview with the *Boston Globe Magazine*. By contrast, it was fairly common for children of Jewish families to pursue a career as a professional musician in the 1920's and '30s.¹⁶ Due to this and the harassment and derision he experienced within his own community, he felt more akin with his Jewish classmates¹⁷ – hence his lifelong fascination with Judaism, which he considered "almost part of [his] cultural background,"¹⁸ and his lifelong friendships with Jewish Americans.¹⁹ In need of social acceptance from his American and Korean-American peers, Kim felt under pressure to mask his musical talent, which was at odds with the predominant ideal of rugged masculinity²⁰ by engaging in sports. What he felt to be more satisfying, however, was to seek interiority: "Turning in on myself became my refuge."²¹ In retrospect,

¹⁴ Qtd. in: Ringer, Alexander L. "Leon Kirchner." *Musical Quarterly* 43.1 (January 1957): 1-20: 2.

¹⁵ Tassell, Jane. "Golden Silences: The Flowering of Earl Kim." *Boston Globe Magazine*, February 27, 1983, 26.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Interview with Martha Potter Kim on August 5, 2009.

¹⁸ Tassell (1983), 26.

¹⁹ E.g. Itzhak Stern, Toby Friedlander, Paul Fromm.

²⁰ Struble states that the nexus between homosexuality and Classical music "is relevant to American culture in a way it has never been to European music." (62) This is evident, for example, in the homophobic vocabulary Charles Ives used when railing against conservative (European) musical idioms, critics, conductors, and composers – "pussies," "pansies," "sissies" etc. Cf. Struble (1995), 62.

²¹ Tassell (1983), 26.

it appears that there were some situations in Kim's life that this split between a public and a private persona might have made more endurable. For instance, when he was drafted by the U.S. army during the Second World War in 1941 to serve as a U.S. Intelligence officer, he was unable to compose or play music until he returned in 1946. Following his studies at Los Angeles City College, UCLA, and at Berkeley, he had just decided to embark on a career as a composer when the conscription order arrived.²² Notwithstanding, he stuck to his plans of becoming a composer throughout the war.

At college and university, he befriended Leon Kirchner, his future Harvard colleague. Kirchner's career ran almost parallel to Kim's, also including (though in a different order) Los Angeles City College, Berkeley, the George Ladd Prix de Paris, four years of military service, studies with Roger Sessions and Ernest Bloch,²³ a Guggenheim fellowship, and Harvard. Having worked with Schönberg, Sessions and Bloch, Kim was acquainted with some of the most seminal figures in musical academia at that time. After his return from the War, he went back to Berkeley for his M.A., where he also won the Prix de Paris, enabling him to spend two years in France. Back in Berkeley he was appointed lecturer in 1949 and discharged only three years later – in the midst of the anti-Communist scaremongering that the McCarthy era is best remembered for²⁴ – because he refused to swear the California loyalty oath. This was one of the few but notable political acts in his lifetime. Another one was his co-founding and presidency of Musicians Against Nuclear Arms (MANA) from 1981 until 1984. This initiative, still active in London, organized benefit concerts in Boston. Although Kim never engaged extensively in the politics of his time, owing to his war experiences as a young man, he always displayed a keen awareness of political events, as opposed to the secluded New York School. He openly protested against the censorship of the arts in the 1980's by resigning from the National Endowment of Arts (NEA) panel for composers²⁵ in reaction to Senator Jesse Helms' plan to impose restrictions on nationally funded art that was considered

²² Tassell (1983), 30.

²³ With whom Feldman, apparently, also wanted to study after graduating from High School, but was rejected, as is revealed in a few letters from Bloch to Feldman from the year 1944 (PSS, MF 206.1/283-285).

²⁴ During which, according to Richard Hofstadter, an "atmosphere of fervent malice and humorless imbecility" obtained. Cf. Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. New York: Vintage, 1963, 3.

²⁵ Martha Potter Kim, e-mail received on August 14, 2009.

inconsistent with the moral standards of the time.²⁶ In 1990, Kim, who had been co-chairman of the NEA for two years, sent a letter of complaint to NEA chairman John E. Frohmayer, which was published in the *Boston Globe*: "As long as the Helms amendment is law, the awarding of grants can no longer be viewed simply as rewarding artistic excellence,"²⁷ he wrote. Although he did not go as far as to write overtly political works, he certainly regarded "music not as autonomous but as relevant to cultural, social, and political context,"²⁸ which, as Kramer contends, is a trait of postmodern music, a term and a definition which will be discussed further below.

4.1.2. Discovering Beckett and ethnicity

After his resignation from Berkeley, Kim served as assistant professor at Princeton until 1967. In the early 1960's he experienced a turning point in his career that was not unlike Beckett's revelation in his mother's room in Foxrock in 1945. Maybe not entirely coincidentally, Kim's epiphany had to do with the fact that he had just discovered Beckett's work, which "was to dominate [his] thinking for twenty years."²⁹

The majority of his Beckett pieces were conceived after Kim obtained a full professorship at Harvard in 1967. The period between 1971-90 in which he was James Edward Dutton Professor was to become his most fruitful one. During these years he received commissions from the Fromm, Koussevitzky and Naumberg Foundations as well as from individual musicians and ensembles. His works were performed more frequently than before. In particular, the Violin Concerto, written for and premiered by Itzhak Perlman in 1979 (Perlman's wife, Toby Friedlander, was Martha Potter Kim's roommate and close friend at Juilliard School), became a major success. "I love Earl Kim, and I love his music. I'm crazy about this concerto," as the violinist enthusiastically stated in the early 80's.³⁰

²⁶ That conflict began in 1987, when Helms took exception to Andres Serrano's art work *Piss Christ*, which had been awarded a prize from an institution partly funded by the NEA. As a result, there were other incidents of controversy, e.g. Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs which Helms and other Republicans as well as religious groups considered a glorification of homosexuality. See Meyer, Richard. "The Helms Theory of Art." *MIT Press* 104 (2003): 131-48.

²⁷ French, Desiree. "Composer Quits NEA Panel." *Boston Globe*, 3 May, 1990: 39, 45.

²⁸ Kramer, Jonathan D. "The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism." *Current Musicology* 66 (Spring 1999): 7-20.

²⁹ Tassell (1983), 34.

³⁰ Tassell (1983), 11.

In 1970 Kim met Beckett in Paris for a two-hour interview, asking him for permission to use some of his texts for *Exercices en Route*.³¹ Neither the composer nor the author ever reported anything about what exactly was discussed during their two-hour meeting, though Schubert seems to have been one of their conversation topics.³² It is obvious, however, that Beckett did not hesitate to grant Kim permission to set his texts. Curiously enough, Kim, who knew them "by heart, had to show Beckett where to look for the lines."³³

As has been observed by critics, composers and performers, a penchant for tranquility and sparseness is central to Kim's aesthetic and a parallel to Beckett's linguistic economy. Apart from their shared proclivity for the theatrical and gestural, the works of both men are imbued with a deep austerity, detachment, and contemplation alongside episodes of irony-tinged exaggerations and finely crafted character drawings. Kim's oeuvre can be divided into three periods, as illustrated by the following chronological catalogue, which was put together by Salerni:³⁴

Early works (1948-1959)

Bagatelles, pianoforte, 1948-50

Letters found near a Suicide (F. Horne), baritone and pianoforte, 1954

Dialogues, piano and orchestra, 1959³⁵

Beckett period (1963-1978)

Two Evening Length works:

Exercices en route (Beckett), soprano, flute, oboe, clarinet, cello, percussion actors, dancers, film³⁶

Dead Calm

They are Far Out

Gooseberries, she said

Rattling On

1963-1970

Narratives (Beckett), soprano, female actress, actor, two trumpets, alto trombone, two violins, violoncello, pianoforte, lights, TV projection:

Monologues

Melodrama I from Happy Days

Eh Joe

Act Without Words

Lines from "Lessness"

Melodrama 2 from Enough

Earthlight³⁷

³¹ Tassell (1983), 39.

³² Thanks to Paul Salerni for this piece of information.

³³ Tassell (1983), 37.

³⁴ Paul Salerni's Verona lecture.

³⁵ Naxos 8.550226.

³⁶ New World Records 80561.

³⁷ New World Records 237.

1973-1978

Later works (1979-1998)

Violin Concerto, 1979³⁸

12 Caprices for Solo Violin, 1980

Now and Then (Chekhov, Yeats, Beckett), soprano, flute, viola, and harp, 1981³⁹

Where Grief Slumbers (Apollinaire and Rimbaud), seven songs for soprano, string orchestra, and harp, 1982, string octet version, 1989⁴⁰

Footfalls (Beckett), one-act opera for soprano, mezzo-soprano, two pianos, harpsichord, chime, 1983

Cornet (Rilke), narrator and chamber orchestra, 1983⁴¹

Scenes from Childhood, brass quintet, 1984

Scenes from a Movie (Rilke): The Seventh Dream and The Eleventh Dream, soprano, baritone, piano trio, 1986-88

4 Lines from Mallarmé (Mallarme), soprano, flute, vibraphone, four percussionists, 1989

3 Poems in French (Verlaine, Baudelaire), mezzo soprano and string quartet, 1989⁴²

Some Thoughts on Keats and Coleridge (Keats, Coleridge), SATB, 1990

Scenes from a Movie (Rilke): The Twenty-Sixth Dream, baritone, chorus, harp, string orchestra, 1991

Dear Linda (Sexton), female narrator, flute, violoncello, marimba, percussion, pianoforte, 1992⁴³

(to be added: Illuminations (Rimbaud), soprano, piano, 1998, as well as miscellaneous unfinished works: The White Hour/Rain on Ragoon (Joyce)/Work in Progress for accordion/Tutto – e sciolto (Joyce), voice and piano/Aya non tsuzumi (Japanese Noh), Princess Aria)

Evidently, in his extremely fruitful late period, Kim increasingly drew on other poets next to Beckett – particularly those he had discovered *through* him. He was, however, anything but losing interest in the author, for it is in this period in which he wrote his only full-length opera *Footfalls*, and he also started, though never finished composing an opera based on *Play* in the mid-1990's (not listed in this catalogue).

Although the great majority of American and European composers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have tended to abominate categorization into "schools" of composition, it is fair to say that Kim ranked among the composers whom Gilbert Chase, in the late 1950's, labeled "younger eclecticists,"⁴⁴ a group including, among others, Ray Green, Leon Kirchner, Paul Bowles, Roger Goeb, Ellis Kohs, Leonard Bernstein, Alan Hovhaness, and Robert Starer. Eclecticism, the "degree zero of contemporary general culture"⁴⁵ in Lyotard's terms, was employed as a technique by many

³⁸ Naxos 8.559226, EMI CDC 7 49328.

³⁹ New World Records 80561.

⁴⁰ Nonesuch 9.79262-2.

⁴¹ Naxos 8.559226.

⁴² Naxos BIS-SACD-1264; New World Records 80561.

⁴³ New World Records 80561.

⁴⁴ Chase, Gilbert. *Die Musik Amerikas*. Transl. Gisela Bartels. Berlin: Max Hesses Verlag, 1958 (Originally published as *America's Music* by McGraw-Hill, New York, 1955). Bernd Alois Zimmermann can be considered one of the trailblazers of postmodern eclecticism in music. By quoting from different stylistic periods, he demonstrated the interconnectedness of the compositional past and present. (Morgan 1991, 411).

⁴⁵ Lyotard (1992), 120.

American composers both parallel and in response to the advent of serialism. Given their multicultural environment, these composers were literally predisposed to availing themselves of a variety of styles, genres, and eras – be it consciously or unconsciously. Ringer distinguishes this method of 'style sampling' from that of the New York School of composers, who, as he polemicizes, "got so hopelessly caught in the musical labyrinth of New York that they missed the connection with the future forever."⁴⁶ Given the influx of composers and musicians from Europe in the cultural and intellectual strongholds in the U.S., the varying and even contrary responses of young American composers to their Old World heritage are a clear indication of the great stir which a growing reception of European music tradition(s) had caused since the 1930's. To be sure, the pragmatism of European-born film music composers, whose

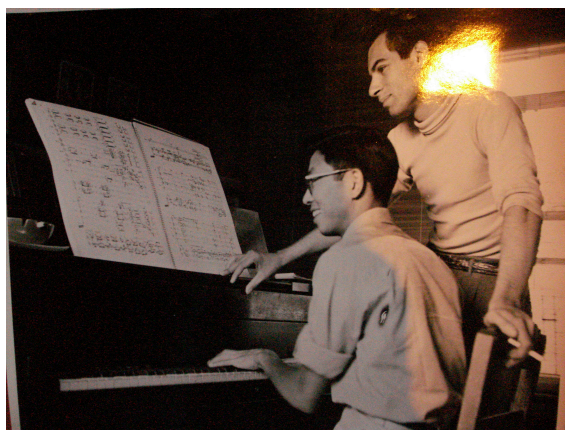


Fig. 4: Earl Kim and Leonard Rosenman. Courtesy of Martha Potter Kim.

scores display an extraordinary heterogeneity and volatility ("unstyle," as Josef Kloppenburg derogatorily dubs it⁴⁷) serving the requirements of particular films and audiences – in other words: the presence of functional music – is not to be neglected,⁴⁸ especially with a West Coast composer such as Kim, who openly admitted to being influenced by motion pictures (as will be exemplified below). As is known, Leonard Rosenman (1924-2008, see photograph above), Kim's close friend, pioneered twelve-tone music in Hollywood film scores. As will be seen, eclecticism is arguably not only a typically American West Coast trait: on a broader scale, polystylism ranks among the char-

⁴⁶ Ringer (1957), 4.

⁴⁷ Kloppenburg, Josef. "Musikkulturelle Vielfalt und expressive Eindeutigkeit. Der Unstil der Filmmusik." *Musikpädagogische Forschung* 4. Laaber, 1983. 207-16.

⁴⁸ Kloppenburg, Josef. "Filmmusik: Stil – Technik – Verfahren – Funktionen." *Musik multimedial: Filmmusik, Videoclip, Fernsehen*. Laaber, 2000 (= Handbuch der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert, Vol. 11). 21-56.

acteristics of postmodern music.

As mentioned above, a turning point in Kim's career occurred in the early 1960's when he finally started developing his own style after two decades of composing what he called "other people's music."⁴⁹ Along with Beckett's works, he discovered the "Asian attitudes that had been dormant in me as well as the fragmented beginnings of a compositional ethic."⁵⁰ This confluence of Asian thinking and the discovery of Beckett's art is noteworthy in the sense that several critics and composer Ann-Kay Lin have detected strands of influence from Zen Buddhism⁵¹ and Japanese Noh theater⁵² – a highly stylized stage art – in Beckett's works (although Beckett was, as usual, dismissive of such notions⁵³). In the following interview excerpt, Kim recounts a day at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, where he went to see a replica of the stone garden of Ryoanji in Kyoto. What struck him was the fifteen stones

of different shapes, a little like icebergs in the way they're buried, and grouped carefully in several specific ways. You can't see them all at once; as your eye roams over these fifteen stones, you see different configurations, each one discrete – maybe three or five or seven, but never all fifteen simultaneously. Here was a monument that **unfolded in time**, although it was static. It was this contradiction between the static and the dynamic that gave it a sense of total repose. I realized then that such a tranquility had to be my inner focus, and that I must keep faith with it.

(...) That garden became a sort of schematic model for me that has persisted right up to this moment. It summed up my theory of composing: **discrete images are not taken in by the eye or the ear at once, but seen or heard consecutively**. At the end there is a whole that is somehow synthesized from all these separate pieces. **Multiplicity becomes unity**. I am hooked on the fact that you can't see fifteen at once, on the sense of things revealing themselves gradually.⁵⁴

Curiously, Ryoanji was also the subject of a series of drawings and a composition by John Cage. He began these drawings were begun in January 1983, just before the inter-

⁴⁹ Tassell (1983), 10.

⁵⁰ Tassell (1983), 34.

⁵¹ Cf. Foster, Paul. *Beckett and Zen. A Study of Dilemma in the Novels of Samuel Beckett*. London: Wisdom Publications, 1989; Graham, Archie. "Art With Nothing to Express: Samuel Beckett and Zen," *Journal of Beckett Studies* 11.2 (2002): 20-55.

⁵² See, for example: Worth, Katherine. *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett*. London: Athlone, 1978; Branigan, op. cit., 52-83; See also Ann-Kay Lin's Beckett-based *Journey* for Noh theater, 1991.

⁵³ Branigan, 60.

⁵⁴ Tassell (1983), 34-5, emphasis added. Revolving around the dissociation of sound events from temporal spaces, such notions largely converge with other composers' theoretical reflections on music and time structuring, as for example with Feldman's dichotomy between "vertical" and "horizontal" composition, and more notably with the parameters *Gestalt*, *Struktur/structure*, *Zustand/state* and *Prozess/process* that constitute Stockhausen's *Momentform*: Stockhausen, Karlheinz. "Momentform," *Texte zur elektronischen und instrumentalen Musik*, Vol. I. Cologne: Dumont Schauberg, 1963. 189-210.

view with Earl Kim was published, and the music is dated 1983-4.⁵⁵ Although referring to the same source of inspiration, the Schönberg disciple Cage seems to have been impressed by different aspects than Kim, namely the structure of the garden and the material and texture of the fifteen stones. Kim, on the other hand, was struck by its perceptual effects on the individual observer.

In addition, Kim was keen to set himself apart from other composers in that his approach was

like haiku – one thought defining a larger concept by inference. It's different from conventional Western thinking. Traditionally you'll have four different movements: distinct, yes, but continuous by means of elisions, transitions, modulations. In my example, the transitions take place by means of silences. Statements are being made when nothing is being said. The thing works by subtraction, really.⁵⁶

What Kim implies here is that, much as with the Japanese stone garden, unity is created not by the composer, but by the listener or observer alone. Interstices of silence take the spot of formal coherence (as in Beckett's plays), allowing for individual perceptions of continuity, or *virtual* continuity that may be projected into those soundless spaces. In contrast, Feldman's compositional strategy is a continuous process of displacing and replacing sound events. Thus coherence is established by the mechanisms of the composer's memory and realized in notation, thus made explicit. With Kim, the continuity is implicit, left up to the listener.

That he refers to haiku to demonstrate his point, a literary form known for its aphoristic concision, deserves scrutiny. More precisely, a haiku is a succinct poem consisting of 17 sound units or moras (5-7-5) which contains one seasonal reference (*kigo*) and a grammatical caesura (*kireji*) that formally underpins the juxtaposition of two separate semantic entities. It usually depicts everyday moments or experiences.⁵⁷ Although haiku as an art form had been known to Western poets before World War II, mainly through Ezra Pound's haiku imitation "In a Station of the Metro," it was not until after the war that these poems found a wide echo in literary circles of the United States. Apart from com-

⁵⁵ Nicholls, David, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 120.

⁵⁶ Tassell (1983), 35.

⁵⁷ On haiku poetry in music cf. Redepenning, Dorothea. "Faszination Haiku." *Creative Dissonances: Music in a Global Context*. Eds. Barbara Mittler und Dorothea Redepenning (forthcoming). On Western perspectives on haiku, cf. Reich, Annika. *Was ist Haiku? Zur Konstruktion der japanischen Nation zwischen Orient und Okzident*. Hamburg: Lit, 2000, 8.

mercial or economic considerations, this increasing popularity largely resulted from R. H. Blyth's⁵⁸ rather one-sided perception of the genre as an emblem of Zen philosophy.⁵⁹ Given the Western inclination to Eastern spirituality at that time, it is clear why the haiku fell on highly receptive ears. There seem to be other reasons, however, lurking behind the success of the haiku: In light of the postmodern "aesthetic democracy" (Sloterdijk) in the course of which the artists "play games" (Iser) with the recipients, thus closing the artist-audience gap (as did, for example, John Cage's so-called "happenings" and the Fluxus movement in the 1950's and 1960's⁶⁰), Roland Barthes' observation that "[t]he haiku has this rather fantasmagorical property: that we always suppose we ourselves can write such a thing easily"⁶¹ suggests that haiku's popularity was also due in part due to its "do-it-yourself" quality, to its nature as an artistic *process* rather than a *product* by elevating the reader to the status of co-author or even author. Apart from that, "[w]hile being quite intelligible, the haiku means nothing, and it is by this double condition that it seems open to meaning in a particularly available, serviceable way,"⁶² as Barthes has it. Interestingly enough, this tension arising from the haiku's ambiguous standing between reference and inference bears a certain affinity to some of our approaches in explaining Beckett's universal success, namely its oscillation between the specific and the unspecific, between hermetic and universal qualities, which calls for the participation of readers or audiences much as an aesthetic game.⁶³

If the genre *per se* is ambivalent, so is its status in both Eastern and Western cultures. In fact, in its modern form, it is best considered a cultural hybrid. Curiously, Western interest in haiku poetry spilled back to its country of origin. Whereas in Japan the haiku symbolized the construction of a new national identity after the war, one which was imbued with modern Western-democratic ideals, in North America it represented an oriental Other. It is this mutual influence, one might even say "infection," of the genre and its respective cultural surroundings, that is most symptomatic of the increasing interpenetration of Western and Eastern cultural ideas at that time and the mutual reinforcement

⁵⁸ Blyth, Reginal Horace. *Haiku*, 4 vols. Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1949-52.

⁵⁹ Reich, A., 39.

⁶⁰ Morgan (1991), 449.

⁶¹ Barthes, Roland. "The Breach of Meaning." *The Empire of Signs*, op. cit., 69.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ As Schoell points out, the concision of the *Mirlitonnades* is reminiscent of haiku poetry. Cf. Schoell, Konrad. "Die Aufhebung der Gattungsgrenzen und die Metaliteratur." *Samuel Beckett und die Medien*. Ed. Peter Seibert. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008. 49-63: 51.

not of authentic values, but of shifting perceptions – including misperceptions – of the respective Other: "Die Selbst-Orientalisierung und Okzidentalisierung, die dem Japan-diskurs zu eigen ist, wird durch die Orientalisierung und Selbst-Okzidentalisierung seitens der USA verstärkt; [...]"⁶⁴ Against this background, it is worthy of note that Kim tried to pass off haiku as an authentically "Asian" or "oriental" concept that was "different from the West," so as to appear more distinct from other composers of the West whose aesthetic was based on similar notions. By doing so, he invoked Eastern and Western notions that are, if anything, in pseudo-opposition to one another. Curiously enough, hardly anyone would have been more aware of this cultural interfusion than the composer himself: "I have this conflict in me, and it's insoluble: the Asian versus the Western,"⁶⁵ he said. If it is to be taken at face value, this commitment to Zen Buddhism, uttered by a composer of visibly East Asian origin, may to the public appear more authentic and less out of place than from a composer such as John Cage. Since he had been exposed to Korean music as a child,⁶⁶ it might to some degree have come to him naturally. One finds it in his preferred tempo (M.M. quarter note = 40), which is also that of Korean court music,⁶⁷ in his use of traditional Japanese percussion instruments in ...*dead calm*..., or in the rather thin fabric of his works. Finally, it is evident it in the simultaneous, heterophonic doubling of the voice,⁶⁸ a technique permeating all his vocal music and to which he attached great importance (as can be gleaned from the fact that he notated lines from *Hamlet* as an exercise).⁶⁹ We will see that this peculiar type of language-music interplay literally echoes Beckett's bilateral instability of word and sound. Kim found it more difficult to consciously incorporate Korean melodies into his music, although he did so, for example, in the third song of *Letters Found Near A Suicide*.⁷⁰ The composer's somewhat desperate attempt to find his own voice by drawing on haiku, which had already been appropriated by Western minds, and even com-

⁶⁴ Reich, A., 40.

⁶⁵ Tassell (1983), 37.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Tsang, David. "Kim, Earl." *Contemporary Composers*. Ed. Brian Morton. Chicago: St. James Press, 1992. 489.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Tassell (1983), 38: In order for the singer and the doubler to be perfectly synchronous, Kim was once told by a Chinese musician, they should "live together for ten years."

⁷⁰ Jeon, 6.

posers such as John Cage⁷¹ and Hans Zender,⁷² among others,⁷³ lays bare one of the major predicaments contemporary composers are faced with, namely, the problem of identity and integrity in an ever-widening diversity of viable compositional paths, this in a time when cultural globalization and an increasing geographic mobility open up a wide array of creative possibilities. As Feldman put it: "How can you have integrity when your whole life is an accumulation of ideas?"⁷⁴

4.1.3. Postmodernism in music I

Das Wort "postmodern" gehört zur modernen Kletterausrüstung der sportlichen Touristen im Kunstgebirge. In seinem Namen rupfen sie Edelweiß, photographieren einander und warten auf ein Glühen. Von der Hitze im Berg und der Kälte auf dem Gipfel ahnen sie nichts. Keiner nimmt ihnen das übel, denn morgen reisen sie wieder ab. In Schlafwagen nahen neue Gäste und machen sich bereits *ihren* Begriff. [The word "postmodern" makes up part of the climbing gear of those athletic tourists who brave the heights of the artistic landscape. In the name of the postmodern they stop to pluck edelweiss, take photos and look forward to the beautiful sunset, oblivious to the heat of the mountain and the chill at its summit. No one holds it against them, because they'll be gone again the next day. Meanwhile, the approaching train's sleeper car carries new guests who are already forming *their own* concepts.]

Wolfgang Rihm⁷⁵

In the preceding chapters, the debate on postmodernism in music has briefly been touched upon by reference to Kramer's controversial catalogue of criteria. At this point, it deserves further elaboration. However, rather than engaging in a comprehensive recapitulation of discourses on the subject,⁷⁶ let alone providing a general account of postmodernism, which would be beyond the scope of the present work, we will briefly outline the problem of its proper definition and then probe into some of the aspects of Kim's work that might be considered postmodern.

Applied to music, the term postmodernism has been a point of fervent dispute. In fact,

⁷¹ Cage, John. *Seven Haiku* for solo piano (1951-52). Peters, 2000; see also *Score (40 Drawings by Thoreau) and 23 Parts* (1974), where the notation is inspired by the syllabic structure of haiku (cf. Nicholls, *Cambridge Companion*, 2002, 133.)

⁷² *Lo-Shu VI. 5 Haiku für Flöte und Violoncello* (1989). Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.

⁷³ E.g. Stephen Montague, *Haiku* for piano, flanger, electronic tape (1987), United Music Publishers. Cf. Redepenning, "Faszination Haiku," for a listing of haiku compositions. Redepenning also points out the ubiquitousness of the haiku in popular music, starting with the Beatles' *Magical Mystical Tour* (1967). Cf. also: Houben, Eva-Maria. *Die Aufhebung der Zeit: zur Utopie unbegrenzter Gegenwart in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1992, 221-5.

⁷⁴ Interview with Robert Ashley, August 1964. MFS, 16.

⁷⁵ "Postmodern? Postmoderne?" Rihm (1997), Vol. 1, 396.

⁷⁶ For a more detailed discussion, cf., for example, Redepenning, Dorothea. "Komponieren im Zeichen der Postmoderne. Anmerkungen zu George Crumb, Wolfgang Rihm und Hendryk Górecki." (German text, not published), Russian translation: *Isskusstvo XX veka: uchodjaščaja epocha?* Conference proceedings, Nižnij Novgorod 1997. Vol. 2. 202–231.

given their rhizomatic⁷⁷ (randomly linked, decentralized) multiplicity, discourses on the subject *per se* are postmodern in character (at least by Deleuze's/Guattari's conception).⁷⁸ Granted that musical postmodernism should be conceived as a "dynamic category"⁷⁹ with fuzzy boundaries, i.e. as a process rather than an overarching paradigm, it seems counterintuitive to draw on a catalogue of rigid characteristics or criteria – which is essentially what Kramer did. On the other hand, the absence of a fixed set of characteristics surely precludes a common basis for stylistic discourses of any kind, and it is due to this imprecision that postmodernism has come to be used as an umbrella term that, on its own, is often held to be insufficient for determining a composer's aesthetic coordinates. Considering this, any work would have to be designated 'postmodern in the sense that...' rather than simply being labeled 'postmodern.'

As Hermann Danuser has shown, the fuzziness of the term is largely owing to the ambivalence of the prefix "post-" (which implies both "to overcome" and "to follow"), as a result of which postmodernism has been defined in a twofold manner, namely as:

- a traditionalist movement *dismissing* the ideas of the avant-garde and embracing traditional forms, i.e. situating the postmodern movement outside modernism (Wolfgang Rihm, Manfred Trojahn)

- an avant-gardist movement propagating a change in perspective, but representing a continuation *within* the avant-garde, i.e. situating postmodernism within modernism, yet departing from its European heritage (John Cage)⁸⁰

Put simply, where the first one suggests a fundamental break from modernism, the second one assumes a continuity. It is easily seen that such diametrically opposed notions cover a wide range of styles and, as a result, defy precise categorization. In fact, this set of definitions accommodates John Cage's aleatoric revolution just as well as outwardly

⁷⁷ See chapter 3.1.5.

⁷⁸ Veselinović-Hofman, Mirjana, *Fragmente zur musikalischen Postmoderne*. Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang, 2003, (=Methodology of Music Research 2), 9. Cf. also: Danuser, Hermann. "Zur Kritik der musikalischen Postmoderne." *Quo vadis musica? Bericht über das Symposium der Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung Bonn-Bad Godesberg 1988*. Ed. Detlef Gojowy. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1990. 82-91: 82.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 83.

⁸⁰ Cf. Danuser, Hermann. "Postmodernes Musikdenken: Lösung oder Flucht?," *Neue Musik im politischen Wandel*. Ed. Hermann Danuser. Mainz, 1989 (=Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Neue Musik und Musikerziehung Darmstadt 32). 5-66. See also Veselinović-Hofman, op.cit.

conservative currents such as "neo-romanticism," "New Simplicity" or "New Subjectivism."

Second, any definition of postmodernism will depend on how modernism is demarcated in the first place: It will become clear that the prefix "post-" in fact augments the definitional fuzziness of preceding stylistic era, which in retrospect, as is often the case, is dubiously looked upon as a coherent whole.⁸¹

Another dialectical definition of the postmodern movement, one that seems mostly unrelated to the double entendre caused by the prefix, was put forward by Nicholas Zurbrugg, who identifies two prevalent strands within aesthetic postmodernism which discriminate between European-dominated and American-dominated schools of thought. What he dubs *C-effect* or "ante-art" designates the styles of primarily American "optimist" artists such as John Cage, who shared the belief that "the architectural and technological innovations of postmodern culture permit potential global enlightenment and improvement,"⁸² while its antipode, the *B-effect* or "anti-art" applies to the "pessimist" aesthetics of nostalgia of European critics and writers such as Beckett, Brecht and Barthes. This dichotomy between a pessimist retrospective and an optimist prospective also underlies Kramer's line of argument; but rather than regarding these two strands as both inherent in postmodernism, Kramer differentiates between postmodernism and anti-modernism: While the latter comprises a nostalgic yearning "for the good old days of tunes and tonality,"⁸³ the former, in his view, is essentially anti-elitist, anti-vanguard, and it also to some extent overlaps with the "traditionalist" conception demarcated by Danuser in that it is seen as antipodal to modernism.

Quite far from such dichotomous and narrow-focused perspectives, Wolfgang Iser contends that postmodernism is neither trans- nor anti-modern, but *radically* modern, that is, an exoteric, grand-scale, anti-elitist implementation of the esoteric ideal of aesthetic pluralization as propagated by the modernist elite.⁸⁴ In other words, postmodernism denotes a break from modernist elitism, yet a continuation of its pivotal aesthetic goal. This vision, he asserts, is positive to the core.⁸⁵ A synthesis of the two outlooks on

⁸¹ Danuser (1990), 83.

⁸² Zurbrugg, Nicholas. *The Parameters of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1993, 8-9.

⁸³ Kramer (1999), 7.

⁸⁴ Iser, 6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

postmodernism mapped out by Danuser, Welsch's view brings us closer to Kim's approach.

Kim, like Rands, Schnittke and Berio, and others, ranks among those composers who, having broken the deadlock (what Dibelius dubbed "zero hour of music"⁸⁶) and overcome the perceived elitism⁸⁷ and "oedipal conflicts"⁸⁸ of the post-WW II generation, no longer shunned past traditions from the late 1960's onwards, as long as it was the respective composer's personal bent – be it towards or against established musical languages – that underpinned such references to the musical past. Entering, therefore, into a dialectic with modernism and incorporating the compositional heritage as a whole, Kim's aesthetic outlook is postmodern by Kramer's definition.⁸⁹ According to Danuser's view, however, his style places him among the "traditionalist" postmodernists: In fact, the intermittent virtuosic and tonal episodes in Kim's works have prompted not only scholars and performers to dub Kim an "unabashed Romantic,"⁹⁰ but also the composer himself – in lack of a better word, that is.⁹¹ This "Romantic" interpretation is consistent with Helga de la Motte-Haber's definition, in which she equates postmodernism with Neo-Romanticism.⁹² However, Hattinger has a point in dismissing discussions about alleged "continuations" of the Romantic tradition as "nonsensical"⁹³ since, as he sees it, the modernist inventions mark a point of no return in the sense that any perspective on previous epochs a composer will take is ultimately that of an outsider.⁹⁴ Apart from the fact that references to 19th-century idioms represent only one facet of the postmodern musical landscape, correlating postmodern composition to musical Romanticism merely shifts the definitional fuzziness to the domain of another poorly-defined label.

An interesting point of critique is brought up by Kramer⁹⁵ in that he identifies a confu-

⁸⁶ "Stunde Null der Musik." Cf. Dibelius, Ulrich. *Moderne Musik nach 1945*. Munich: Piper, 1998.

⁸⁷ See Dibelius (1970), 7-10.

⁸⁸ Kramer (1999), 12.

⁸⁹ Kramer, Jonathan D. "Bernard Rands' ...body and shadow...: Modernist, Postmodernist, or Antimodernist?" *Contemporary Music Review* 20.4 (2001): 29-43

⁹⁰ Salerni, Paul. Liner Notes for Earl Kim's *Violin Concerto*. Naxos, 2005 (8.559226).

⁹¹ Tassell (1983), 38.

⁹² Motte-Haber, Helga [de la]. "Die Gegenauflärung der Postmoderne." *Musik und Theorie*. Ed. Rudolf Stephan. Mainz, 1987 (= Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Neue Musik und Musikerziehung 28). 31-44: 36; also qtd. by Hattinger in: Kolleritsch (1993), 38 (see footnote below).

⁹³ Hattinger, Wolfgang. "Wenn sich jemand kratzt, ohne genau zu wissen, wo es ihn juckt. Bemerkungen zur Postmodernediskussion." *Wiederaneignung und Neubestimmung. Der Fall "Postmoderne" in der Musik*. Ed. Otto Kolleritsch. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1993 (= Studien zur Wertungsforschung 26). 34-49: 42.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 42.

⁹⁵ Kramer (1999).

sion of what he perceives as two fundamentally distinct notions: postmodern recontextualizations of past traditions on the one hand and conservative or nostalgic stances on the other. The former, he argues, are not necessarily underpinned by the latter. This returns us to Welsch's notion of viewing postmodernism (be it "traditionalist" or not) as an outgrowth of modernism rather than as a reaction against it: As will be seen in the analyses, Kim's and Rands' 'tonal' languages developed almost naturally out of the twelve-tone method they had inherited from the earlier generation of composers, and which Kim utilized lavishly in his first compositions. That furthermore the absorption, reflection, re-formulation and re-composition of the (musical) past is as paramount in Kim's works as it is in Beckett's is, on closer inspection, highly characteristic of postmodern thought, notably of what Welsch dubs "interferential plurality,"⁹⁶ i.e. plurality within a single work of art. In this sense, the "New Simplicity" of Kim, Rands and other composers of that generation, despite its conservative garment, is no less a continuation of musical modernism than, say, the "New Complexity." Thus it cannot be denied that, as with Beckett's respect for the literary and musical tradition and his incorporation of different media, Kim's use of musical vocabulary of the past does not at all subscribe to any conservative aesthetic posture on the composer's part. As will become clear in the analysis, his personal commitment to his heritage is worlds apart from any interest in or claim to authenticity, let alone any intent of heralding a general return to a particular paradigm of the past. Rather, these modes are appropriated and literally *quoted* as vehicles of self-reflexivity and, as with film music, as emotional triggers suited to whatever mood and scenario Kim associated with a certain text passage. This pragmatism and aloof perspective on the musical tradition is evident in Kim's comment on the label "New Romanticism," in which he talks not so much about the aesthetic period as about the notions retrospectively ascribed to Romanticism:

I don't even know what the new romanticism is [...] If it means that people are a little more revealing about their private feelings, then yes, you can count me in. [...] Passion is the thing I'm committed to as a composer. The innermost feelings must be revealed directly, honestly, in one's music. You have to risk it. I do feel that I'm part of a tradition, a continuum, and that's why it's so important to hear my music in conjunction with other periods. I'm not an iconoclast.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Welsch, 14.

⁹⁷ Tassell (1983), 38. It is noteworthy in this context that, as opposed to Feldman, whom Walter Zimmermann calls an "iconoclast," (MFE, 11), Kim explicitly rejects this term as a description of his artistic outlook.

Peter Sloterdijk has identified a pair of forces that, in his view, characterize postmodern thought: "Copernican mobilization" versus "Ptolemean demobilization."⁹⁸ That is, *pensée sauvage*⁹⁹ or "anything goes"¹⁰⁰ versus its antipode: reduction in material, and simplicity, respectively. The philosopher argues that the purportedly "conservative aura" of such "Ptolemean" phenomena vanishes if one regards them as correctives ("Korrekturbewegungen") *within* the overall vein of Copernican mobilization.¹⁰¹ Along these lines, the interferential plurality of Kim's works is, in fact, a break from the imperative of serialism in favor of a more consistent implementation of its underlying rationale. In other words, it represents a liberation from the last centralizing dogma or, as Feldman put it, "authoritarianism"¹⁰² that the serialists had, paradoxically, subscribed to *en route* to eschewing such centralizing conventions in favor of an entirely free choice of material, delimited only by the composer's individual horizon of aesthetic experience and concerns. In other words, while the centrifugal forces of "anything goes" *per se* may be subject to the accusation of arbitrariness,¹⁰³ the centripetal self-reflexivity of postserial compositional practice, as demonstrated in the present study, counteracts the impression of randomness. Therefore, the composer's mind, knowledge and background might offer far more fruitful starting points for work analyses than the works themselves.

4.1.4. Schönberg's shadow: dodecaphonic procedures

Kim studied with Schönberg at UCLA in 1939, and as with other American disciples of the Viennese master, his work is characterized by structural rigor, as reflected, for example, in the traces of the Classical sonata form permeating his works. In addition, Kim applied other serial procedures to musical parameters other than pitch, echoing the techniques of the European avant-garde. But his œuvre also reveals a great deal of detachment from Schönberg and his serialist successors. This oedipal conflict is evident in two contrary statements: In the interview with the *Boston Globe* he described Schönberg's

⁹⁸ The "Copernican mobilization" denotes a decentralizing force to the point where everything becomes possible. By "Ptolemean demobilization," Sloterdijk means a deliberate return to the "old-new" modes of perception ("bewußten Rückgang aus dem kopernikanischen Vorstellungswirbel in die alt-neue Wahrnehmungseinstellung.") Op. cit., 65.

⁹⁹ Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *La pensée sauvage*, Paris: Nov. tir., 1964.

¹⁰⁰ Feyerabend, Paul. *Against Method, Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*. London: NLB, 1975.

¹⁰¹ Sloterdijk, 68.

¹⁰² "The Anxiety of Art," 22-3.

¹⁰³ Cf. Redepenning (1997).

influence on his own work as "incalculable."¹⁰⁴ Four years later, in an interview with a Korean magazine, he admits that, "as a musician" he was inspired by all of his teachers, while explicitly distancing himself from Schönberg's "rather complex, dissonant serial style."¹⁰⁵ And while he admired both Schönberg's and Bloch's devotion to this method, recognizing that it "had to be the true idea of composing," he considered his own style fundamentally different from theirs.¹⁰⁶

These changing responses to the same question are quite revealing with respect to his own stylistic trajectory. Starting in the 1980's, serial techniques in his works became more sparse, so that in a lexicon article published in 1992, David Tsang entirely disregarded the serial techniques he employed in many of his early works,¹⁰⁷ possibly in light of Kim's then current style. If compared to the earlier Beckett settings, works such as *Footfalls* and the song cycle *Now and Then* display a total reduction of tonal material. In a way, this tendency runs parallel to Beckett's mature style – evidently not in terms of the syntactic and semantic obscurities that mark the author's late writings, but in terms of the homogeneity and minimalism common to these works.

Triggered largely by Schönberg's emigration to the U.S., both defenders and antagonists of dodecaphony engaged in fiercely polemical debates. Clearly, what Richard Hofstadter identified as "anti-intellectualism" or "philistinism"¹⁰⁸ in American public life culminated in the late 1940s to the late 1950s, the era of McCarthyism, a period which coincided with Schönberg's greatest setbacks in American musical academia. For Kim also, this was a period of hardship, as discussed above. Some twenty years before writing his supportive essay "Some Notes on Schönberg...", Sessions criticized the tendency toward a homogenization of art music, which, he argued, was due to the rise of mass culture.¹⁰⁹ He then goes on to cite Schönberg as a counter-example.¹¹⁰ This is peculiar, given that dodecaphony was also believed by its opponents to preclude any form of artistic individuality – Rochberg, for example, rails against what he calls the "virtually nonexistent

¹⁰⁴ Tassell (1983), 30.

¹⁰⁵ Jeon, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Tsang.

¹⁰⁸ Hofstadter (1963).

¹⁰⁹ Sessions frowns upon a "vastly increased public (...) whose interest in music is relatively lukewarm." Sessions, Roger. "Art, Freedom and the Individual" (1957). *Roger Sessions on Music. Collected Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979. 105-19: 108-9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 109.

profile of identity" in Schönberg's "forgettable" music¹¹¹ resulting from a "process of equalization" reducing musical originality "to the lowest ebb it had reached since the Baroque era."¹¹² One might ask where this fervent quest for individuality and diversity originated. In Milton Babbitt's view, it is deeply rooted in American culture: "If this extreme diversity is, to some degree, a reflection of that multiformity which characterizes all aspects of American cultural life, it is also symptomatic of the relative isolation in which each composer pursues his own work and determines his own direction."¹¹³ Furthermore, if American anti-intellectualism, as Hofstadter argues, springs from the egalitarian spirit and "primitivism," both of which represent traits that are deeply rooted in American cultural memory,¹¹⁴ so does a vehement skepticism about doctrines, dogmatism, and authoritarianism – which composers such as Rochberg apparently perceived in serialism.

From the 1960s onwards, however, serial and tonal composing were no longer treated as mutually exclusive, as Kim's fairly pragmatic approach shows: Rather than rendering dodecaphonic structures the sole *raison d'être* of his compositions, he drew on them in order to obtain certain effects, mostly linked to the semantic content and structure of the texts that he set to music. Other Schönberg disciples, associates and admirers would take pains to elaborate the Schönbergian system so as to obtain from it the potential for a greater variety of modes of composition and thus adapt it to the *zeitgeist*. In his book on Schönberg's twelve-tone composition,¹¹⁵ Josef Rufer alerts his readers to the important role that the individual composer's creative imagination plays in twelve-tone composition. The challenge in any compositional approach, he maintains, is to allow "the greatest freedom within the strictest law."¹¹⁶ Also rebutting the contention that dodecaphony testifies to a lack of creative imagination, Kim's teacher Roger Sessions argued that any skillful application of the twelve-tone system by any composer would ultimately "bear the stamp of his personality," representing a series of personal choices

¹¹¹ Rochberg, George. *The Aesthetics of Survival*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004, 39.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 40.

¹¹³ Babbitt, Milton. "Some Aspects of Twelve-Tone Composition." *The Score* 12 (1955): 53-61: 38.

¹¹⁴ "and if anti-intellectualism has become, as I believe it has, a broadly diffused quality in our civilization, it has become so because it has often been linked to good, or at least defensible, causes. It first got its strong grip on our ways of thinking because it was fostered by an evangelical religion that also purveyed many humane and democratic sentiments. It made its way into our politics because it became associated with our passion for equality. It has become formidable in our education party because our educational beliefs are evangelically egalitarian." Hofstadter, 22-3.

¹¹⁵ Rufer, Josef. *Composition with Twelve Notes only related to one another*. Transl. Humphrey Searle. London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1954.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 4.

rather than a predetermined datum.¹¹⁷ Clearly, such efforts to make dodecaphony more palatable to American composers also represented attempts to obtain an aesthetic rapprochement between the European and the American musical academia.

Apart from Sessions' and Bloch's adaptation of the twelve-tone system, it was Babbitt's approach that opened up new horizons within the field of dodecaphony: By mapping out the possibilities provided by (re-)combinations and transformations of elements and subsets within the series,¹¹⁸ Babbitt explored theretofore uncharted dodecaphonic territory, and Earl Kim, among others, would follow suit. Along with this systematic extension and pluralization of the twelve-tone system, he introduced a new set of rigorously defined and standardized terms ("secondary set," "derived set," "aggregate") with the objective of avoiding cumbersome descriptions and facilitating analytic discourses on twelve-tone music.

As can be seen, there were quite a few attempts to demonstrate the flexibility and productive potential of Schönberg's methods, to pluralize it, and, in this way, make it more attractive to composers who "regard the mere presence of 'twelve tones' as sufficient evidence of a fall from musical grace. [...] For American twelve-tone composers, in word and musical deed, display a diversity of "idioms," "styles," compositional attitudes, and accomplishments [...]"¹¹⁹

Accordingly, Kim's idiosyncratic approach to dodecaphony is anchored in a synthesis of two antipodal aesthetic positions whose respective proponents had been engaging in a fervent debate, to which Schönberg's arrival in the United States in 1933 had added a great deal of fuel.

Much indebted to established musical languages, Kim displayed an enormous skepticism about the "innovation dogmatism"¹²⁰ of his American colleagues.¹²¹ In fact, he

¹¹⁷ Sessions, Roger. "Some Notes on Schönberg and the 'Method of Composing With Twelve Tones'" (1952). *Roger Sessions on Music*. 370-5: 374.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Babbitt (1955), and also: "Twelve-Tone Invariants as Compositional Determinants." *Musical Quarterly* 46.2 (1960: *Special Issue: Problems of Modern Music. The Princeton Seminar in Advanced Musical Studies*): 246-259.

¹¹⁹ Babbitt (1955), 38.

¹²⁰ Term used by Sloterdijk, 36-7: "So wie die Bekleidungsmode nicht Kleider verkauft, sondern Unterschiede zwischen Kleidern, so liefern Galerien von heute nicht so sehr Kunstwerke als angebliche Unterschiede zwischen Kunstwerken; dabei fällt auf, daß die Kategorie des Scheins sich nicht mehr auf die Differenz zwischen Werk und Wirklichkeit bezieht, sondern auf die zwischen einem Werk und all den anderen. Im Sog der ästhetischen Entropie wird alle Kunst zu einem Einerlei aus sich selbst herauskehrenden Differenzen, die in lärmender Koexistenz verschwimmen."

¹²¹ E.g. Feldman: "It is these imitators who are interested not in what the artist did, but the means he used to do it. This is where craft emerges as an absolute, an authoritarian position that divorces itself from the creative impulse of the originator. The imitator is the greatest enemy of originality." "The Anxiety of Art," *GMR*, 23.

seemed appalled by what he perceived as an exaggerated neophilia and the fact that compositional ideas were measured strictly in terms of novelty. As will be seen, this acceptance, rather than anxiety, of influence, the recognition that intertextuality is at work every time a work of art is created, is even more evident in Rands. As said in the previous chapter, Kim was aware "not of what is dead, but of what is already living,"¹²² in T. S. Eliot's words. Kim said:

What is something conservative or radical? The difference of these terms is rather strange. Nothing new any more these days? Everything has been done? I think radical has often been a term which is used to identify something not in terms of value but in terms of its difference from whatever preceded it. I do not know if it is the proper definition. The reason why I have trouble with these terms is because I am not concerned with what is different or new, I am concerned with what is good. That is the only thing that concerns or interests me.¹²³

In this, he was of one mind with Wolfgang Rihm, who argued:

Überhaupt muss ich hinter den Gedanken der Innovation in der Musik ein Fragezeichen setzen. Das Phänomen Innovation ist in der Musik unmöglich. Um die Musik herum, in ihren Aufführungsritualen, ihrer Praxis etc. ist Innovation unerlässlich, da Musik und Menschen, für die Musik ja entsteht, immer neuen Kommunikationswechselbeziehungen unterworfen sind. Musik selbst ist aber nicht etwas, das erneuert werden kann, nur die Auffassung von Musik, die Prioritäten ändern sich von Zeit zu Zeit, mit der Zeit. (...) Alles, was neu ist, ist es in Bezug auf Voriges, also relativ. Neue Musik in solchem Selbstverständnis ist aber dann: reagierende Kunst, wenn nicht reaktionäre. [Above all, I have to put a question mark after any notion of innovation in music. The phenomenon of innovation is impossible in music. In what surrounds music, in its performance rituals, its practice, etc. innovation is indispensable, as music and human beings, for whom music is created, are constantly subjected to new relations of communicative interaction with one another. But music itself is not something that can be renewed, merely the attitudes towards music, the priorities, change from time to time, and change with the times. (...) Everything new is only new in relation to what came before it, i.e., its newness is relative. Given such a self-understanding, then, new music becomes: reactive art, if not to say reactionary.]¹²⁴

By comparison, by the time Rihm formulated this statement, the concept of originality had long been dismissed as a mere utopia by literary critics. As Roland Barthes posited in 1968: "[T]he writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them."¹²⁵

¹²² Eliot, T. S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch et al. New York: Norton, 2001. 1092-8: 1098.

¹²³ Jeon, 8.

¹²⁴ Rihm, Wolfgang. "Der geschockte Komponist." *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* 17 (1978): 42.

¹²⁵ Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author," *Image – Music – Text*, op. cit., 142-8: 146.

4.1.5. Recursivity and mirror forms

One of the most striking analogies between Kim and his teacher Schönberg is the pivotal role played by hexachords in the compositions of both. Beyond the plain fact that both composers liked to base entire pieces on one or several hexachordal modes (which was as well an idiosyncrasy of other composers such as Alban Berg), in some instances Kim employed the same combinatory hexachord types as his Viennese teacher.

In his lecture "Composition with Twelve Tones," Schönberg stated that "a basic set of twelve tones (BS) can be used in either dimension, as a whole **or in parts**."¹²⁶ It was thus Schönberg himself who laid the groundwork for an increasing liberalization of his serial practice. Furthermore, the technique of re-ordering single pitch classes within hexachords and other larger units is frequent in Schönberg's later works, and as we will see, it is this flexibility and mobility of smaller segments derived from a series which also plays a major role in Kim's compositions and which would ultimately usher in a new type of modality. Schönberg himself preferred derived hexachords (inversions) that completed the basic set ("should bring forth the hitherto unused six tones of the chromatic scale"¹²⁷). He already employed complementary half-rows in some of his early dodecaphonic compositions (*Sonnet* from the *Serenade* op. 24, 1920-23, *Waltz* op. 23,5 1920-23, *Suite* op. 25, 1921-3), but it was not until he composed the Scherzo of his *Wind Quintet* op. 26 (1923-4) that he first exploited the full range of possibilities provided by combinatoriality: Starting with the *Variations for Orchestra* op. 31 (1926-8), he derived his 12-tone rows primarily from hexachords whose complement is produced by inversion (inversional hexachordal combinatoriality) and subsequent transposition.¹²⁸ According to Babbitt, combinatoriality is present if "a set is so constructed that the content of one of its hexachords is an inversion of the pitch classes of its other hexachord, ordering considerations aside."¹²⁹ This is the case, for example, in the *Fourth String Quartet* op. 37, in which the second hexachord (B) played by the first violin, presenting a set of six new notes, is an inversion of the first one (A), represented here and in the

¹²⁶ Schönberg, Arnold. *Style and Idea*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1950, 109. Emphasis added.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹²⁸ Buhrmann, Dirk. *Arnold Schönbergs "Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte" op. 41 (1942)*. Hildesheim: Olms, 2001 (= *Diskordanzen: Studien zur neueren Musikgeschichte* 11), 146-7.

¹²⁹ Babbitt (1961), 74.

following chapters by integer notation according to Allen Forte's system.¹³⁰ Rochberg refers to this as "invertibility of hexachords resulting in the production of six *new* notes."¹³¹

A: [2,1,9,10,5,3] = [0,1,4,5,6,8]

B: [4,0,8,7,6,11] = A_{Inverted} = [8,0,4,5,6,1], reordered: [0,1,4,5,6,8]

Furthermore, the two subsequent hexachords, C, which is also an inversion of A, and D, which is an inversion of B, are interchangeable¹³² (again, ordering considerations aside) with B and A, respectively:

C: [7,8,0,11,4,6]

D: [5,9,1,2,3,10]

Apart from *Pierrot Lunaire*, which was, according to his disciple and friend Anthony Brandt, a "particularly important touchstone" in Earl Kim's life,¹³³ Schönberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* seems to have been a significant model for him. The affinity between the *Ode* and Kim's song cycle *Now and Then*, for example, is seen in their respective historical background: While Schönberg wrote this composition in reaction to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Kim conceived his song cycle as a musical war memorial of the American counter-strike in Nagasaki and Hiroshima.¹³⁴ In the *Narratives*, he employed the same type of recursive hexachord in *Monologues* and *Melodrama II* that Schönberg had used in *Ode*, consisting of alternating semitones and minor thirds, which is listed by Forte as pc set 6-20(4).¹³⁵ It is also referred to as the "Faust mode" by Pousseur (because it occurs in Franz Liszt's *Faust Symphony*) or as "Mode

¹³⁰ The integer notation employed throughout the remainder of this study is defined as follows: C = 0, C# = 1, D = 2, etc. Right of the equal sign is the so-called *prime form* of the hexachord, where the pitch-class set is in *normal order* and the first integer is 0 by default. *Normal order* denotes that permutation with the least difference determined by subtracting the first integer from the last. This particular hexachord is also named 6-16 in: Forte, Allen. *The Structure of Atonal Music*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1973, 180.

¹³¹ Rochberg, George. *The Hexachord and Its Relation to the 12-Tone Row*. Ryn Mawr, PA: Presser, 1955, 4.

¹³² Interchangeability is the term used by Rochberg for this type of equivalence, Rochberg (1955), 2-3.

¹³³ Anthony Brandt, e-mail received on July 1st, 2008.

¹³⁴ Cf. Kupfer, Diana. "A Cycle of Songs, Sorrow, and Citations. Earl Kim's *Now and Then*." *Time and Space in Words and Music: Proceedings of the 1st Conference of the Word and Music Association Forum, Dortmund, November 4-6, 2010*. Ed. Mario Dunkel, Emily Petermann, and Burkhard Sauerwald. Frankfurt: Peter Lang (forthcoming 2012).

¹³⁵ Forte (1973), 180.

Ib."¹³⁶ By analogy with the Octatonic scale, this scale is nicknamed "hexatonic" by Richard Cohn.¹³⁷

Kim reveals a propensity not only for such hexachords, but for recursive and symmetrical material in general. Tonal successions which Messiaen referred to as *Modes à transpositions limitées*¹³⁸ and as "modernized primitive" pitch-scales by Joseph Schillinger¹³⁹ already figure prominently in the late-Romantic¹⁴⁰ and 20th-century repertoire.¹⁴¹ Messiaen explained that "ces modes sont formés de plusieurs groupes symétriques, la dernière note de chaque groupe étant toujours 'commune' avec la première du groupe suivant."¹⁴² In other words, it is possible to generate a new group of notes from the last note of the last set and so forth. In the late-Romantic tradition, symmetrical divisions of the octave had come into vogue because they "erode[d] the fundamental distinction between consonance and dissonance."¹⁴³ This is to say that these modes were a welcome supplement to commonplace tonal harmony: While they may belong to several tonalities, they do not go so far as to transgress the border to polytonality.¹⁴⁴

As revealed in his song cycle *Now and Then*, Kim had a general proclivity for cyclical forms. It seems fair to say that this circularity *ad infinitum* of scales that divide the octave into equal parts bears a similarity in approach to Beckettian self-referentiality, e.g. the *mise en abyme* of the dog song, as outlined in chapter 2.2.2. The paradox inherent in these symmetrical forms is that, while they generate infinite circularity, they nevertheless remain, as Messiaen's designation reveals, "limited," thus inescapable. As Paul Salerni has observed, this idea resonates with the cerebral claustrophobia in Beckett's works.¹⁴⁵ This is only one of many possible points of contact between Kim and Beckett. Another parallel interest lies in mirror forms, retrogrades or *palindromes*, as Kim him-

¹³⁶ Pousseur, Henri. "Stravinsky by Way of Webern." *Perspectives of New Music* 10.2 (1972): 13-51: 33.

¹³⁷ Cohn, Richard. "Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions." *Music Analysis* 15 (1996): 9-40.

¹³⁸ Messiaen, Olivier, *Technique de mon Langage Musical*, Vol. I, Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1955. 51-6. Strangely enough, the hexatonic scale 6-20(4) is not considered by Messiaen.

¹³⁹ Schillinger, Joseph. *The Schillinger System of Musical Notation*. 2 Vols. New York: Carl Fischer, 1946 (first ed.: 1941).

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Cohn, Richard, op. cit.

¹⁴¹ E.g. Debussy, Stravinsky, Skryabin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Ravel, Britten, Bartók, Messiaen.

¹⁴² Messiaen (1944), 51.

¹⁴³ Cohn, Richard, 11.

¹⁴⁴ Messiaen (1944), 51.

¹⁴⁵ Salerni, Verona Lecture.

self liked to refer to them.¹⁴⁶ As with recursive systems, mirror techniques project into the future that which has been stated in the immediate past.¹⁴⁷ In this sense, they are restrictive, automatic (Paul Salerni, in his Verona lecture on Earl Kim, referred to them as "prisons") as well as highly productive. Although, as with Beckett's parodistic enumerations, these automatic operations could be looked at as manifestations of an overall 'algorithmic revolution' in the arts starting in the 1950's,¹⁴⁸ such forms also might be thought of as dating back to medieval *organa* and canonic forms,¹⁴⁹ which, for example, inspired Paul Hindemith's *Ludus Tonalis* (1942).¹⁵⁰ In Kim's work, palindromes occur on a smaller scale and may be rather subtle, at times even incomplete or asymmetrical, but, as will be seen, they are nevertheless pervasive in works such as *...dead calm...* Two other "Beckett composers," Heinz Holliger and György Kurtág, displayed a similar interest in retrogrades.¹⁵¹

Although still including twelve-tone operations, Kim's musical language in the Beckett settings started to move away from them, which was, as we have shown, symptomatic of the transition from musical modernism to postmodernism. This trajectory continued in his later works, where Schönberg's techniques are abandoned almost completely. While at the same time moving away from total serialism, Kim also approached Beckett's outlook on abstract language: "Perhaps, like the composer Schönberg or the painter Kandinsky, I have turned toward an abstract language. Unlike them, however, I have tried not to concretise the abstraction – not to give it yet another formal context."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ The term "palindrome" denotes a mirror image sometimes used interchangeably with 'retrograde' (Cf. Newbould, Brian. "Palindrome." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 19. Ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 2001, 2-3). The fact that Kim, just as the other 'Beckett composers' Heinz Holliger and György Kurtág (cf. Kunkel) used this term, rather than retrograde, is another indicator of his detachment from serial techniques. Roman Haubenstock-Ramati also invented the personal label "Mobile" for a familiar concept, Earle Brown's "kinetic" or "open" forms, apparently to give it a personal spin.

¹⁴⁷ Brandt, Anthony. Liner notes for the Album *Earl Kim*. New World Records, 2001 (80561) 7.

¹⁴⁸ Essl, Karlheinz. "Algorithmic Composition." *Cambridge Companion to Electronic Music*. Cambridge, NY: CUP, 2007. 107-25: 108: "By utilising algorithmic methods such as automatisms, random operations, rule-based systems and autopoietic strategies, some artistic decisions are partly delegated to an external instance. This might be regarded as a weakness of the subjective autonomy. On the other hand, it enables one to gain new dimensions that expand investigation beyond a limited personal horizon. From this basis, algorithms can also be regarded as a powerful means to extend our experience – they might even develop into something that may be conceived as an 'inspiration machine.'"

¹⁴⁹ For precursors of algorithmic composition, cf. Essl, op. cit., 109-10.

¹⁵⁰ In this collection of fugues, the Postludium (the 25th piece of the cycle) is identical to the Praeludium in mirror retrograde, i.e. turned upside down. Neumeyer, David. "The Play of Tones: On the *Ludus Tonalis*." *The Music of Paul Hindemith*. New Haven, London: Yale UP, 1986. 224-238.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Feldman, "The Future of Local Music." *GMR*, 157-95: 182. On Kurtág cf. Kunkel.

¹⁵² Gruen, John. "Samuel Beckett talks about Beckett." *Vogue*, 127.2 (Feb. 1970), 108. Qtd. in: Bryden, SBM, 41.

4.2. *Exercises en route*

Exercises en route, Kim's first cycle of Beckett-based compositions, was conceived in the early 1960's, at the turning point in his career when the composer came to value his Asian heritage on the one hand and Beckett's œuvre on the other. Both *Exercises* and *Narratives* are marked by the same hybrid quality – of being performable both theatrically and as a concert piece – that Kim's touchstone *Pierrot Lunaire* became known for. Two versions of the cycle exist: The original, theatrical collection also included incidental music (e.g. a piece originally entitled *Moments* and later re-named *Transitions*) to accompany dances choreographed by Mimi Kagan, as well as a solo piece based on Watt's word transformations. This theatrical work was completed and received its premiere at Sanders Hall in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on January 15 and 16, 1971, with Benita Valente singing the soprano part. Eleven years later, Kim produced a concert version comprising four movements, which was first performed in Marlboro. Since 2001 a recording of the concert version is available on a compact disc devoted entirely to Kim works,¹⁵³ although, as with most of the *Narratives*, the *Exercises* remain unpublished to date. The following remarks refer solely to the concert version.

4.2.1. ...*dead calm*...

The first piece to be written and performed (separately in 1961¹⁵⁴), ...*dead calm*... is, with regard to its instrumentation and musical language, most indicative of Kim's waking interest in East Asian culture in the early 1960's: A large 18-piece percussion set, mostly Japanese, is combined with a small ensemble of traditionally Western instruments, piccolo flute, oboe, clarinet, violin, and violoncello. The words, from the addenda to the novel *Watt*, are sung by a soprano.

The short piece, which takes no longer than five minutes in performance, encapsulates virtually all of Kim's compositional hallmarks: his characteristic metronome marking (quarter note = 40), a combination of symmetrical and irregular mirror forms or palindromes, voice doubling, frequent silences, minimal tonal material juxtaposed with virtuosic and serial passages, structural discipline, and thin textures of alternating or inter-

¹⁵³ New World Records 80561.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Tsang.

locking strata of sounds.

1

...DEAD CALM...

(Text by S. Beckett)

EARL KIM
27 YORK ST.
LEXINGTON, MASS.

*INSTRUMENTATION

- Soprano Voice
Piccolo
Oboe
Clarinet
Violin
Cello
Percussion
Player No 1
1. Wind Chimes (Pentatonic)
2. Small Bell (Strike)
3. Small Bell (Ring)
4. Densho (Large Bell - Japanese)
5. Claves (High & Medium)
6. Hyoshigi (Wooden Clapper - Japanese)
7. Wood Block
8. Otsuzumi (Hand Drum - Japanese)
9. Taiko (Stick Drum - Japanese)
10. Bongo (Pair), tuned approx. m.3
Player No 2
1. Two Suspended Cymbals (High & Low)
2. Sizzle Cymbal
3. Temple Blocks
4. Congo Drums (Pair), tuned approx. m.3
5. Squeeze Drum (African)
6. Tom-Tom (Chinese), approx. 15" diam.
7. Tenor Drum
8. Bass Drum
Mallets & Sticks
1. Wooden Mallet - Densho
2. Wooden Sticks - Taiko
3. Reed Stick
4. Soft Stick
5. Wire Brush
6. Rubber Mallet (Medium)
7. Metal Mallet

$\downarrow = c. 40$

ring.

S. Bell $\frac{3}{4}$

pp

sempre

pp

M
1613.3
K49
D27
1963
Folio
Copy 2

Ex. 7: *Exercises en route: ...dead calm...*, p. 1 Houghton Library for Rare Manuscripts, Harvard University (hereafter: HL). Not published.

It would appear that Kim was enamored of the novel *Watt* primarily because he was intrigued with Watt's language games, given that his twelve-tone "translations" of Watt's linguistic transformations feature prominently in *Earthlight*,¹⁵⁵ as well as in the Watt solo piece "Day of Most" that formed part of the original theatrical cycle. The text selected for *...dead calm...*, however, is best described as a short "imbedded poem"¹⁵⁶ calling to mind the Beckettian poetry written between 1947 and 1949. The addenda to *Watt* are a loose collection of "precious and illuminating material. Only fatigue and disgust prevented its incorporation,"¹⁵⁷ as the author ironically notes. John Fletcher maintains that the addenda comprise "notes towards a possibly infinite expansion of the novel."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ See chapter 4.3.

¹⁵⁶ Term borrowed from Gontarski, S. E. "Samuel Beckett's 'Imbedded' Poetry and the Critique of Genre." *Fulcrum* 6 (2006): 478-83.

¹⁵⁷ *Watt* (1953), 247.

¹⁵⁸ Fletcher, John. *The Novels of Samuel Beckett*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1964, 59.

This also ties in with the name of the figure pair Watt-Knott, what-not, or "anything,"¹⁵⁹ which could stand as a motto for the novel as a whole: "(...) Watt is the eternal question what? driving up against the eternal answer Knott, nothing, *néant*."¹⁶⁰ Some of the thoughts and ideas in the *Addenda* read like additions or footnotes to the main text. Others do not seem to be of any significance or in any way correlated with the events of the main plot or subplots. What is entirely absent from Kim's setting is the quirky irony inherent in the *Addenda's* status as literary "raw material" by which the author ridicules notions such as artistic ease, mastery, genius, and spontaneity. Granting the reader insight into the novel's genesis is, after all, a way of foregrounding the literary work's status as fiction. Thus this divulging of unused material is meta-fictional. It falls within the paradigm referred to by Laass/Schröder as "auctorial self-disqualification"¹⁶¹ characterized by a self-conscious, unreliable narrator who continuously reminds the reader of his incompetence.

The "dead calm" passage represents a précis of the story of Watt, a "solitary figure, lit less and less by the receding lights, until it was scarcely to be distinguished from the dim wall behind it"¹⁶² emerging, as it seems, out of nowhere (i.e. arriving by tram) and likewise disappearing into nothingness at the end of the novel (by train). *Watt* is a type of anti-*Bildungsroman* in that the character experiences that "nothing had happened, that a nothing had happened, learned to bear it and even, in a shy way, to like it."¹⁶³

Although starting and ending in *pp* and *p* respectively, thus emerging from and returning to silence, the macro-structural layout of *...dead calm...* is not an arch form of the type Kim used in some of the *Narratives*, which, as will be suggested, might be deemed an equivalent to the cyclical forms pervading Beckett's work. The glassy sound of the small bell at the beginning, however, creates a mysterious atmosphere evoking the image of someone or *something* (if we agree with Ihab Hassan in that it is 'silent literature's aim to "turn man into things"¹⁶⁴) appearing "from naught," i.e. of the featureless figure of Watt "scarcely to be distinguished from the wall behind it."¹⁶⁵ Rather than returning to that timbre at the end of the piece, however, we hear a repetition of the de-

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 86.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Laass, Henner and Wolfgang Schröder. *Samuel Beckett*. Munich: Fink, 1984.

¹⁶² *Watt* (1953), 16.

¹⁶³ *Watt* (1953), 80.

¹⁶⁴ Hassan, op. cit., 5.

¹⁶⁵ *Watt* (1953), 16.

scending minor seventh that is has been played before by the `cello to double the words "in doubt" (p. 5), providing the piece with a somewhat puzzlingly irresolute ending rather than a fade-out equalling Watt's disappearance.

Most of the score pages are palindromic. Sometimes the mirror forms only occur in certain voices, as on pages 4 and 5. At others, there is just a minor element distorting the symmetry, e.g. the rhythmic structure of the oboe voice on page 7, the only element deviating from the otherwise irregular pattern.

Ex. 8: ...dead calm..., p. 2 (HL): palindromic array

As mentioned in a previous chapter, Kim reported in an interview that the making and structure of films exerted quite a strong influence on his work, as is, for example, evident in his composition *Scenes from a Movie*. This also becomes apparent in *...dead calm...*: In quite the same way in which a sequence of photographs presented at a certain speed creates the illusion of movement in the viewer's perception, the sequence of score pages forms a coherent process out of individual sound (and, if one looks at the score, also visual) images put in sequence, whereby each of these "shots" is also a self-sufficient unity displaying an individual arrangement of material. At the same time, they are connected by similarity in texture, instrumentation, and mood. As with Feldman, each sound image is a metaphor of its predecessor. As has been demonstrated, this covert intermediality inherent in a visual conception of music, i.e. the shift away from the

temporal toward the spatial dimension, from sounds-in-time to sounds-in-space, also lies at the heart of Feldman's aesthetic vision, although, as has been explicated, the latter drew inspiration from completely different sources.

Apart from the symmetrical layout of the pages, the macrostructure of the piece is not as straightforward as in many of his later compositions, although it is closely modeled on Beckett's text: The first four pages, presenting the first three lines of text, exhibit a minimal employment of pitch material. Then, for the next three lines (pp. 5-7), Kim uses three different hexachords. On p. 5, he highlights the phrase "in love" visibly (by placing it in the center of the score page) and audibly (it sounds between two bars of percussion solo). The instrument doubling the voice, the oboe, does not double the melodic line throughout, but instead deviates from it on the last eighth note of the first bar by ascending a minor second onto Db which then resolves into unison with the clarinet and the voice in the second bar, bearing a faint resemblance to an *échappée*¹⁶⁶ and thus evoking, for a short moment, an intimation of traditional harmonic progression that endows the word "love" with a sentimental quality. This poignant dissonance of the minor second, i.e. the sudden closeness in pitch together with the additional timbre of the flute joining in, stand out starkly against the otherwise airy texture.

Only on p. 5 does Kim allocate specific pitch classes to verbal material, which he later did so often in the *Narratives*. "In doubt" is translated into the minor seventh leap F-G (which, as we have already pointed out, is also the motive that closes the piece); "in fear" is set to the major seventh Bb-A. The next text line, "wind of winter," is introduced by a perfect fifth played by the violin which alludes to the introductory bars of the *Hurdy-Gurdy Man* from Franz Schubert's *Winter Journey* by quoting the exact same pitches – an appropriate allusion considering, as said above, that Schubert's *lieder* were a passion shared by Kim and Beckett. This "associative quotation" (Wolf¹⁶⁷) or *pars pro toto* reference to a third work of art is an instance of what elsewhere I have dubbed *recursive intermediality*,¹⁶⁸ notably the phenomenon that the composer senses echoes of other texts within the source text he draws on. György Kurtág, who in *...pas à pas* –

¹⁶⁶ "In part-writing, an unaccented non-harmonic note that intervenes in a melodic resolution but is not contained in the interval circumscribing the resolution, and which is approached in the direction opposite from that of the resolution. Usually the *échappée* is the third degree of the scale, and separates resolution of the second degree on to the first." "Échappée." *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Ed. Alison Latham. *Oxford Music Online* (www.oxfordmusiconline.com, date accessed: 27 Jan. 2011.)

¹⁶⁷ 1999, 67.

¹⁶⁸ Kupfer, "A Cycle of Songs, Sorrow, and Citations."

nulle part... juxtaposes Beckett's own writings with the latter's English translations of Sébastien-Roch Nicolas Chamfort's works, would be another example of this reference type.

The musical score for "Wind of winter" features five staves: Piccolo, Clarinet, I S. Bell II, II B. Dr., and Soprano. The tempo is marked *rit.* and *meno mosso*. The key signature changes from 2/4 to 5/4 and then to 3/4. The Soprano part has the lyrics "wind of winter". The Piccolo and Clarinet parts feature complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and quintuplets. The Bass Drum part has a steady eighth-note pulse. The string part is marked *arco* and *sempre (senza decresc.)*.

Ex. 9: ...dead calm..., p. 6 (HL): "Wind of winter"

The line "cold, cold, calm sea" is set to a chromatically descending *lamento* tetrachord. Rather than doubling the vocal line, the piccolo now anticipates it. Another new rhythmic feature that marks this passage is a death-knell-like regular eighth-note "pulse" played by the Taiko drum (not unlike the grim timpani ostinato in Brahms' First Symphony op. 68). In combination, the pungent sound of the piccolo flute and the low drum evoke late 18th- and 19th-century (janissary) military music. It is noteworthy that Kim obviously opted for this timbre to infuse this passage with a tenebrous, ominous atmosphere, as is confirmed by his decision to repeat the word "cold" twice. The postmodifying phrase "whitening whispering to the shore" induces a more lyrical, quasi-tonal language, in which the clarinet replaces the piccolo as voice-doubling instrument. However, the gloomy *lamento* elements slowly find their way back into the texture. First, the

oboe plays the retrograde of the descending *lamento* tetrachord. Subsequently, the regular Taiko drum beat blends back into the sound. In ...*dead calm*..., no full twelve-tone aggregates are employed (although each of the twelve tones occurs at some point). Instead, p. 9 exhibits a relatively large set of pitch classes or, more precisely, of superimposed layers consisting of fixed sets of specific pitch classes amounting to a set of 9 pitches altogether. Although Kim uses different pitch material for each line of text and different instrumental combinations to double the voice, the preponderance of certain intervals throughout the piece provides the soprano line with a distinctive contour which serves as a unifying principle (as is quite typical of Kim): Minor thirds followed by major and minor sevenths mark the melodic lines on pp. 3, 7, and 9. The first three notes of the motive, given to the piccolo on pp. 10 and 11, are a permutational transformation of this intervallic contour in which the third note, the seventh, is shifted to the first position. After a short transition, a "limping" motive played by the strings underlying the line "stealing hastening swelling passing dying," whose phonetic and semantic material creates a sense of acceleration and dramatic tension, is doubled by a quick and rhythmically complex succession of accompanying motives parceled out among four instruments. The pitches are palindromic around the swelling tone that the word "swelling" is set to. The line ends in a lower (i.e. alto) *tessitura*. It is worthy of note that the hexachord employed here (6-33), the Dorian mode, is identical to the one which Kim later used in *Eh Joe* for the highly poignant passage where the voice in Joe's head reminds him of the lover who has killed herself. Although this might be purely coincidental, the pitch class set's closeness to the minor scale by no means excludes the possibility of it having been deliberately deployed according to its traditional tonal/semantic implications.

After the minor seventh A-Bb ("dying"), a new sound sphere is opened by a flageolet tone played by the `cello, and the somewhat whimsical, otherworldly atmosphere of this timbre is continued by the piccolo flute, whose runs consist of a fixed series of nine tones: F# E G Eb Db F Bb Ab G. Together with the spoken last line on p. 11, the `cello flageolet and the piccolo figures form the last symmetrical palindrome.

4.2.2. *They Are Far Out*

The next piece in the cycle is a setting of lines from *Malone Dies* for singer-narrator, cello, violin, and percussion. It was completed in 1966 and received its premiere in the same year. Kim left behind several versions of the score, one of which, like *Earthlight*, was printed by the publisher Mobart, but apparently never licensed for publication.¹⁶⁹ The following observations refer to the most recent version, printed by Mobart in 1978. The novel revolves around an old man, Malone, an inmate in a hospital or an asylum, who can only move his head and one hand. When his caretaker, a female character by the name of Moll, disappears, she is replaced by a sadistic male nurse named Lemuel whom Malone despises from the outset, since he bullies and tortures him and other inmates, taking advantage of their helplessness. At the center of *Malone Dies* lies the narrator's meditation on the creative process: Malone himself writes a coming-of-age-story about a boy, Sapo, whose name he decides to change into Macmann as the boy grows older. The line between the narrative and the act of narrating blurs as Malone confuses himself with Macmann. Thus, Malone's story represents, again, a *mise en abyme* of the problem of constructing a narrative. What is more, the name makes it evident that Lemuel may be understood as the alter ego of the author himself. Along similar lines, the motive of control, physical torture or violence inflicted by one character upon another, which figures prominently in many of Beckett's self-reflexive works, might be construed as a representation of the control the creative self holds over the products of his imagination.

The text passage Kim set to music is taken from the last five paragraphs of the novel: After Lemuel has killed two sailors with his hatchet during an excursion to a nearby island and orders the other three to get back into his boat after sunset, "[t]hey are far out in the bay,"¹⁷⁰ Lemuel rowing them back to the hospital. Finally, Malone assures the reader (and himself) that Lemuel will "not kill anyone anymore," while his sentences gradually break up into phrases and words. If the animosity between Lemuel and Malone can be read as a representation of the schizophrenic paranoia that the author feels towards his own characters and vice versa, this scenario encapsulates the artistic *desideratum* of the author/narrator: Shortly before the end, Malone, who is both the author of

¹⁶⁹ Confirmed by an inquiry to the publisher on Nov. 13, 2009.

¹⁷⁰ *Three Novels* (1958), 287.

the Macmann story and the narrator of his own, avows that he will abolish himself ("I shall say I no more"¹⁷¹). This is echoed in the last lines of his story, which evoke Macmann's endeavor to break free from the tyranny of the 'narrator' (this is especially evident when the "hatchet" is not only substituted by "stick" or "hammer," but also by "pencil"). The most straightforward interpretation of the fragmented last sentences is, of course, to read them as evidence of Malone's actual death. On the metafictional plane, they might also represent the impossibility of auctorial extinction, given that in the sequel *The Unnamable*, the act of abolishing the "I" has still not been accomplished. Only the narrator's name has been abandoned, while the reincarnated 'author' and the figures that are products of his imagination remain inextricable. Thus, Kim selected a passage that contains not only the gist of the text, but also a prime Beckettian theme.

As with all of Kim's Beckett settings, the score bears witness to Kim's extraordinary responsiveness to the peculiarities of the text, but also to his personal view of them. The tense, oppressive mood of *They Are Far Out* stands in stark opposition to the serene, contemplative, and somewhat aloof character of *...dead calm...* In the cello introduction, a pattern of alternating tension and relaxation consisting of tritones resolving into consonances, in which Kim deploys an entire twelve-tone aggregate, the musical scene is set for the narrative. This introduction with its tritone consonance may bring to the mind's eye the push-pull of the rowing motion or the boat floating into the descending night.

That Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* served as a point of orientation for many of Kim's works is conspicuous in Kim's method of notating *Sprechgesang*. As with Schönberg, he notated pitches that are to be performed as the type of *Sprechmelodie* which Schönberg had envisaged in his preface to *Pierrot Lunaire*, "taking into consideration the notated pitches."¹⁷² In *They Are Far Out*, Kim also notated absolute pitches. Furthermore, what is most peculiar in this piece is the splitting of the voice into two, sometimes even three, separate parts of interlocking layers. The resulting text fragmentation echoes the heteroglossia or multiphrenia¹⁷³ of the mental spheres which is common to many Beckettian protagonists and a central feature of the narrators in the *Trilogy*, taken to extremes in the

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 283.

¹⁷² "unter Berücksichtigung der vorgezeichneten Tonhöhen," Schönberg, Preface to *Pierrot Lunaire*, Mainz: Schott, 1996.

¹⁷³ See chapter 2.2.2.

last novel *The Unnamable*. Additionally, the blending of two separate narrative streams tone-paints the entanglement of bodies in the boat. Due to the split voices, the Beckettian sentence fragments taken from the end of the novel are disintegrated further. Stringed together almost seamlessly and performed by a single singer/speaker, they are impossible to parse separately unless followed in the score. The only way to create coherence within the disjointed strings of words is by way of providing a specific intonational pattern, which Kim did for monosyllabic words (see p. 1 below). Adhering to these prosodic instructions at the same time as abiding by the *Sprechmelodie* suggested (all the while not losing sight of the rhythmic configuration of the words) is obviously a highly challenging task for the singer/narrator. Clearly, it draws the listener's attention away from the delicate drone-like musical texture to the recitation and the construction of the text. In a sense, what Kim did was to set music to text rather than the other way around, and this paradigm seems to hold true for a number of his Beckett works, which is certainly also owing to their theatrical purpose. This is to say that, rather than transferring the text into his own medium by means of creating formal or semantic equivalents in music (which he later did in passages of *Earthlight* and in *...dead calm...*), Kim, in this piece at least, sought to amplify some of the stylistic effects already inherent in the text (in this case, the narrator's multiple selves) by exploiting the structural possibilities supplied by musical parameters.

Unlike in other settings, the macrostructure of the piece is not at all modeled on the layout of the text. Rather, it reflects the informational structure of the last five paragraphs. As aforesaid, two lines of text, one from the beginning, the other one from the middle of the first paragraph, are superimposed. This is done similarly for the third paragraph, though now some phrases are canonically echoed: "raises his hatchet"/"but not to hit anyone anymore." The caesura after the first "absurd" concurs with the break between the first two paragraphs, and the emphasis on the key word "absurd" is reinforced by somewhat bizarre sound effects produced by the cymbals before, and by a violin glissando after the caesura. Yet it is not until the sung part "my last" (*Tempo II*) that a completely new section is opened. The latter is followed by a brisk passage on Lemuel, at the end of which another sung part in the upper voice (*Tempo I*: "or") serves as a smooth transition to the last part, which, with its thinner texture and the reiteration of the drone accompaniment, returns us to the static, yet tense and uncanny mood of the exposition.

They Are Far Out . . .
(from *Malone Dies* by Samuel Beckett)

EARL KIM

Sustained and Somewhat Insistent ($\text{♩} = c.40$)

Cello
Solo
f *decresc. poco a poco* . . . (*mf*) *mp* *mf sempre*

Vcl. *poco a piacere*
più f *f* *mp* *p*

Nar. *mp*
apoken They are far out in the bay. Le-mu-el has shipped his oars the oars trail
apoken This tan-gle of grey bod-ies is they. Si-lent dim per-haps cling-ing

Vln. *rolla voce*

Vcl. *rolla voce*
mp

①) $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ indicates rising or falling "pitch" within words or one syllable.
②) Solid notes through the rests when beamed together.

Ex. 10: *Exercises en route: They Are Far Out* (HL)

Once the exposition of characters and settings is complete, the two primary streams of narrative diverge increasingly in terms of pitch and prosodic contour, thereby building up more tension. This reinforces the mood of the next passage (the eerie depiction of Lemuel's atrocious murders). The vocal trajectory of the line "raises his hatchet" is clearly modeled on the description of the figure's abrupt gesture. The upper voice remains within a relatively low and narrow range and is interspersed with the incantatory repetitions of the phrase "will not hit anyone anymore"/"touch anyone anymore" in the lower voice. Set to a catchy rhythm and a high prosodic range, the lower voice is reflective of the narrator's subconscious layers, his subliminal anxiety in the face of Lemuel's cruelty. This cumulation of fear is reinforced by a heightened tonal density starting at *Tempo II (Poco piu mosso)*. From the very beginning of the piece, the tonal framework of the accompaniment encompasses the entire twelve-tone spectrum. Yet up to this point this is obscured by a rather slow pitch succession, above all of drone-like sustained notes. By contrast, pitches succeed one another at this point more quickly and in more intricate, syncopated rhythmic variants. The section culminates in a stretto-like densification (shorter phrases, quicker voice alternations), intensification (crescendi from "ei-

ther with it" in the lower voice), and acceleration ("slow to fast") of musical and verbal material. The passage is a highly compact representation not only of the duality of the narrator's mind, i.e. the seeming sober-mindedness of the narrator's first voice versus the frenzy reflected in the second, or between resignation and insurrection, but it simultaneously emphasizes the very predicament that lies at the core of the text passage, i.e. the desire to do away with the author/creator as an authoritarian force, together with the recognition of the impossibility of such de-subjectification owing to the inextricable tie between the artist and his material. As with Feldman's *neither*, the word "light" is emphasized in the text through repetition: Besides being preceded and followed by pauses, it is set to the highest, longest tone and subsequently restated twice. In an earlier passage in *Malone Dies*, the protagonist ironically comments on man's thirst for knowledge: "It is thus that man distinguishes himself from the ape and rises, from discovery to discovery, ever higher, towards the light. Now that I have lost my stick I realize what it is I have lost and all it meant to me."¹⁷⁴

This idea of absolute knowing, also present in the manichean supremacy of the world of spirit over the world of matter¹⁷⁵ is represented by "light of understanding,"¹⁷⁶ as Krapp calls it, toward which the writer also aspires despite his awareness of the unknowability of the self and the world.

Based on the intense closing paragraphs of *Malone Dies*, Kim's second *Exercise en route* captures the very essence of Beckett's aesthetic vision: the Sisyphean dilemma of the author who has to grapple with the paradox of "[t]he expression that there is nothing to express [...] together with the obligation to express."¹⁷⁷ Kim's music stresses this Sisyphean predicament, particularly at the center of the piece, where the split voice echoes itself like a mantra ("he will not..."). This repetitive setting underscores the self-abolishment of the author purported by the text at the same time as it *undermines* it, since the repetitions also deprive the words of their referentiality. In the very same paradoxical – or enantiodromic – manner, the author/narrator's self-effacement is yearned for in Beckett, but never achieved.

¹⁷⁴ *Three Novels* (1958), 254.

¹⁷⁵ On Beckett's manicheism cf.: Knowlson, James, ed. *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*, Vol. III: *Krapp's Last Tape*. London: Faber and Faber, 1992. xxi-xxv, 137.

¹⁷⁶ CDW, 220.

¹⁷⁷ *Proust* (1970), 103.

Ex. 11: *They Are Far Out*, p. 8 (HL)

4.2.3. *Gooseberries, She Said*

After *They Are Far Out*, Kim went about composing a piece based on an extract from the play *Krapp's Last Tape*. Although the scenarios of the cycle's two centerpieces both feature a scene on a boat, the contrast between the plots could not be greater.

Gooseberries, She Said for voice, flute, oboe, clarinet, percussion, violin and cello was completed in 1967. *Krapp's Last Tape*, Beckett's one-character piece written in 1958 and premiered in London, was originally conceived as a monologue for Irish actor Patrick Magee.¹⁷⁸ Unlike *Godot* and *Endgame*, plays which were only "gradually getting into the consciousness of NY,"¹⁷⁹ *Krapp* was an immediate triumph in the United States. Billed with Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*, it opened on January 14, 1960 in the Provincetown Playhouse, New York, where it ran for almost a year. It received Obie Awards (for "Distinguished Plays," Donald Davis (Krapp) for "Distinguished Performance"). Perhaps Beckett's most straightforward and most sentimental play, *Krapp* features the story

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Knowlson (1996), 398.

¹⁷⁹ Letter from Alan Schneider to SB, dated January 30, 1958. Harmon (1998), 35.

of an elderly lonely man reminiscing about the past by listening to his "journal," a collection of old tapes which he has recorded and systematized chronologically over the years. The plot construction is, again, recursive: The tape old Krapp unearths from "box three" was recorded "at a much earlier time,"¹⁸⁰ i.e. on the protagonist's 39th birthday. On this tape we hear young Krapp's voice report that he has "just been listening to an old year, passages at random" recorded "ten or twelve years" before, in his mid- to late twenties. Thus, two retrospectively narrated stories are embedded into frame stories. Apart from this self-similar *ad infinitum* technique, we can see the same structural circularity at work that one also finds elsewhere in Beckett's oeuvre: Krapp's "spiral toward multiphrenia"¹⁸¹ is not only emblemized visually by the winding tapes, but also induced by them, given that they are at always at the protagonist's disposal. Having the option of rewinding the tape and thus of reliving his most precious memories, Krapp repeatedly listens to his favorite snippet, furtively attempting to retrieve his favorite moment. The scenario brings to mind an image that Bergson gives the reader in his essay *Introduction to Metaphysics*¹⁸² to explain duration and to support his statement that two moments in the consciousness of a person can never be identical: Two spools playing a tape, one unwinding the tape as the other winds it up. Calling to mind the relational complementarity permeating Beckett's images (*enantiodromia*), the two spools, similar to the omnipresent bicycle image in Beckett's work, represent past and future: The longer one's past, the shorter one's future. The shorter the time ahead, the more memories have accumulated.¹⁸³ "The vision" seems to represent a wellspring of creative inspiration to Krapp: a romantic tryst in a punt, in the midst of which the beloved one says: "picking gooseberries" in response to young Krapp's inquiry about how she got the scratch on her thigh.¹⁸⁴ It is this sensual passage which Kim selected for the third part of *Exercises*. Although Beckett was assiduous in maintaining a tragicomic equilibrium in his stage production, ensuring that "neither the comic nor the pathetic aspects of Krapp's appearance and predicament"¹⁸⁵ were lost, the *Krapp* text on its own undoubtedly displays a stronger pathos and sentimentality than many of his other works.

¹⁸⁰ CDW, 217.

¹⁸¹ Gergen, see chapter 2.2.2.

¹⁸² Bergson, Henri. *Einführung in die Metaphysik/Introduction à la métaphysique* (German-French ed.). Ed. and transl. Sabine S. Gehelhaar. Cuxhaven: Junghans, 1988, 8 (French), 9 (German).

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ CDW, 221.

¹⁸⁵ Knowlson, (1992), xv.

Pre-existing musical material is incorporated into Beckett's play: Sabine Baring-Gould's hymn "Now the day is over" is an intermedial reference mirroring the protagonist's approaching death and also a manifestation of his nostalgia about his past love life. In later productions, the song was abandoned for being "in Beckett's personal view, rather clumsily over-explicit."¹⁸⁶ Apart from this, a connection to Schubert is established by the fact that Krapp can feel the presence of death lurking behind himself throughout the play. Twice he glances over his shoulder to look for the "Death the Reaper"¹⁸⁷ figure. Beckett used to refer to this look as "Hain," as in Matthias Claudius' poem "Death and the Maiden,"¹⁸⁸ which is obviously the text Schubert set to music in his *lied* of the same title.

Apart from the play's sentimental quality, Kim followed Beckett's lead in terms of structural organization. Not only did Beckett intersperse his play with cyclical elements, but inherent in this circularity is a dramatic technique that one might describe as aleatoric permutation: Each time Krapp fast forwards or rewinds the tape to where he thinks the anecdote starts, the recollection starts with a different word. How carefully Beckett delineated the structure beforehand is evident in his *Krapp* notebook: "Story of the boat C, ABC, BC and end."¹⁸⁹ Although Kim also operated with techniques of rotating and displacing sets of pitches or elements of other parameters, he eschewed an all-too strict formal adaptation of Beckett's construction principle in *Gooseberries*. The composer's creative focus clearly lay more on the affective content of the text. Nevertheless, he employed some of his own idiosyncratic formal techniques, such as palindromes, and apart from that his approach to the text alludes to the random tape-playing by incorporating passages that start with incomplete sentences. Hence the verb "picking" does not occur at all throughout the piece, which, for the listener unfamiliar with Beckett's play provides "gooseberries" with a range of new connotations. As a result of the first 'aleatoric permutation' of the tape, the following passage (C, according to Beckett's notebook) sounds at the beginning and at the end of the boat anecdote: "--my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, xvi.

¹⁸⁷ Expression used by Krapp actor Martin Held. Cf. *Theatre Workbook 1, Samuel Beckett, Krapp's Last Tape*. Ed. James Knowlson. London: Brutus Books, 1980, 68.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 38-9.

¹⁸⁹ Knowlson (1992), 85. "End" refers to the last passage, "Past midnight..." (Knowlson, 1996, 257).

¹⁹⁰ CDW, 220.

Thus, it frames the rest of the episode, including the passage selected by Kim (B):

[...Picking] gooseberries, she said. I said again I thought it was hopeless and no good going on and she agreed, without opening her eyes. [*Pause.*] I asked her to look at me and after a few moments – [*Pause.*] – after a few moments she did, but the eyes just slits, because of the glare. I bent over to get them in the shadow and they opened. [*Pause. Low.*] Let me in. [*Pause.*] We drifted in among the flags and stuck. The way they went down, sighing, before the stem!¹⁹¹

This textual arch form is adopted by Kim:

A
a: my face...us
 b: gently...side

B
 c: gooseberries, she said
b': I said...on
 d: and she agreed
 e: without...eyes
 f: I asked her...moments
 g: after...slits
b'': because...shadow
 h: and they opened
 i: musical interlude
 j: let me in
 k: we drifted in...stem

A
a: my face
 b: gently...side

Following the text extract, the music starts quite abruptly. That is, the vocal entry is not preceded by an instrumental opening. Possibly in response to the lyrical lucidity of the text, there are certain strikingly smooth melodic figures, often in (quasi-)palindromic array, instilling in the melodic line brief hints of tonality, e.g. "and my hand on her," "all moved and moved us," the latter doubled and thus reinforced by the oboe. Juxtaposed with the contrasting rest of the vocal line which appears rather disjointed due to large melodic leaps and fragmented doubling parts, these brief passages are all the more ear-catching.

Unity is created by rhythmic motives, distinctive contours and triadic pitch class modules, all three of these features recurring in the speech-doubling woodwind *staccati* throughout the piece. A look at Kim's compositional strategy sheds light on the genesis of these motivic cells: As some of his drafts reveal, the composer's first step in approaching a Beckett text was to map out a rhythmic framework for the voice. Next, it

¹⁹¹ CDW, 221.

appears, he devised the contour of the *Sprechgesang* before constructing a concrete pitch grid for the doubling voices in a final step.

On the phrases "up and down" and "side to side," a basic rhythmic figure is introduced, along with the undulating tonal contour that permeates the entire *Sprechgesang*. Imitating the rocking motion of the boat, this motivic building block could be outlined roughly as consisting of three sixteenth-notes arranged in a downward-upward trajectory, the upward interval being larger than the downward interval.

The image displays a musical score for the beginning of "Gooseberries, She Said" by Henry Lipp. It features two systems of vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The first system shows the vocal lines with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a complex rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes. The second system includes the vocal line with lyrics: "my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there with-out moving." The piano accompaniment consists of two staves, with the upper staff showing a melodic line and the lower staff showing a rhythmic accompaniment. The score is marked with various time signatures (13/16, 12/16, 10/16, 7:6) and includes a tempo marking of "Tempo I ♩ = 36-38". A library stamp from Houghton Library is visible in the center of the page.

Ex. 12: *Gooseberries, She Said*, beginning (HL)

This is, however, only the surface structure, the vocal part. What makes it distinct is the tonal configuration of the underlying voice-doubling strata. A closer look at the fixed combinations of the four triadic modules (see diagram) reveals that Kim not only used a limited set of seven pitches (1-7 or C#-G), but also that triad no. 2 (Eb- C#-F#) is always followed by no. 3 (D-F-F). The frequency of this progression accounts for its almost motivic distinctiveness. Moreover, the triads listed below as nos. 2 and 4 are, in fact, nos. 1 and 2 transposed down a minor second. This configuration returns on "because of the glare."

flute	4	3	2	2	4	1	3	2
oboe	2	1	5	5	2	4	1	5
clarinet	7	6	5	5	7	4	6	5
triad no.	1	2	3	3	1	4	2	3
text	up	and	down	and	from	side	to	side

flute	3	2	3	2	1	4	2	3
oboe	1	5	1	5	4	2	5	1
clarinet	6	5	6	5	4	7	5	6
triad no.	2	3	2	3	4	1	3	2
text	I	said (...)	I	thought	it	was	hope-	less.

flute	3	2	4	1	3	2
oboe	1	5	2	4	1	5
clarinet	6	5	7	4	6	5
triad no.	2	3	1	4	2	3
text	and	no	good	go-	ing	on.

Fig. 5: pitch class sequence in voice-doubling, integer notation

On the twelve-syllable phrase "I bent over her to get them in the shadow," this array of triadic modules is extended by another constellation. Triad no. 5 is a transposition of the prime triad no. 2.

flute	2	2	1	3	2	3	2	4
oboe	0	5	4	1	5	1	5	2
clarinet	5	5	4	6	5	6	5	7
triad no.	5	3	4	2	3	2	3	1
text	I	bent	o-	ver	her	to	get	them

flute	1	4	2	3
oboe	4	2	5	1
clarinet	4	7	5	6
triad no.	4	1	3	2
text	in	the	sha-	dow.

Fig. 6

The musical score consists of several staves:

- Woodwinds:** Three staves for flute, oboe, and clarinet, all marked *mp*. Handwritten numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 3, 1, 2 are written above the first staff.
- Vocal Line:** A single staff with lyrics: "up and down and from side to side." It includes performance directions: *Meno mosso*, *Poco rit.*, and *long pause*. Handwritten notes include "penita" and "spoken".
- Percussion:**
 - Conga Drum 1:** A staff with notes marked *mp* and "soft stick".
 - Bass Drum:** A staff with notes marked *mp* and "S.S. Tom-Tom".
- Other:** A grand staff (treble and bass clef) at the bottom, which is mostly empty.

Ex. 13: *Gooseberries, She Said*, mm. 9+10 (HL)

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Bemta
Poco meno mosso
stay inf
lunga

mp
I said a-gain I thought it was hope-less and no good going on,

Ex. 14: *Gooseberries, She Said*, mm. 14-17 (HL)

Thus, apart from unifying qualities inherent in the macrostructural layout, this fixed grid of pitches assumes the function of a structural device, not unlike the traditional notion of motivic work, establishing and strengthening cohesion throughout the movement.

Regardless of the aforementioned short quasi-tonal melodic progressions, the cantilena, like the speech melody, is marked from the outset by leaps, *saltus duriusculi* within an extraordinarily wide *tessitura*. While the boat episode (and Kim's reverence for Schubert) might be expected to give rise to a Schubertian *lied*-type setting – which would be another example of recursive intermediality –, this not even recitativo fragmentation of the vocal line clearly defamiliarizes the concept of the Romantic *Kunstlied*.

The central phrase of the narrative, "gooseberries, she said," spoken after a "long pause," is the most meticulously orchestrated piece of text. It is anticipated and supported by a quick succession of different sound effects emanating from different instruments not unlike the one we observed in *...dead calm...* at the verse "stealing hastening swelling passing dying": two *pizzicato* notes given to each of the two string instruments, followed by the second conga drum and claves accompanying the voice, and a high sustained *non-vibrato* tone – G6 – in the violin, and finally concluded by another *pizzicato* tone played by the 'cello. It seems very likely that Kim's enthrallment with this phrase, which he also chose as a title, has to do with the fact that he associated it with

Chekhov's short story *Gooseberries*, one that the Beckett text may also allude to. As Martha Potter Kim recounts, the composer considered "Beckett's mastery of the literature and his loving allusions to favored works in his own pieces [...] truly nonpareil."¹⁹² That Kim treasured Chekhov's¹⁹³ writings next to Beckett's is evident in the fact that he set an extract from Chekhov's *Seagull* in his later cycle *Now and Then* (in which he also set two Beckett poems). If Beckett indeed referred to *Gooseberries*, this common ground of Chekhov's œuvre, like Schubert's *Lieder*, is an intersection of intertextual strands fostered by a shared frame of reference. As Julia Kristeva has put it, the word "turns out to occupy the status of *mediator*, linking structural models to a cultural (historical) environment."¹⁹⁴ Thus it opens up what she referred to as the "third dimension" of dialogue (in the present case, the dialogue between the text and the music), which comprises exterior texts (or, with Schubert, music).¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, by relating to the writer via a third artist's creative output (i.e. by evoking Schubert's compositional idiom or by directly quoting from his *Lieder*, as well as by subjectively highlighting intertextual allusions), Kim's approach to the literary texts underpins Roland Barthes' contention that every literary text is a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture."¹⁹⁶ Along the same lines, Bakhtin asserted that, in Kristeva's words, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."¹⁹⁷

In Chekhov's tale, the gooseberries represent a (material) object of meaning in the life of Nikolai Ivanovich, and by the end of his life he has fulfilled his dream of being owner of an estate and growing lots of gooseberry bushes. However, the narrator of Ivanovich's story, somewhat hypocritically states that human happiness should not be defined exclusively in material terms. Regretting that, due to his age, he personally feels incapable of rising above the mass of ordinary people to seek truth in a greater cause

¹⁹² E-mail received on November 27, 2009.

¹⁹³ Revisiting intermediality as a recursive phenomenon: Euphony as well as pre-existing musical material also feature prominently in Chekhov's narratives, cf. Steinberg-Pavlova, Viktoria. *Musik in Anton Čechovs Erzählungen*. Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang, 2008 (Diss. University of Heidelberg, 2006).

¹⁹⁴ Intertextuality, cf. Kristeva, Julia. "Word, Dialogue, and Novel." *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Transl. Thomas Gora et al. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. 64-91: 66.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 66.

¹⁹⁶ Barthes, "Death of the Author," *Image – Music – Text*, 146.

¹⁹⁷ Kristeva (1980), 66.

than pursuing his own happiness, he nevertheless recommends to his younger friend:

don't go to sleep or be lulled into complacency! While you're still young, strong and healthy, never stop doing good! Happiness doesn't exist, we don't need any such thing. If life has *any* meaning or purpose, you won't find it in happiness, but in something more rational, in something greater. Doing good!¹⁹⁸

As one critic observed, "[n]one of Chekhov's heroes who speak of man's place in the world, of man's responsibilities and unique attributes are endowed with exceptional abilities and achievements."¹⁹⁹ Obviously, it is Chekhov's characters' paradox of the recognition of failure on the one hand and their absurd quest for metaphysical transcendence or, as with the narrator in "Gooseberries," their nostalgic yearning on the other, that has left its mark on Krapp and many other Beckettian characters.²⁰⁰ This is obvious if we compare the following two passages from *The Seagull* (from which Kim set a passage in *Now and Then*) and Beckett's *Cascando*, respectively:

Trigorin: Day and night I'm obsessed with one compelling thought: I must write, I must write, I must...No sooner have I finished one novel, than I've got to write another, I don't know why, then a third, and after that a fourth. I write incessantly, I can't help it.²⁰¹

Voice: ...all I ever did...in my life...with my life...saying to myself...finish this one...it's the right one...then rest...sleep...no more stories...no more words...and finished it...and not the right one...couldn't rest...straight away another...to begin...to finish...²⁰²

The section following a short reprise of the wind-accompanied speech melody ("I said...going on") refers back to the downward-upward "rocking boat" motive stated at the beginning. Brought in by the wind instruments in fugue-like staggered theme entries, it is mimicked by the voice, who spins out a melodic filigree ascending in zig-zag motion from F3 to B5 ("and she agreed").

Overall, the voice writing exhibits a greater diversity of vocal practices than in the two pieces preceding *Gooseberries*. Aside from alternating spoken and sung parts, Kim requires gradual transitions between "half spoken," "normal speech," and "lower" sections. Not only does this vocal multiformity mimic the Beckettian plethora of voices emanating from a single mind, but it also offers a viable equivalent to the "plurivocal-

¹⁹⁸ Chekhov, Anton. "Gooseberries." *The Lady with the Little Dog and Other Stories, 1896-1904*. London: Penguin, 2002. 74-84: 83.

¹⁹⁹ Bill, Valentine T. "Nature in Chekhov's Fiction." *Russian Review* 33.2 (1974): 153-166.

²⁰⁰ Gilman, Richard. *Chekhov's Plays. An Opening into Eternity*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1995.

²⁰¹ Chekhov, Anton. *Four Plays*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2005, 31.

²⁰² CDW, 297. Ellipses original.

ity" and emerging dispersion of meaning, a characteristic that Eco refers to as "second degree openness."²⁰³At the same time, it appears as a perfect example of Bakhtin's notion of novelistic heteroglossia applied to music:

The novelist working in prose [...] welcomes the heteroglossia and language diversity of the literary and extraliterary language into his own work not only not weakening them but intensifying them (...). It is in fact out of this stratification of language, its speech diversity and even language diversity, that he constructs his style, while at the same time he maintains the unity of his own creative personality and the unity (...) of his own style.²⁰⁴

Likewise, despite the mixed performance techniques in the spoken and sung parts, the vocal contours work most effectively as a unifying principle. This is to refute Kramer's all too general and simplistic statement that the postmodern composer "shows disdain for the often unquestioned value of structural unity"²⁰⁵ (which, as we shall see, does not hold true for Rands' Beckett settings either). Rather, structural unity is attained through new, individualized procedures, in the case of Kim, vocal contours, recurring pitch material, and traditional cross-references within the cycle (musical intratextuality).

While numerous palindromes are embedded into nearly all of his works, in *Gooseberries* they are charged with an additional meaning, occurring literally as "mirrors" in the passages where the narrator describes the eyes of the loved one: "without opening her eyes"/ "and the eyes just slits"/"and they opened" (the latter being palindromic in the vocal part only). This programmatic utilization of a formal compositional principle ties in with young Beckett's postulate that form not be disjunct from content.²⁰⁶

In the hushed and almost minimalistically composed instrumental interlude before the allusive phrase "let me in" (which, in the play's history, has caused much misunderstanding²⁰⁷), two sets of scattered sixteenth notes in the woodwinds, forming two successive palindromes over a span of five bars, are woven into the thin fabric of the violin's sustained notes marked "molto vibrato."

²⁰³ Eco (1989), 42.

²⁰⁴ Bakhtin (2001), op. cit., 1218.

²⁰⁵ Kramer (1999), 7.

²⁰⁶ *Proust* (1970), 88.

²⁰⁷ The French version "m'ont laissé entrer" makes it clear that this is a declarative statement, relating to the beloved's eyes, rather than an explicitly sexual imperative. (*Theatre Workbook 1*, op. cit., 28).

12

52 $\frac{3}{4}$ Spoken (low) $\frac{2}{4}$

Voce

Let me in.

1. $\frac{3}{4}$ Claves $\frac{2}{4}$

Perc.

wire brush *pp*

Susp. Cym. *p* l.v.

2. Tenor Drum *p*

S.S.

Ex. 15: *Gooseberries, She Said* (HL)

The woodwinds' interjections double the violin's two major and minor sixth leaps downward and upward, which refer back to the "rocking" motive, as does the tremolo figure in the strings after "let me in," the parallel sixteenth runs with alternating single and double stops in the *più mosso* section and in the bars marked *col legno battuto*, where the original rhythmic configuration of the motive is presented. The ensuing trilled B in the violin, which before has sounded in combination with the words "I bent over her," now heralds a similar movement of the narrator: "I lay down across her," leading directly into the reprise. Meanwhile, the rocking motives in the music come to a standstill as the boat floats "in among the flags."

links between his quotations so as to create a seamless unity, while also weaving his own web of words and meanings. This is not to say, however, that by way of "writing through" or re-composing Beckett's text for the purpose of setting it to music, the composer manipulated its original characteristics. Rather, Kim's carefully crafted chain of quotations foregrounds its structural peculiarities, i.e. its euphony. As Martha Potter Kim reports, the composer "was always reading with an eye to the music of the words."²¹² Indeed, the selection is geared towards highlighting the parallel syntax and anaphoric constructions the work is replete with and, above all, its cyclical self-references signifying the "long circuit" in which the *Unnamable* finds himself trapped.²¹³

Rattling On is formally structured into two parts of approximately equal length. The theatrical version was originally entitled *Faces*. The first part is divided into several distinct sections, which are connected by smooth transitions and concluded by the vocalise. A first introduction to the *Unnamable's* microcosm of circulating thoughts is provided by an alternately ascending and descending arpeggiated tetrad, B-Eb-Bb-D, which is equivalent to the pitch class set listed by Forte as 4-7 (0,1,4,5), a segment of the Octatonic scale or Messiaen's Second Mode of Limited Transposition.²¹⁴ These arpeggi, which are mimicked by the soprano, can also be heard as what in traditional harmony would be classified as a ninth chord on B or Cb with the 5th omitted. Thus they evoke tonality. All twelve tones are then brought in during the next passage, while the voice-doubling line is parceled out among the woodwinds. From "no more need of them" onwards, each line is preceded by an instrumental suggestion which is then answered by the voice. Symbolized by integers, the pitch class distribution exhibits an irregular pattern of re-orderings of differently sized sets and rearrangements within these sets. Continuity is created by a combination of parameters: Apart from the fact that certain pitches retain their syntactic positions, the rhythmic configuration and, to some extent, the melodic contour are also preserved.

"no more need of them": clarinet: 3 11 2 0 1, voice + oboe: 8 7 2 10 1

"no more need of anyone": flute: 5 7 3 6 4, voice + clarinet: 8 7 2 10 1 0 11

²¹² E-mail received on November 27, 2009.

²¹³ *Three Novels* (1958), 410.

²¹⁴ Messiaen (1944), 85-6.

"no one can do anything": oboe: 5 7 3 6 2 1 8, voice + flute 8 5 7 3 6 4 2 1 8 0 9 10 11

"it's I am talking": clarinet: 5 8 0 9 2 1 10, voice + oboe 4 11 3 0 2 1

Subsequently, the "It's I" motive is inverted and transposed ("It's I who seek find lose") and then transposed again ("seek in vain seek no more"), accompanied by a tritone drone and doubled by a flutter-tongued flute and the glassy *sul ponte* sound produced on the `cello, respectively. A temporary stay against the heteroglossia created by the constant flux of vocal techniques and the ever-changing backdrop of soundscapes it is set against, the climactic figure that follows appears as a hint at traditional bravura-style voice-writing, particularly with the fermata on the dramatic peak tone. As we have seen, Kim's musical language responds quite sensitively to any stylistic nuances present in the text sources, and in this context, the allusion to an outdated soprano idiom fits the relatively straightforward antithesis "ice – furnace." Picking up the drone tones of the `cello and the oboe, the initial interval of the "It's I" motive is augmented from a perfect fourth into a tritone, followed by a quick succession of descending and ascending tritones ("and in the furnace").

Can't hear enough

flutter tongue

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Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Perc.

Voc.

it's I who seek, find, lose, find a-gain, lose a-gain, seek in vain, seek no more, let it stand, in the ice

Vln.

Vlc.

pizz.

arco poco sul pont.

arco poco f

arco poco f

4

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27 $\frac{7}{8}$ $\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{7}{8}$ $\frac{6}{8}$

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Perc.

Voice

Vln.

Vlc.

A tempo
Pause slightly on commas
colla voce

f *sim.* *colla voce*

mf *colla parte*

and in the fur- nace,— you feel noth- ing, strange. you don't feel your mouth on you,

ff *mf* *ff* *mf*

Ex. 17: *Rattling On*, mm. 22-30 (HL)

There is a fine sense of dramaturgical balance inherent in the fact that this exuberant culmination is neutralized immediately by the diametrical setting of the ensuing phrase "you feel nothing": A semantic antipode to "ice" and "furnace," the verse is spoken while the whole twelve-tone aggregate comes back into play in the strings. This leads over seamlessly into the next section. Accompanying the word "strange," the winds anticipate the structure of the upcoming spoken phrase that "accompanies" the instruments *colla parte*. The instruments in turn play *colla voce*. As the following pitch class grid illustrates, the instrumental text underlay is a succession of a limited number of recurring triadic configurations (a similar strategy as in *Gooseberries*). Two of the pitches are either retained or passed on from one instrumental part to another, such that for the most part no more than one pitch changes from one syllable to the next. This minimal transformation represents a suitable musical analogy to the novel's characteristic monolithic continuity.

fl.	9	9	9	8	3	3	3
ob.	6	8	8	7	7	11	2
cl.	4	4	5	5	5	7	11
voice	you	don't	feel	your	mouth	on	you

fl.	9	9	9	8	3	3	2	2
ob.	6	8	8	7	7	11	3	1
cl.	4	4	5	5	5	7	11	11
voice	you	don't	feel	your	mouth	a-	ny-	more

Fig. 7: Pitch configurations in voice-doubling instrumental parts, integer notation

Since phrases are demarcated by brief caesuras, the overall pace depends on the length of phrases, i.e. shorter phrases give rise to intermittent accelerations, which also serve to build up suspense in a theatrical sense. This effect is reinforced by ever-faster transformations of the voice-doubling stratum until the line "a quite different thing," at which point the instrumentation changes on every syllable. Another climax is reached at "like a caged beast born of caged beasts." Even if Beckett did not intend to evoke Rilke's poem "The Panther," the composer, who admired the poet greatly,²¹⁵ surely did – yet another example of recursive intertextuality. That he selected the "caged beast" passage without stripping it of repetitions and set it to a haunting rhythm marked *ff* and supported by a *marcato* violin figure leaves no doubt that he was eager to capture the circular "ritual dance" depicted in Rilke's poem, as the latter is equally a metaphorical analogy to the circular structure of the Unnamable's ruminations.

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,
has grown so weary that it cannot hold
anything else. It seems to him there are
a thousand bars and behind the bars, no world.

As he paces in cramped circles, over and over
the movement of his powerful soft strides
is like a ritual dance around a center
in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Among Rilke's early work, he set *The Lay of the Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke* to music in his composition *Cornet* (1983). His *Scenes From A Movie: The Seventh Dream* (1986-88) are also based on Rilke.

²¹⁶ Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Poems*. Transl. J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996, 32.

9

89 $\frac{4}{8}$

Fl. *piu f* *ff*

Ob. *piu f* *ff*

Cl. *piu f* *ff*

Voce

and that I seek, like a caged beast born of caged beasts

Vln. *piu f* *ff*

Vlc. *piu f* *ff*

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Ex. 18: *Rattling On*, "Rilke" verse (HL)

This time, it is the violin that anticipates and then doubles the prosodic contour of the voice, while the winds play an imitation in the speech pauses. As the section draws to a close, another seamless transition is made. By the time the last speech-imitating gesture of the winds sounds, the mantra-like rhythm has taken center stage. Thus the initial beats of the Chinese tom-tom emerge out of this scenario in a fairly smooth, non-disruptive manner. Muted down to soft drum beats accompanying the spoken lines "the words fail...distant cries," the new section provides a temporary relief from the tension built up before. Despite the regular pulse, monotony is precluded by clear intonational directions, which include not only relative pitches, but also rising and falling tones within a specified range.

After the phrase "distant cries" and a pause, the soprano engages in a cadenza-like vocalise, a *bravura* passage, similar to the *quasi una cadenza* section in *Earthlight* or the *cadenza* in the *Violin Concerto*, which displays Kim's admiration for the 19th century virtuoso tradition.

mur - murs, dis-tant cris, Vocalise

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Ex. 19: *Rattling On*, Vocalise, first part (HL)

Originally denoting vocal études, the term "vocalise" primarily referred in the early 20th century to compositions featuring vocal parts sung on vowel sounds written by composers such as Fauré, Ravel, Casella, Cilea, Giordano, Respighi and most notably Rachmaninov (op. 34). Almost entirely unaccompanied and extraordinarily virtuosic, the most challenging vocalise section in *Rattling On* seems to hark back not so much to earlier 20th-century vocalises as it does to the tradition of vocal exercises dating back to the mid-18th-century.²¹⁷ On the other hand, the trilled notes evoke the 18th-century conception of the trill as a cadential figure.²¹⁸ While the technical demands also move this vocalise close to the standard of free instrumental forms such as the cadenza or capriccio,²¹⁹ the section is meticulously structured. Its 78 bars display elements of classical motivic/thematic development. The aforementioned trilled tone constitutes the head of the main theme, followed by an undulating figuration, a succession of intervals con-

²¹⁷ Cf., for example, Jean-Antoine Bérard's *L'art du chant. Dédié à Mme de Pompadour*. Paris: Saillant, 1755.

²¹⁸ This is described in detail in Giuseppe Tartini's *Treatise on the Ornaments of Music* (1771). Transl. Sol Babitz, *Journal of Research in Music Education* 4.2 (Fall 1956): 75-102.

²¹⁹ see Kim's *Twelve Caprices for Solo Violin*, 1981.

tinuously decreasing in size (composed of exactly 12 tones). A hexachordal²²⁰ upward-downward movement presented for the first time in bar 140 (bar 12 of the present section) takes the guise of a secondary theme. At times, the themes are transformed and transposed in their entirety; at others, only fractions are restated. Such is the case in bar 133, where only the tail of the principal theme is reiterated twice, and in bs. 156 and 160, where the initial minor second of the secondary theme is repeated. The entire section between bs. 154 (marked *veloce*) and 162 (before the fermata) is a symmetrical palindrome. It is followed by a number of transformations of the trill theme's second part, with augmenting intervals, until the head of the theme is reprised in bs. 171-2. The first line of text, a restatement of the lines "It's I who seek find lose...", is sung to a 12-tone motive based on the ascending second of the secondary theme (bs. 183-4), which is transposed twice. In a final passage, the secondary theme is repeatedly stated in its original disposition. The subsequent hummed eight-tone motive²²¹ marked "molto meno mosso" and leading over to the final return of the trilled note is again based on the main theme's second part. Chromatically transposed downward, it refers back to the main theme in its initial form. The vocalise closes with a series of six trilled G's, slowly fading out "al niente." This instruction foreshadows the ensuing text section that initiates Part II: "perhaps I went silent," during which the dramatic curve of the composition temporarily flattens. Apart from this semantic transition, tonal continuity is supplied by the notes Ab-G, which are passed on from the soprano to the strings. This dyad is employed to underlay the pivotal – and, notably, palindromic – words "on" and "no" in the subsequent lines of spoken text. A crescendo then builds up to the longest spoken passage (pp. 13-21), throughout which the strings play an ostinato of two superimposed hexachords:

Vln.: 3 0 1 9 9 6 8 3 0 1 9 9 6 8 3...

Vlc.: 2 10 11 5 5 4 7 2 10 11...

The speech delivery alternates between three different modes of intonational contours indicated by curves (marked "distinct profile," "more legato" and "glissando") and intermittent spoken verses.

²²⁰ Hexachord 6-Z6 (Forte 1973): F# G Ab B C C#, with the interval pattern: semitone, semitone, minor third, semitone, semitone or: two semitonal trichord segments. Alternatively it could be conceived as an incomplete form of Messiaen's Fourth Mode (Messiaen, 91)

²²¹ A superimposition of two tetrachordal segments of the chromatic (C C# D D#) and the major scale (F# Ab Bb B).

Fl. 212 10 8 5 8 8 3

Cl.

Voce * colla parte

if I could re-mem-ber what I have said I could re-peat it, if I could learn some-thing by heart

Vln. 10 8 5 8 8 3

Vlc. * distinct profile

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Fl. 215 3 8 10 8 7 8 8 8

Cl.

Voce * **

I'd be saved, I have to keep on say-ing the same thing and each time it's an ef-fort,

Vln. 3 8 10 8 7 8 8 8

Vlc.

*more legato **glissando

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Exs. 20/21: voice profiles, *Rattling On* (HL)

Supported by the oboe (the instrument which Kim utilized in *...dead calm...* and *Gooseberries* in a fairly traditional manner²²² to create warm, pastoral nuances), the spoken verses "and the other," "what was his name," and "better than I can see me" intersperse the mechanical circularity of automatic repetition, which Kim's text selection ("if I

²²² As opposed to those composers who explored extended playing techniques on that instrument, e.g. Heinz Holliger.

could repeat it," "keep on saying the same thing," "the words recur") emphasizes even more, with moments of conscious reflection. The eureka moment when the name "Mahood" (p. 17) finally comes back to his mind prompts a break in the flow of the narrator's incessant brooding, which is marked "meno mosso" and "molto legato" in the accompaniment. In other words, Kim tone-paints the narrator as rejoicing in an epiphany of truth in the midst of an otherwise bewilderingly fragmented reality.

The image shows a page of a musical score for the piece "Rattling On, Mahood" (HL). The score is for a full orchestra and voice. The top staff is for Flute (Fl.), followed by Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Voice. The bottom two staves are for Violin (Vln.) and Viola (Vlc.). The score is marked with "Molto meno mosso" and "A tempo". Performance instructions include "più p" and "molto legato". The lyrics are: "Ma - hood, he was called Ma-hood, I don't see him an - y-more, I don't know how he lived". A handwritten note "louder!" is written above the violin staff. The page number 17 is in the top right corner. A library stamp from Houghton Library is also present.

Ex. 22: *Rattling On*, "Mahood" (HL)

As the accompaniment becomes *più intenso*, Kim adroitly uses the last line of this passage, "I invented my memories"²²³ as a juncture to the next excerpt he opted for, which starts "I knew I had memories"²²⁴ and continues with a passage that calls to mind the end of *Malone Dies*: "stars, beacons, lights, buoys."²²⁵ This textual back-reference is echoed in the music. In fact, the instrumental introduction of *They Are Far Out* is already evoked in the last bar of the previous section, at which the tritone F-B sounds upon reaching the word "memories". This time, however, consonant intervals prevail after the first dyad.

²²³ *Three Novels* (1958), 396.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, 399.

²²⁵ This imagery is also found at the end of the early short story *The End* (1946), CSP, 98-9.

Ex. 23: Back-reference to *They Are Far Out* following Beckett's back-reference to *Malone Dies* (HL)

As the narrator's compulsion to express returns, so does the dodecaphonic text underlay from Part I. The legato runs in the woodwinds ("quick now and try again") are composed of three new rows. As in the *colla parte* sections in Part I, they are not complementary, but partly overlap in pitch material. The voices consist of six-element (flute), five-element (oboe), and four-element (clarinet) segments (Fig. 8).

fl.	0	1	7	9	2	3
ob.	11	11	6	5	8	2
cl.	10	9	4	4	7	10
text	quick	now	and	try	a-	gain

Fig. 8

Various transformations are performed on these rows whenever they recur in the remainder of the piece. They tend to co-occur with passages of text dealing with the act of composition and the role of the author within his own work, e.g. "you must say words as long as there are any," "perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story." Principally, subsets are singled out of the rows and rearranged (sometimes palindromically).

As in the first part, Kim added the indication *colla parte* – by definition and convention attributed to instrumental accompaniments – to the vocal part. That is, the contour is suggested by the instruments and followed by the voice. As said above, this is reflective

of the composer's approach to the Beckett texts in general: It demonstrates that he first notated the rhythmic structure he read into the text and subsequently focused on the gestural content of the words and phrases, which he translated into vocal contours. The viability of such a theatrical approach even to the prose texts substantiates Guy Debrook's argument that Beckett's use of language is primarily gestural, which, in Debrook's view, is also what has attracted so many composers to his work.²²⁶

In line with the circularity of ideas pervading the entire cycle, the refrain-like excerpt "it's too late" is set to an ironically naïve endless melody marked by a folkloristic *Terzenseligkeit* (i.e. "blissful thirds"), which concludes the cycle. This musical kitsch creates an ironic contrast to the despair inherent in the insoluble paradox "I can't go on – I'll go on," highlighting Beckett's (self-)mocking portrayal of an individual engaged in autosuggestive self-deception. In Kim's setting, the *Unnamable* in the end similarly euphemizes his own condition, and this musical naïvety perfectly reflects a prime Beckettian theme. That is, even if the world and everything in it crumbles to pieces, and even if the writer has "nothing to say": Hope springs eternal.

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system, starting at measure 309, has a voice line with the lyrics: "it's the door, per-haps it's I, I don't know, I've for- got- ten, it does-n't". Above the voice line, there are time signature markings: 2/8 and 4/8. The violin line below has a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords. The second system, starting at measure 313, has a voice line with the lyrics: "mat-ter. I nev-er knew, I can't go on, you must go on, I'll go on...". The violin line continues with a similar repeating pattern, marked with *pp* and *ppp*. Handwritten annotations include "Wiederholung" in the first system and "1970" in the second system.

Ex. 24: End of *Rattling On* (HL)

²²⁶ Debrook (1999), 67-82.

Although Kim's vocal *colla parte* suggests that the speech delivery is to follow the speech melody (as said before, it is less a melody than a profile or contour) suggested by the instruments, Kim's idiosyncratic instrumental voice-mirroring makes it difficult to determine for the listener whether it is the words that pre-exist the sounds or vice versa. This also raises other questions concerning the interplay between the two: Does the instrumental doubling parody or support the voice? Does it follow or is it followed by it? Is it contrapuntal to the text or does it create an emotional backdrop? It is evident that the simultaneity of words and music is very much in unison with the Beckettian simultaneity of form and content: distinct but interdependent, engaging in an ambivalent interplay that undercuts the traditional *prima...dopo* hierarchy.

4.3. *Narratives*

Commissioned by the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation and the Naumberg Foundation, *Narratives* is Earl Kim's second Beckett-based cycle. It was composed between 1971 and 1976. In the score it is entitled a "Music/Theater Piece in 2 Parts and 7 Scenes." Drawing on a variety of dramatic and prose works, Kim wrote this cycle for female speaker/soprano, teleprojected actor (in *Eh Joe*), two violins, cello, two trumpets, trombone/alto trombone, piano, and lights.

The music theater version was first performed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1979. Prior performances of *Eh Joe* and of *Monologues* were given upon their completion in 1975 and 1977, respectively.

There are a few difficulties attached to the analysis of this Beckett evening. First, unlike *Exercises en route*, Kim never created a concert version, i.e. the scores are to some degree contingent upon the productions Kim envisioned and realized himself, especially in terms of tempo and diction. Second, the score was never published in its entirety. In the late 1990's, Kim had sent *Monologues* to Theodore Presser, who rejected it. In a letter dated January 30, 1998, the publisher called the piece "theatrical, unique and somewhat difficult."²²⁷ It was feared that the market was too small and engraving too costly to merit publication. To date, *Earthlight* remains the only composition available in print.²²⁸ Nevertheless, the *Narratives*, just as the *Exercises*, follow the template of *Pierrot*

²²⁷ Houghton Library, Harvard University, Earl Kim materials, box 2 (to date uncatalogued).

²²⁸ Mobart Music Publications, 1978.

Lunaire in allowing for both a theatrical and a concert performance. This is why in the following we will take the liberty to analyze the seven pieces without consideration of any theatrical performance.

Order of pieces in the score:

PART 1

- 1 Monologues
- 2 Melodrama I (*Happy Days*)
- 3 Lines (*Lessness*)
- 4 Eh Joe

PART 2

- 1 Melodrama II (*Enough*)
- 2 Act Without Words
- 3 Earthlight

Order of creation:

1. Earthlight: May 8, 1973; 2. Melodrama 1: September 1973; 3. Eh Joe: September 1974; 4. Melodrama 2: June 1975; 5. Lines from *Lessness*: July 1975; 6. Act Without Words: January 6, 1976; 7. Monologues: September 9, 1976.

Order of performance:²²⁹

PART 1

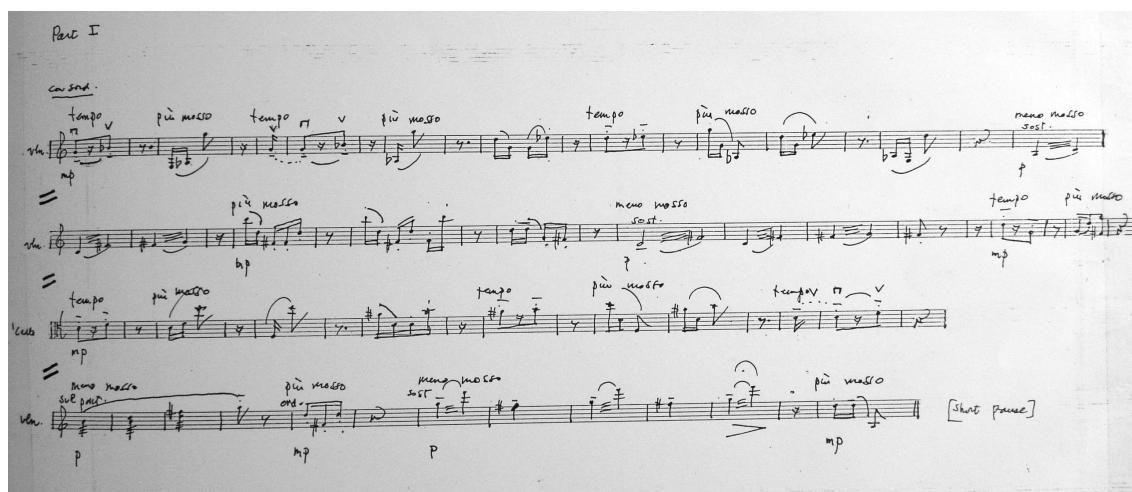
- 1 Monologues
- 2 Melodrama I (*Happy Days*)
- 3 Eh Joe

PART 2

- 1 Act Without Words
- 2 Lines from *Lessness*
- 3 Melodrama II (*Enough*)
- 4 Earthlight

²²⁹ According to Paul Salerni

4.3.1. Monologues



Ex. 25: *Monologues*, beginning. Original manuscript (HL)

The last piece completed (on September 1, 1976) and the first one in this group of settings, *Monologues* (for violin, cello, and piano) was commissioned by the Naumburg Foundation, notably by the violinist Robert Mann,²³⁰ and premiered by the Francesca Trio in 1977. As in the final piece of *Narratives*, *Earthlight*, the players are seated in three pools of light, and, as Salerni reports, the stage was completely dark outside the pools,²³¹ though, differently than in *Earthlight*, the light remains steady throughout the performance. The piece was originally inspired by *That Time*, as the text written underneath the music in one of the sketches reveals. Written in 1974 and 1975 for actor Patrick Magee, this play depicts an elderly man listening to three voices incessantly sounding from "both sides and above." The voices, as Beckett wrote in the stage directions, are his own, haunting him, i.e. the listener, by narrating fragments from different stages of his life. Beckett made it very clear that the voices are to be set apart from one another by three distinct pitches, and that transitions between them are to be conducted seamlessly. As so many other Beckettian characters, the old man with "long flaring white hair," caught in an infinite loop of relived moments and circular, "recycled"²³² thoughts, has lost his ability to differentiate between fact and fiction, past and present. This ap-

²³⁰ According to Salerni, Mann was much irritated by the fact that, although he had ordered a trio, the instruments hardly ever sound together. Salerni, Verona Lecture.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Brater, Enoch. "Fragment and Beckett's Form in *That Time* and *Footfalls*." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 2 (1977): 70-81: 75.

pears, yet again, as an aesthetic meditation on the "heteroglossia" (Bakhtin²³³), "multiphonia" (Gergen²³⁴) or variety of voices, echoes, and resonances underlying a literary work, influences which, although formally distinct, cannot be separated by the creative mind. Likewise, this multiplication of voices is another quite effective way of dispersing – and thus evading – textual meaning.

In the final version of *Monologues*, Beckett's words are missing, but still present as a hidden text in the rhythmic pattern of the instrumental voices, a method also employed by German composer Michael Denhoff in the 1990's. Kim's typescript of *That Time* is divided into nine parts, which suggests that he originally intended to compose music for each one, but in the end settled on only three of them. Beckett's text, on the other hand, consists of four passages, each one made up of nine verse paragraphs. Just as Beckett's play is interrupted twice by silences of "10 seconds," Kim prescribes pauses between sections, albeit of unspecified length, and "short pauses" after pp. 1, 2, 5, 6, 10 and 11. It goes without saying that the caesuras diverge from Beckett's instruction that the voices "modulate back and forth without any break in general flow." However, owing to his strong sense of musical history, Kim might have found it necessary to clearly demarcate the structural parts of this Classical arch form.

Curiously, the three instruments do not each represent one of the three voices A (that of maturity), B (that of youth) and C (that of old age), as one might expect. On the first draft sheet, the lines of each voice were divided between the instruments. The first lines of A's first paragraph, starting "That time," ending "long ago," is intoned by the violin. The second part of this paragraph, again starting "that time," ending "when was that" is allotted to the cello. Therefore, rather than following the text's macrostructure, Kim's responds to its finer subdivisions, down to the level of individual phrases and words, which are combined with specific rhythmic motives or even pitches. To this type of word-setting he adhered even more strictly in the second *Melodrama (Enough)*.

The treatment of the instruments in *Monologues* is somewhere between a piano trio and a superimposition of three dramatic soliloquies. While they hardly ever play together, motivic ideas are continuously exchanged between the three instruments, as though reacted to and commented on. Probably the most noticeable feature of this piece is its meticulous macrostructural organization: Each of the three parts comprises three pages.

²³³ Bakhtin (2001), 1218.

²³⁴ Gergen, 73-4.

The first part, a kind of exposition (plus repetition), and the second part, the "development," are identical in length, i.e. 82 bars, and the last part or "recapitulation" comprises no more than 16 bars. There are three tempi that frequently alternate, "tempo," "più mosso," and "meno mosso," for which Kim provided metronome marks in the prefatory notes. The rhythm is "generally free [in the sense that speech or prose rhythm is free]," and "rests are to be interpreted as forms of punctuation rather than precisely measured stops," as Kim also prescribes in the notes. Clearly, the music is meant to emulate natural prosody, just as the instruments assume the roles of dramatic characters. The violin initiates the first part, playing the same two pitches for the first eight bars (G and Bb), before two more pitches, D and Eb, are added. Reminiscent of a fugal answer, the cello recapitulates the rhythmic cells of the first four bars of the violin voice. However, the cello's answer is already a transformed, pared-down version of the violin exposition. Bars 5 and 6 of the violin voice are left out by the cello and shifted to the end. The violin responds, suggesting new material (*sul pont.*). After a "short pause," the cello continues, reiterating and reordering some of the rhythmic cells presented by the violin on page 1. As in natural speech, relative pitches and vocal contours seem to take priority over natural ones. It is the distinctive features of (non-tonal) language, notably melodic contours, rhythm, and stress, that constitute the distinct vocabulary which Kim employs here. Starting with the first entry of the piano, the strings become increasingly agitated (recalling *Play*, where the man's speech stirs up the women's blood). Before the piano enters, of the p only six pitches have sounded, G, Bb, B, D, Eb, F#, the same recursive hexachord that Schönberg used in *Ode to Napoleon*.²³⁵ The piano then plays a complete aggregate plus permutations of two tetrachordal subsets (see below).

[0– 4] – [8 – 10 – 3 – 11] – [7 – 2 – 6 – 9] – [5 – 1] (complete row)
 - [9 – 7 – 2 – 6] – [10 – 3 – 11 – 8]

What follows is a type of developmental section, combining the mobility of the rhythmic building blocks of the strings with the more elaborate and ornate piano idiom. On page 3 the piano plays a three-part canon of repeated dyads using reorderings of dyadic subclasses on p. 2 (Fig. 9).

²³⁵ Salerni, Verona Lecture.

upper voice	$\frac{9}{7}$	$\frac{2}{6}$	$\frac{3}{10}$	
middle voice	$\frac{0}{4}$	$\frac{0}{4}$	$\frac{0}{4}$	$\frac{0}{4}$
lower voice	$\frac{10}{8}$	$\frac{11}{3}$	$\frac{7}{2}$	

Fig. 9

The violin takes over on page 4. After a four-bar intermezzo of arpeggiated chords, it returns to the speech-like rhythmic cells of the beginning. The last line on p. 4 is a nearly verbatim reiteration of the first 16 bars of the composition (with the exception of the octave transposition of the first two notes in bar 3).

Throughout Part II, which is opened by the piano, the instrumental parts remain completely separate. Scherzo-like punctuations dominate the rhythmic material. Here, Kim strings together short motivic snippets in a similar way as in the first part, again placing between them short pauses instead of transitions. Toward the end of the page, punctuations prevail. Gradually, the gap between extremely high and low registers, which had made this piano solo seem almost like a physical dialogue between the right and the left hand, closes. This solo is concluded by a run of sixteenth-notes based on another recursive set, the nine-tone scale C# D D# F F#G A Bb B (with the intervallic sequence 1-1-2-1-1-2 etc.).

The next sections are virtuosic violin and violoncello cadenzas, respectively, employing twelve-tone techniques in passages of highly virtuosic demands comparable to those in his *Violin Concerto* (1979). At this point, another "hidden text" or covert form of intermediality comes into play: This section was inspired by the rewinding tapes in *Krapp's Last Tape*, and so Kim asked the string players to imagine a tape played backward and rewound when performing the double stops and the runs in Part II.²³⁶ As we have seen, in *Gooseberries*, conceived a decade earlier, Kim was much intrigued by the incorporation of tape recorder's randomizing effects in *Krapp*.

²³⁶ Salerni, Verona Lecture.

Monologues, p. 6: "tape played backwards"

Ex. 26: *Monologues*. Transcript (by the author) of the original manuscript (HL)

Following these melodic 'tirades' of the strings, the piano plays a mockingly lethargic conclusion of Part II, marked "meno mosso e molto sostenuto." As in serial permutation, the three instruments in *Monologues* take turns in beginning the sections: Part III begins with the 'cello. Again, solo passages make up the most part of the 'movement,' but this time they are shorter, and already on the bottom of page 9, all three instruments sound together.

After the solo passages of the piano and the violin, followed by a stretto-like conclusion on p. 12, the instruments end the piece together, the piano – presented again as the most "eloquent" instrument of the three – delivering a final full twelve-tone aggregate.

Clearly, one can only conjecture exactly which text sections Kim translated into music, or to what degree his sounds adhere to the words. Nevertheless, the idea of eschewing any one-to-one association of instruments with characters in favor of creating a freer version of the Beckett text in the form of three instrumental recitatives is certainly 'Beckettian' in the sense that it increases the fragmentation of the speech parts. In the piano "canon" on page 3, Kim does quite the opposite by bringing together all three voices into a single instrument, while transposing the split self of Beckett's play into canonic voices. Clearly, Kim's musical interpretation of the play not only echoes, but dramatically densifies and intensifies the schizophrenia of the character on stage, ren-

dering the voices even less locatable than in the play and thus following Beckett's "principle of heightened indeterminacy."²³⁷ At the same time, he paid tribute to traditional musical forms by fitting the trio of voices into a fairly conventional tripartite sonata structure.

4.3.2. *Melodrama I (Happy Days)*

Narrative
♩ = 40

Melodrama I "Happy Days"

The sun was not well up when Millie rose descended the steep [pause]

Ex. 27: *Narratives: Melodrama (Happy Days)*. Transcript (by the author) of the original manuscript (HL).

It is quite revealing about his reverential and receptive posture toward musical conventions of past centuries and his compositional eclecticism that Kim named two of the pieces in his *Narratives* "melodrama." For, apart from denoting a type of vocal delivery that was frequently utilized by Schönberg, Berg, and many other 20th-century composers, the term also harks back to the 18th-century genre initiated by Rousseau's *Pygmalion*. Valued by composers for its word-music equilibrium,²³⁸ it presented a viable alternative to traditional modes of text-setting, and possibly for this reason it proved particularly attractive to Kim.

²³⁷ Brater, 71.

²³⁸ Branscombe, Peter. "Melodrama." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 16. Ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 2001, 360-3.

Melodrama I was the second piece conceived, and was written in September 1973, more than six months after *Earthlight*. Beckett's two-character play depicts a garrulous female figure, Winnie, who seeks to convince herself through platitudes ("can't complain"—"so much to be thankful for" – "no pain") and by reminiscing of old times that she is having a "heavenly day" despite the insufferable tedium lurking behind her daily routine. Her husband Willie, on the other hand, remains silent or monosyllabic for most of the play. His presence nonetheless comforts her, for "to be is to be perceived,"²³⁹ that is, so as long as "someone is looking at [her] still,"²⁴⁰ she is assured of the meaningfulness her own existence.

Kim decided to leave out Willie's part, setting only Winnie's words to *Sprechgesang*. Winnie's story about a child named Mildred in Act II forms the frame narrative in Kim's setting. With Beckett, this narrative is interpolated between spoken trains of thought. Between the beginning and the end of the Mildred story – the segments which also form the beginning and the end of the composition – Kim inserted fragments from other parts of the play, e.g. the memory of Winnie's first love ("I close my eyes – (...) and am sitting on his knees again")²⁴¹ in Act I.

Ex. 28: *Melodrama (Happy Days)*. Transcript (by the author) of the original manuscript (HL)

(normal voice) (do)

I close my eyes

mp

In the Beckett text, the Mildred episode is embedded into the story as follows: Winnie, gradually running out of ideas to keep her mind busy, tells herself to "open and shut the eyes." If the eye, a prominent motive in Beckett's work,²⁴² can be said to represent the mental world, as Brienza has suggested,²⁴³ or, as one could similarly argue, if it functions as an interface between internal and external reality, similar to Beckettian doors, then the motive opening and closing the eyes serves as a transition from extra- to intro-

²³⁹ Motto of Beckett's *Film*, CDW, 321-334.

²⁴⁰ CDW, 160.

²⁴¹ CDW, 142.

²⁴² E.g. *Film*, "Imagination Dead Imagine" (CSP, 182-5).

²⁴³ Brienza (1982), 63.

version, from reality to fiction, from present to past. "There is my story, of course, if all else fails,"²⁴⁴ meaning memorized fiction and fictitious memory are depicted here as a panacea against the tediousness of an unendurable present (in the sweltering heat), as so often in Beckett. Tellingly, Winnie starts her journey inward in "the mother's womb."²⁴⁵ Skillfully, Beckett then reiterates the eye motive in the narrative as a characteristic of Mildred's doll ("China blue eyes that open and shut"²⁴⁶). In addition, he weaves Willie's "crawling backwards"²⁴⁷ into the narrative. The eyes are, in fact, an element of Winnie's life in the subplot. In other words, Beckett, here again, creates a *mise en abyme* to illustrate the interpenetration of two diegetic levels. Thus, in selecting these subplots rather than the framework story, Kim draws attention to a salient feature of Beckett's work. As he would have envisaged a rather short composition in the first place, the Mildred story was adequate in length, while at the same time allowing the composer to engage in an exquisite characterization of Winnie by musical means. *Melodrama* begins with a spoken, unaccompanied text, i.e. the first part or "exposition" of the Mildred story repeated verbatim, including the positions of the pauses of the original Beckett text:

Mildred has memories, she will have memories, of the womb, before she dies, the mother's womb. [Pause] She is now four or five already and has recently been given a big waxen dolly. [Pause] Fully clothed, complete outfit. [Pause] Shoes, socks, undies, complete set, frilly frock, gloves. [Pause] White mesh. [Pause]. A little white straw hat with a chin elastic. [Pause] Pearly necklace. [Pause] A little picture book with legends in real print to go under her arm when she takes her walk. [Pause] China blue eyes that open and shut. [Pause]

Only then does the *Sprechgesang* set in. Pitches indicate the "relative profile" only. The speech pauses are filled by piano chords. These passages alternate with parts to be spoken in a "normal voice," where only the speech rhythm is notated.

Most striking about Kim's treatment of the Beckett text are the numerous tone-paintings, which, on the face of it, seem rather turgid and overdone: This is already apparent in the fact that the words "sun," "up" are to be delivered on the highest pitches, "descended" is set, not exactly subtly, to a descending line, and the pitch motion of the vocal part on "all fours" illustrates the girl's clumsy descent. This is most definitely an effect adapted for the purpose of musical character drawing. More precisely, this ironic

²⁴⁴ CDW, 163.

²⁴⁵ CDW, 163. On the Jungian theme of "never been properly born" see chapter 2.1.3.

²⁴⁶ CDW, 163.

²⁴⁷ CDW, 147.

use of madrigalisms corresponds to Winnie's verbal conservatism, which includes her refrain "old style"/"in the old style"/"to speak in the old style," the hackneyed phrases or incantations she utters over and over again, as well as archaisms ("woe woe is me"). The artificial vividness of this (autobiographical) account is reflective of a character who seeks refuge in the past which appears to be more alive to her than the present.

As is characteristic of Kim's manner of word-setting, text modules are set to specific motivic units (that remain mostly constant in rhythm and pitch). The fragment "laughing wild among severest woe," that "unforgettable line"²⁴⁸ from a Thomas Gray poem that Winnie tries to recall throughout the play, is spoken over a dramatic trill on the piano, another instance of exaggerated, irony-tinged tone-painting.

Kim also set to music Winnie's fragmentary recollection of Irish poet Charles Wolfe's lines "Go forget me,"²⁴⁹ for which he uses a 4-tone idea made up of three pitches, A, B, and F, stated in three different permutations:

A BB F – F AA B – B FF A.

Ex. 29: *Melodrama (Happy Days)*. Copy (by the author) of the original manuscript (HL):

The musical score consists of three variations, labeled I, II, and III. Each variation is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked 'Meno mosso/piu espr-'. The lyrics 'Go for-get me...' are written under the vocal line. Variation I shows a specific melodic line for the vocal part and a corresponding piano accompaniment. Variations II and III show different permutations of the 4-tone idea (A, B, F) over the same lyrics.

The phrase "brightly sing" is to be "half sung" in "Tempo." The accompaniment suggests a waltz, but breaks off after only one bar. As opposed to the bittersweet, yet somewhat resolute ending of the original play, *Melodrama* ends rather desolately after the second half of the Mildred narrative. The dramatic, theatrically gestural piano accompaniment dissipates on "too late" and – tellingly – returns to a more static diction as Winnie ends her narrative and turns back to Willie. The distance between the highest and lowest notes on the piano sounding just before she calls him seems to illustrate the couple's mutual estrangement. Followed by a long pause, Winnie's inaudible "Willie" finally brings the composition to a close, or, more precisely, mutes it down to silence. Although not exactly in accordance with this particular play, this silent ending is truly Beckettian.

²⁴⁸ CDW, 160.

²⁴⁹ CDW, 164.

(più parlando)

till all came run- -ning, in their night att- -ire

sub pp cresc. poco a poco.....f

gradually clear pedal.....

Ex. 30: Tone painting on "till all came running." *Melodrama (Happy Days)*. Transcript (by the author) of the original manuscript (HL).

4.3.3. *Lines from Lessness*

The *Lines* for solo soprano, Kim's most 'automatic,' word-oriented example of text-setting in this cycle, apart from *Enough*, were completed in July 1975. Given its limited vocabulary and phrase constructions which recur throughout the short prose text according to the rules of its own "midget-grammar,"²⁵⁰ Beckett's *Lessness* lends itself in every respect to experimental compositional methods of text-setting and, as mentioned in chapter 2.2.3., arguably as a model for serial or aleatoric techniques: As also pointed out before, the text of *Lessness* is composed of twenty-four paragraphs, each containing seven "sentences." Beckett wrote down each sentence fragment "on a separate piece of paper, mixed them all in a container, and then drew them out in random order twice."²⁵¹ This hermetic system of syntactic construction is self-reflexive²⁵² in that it mirrors the confined spaces surrounding the fragile individuals in the story, just as the fragmentary nature of the sentence stubs captures the image of "scattered ruins." In short, form and content are merged into one, mirroring one another. All the same, neither signifieds nor signifiers constitute self-sufficient, coherent systems, a trait which has been referred to as 'bilateral instability' in chapter 2.2.3.

Again, Kim opted for a three-part structure, consisting of $15+9+9 = 33$ lines, and for each line there is one dynamic marking (out of a total of six). The lines and dynamics are distributed as follows:

²⁵⁰ A term Brienza uses in *Samuel Beckett's New Worlds* (1987) with regard to *How It Is*.

²⁵¹ Cohn, Ruby (1973), 265.

²⁵² Cf. Brienza (1987).

parts	I				II		III			
sections	1	2	3	4	1	2	1	2	3	4
no. lines	5	3	5	2	6	3	3	2	3	1
dynamics	mf ff p mp p	pp f ff	p ff f pp mf	mp f	ff mf ff p mp f	pp f ff	p ff mp	pp mf	p ff mp	pp

Fig. 10

Given the absence of any discernible regular pattern, this is essentially a pseudo-serialization of dynamics, numbers of lines, and, as we will see, motivic modules. Rather than copying Beckett's structural layout, Kim devised his own. The aleatoric construction of the text is echoed by Kim's irregular distribution of lines despite the symmetrical design of the three parts. On a draft sheet Kim indicated: "NOTE: pause between line 1 to 2 secs., between sections 3 to 4 secs., between parts I & II & III 5 to 6 secs."

The lines used in the piece are the following:

Part I:

Scattered ruins same grey...as the sand ash grey...true refuge.
 Four square all light sheer white blank planes all gone from mind.
 Never was...but grey air...timeless...no sound...figment...the passing light.
 No sound...no stir...ash grey sky...mirrored earth...mirrored sky...
 Never but...this changelessness dream...the passing hour.

He will curse God again as in the blessed days face to the open sky...the passing deluge.
Little body grey face features slit and ...little holes...two pale blue.
 Blank planes sheer white eye calm long last...all gone from mind.

Figment light never was...but grey air...timeless...no sound.
 Blank planes touch close sheer white all gone from mind.
Little body...ash grey...locked rigid...heart beating...face to endlessness.
 On him will rain again as in the blessed days of blue the passing cloud.
 Four square...true refuge long last four walls...only backwards...no sound.

Grey sky...no cloud...no sound...no stir...each ash...grey sand.
Little body...ash grey...locked rigid...heart beating...face to endlessness.

Part II:

Old love...new love...as in the blessed days unhappiness will reign...again.
 Ruins true refuge long last...towards which...So many false time out of mind.
 Light white touch close...head through...calm eye...Light of reason all gone from mind.
 (only "from mind" is the same)
 Never but...imagined...the blue in a wild imagining...the blue...celeste of poesy.
 All sides...endlessness (similar)...earth sky as one...no sound...no stir.
Little body...ash grey...locked rigid...heart beating face to endlessness.

He will curse God again...as in the blessed days...free to the open sky...the passing deluge.

Little body grey face...features slit...and little holes...two...pale blue.
Blank planes...sheer white...eye calm long last...all gone from mind.

PART III:

Figment light...never was...but grey air...timeless...no sound.

Blank planes...touch close...sheer white...all gone from mind.

Ash grey...little body...only upright...heart beating...face to endlessness.

- One step more...one alone...all alone...in the sand...no hold...he will make it.

Blacked out fallen open...true refuge...issueless towards which so many false time out of mind.

Never but silence such...that in imagination...this wild laughter...these cries.

Head through...calm eye...all light sheer white...all gone from mind.

Figment dawn...dispeller of figments and the other...called dusk.

- One step more...one alone...all alone...in the sand...no hold...he will make it.

As said above, the text structure served as a model in that Kim employed a limited set of pitches and rhythmic material. However, just as Beckett modifies his constellations by, for example, adding or omitting individual words, there are minute deviations in the recurrent motivic modules that Kim uses for a group of phrases of similar linguistic sound material or of similar semantic content (which, as discussed in chapter 2.2.3., often coincides in Beckett). For example,

all gone from mind
time out of mind
the passing cloud
the passing light

all take a similar motive, characterized by a diminished octave or augmented seventh. "Changelessness" and "endlessness" are set to a three-tone motive with a major sixth- and major-seventh downward leap and two repeated notes.





time out of mind.



the passing cloud.



the passing light.



this changelessness



endlessness.

Ex. 31: *Narratives: Lines from Lessness*: handwritten copy (by the autor) of the original manuscript (HL)

Two lines are repeated twice and three times in their entirety, both starting "Little body" (indicated above by italics or underscored, respectively), and set to identical material. Appropriately, "mirrored earth...mirrored sky" forms a palindrome.

In contrast to the confined space represented by limited linguistic and musical material, the melodic contour of the voice is marked by big leaps. The F#6 as on "dream" on page 1 is almost beyond the *tessitura* of even a coloratura soprano. Just as in the Beckett text, in which the dimension of space is restricted, whereas that of time is stretched in such a

way as to suggest some kind of eternity, Kim juxtaposes limited musical material with a vast vocal gamut.

mf Scattered ruins same grey... as the sand ash grey... true refuge.

ff Four square all light sheer white blank planes all gone from mind.

p Never was... but grey air... timeless... no sound... figment... the passing light.

mp No sound... no stir... ash grey sky... mirrored earth... Mirrored sky...

p Never but... this changelessness I dream... the passing hour

Ex. 32: *Narratives: Lines from Lessness*. Handwritten copy (by the author) of the original manuscript (HL).

4.3.4. *Eh Joe*

This piece for two muted trumpets, muted trombone, two violins, cello, teleprojected actor, and female speaker on stage,²⁵³ the second version of which was completed in September 1974, derives its structure from the original script of the television *dramaticule*, setting the text of the entire nine camera moves of the play. Kim once said that he was fascinated by the cinema and inspired by "the structure of visual things,"²⁵⁴ and in

²⁵³ The concept of a teleprojected actor and visible female speaker was also adopted by JoAnne Akalaitis in her 2007 *Beckett shorts* production of the play. Cf. Gontarski (2009), 21.

²⁵⁴ Jeon, 4.

this case, he adopted the architecture of the television play rather than adapting it to a conventional musical framework as in some of the other *Narratives*.



Fig. 11: *Eh Joe* performance conducted by Kim, with Irene Worth as Joe's voice. Courtesy of Martha Potter Kim.

Eh Joe, written in English and first televised by the BBC on July 4, 1966, was Beckett's first television play. Unlike *Ghost Trio* or *Nacht und Träume*, it does not include any music, and unlike *Quad*, which Beckett once described as a "static fugue,"²⁵⁵ there are no evident structural analogies to musical forms. The only character in the play is a man in "his late fifties, grey hair, old dressing-gown, carpet slippers, in his room,"²⁵⁶ thus in the typical Beckettian attire. After Joe inspects his entire sparsely furnished room, opening and closing all the windows and the door, he starts hearing a female voice, "low, distinct, remote, little colour, absolutely steady rhythm, slightly slower than normal."²⁵⁷ Though this is never made explicit, it is suggested that the voice emanates from his mind. The latter is compared to a bicycle – a recurrent motivic allegory permeating

²⁵⁵ Bernold, op. cit., 83.

²⁵⁶ CDW, 361.

²⁵⁷ CDW, 361-2.

Beckett's entire oeuvre²⁵⁸ ("that penny farthing hell you call your mind," "penny a hoist tuppence") and perhaps an analogy to the Bergsonian pair spools of past and future (see chapter 4.2.3.), the Beckettian character duets, the bicyclical plot structure of *Godot*, and other archetypal dualisms ubiquitous in his works. The female voice haunting him appears to be that of a past love ("The best's to come, you said, that last time (...) You were right for once," "I found a better (...). Preferable in all respects... Kinder... Stronger... More intelligent... Better looking"). It brings back to his mind the memory of another former lover who is described as "The green one...The narrow one...Always pale."²⁵⁹ This mental monologue of the voice of conscience inside Joe's head recovering images of the past, scolding and questioning his actions, lies at the core of the play. By disclosing only bits and scraps of the knowledge shared by Joe and the voice, Beckett challenges the spectator to infer his own coherent story from the incoherent accusations and emotionally charged images that Joe is bombarded with, in other words: to project a meaningful chain of events or a *Gestalt*, related by cause and effect, onto the plain-looking character. This challenge is reinforced by the camera's gradual zoom, occasionally rewarding the spectator with a sense of closeness to the character. Although Beckett did not include any music, the camera movement and the "mental setting" are to some extent comparable to *Ghost Trio*, where the close-ups are accompanied by passages from Beethoven's piano trio. In quite the same way, Kim's music seeks to intensify the intimacy between the audience and the protagonist as the camera moves ever closer. In the original performance of Kim's setting, the female actor and the ensemble were fully visible to the audience, as was the televised actor. As Grant Lyle Jeffers has suggested, "Kim has set out not merely to correlate the already quite coherent system of repeated phrases, catchwords and levels of diction that Beckett gives us, but to pull out and illuminate the web of feeling that lies within the words themselves."²⁶⁰ This non-verbal, emotional layer of meaning is imbued with Beckettian ambivalence, allowing for a range of hermeneutical approaches. This aesthetic openness is underscored by the fact that the vocal delivery itself is intended to be rather mechanical, uncharacteristic, echoed in the mostly specified, regular speech rhythm of Kim's setting. The ambivalence

²⁵⁸ For a listing of Beckettian bicycles cf. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, 55.

²⁵⁹ Some critics have argued that this description fits Beckett's cousin Peggy Sinclair, who liked to dress in green and had green eyes (cf. Knowlson 1996, 91, 116). With her, Beckett had a liaison in his 20's. She died from tuberculosis at a young age.

²⁶⁰ Jeffers, 36.

and artificiality is reinforced by Kim's idiosyncratic voice-doubling. Although Kim's setting is by necessity a specification of the unspecific, using denotations and connotations as anchor points for his musical interpretations, his text-setting approach is nevertheless an outstanding example of the subtlety and economy of musical means by which his musical syntax establishes subliminal links between the audience and the dramatic plot.

The small intervallic range and the limited pitch material, along with the nasal sound of the muted brass instruments, are *Eh Joe's* most salient features, representing the hermetic sphere of the mind, with Joe's thoughts incessantly going around in circles and plunging the audience straight into the dismal, eerie atmosphere of the television *dramaticule*. The use of seconds and thirds as well as small melodic steps are quite dominant. The upward slide, extremely difficult to play, which is introduced by the muted trombone on page 1 reverberates throughout the piece, both as a syntactic and a semantic device in that it both demarcates structural sections as a "transition" motive and becomes associated with a specific sphere of meaning. From the very beginning, the brass tones form a semitone cluster, starting on F#, F, and G. This pitch density is retained as the voice comes in. The voice doubled by the trumpets playing a complementary pattern of pitches at different octaves (1st trumpet: F# 5 – G# 4 ; 2nd trumpet: G# 3 – F#4). The semi-tone melodic progression is continued in the accompaniment of the lines "Why don't you put out that light?" On "crumbles when you lie down in the dark," the brass instruments remain on the same pitch before falling completely silent. Finally, on "Dry rotten at last," the strings enter, briefly recapitulating the beginning, with the brass instruments playing the same semitone cluster shifted a tritone upwards (B-C-C#), followed by an upward glissando in the trombone, also a tritone higher.

Samuel Beckett/text
2

Eh Joe
a television play

music/Earl Kim

$\text{♩} = 40$
3/4 *straight mute*
p

Trumpet in C 1
straight mute
p

Trumpet in C 2
straight mute
p

Alto Trombone
straight mute
p

*Woman's Voice

Joe... Joe... Thought of ev - ery - thing?...

Tempo 1

For - got - ten no - thing?... You're all right now eh?...

No one can see you now... No one can get at you now...

Why don't you put out that light?... There might be a louse watch - ing you...

* Low, distinct, remote, little colour, steady rhythm.

Ex. 33: *Narratives: Eh Joe*. Transcript of the original manuscript (HL). Courtesy of Paul Salerni.

In the last bar on page 1, the violin plays a different motive: two upward augmented fifths which, in camera move 1, accompany the imperatives "Say it now, Joe," "Come on Joe," and "Say it again now and listen to yourself," where it is juxtaposed with the old material ("no one will hear you"), notably the slide of the trombone. In this way, the closeness of pitches is associated with introversion or mentality, whereas the leaping

motives are ascribed to extraversion, the character expressing himself, speaking his mind.

In camera move 2, the material is reduced to the utmost. It is a passage of free vocal delivery marked *piano* and *molto sostenuto e senza espressione* with only trombone and 'cello accompaniment. The metaphor of a "penny-farthing" bicycle is visually translated into the two instruments' playing two alternating tones, one notated on the top staff, the other in the bottom one, with the voice in between them. In addition, the curved lines of the phrase marks promote the impression of "eye music." Again, the pitch range largely remains within a minor third. On "All the others," the trombone plays an upward glissando from D to Eb, thus reiterating the figuration of introversion and resignation from the beginning. The glissando returns again with the character turning inward, i.e. when the voice talks about "the dead in his head."

5

♩=ca. 40 **Camera move 2**

molto sostenuto e senza espressione

Tbn. 34 bucket mute *p*

W.V. You know that penny farthing hell you call your mind... That's where you think this is coming from, don't you?...

Vc. *ancora con sordino* *p*

Ex. 34: "penny farthing hell": *Eh Joe*. Transcript of the original manuscript (HL). Courtesy of Paul Salerni.

In camera move 3, the agitated sixteenth-note voice-doubling motive from the first camera move returns in the violins, marked by the friction of a major second on every other tone (the first violin playing G#-A-G#, the second alternating between G# and G). Although the speech rhythm of the voice is not notated, it seems right to assume that it is supposed to follow the instruments *colla parte*, as the number of syllables matches the number of tones. A sort of arch form in this camera shot is created by the instrumentation: The violins begin and conclude this section. In between, the lines "That lifelong adorer...That old paradise you were always harping on" are accompanied by brass. At the end of the section, the glissando figure recurs as a transition indicating the end of the camera move and triggering the next zoom.

A new sphere of meaning opens up at the end of the next camera move. After new pitch

material has been brought in by the violins on "Ever think of that" (C#-D#), played in the manner of the accompaniment on page 1 and with a similar semantic content ("Thought of everything?"), Kim switches to a different type of musical language for the remainder of this camera section. That is, he creates quasi-symmetries and quasi-palindromes by means of pitch classes and rhythmic patterns. As to the rhythmic disposition, individual parts or instrumental groups are also palindromic in certain passages or bars, as seen in the following passage, in which the order of pitches is most intriguing:

119

Tpt. 1 *p*

Tpt. 2 *p*

Tbn. *p*

W.V.

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

Vc. *p*

E - ver think of that? If it went on... The whis-per in your head... Me whis-per-ing at you...

123

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tbn.

W.V.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2 *pizz.* *pizz.* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

Vc.

In your head... Things you can't catch... On and off... Till you join us... Eh Joe?

poco rit. e decres.

Ex. 35: Eh Joe. Transcript of the original manuscript (HL). Courtesy of Paul Salerni.

Each set of bracketed numbers below stands for a dyad of pitch classes played simultaneously.

Ever think of that
0 4 1 [3 9]
If it went on
5 [4 6] 5
The whisper in your head
[3 9] 1 4 0
Me whispering at you
5 [4 6] 5 [3 9]
In your head
1 4 0
Things you can't catch
0 4 1 [3 9]
On and off
1 4 [3 9]
Till you join us
5 [4 6] 5
Eh Joe
[3 9] 1 4 0

As is evident, the organization of pitch material in the first three bars is palindromic, but after that it is not quite as symmetrical. Just as with the organization of rhythmic values, there are elements disturbing the symmetry. It appears that, as with Feldman a few years later, Kim rejected large-scale symmetries in favor of a high degree of mobility of elements and subsets. As with the Japanese stone garden he was inspired by, there are various ways in which the constituent elements of a larger structure could form sub-combinations, thus relating to one another in a number of possible ways. For example, one can say that the first two lines and the last two lines of this passage are palindromic, or that the first three lines are palindromic. Then, however, the third line and the antepenultimate are not, but the fourth from last and third are. Still, the whole section is unified by the use of the same pitch material 0,1,3,4,5,6,9, heptachord 7-Z17,²⁶¹ or C-C#-D#/Eb-E-F-F#/Gb-A. As Kim summarized his compositional strategy: "Multiplicity be-

²⁶¹ Forte, 180.

comes unity."²⁶² It appears that this applies not only to a multiplicity of single elements, but also to the manifold ways in which these elements can be related without a central principle. In other words, from the manner in which two, three, or four elements relate to one other, no conclusions may be drawn as to the overall framework, and vice versa. In this way, the line "Things you can't grasp" is represented by the irregular array of pitches.

What is noteworthy about this fourth scene, in which the 'schizophrenic' nature of the character takes center stage, is Kim's repeated use of the pitches 0 and 4 (C and E), whereby they become associated with Joe's mental 'plague.' The fact that the same two pitches occur in connection with the split mind in *Monologues*, the composition based on *That Time*, is also worth pointing out.

When the voice brings up the lover who has killed herself for the first time in camera move 7 ("The green one...the narrow one"), the text is spoken freely and independently from the rhythm of the accompaniment. A new motive is introduced, delicate violin pizzicati (played with a baton) of Mendelssohnian elfishness based on the pitch material C# E F# G A B (pitch class set 6-33: 0,2,3,5,7,9), which relates to the heptachord 7-Z17 ("Ever think of that...") through a subcomplex of five elements, 0,3,5,7,9, i.e. through 5-34. Metaphorically speaking, if the heptachord 7-Z17 is to characterize Joe's voice of conscience, then it is the thoughts of the lost lover which overlap to a great extent with what preoccupies him. The numerous compositional sketches and drafts Kim left behind and similar strategies in other compositions suggest that his choice of pitch material was indeed very cerebral and carefully thought-out.

The agitated motion of the lover motive, which seems to mirror the distress of the conscience-stricken character in the face of this unpleasant memory, the high register of the violin figurations, the larger tonal gamut, and finally the sustained notes in the other instruments, reminiscent of a musical "halo" as we know it from J. S. Bach, open up a wholly new musical sphere that is reiterated whenever the verbal motive recurs. It is as though Joe were experiencing some type of catharsis through the ruminations induced by the voice. The "cleansing" of his conscience, his coming to terms with his past, takes the form of outright mourning and despair when the voice utters the encouraging words "Don't lose heart now...When you're nearly home" in scene 8, which Kim sets to a *la-*

²⁶² Tassell (1983), 34.

mento of five chromatically descending notes in the strings marked "legato possibile." This descending motion could also be read as a variant of the glissando. In its downward version it appears, for example, after "Throttling the dead in his head." Although Beckett's text may not be as emotionally charged toward the end, and less teleological, it does use evocative images and suggestive language ("dreaded pain," "like a child," "Spiritlight") and interweaves them with an almost concrete depiction of a suicide. Kim incorporates these implications into his composition alongside the depiction of the forsaken once-beloved into his musical language. Although he does to some extent specify the Beckettian unspecified, rather than further ambiguating it, he shuns all-too blatant text-painting.

Camera move 7

145 *whisper mute* **p**

Tpt. 1 *whisper mute* **p**

Tpt. 2 *whisper mute* **p**

Tbn. *whisper mute* **p**

W.V. *whisper mute* **p**

Vln. 1 *semplice*

Vln. 2 *semplice*

149

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tbn.

W.V.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

153

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tbn.

W.V.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

*Use short baton instead of bow

Ex. 36: Eh Joe. Transcript of the original manuscript (HL). Courtesy of Paul Salerni.

4.3.5. *Melodrama II (Enough)*

The second half of the *Narratives* is opened by a second *Melodrama* for woman's voice, piano and two violins, based on excerpts from Beckett's short prose piece *Enough*. Kim's composition was completed in June 1975. The lines he carefully selected contain

the main attributes and theme of the text: A narrator (of unspecified gender) reminisces about a childhood "outing" in an undulating countryside, accompanied by an unidentified male figure. The relationship between the two is one of strong interdependence. While the narrator needs "him" as a guardian or partner, "he" needs the narrator to satisfy his "desires" – whether these be physical or purely emotional in nature. In any case, "he" exerts great authority over the narrator until, after a hike which has taken "ten years at the very least," the narrator finally decides to forsake his or her leader. As is typical, the text is pervaded by abstract, generic and archetypal figures and relationships, while not providing any details about the characters or the setting. Hence it offers plenty of interstices for various exegeses and speculations of an allegorical, political, sociological, psychological, or biographical nature.

Not only did Kim select passages from the text, but within these passages he chose to highlight specific expressions through his music, such that his setting creates an entire web of meaning of its own: a musical subtext. This he achieved by assigning a particular rhythmic cipher and specific pitches to certain words and phrases (as he did for many text passages in other parts of the *Narratives*). In addition, they are doubled by the piano. For example, "he" is associated with a single eighth note and a dyad consisting of the pitches G and Eb. These music-semantic pivots make up the structural as well as the semantic framework of the piece. Thus, Kim devises a fixed set of fairly straightforward musical gestures, using them as "pointing devices" to accompany Beckett's semantically ambivalent language. At first glance, this may appear as an inappropriate treatment of a text that avoids all-too concrete references. Then again, this word-setting technique does nothing but underscore the formal structure of the text. If anything, Kim's personal interpretation may be found in the much subtler, intricately woven fabric of pitch classes.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for 'MELODRAMA from Enough' by Samuel Beckett, set to music by Eyal Kim. The score is written on multiple staves. The top staff is for the voice, with lyrics: 'I did all he de-sired. I desired it too. For him. Whenever he de-sired something so did I. He only had to say what thing.' The piano accompaniment is on the next two staves, and the cello part is on the bottom two staves. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics like 'piano', 'mp', and 'poco f'. There are also performance instructions like 'poco rit.' and 'poco f'. A library stamp from Houghton Library is visible in the upper right corner of the manuscript.

Ex. 37: Narratives: Beginning of Melodrama (Enough). Original manuscript (HL).

Both figures are musically characterized by the interval of a minor sixth, but whereas "I" is assigned the pitches F# and D in bass clef, "he" is accompanied by G and Eb in treble. Throughout the work, the personal pronouns are connected by phrase marks. Their interdependence is thus rendered both audible and visible.²⁶³ The word "desired" is highlighted by a distinctive speech rhythm and a diminished octave (B-Bb). These pitches together make up the recursive hexachord described in the previous chapter, 6-20(4) in the Forte catalogue or "Faust mode," also featuring prominently in Schönberg's *Ode to Napoleon*. Paul Salerni has suggested that the primary link between these two pieces is the theme of tyranny and oppression.²⁶⁴

The entire hexachord is first presented in the brief violin introduction and then repeated in the intermezzo between the first section and the second. After this exposition, with its clear-cut arch form, new linguistic and musical material is brought in: "left hand" is accompanied by a major sixth between two new pitches, C and Ab. As it is the narrator's left hand, it is notated on the lower stave – and played by the left hand. In addition, the dyad C#-A signifying "right"/"right hand" is introduced. It sounds on "free outer hands." "Hand in hand." The word "enough" takes a new rhythmic cypher, two sixteenth-notes on two new pitches, F and E, so that at this point the hexachord is complete and thus the entire twelve-tone aggregate has come into play: "Enough" pitch material has been used.

For "Mine never felt at home in his," Kim uses the personal pronoun rather than the hand motives, thus suggesting the reading: "I never felt at home with him." The characters' increasing estrangement is also evident in the fact that they are now connected by a broken phrase mark curve, which is found again on page 3 at the phrase "Before his clasped mine again." The last three sentences of section 3 ("I see the flowers (...) the same") are set to a violin counterpoint marked *più espressivo/molto sostenuto*. They are spoken freely while the piano pauses. Standing out against the rest of the section in their lyrical intensity, they indicate that Kim was aware of Beckett's reference to the begin-

²⁶³ Similarly influenced by visual arts as Morton Feldman, Kim was certainly not disinclined to "eye music," most evidently in the notational depiction of rain in his Apollinaire setting "Listen to it rain" from *Where Grief Slumbers*.

²⁶⁴ Salerni, Verona Lecture.

ning of the fifth stanza of Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale,"²⁶⁵ another example of recursive intermediality. It is in the context of Kim's pared-down textures using minimal musical means that these subtle changes in instrumentation or in the vocal mode become all the more apparent. Brandt has stated that the doubling voice "becomes a crucial element of motion, contrast, and recognition."²⁶⁶ This paradigm of stripping the material down to essentials, reducing it "to its maximum," as Kim himself phrased it, aligns to some extent with the postulates of the minimalists. Kim's student John Adams is, after all, one of the foremost representatives of this movement. Although the motivation behind Kim's approach may have been an entirely different one, his compositional strategies are highly reflective of their context and *Zeitgeist*. As his later works reveal, his creative trajectory led to a more lucid musical language, and it is this transparency of creative operations which minimalists such as Steve Reich propagated in the 1960's.²⁶⁷

Associating specific pitches and rhythmic ciphers with words and meanings enables the composer to imply subliminal layers of meaning which are not as overt in the text. In other words, the motivic cells creating a subtext may assume a similar function as leit-motives. Such is the case on page 4, where "say" is combined with the "desire" motive. In other words, Kim insinuates that it is his desire which is on the authoritarian character's mind. This interpretation seems to have been prompted by the fact that the narrator "bow[s] down" so as to spare his companion the embarrassment of having to express his desires. The same motive is used for "enjoy" on page 6.

Equally worth pointing out is the setting of "Two equal segments" on page 5, which forms a perfectly symmetrical palindrome. Here, Kim uses the pitches G (so far attributed to "him") and F# (which forms part of the narrator's pitch configuration). On a similar note, the "mirror" motive on page 6 includes only the Eb of the "he" motive: It reflects only a part of "him." Curiously, the other pitch, D, belongs to the narrator motive. Does the narrator serve as a mirror for "him"?

Thus this piece demonstrates the extent to which a limited set of musical vocabulary is capable of speaking its own language. Occasionally, Kim's tones delineate their own

²⁶⁵ "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet, / Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs, / But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet / Wherewith the seasonable month endows / The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild; (...)," Keats, John. *Lyric Poems*, New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1991, 35.

²⁶⁶ Brandt, Liner Notes, Album *Earl Kim*, 5.

²⁶⁷ "I am interested in perceptible processes. I want to be able to hear the processes happening throughout the sounding music." Reich, Steve. "Music As A Gradual Process" (1968). *Writings on Music, 1965-2000*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. 34-6: 34.

territory of meaning, and in this, *Melodrama II* exhibits an extremely close interplay between words and music, or at least a less ambivalent one than some of the other *Narratives*.

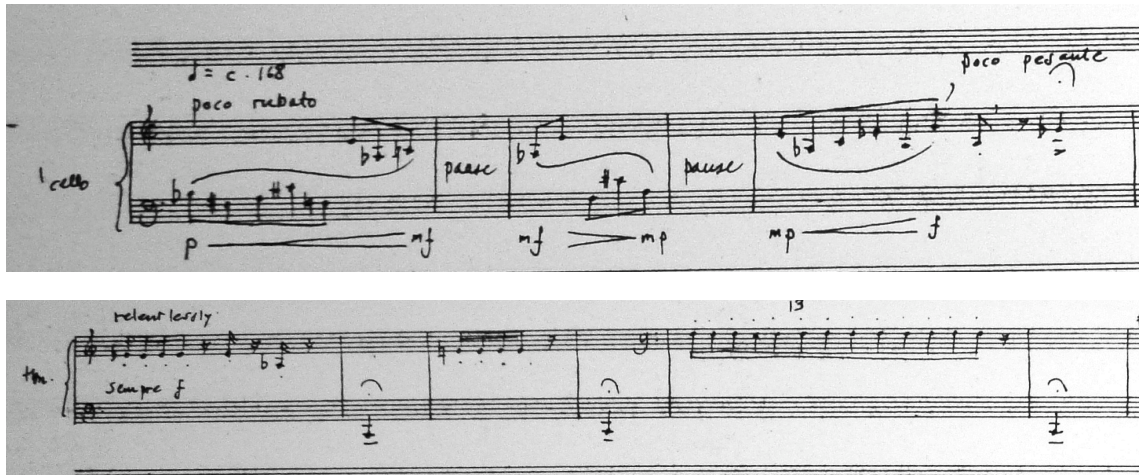
4.3.6. *Act Without Words*

Beckett's two mime plays, entitled *Act Without Words I* and *II*, were written in 1955 and 1956 and premiered in London in 1957 and 1960. Apart from *Quad*, they are the only stage works in which language is not used at all. John Beckett originally composed a score for *Act I*. The two *Acts*, the first of which Beckett wrote for cabaret dancer Deryk Mendel, are indicative of Beckett's fascination with the vaudeville genre and silent films starring actors such as Buster Keaton, whose early films he had seen as an undergraduate in Dublin.²⁶⁸ In other words, even more than the costumes of the two "tramps" Didi and Gogo, the *Acts* reveal the influence of American popular genres on Beckett's output. One shared trait of the plays is the complementarity of dramatic events, of things constantly turning into their opposite: *enantiodromia* yet again. *Act Without Words I* depicts a man in the middle of the desert and his failed attempts to get a hold of a bottle of water and various other items emerging out of nowhere, accompanied by the sound of a whistle. Each time he reaches out for them, they are miraculously pulled away, and each time he turns away from them, they remain where they are. This evokes the complementary movement of the subject and the doors in *neither*, albeit in a playful, jocular manner.

Kim completed his piece for violoncello and tenor trombone twenty years later, between January 24 and 26 in 1976. Although he did not specify which of the *Acts* his music is based on, the piece seems to be modeled on *Act II*, not least because the 'cello and the trombone, which appear to correspond to the two male characters A and B, differ in temperament and demeanor. A and B alternately emerge out of a sack to pursue their daily respective routine of getting dressed, eating a carrot (which both of them do), brooding and praying (which only A does), and engaging in personal hygiene (B). All the while, they carry their respective antagonist's sack to the left side of the stage. A is characterized by Beckett as "slow, awkward (...), absent," while B is "brisk, rapid,

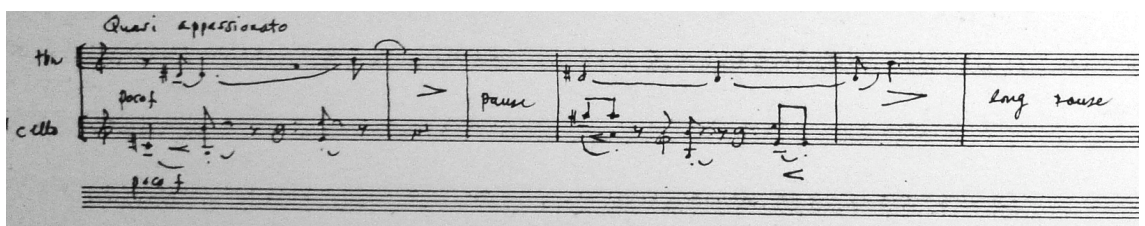
²⁶⁸ Knowlson (1996), 57.

precise."²⁶⁹ Thus, although "B has more to do than A," the actors are given the same amount of time for their performance. It would be tempting to a composer to represent each character by one particular instrument, which however, as in the *Monologues*, is not the case, although the 'cello *rubato* opens and closes the composition parallel to the appearance of A the play, and the "relentless" clockwork-like tone repetitions introduced by the trombone seem to encapsulate character B's accuracy and tidiness.



Ex. 38: *Act Without Words*, first bars of the initial motives of the 'cello ("character A") and the trombone ("character B"). Original manuscript (HL).

On page 2, however, the instruments switch motives, the trombone taking over the legato figure from the 'cello, while the latter plays extensive tone repetitions. Except for the four bars in the "Quasi appassionata" section in the last line of page 1, the two instruments never coincide, as in *Monologues*. A *stretto* effect is produced by two interlocking sequences of notes and rests in which 'cello pizzicati are echoed by the trombone with a delay of a thirty-second rest. As in other pieces discussed before, the 'cello figure at the beginning and at the end is marked by Kim's idiosyncratic quasi-symmetry. In the first three bars, only the five pitches A C# F E Ab are retrograded.



Ex. 39: p. 1, last line: instruments coinciding. Original manuscript (HL)

²⁶⁹ CDW, 209.

Although Kim's *Act Without Words* is a concert piece rather than incidental music accompanying a dramatic plot, the music is highly gestural, possibly even more graphic than any of the other *Narratives*. Undoubtedly, this theatricality is along the lines of Berio's *Sequenza V* (1965). Kim's approach resembles Beckett's in that the two instruments perform complementarily throughout and in that he devises an arch form that corresponds to Beckett's reiteration of the stage actions of character A, which concludes *Act II*.

4.3.7. *Earthlight*

Earthlight, a "Romanza" scored for high soprano, violin *con sordini*, piano and lights, forms the final part of the *Narratives*. It was the first piece conceived. The manuscripts and sketches at Houghton Library, Harvard University show that Kim started composing it in early November 1971 and completed it on May 8, 1973. On stage, the three musicians are positioned in triangular array, the pianist sitting with his back turned to the audience, the soprano facing the pianist and the violinist facing the soprano.

In addition to the seating plan, Kim provided a lighting diagram which is included in the score. Three rate-controlled dimmers were contributed by the Harvard Electronic Design Center. As in Beckett's theater piece *Play*, in which the three actors' "speech is provoked by a spotlight projected on faces alone,"²⁷⁰ the three musicians are lit whenever they start "acting," i.e. playing or singing.

²⁷⁰ CDW, 307.

For The Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress and Dedicated to the Memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky

EARTHLIGHT

Romanza

for high Soprano, Violin con sordini, Piano and Lights

Samuel Beckett *

EARL KIM

The musical score for the beginning of 'Earthlight' features three staves: Violin, Piano (P), and Piano (P). The Violin staff starts with a tempo of quarter note = 40, a circled '1', and a box containing '1 4. 5'. It includes a 4.5' dynamic wedge, a section marked 'sord. 2' and 'semplice' with a *pp* dynamic, and a circled '2a' with another '1 4. 5' box. The Piano (P) staff has a *poco espr.* marking, a circled '2b', a *p* dynamic, and a 'col ped.' instruction. It also features a 4.5' dynamic wedge. The Piano (P) staff below it has a circled '3' and a 4.5' dynamic wedge. The score is in 3/4 time and G major.

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M. 311

Ex. 40: *Narratives: Earthlight*, beginning (© 1978 by Mobart Music Publications. Courtesy of SCHOTT MUSIC, Mainz - Germany).

The text excerpts are borrowed from eight of Beckett's prose and stage works: *Cascando*, *Endgame*, *Malone Dies*, *Play*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Watt*, *Words and Music*, and *The Unnamable*. However, Kim did not specify which extracts were taken from which text.

The following table (Fig. 12) lists the text sources for each line. Square brackets indicate the changes Kim made.

Text	pp. score	text source
that old moonlight on the earth again that old [star]light on the earth again	5	<i>Words and Music</i> (CDW, p. 290)
to him I brought this emptied heart these emptied hands this mind ignoring this body homeless	7-9	<i>Watt</i> (p. 166)
it's darkening [the] earth [is] darkening	9	<i>Cascando</i> (CDW, p. 297)
before the sea before the earth before the sky at the window against the air against the air opening shutting grey grey black at the window grey black	20-21	<i>The Unnamable</i> (p. 405)
I see my light dying	22	<i>Endgame</i> (CDW, 98)
to love him my little reviled, my little rejected to have him, my little to learn him forgot, abandoned my little to find him	23	<i>Watt</i> (p. 166)
the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm	25	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> (CDW, p. 43)
one earth lit night, white last moon, in the earth light, sole regret white last moon not even that	28-29	<i>Malone Dies (Three Novels)</i> , p. 264)
all dark all still	29	<i>Play</i> (Chorus, CDW, p. 319)
at me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on.	31	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> (CDW, p. 84)

Fig. 12

The composition epitomizes Kim's "ability to maneuver between styles and stances while maintaining the integrity of his voice," as Paul Salerni put it.²⁷¹ Kim juggles twelve-tone composition with atonality and traditional triadic harmony and how fuses all these musical idioms into a classical sonata form. Below is a scheme of *Earthlight's* macrostructure.

Exposition: pp. 3-9

3-5: octatonic: spoken verses

6: dodecaphonic: violin

7-9: octatonic: spoken verses

Development: pp. 10-23 (top)

Variation/reiteration of octatonic/dodecaphonic material, of tone repetitions on p. 4 ("laughter")

²⁷¹ Paul Salerni, Liner notes on Earl Kim's *Violin Concerto*. Naxos 8.559226.

Recapitulation: pp. 23 (bottom)-29 (top)

Return to: spoken verses, arpeggio (pp. 26-7. Compare: p. 8, Tempo 1 on p. 28

Coda: pp.29 (bottom)-end

Even within the sections, three-part forms abound, as evident in the introductory section (pp. 3/4²⁷²), which already exhibits a tripartite layout; page 3 sees the exposition of material that constitutes the center of gravity throughout the composition: the pitches C# - D# - A in alternating high and low octaves. (For the sake of clarity, these pitches will hereafter be referred to as pitch classes 1, 3, and 9²⁷³). Introduced by the violin, these pcs are passed on to the piano in m. 4. The first three bars constitute a perfect palindrome, as does the entire first page. The next page begins with a brief 'development': While the piano engages in a rhythmic elaboration on the major tenth on pc 9 and 1 and then plays a full bar of repeated sixteenth-notes, the violin remains on pc 3, playing a short pizzicato interlude of repeated sixteenth-notes marked *poco accelerando* in m. 1, then sustaining pc 3 until the piano introduces another rhythmic variation marked *più mosso*, bringing in additional pitches (0, 10). At the same time, the sustained note is passed on from the violin to the piano. The last few bars, returning us to the high-low pendulum motion of page 1, is a short recapitulation completing the miniature sonata form, while also setting the stage for the voice.

The first verses from *Words and Music* ("that old moonlight...") are not sung, but spoken – again revealing Kim's reverence for Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. Analogies between *Earthlight* and *Pierrot* abound, although, unlike Schönberg, who demanded that the performer transform the "pitches into a spoken melody, taking into account the notated pitches,"²⁷⁴ Kim entirely rejected the notation of pitches for the *Sprechgesang* (s. *Melodrama I*).

The texts selected for *Earthlight* also bear certain similarities to those of *Pierrot Lunaire*: They revolve around the same central metaphor and theme, the moon, as a symbol of folly, inane sentimentality (as in Heinrich Heine's "Der Doppelgänger" and Franz Schubert's setting of the poem in his *Swan Song* D 957), and creative impasse. In

²⁷² All page numbers refer to the Mobart score.

²⁷³ Following Allen Forte's integer notation (i.e. 0 represents C, B# and D-double-flat etc.), which presupposes octave and enharmonic equivalence. Cf. Forte (1973).

²⁷⁴ "Der Ausführende hat die Aufgabe, [die notierten Töne] unter Berücksichtigung der vorgezeichneten Tonhöhen in eine Sprechmelodie umzuwandeln." (Preface to the score), Mainz: Schott, 1996.

a letter to director Alan Schneider concerning a production of *Happy Days*, Beckett wrote: "*Moon*. (...) 'To ask for the moon' means to [Winnie] to demand the impossible. And of course echo of 'night of the moon.'²⁷⁵ In the hellish sun *moon* means coolness and freshness."²⁷⁶ What is more, Winnie in *Happy Days* wishes for "the happy day to come when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of the moon has so many hundred hours."²⁷⁷ This evokes Eichendorff's "Mondnacht" ("night of the moon") synecdochically for the Romantic tradition. In the poem, the lyrical subject dreams of his soul flying off into the night, to a "home" which, like in the *neither* text, remains unspecified. In *Watt*, the phases of the moon reflect the appearance and disappearance of the main character and again echo Beckett's predilection for cyclical forms in his depictions of the human condition: "The night was of unusual splendour. The moon, if not full, was not far from full, in a day or two it would be full, and then dwindle, until its appearance, in the heavens, would be that compared, by some writers, to a sickle, or a crescent."²⁷⁸ As Sue Wilson has shown,²⁷⁹ Beckett's fascination with the moon had to do with the peculiar shades, the mixture of darkness and light, which the author quite often considered for staging his plays. In his *Canti lunatici*, Bernard Rands later followed the tradition of "moon compositions" by drawing on poems and musical compositions having the moon as a common theme.

Between the spoken verses on p. 5, the piano, like a *secco* accompaniment, interpolates the three-note rhythmic figure heard before (on page 4, m. 1): two sixteenth-notes, the first of which is accented, the second of which is tied to the succeeding eighth-note. In the system below, the pattern of repeated notes is reiterated by the piano. This rhythmic pattern, along with the whole-tone chords following it, recurs throughout the piece. For example, it is shifted into the vocal part on page 10. By the end of page 5, the full 12-tone aggregate has sounded, and with the exception of pc 10, all 12 pitches occur in the last bar of p. 5.

New material is presented on page 6 with no transition. After the somber and somewhat static beginning, and after the last two measures of the previous section have faded into

²⁷⁵ Probably Eichendorff's poem "Mondnacht" (1837), which would tie in with Winnie's penchant for "classics."

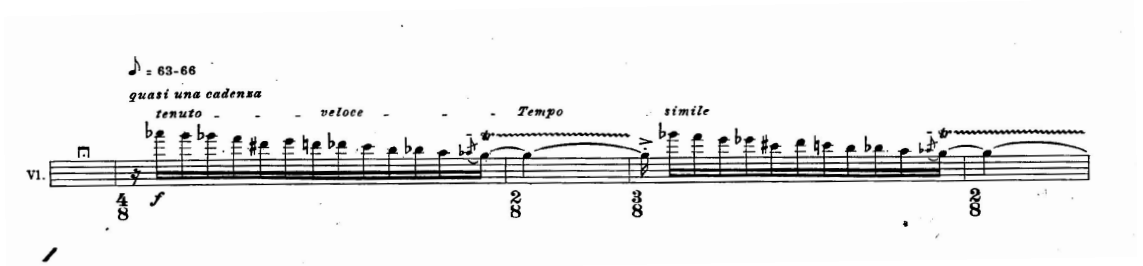
²⁷⁶ Harmon (1998), 104.

²⁷⁷ CDW, 144.

²⁷⁸ *Watt* (1953), 222.

²⁷⁹ Wilson, Sue. "Krapp's Last Tape and the Mania in Manichaeism." *Samuel Beckett Today – Pastiches, Parodies & Other Imitations*. Eds. Marius Buning et al. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003. 131-45: 144.

silence, the violin bursts out in a cadenza-like, chromatically descending line ending on a trilled G. This dramatic figure, bringing to mind the viola solo in *Pierrot Lunaire's* "Serenade" (m. 25) is played three times, each time varying in length. Initially it contains 13 sixteenth-notes in 4/8 meter, then 11 notes in 3/8 time, and finally 16 notes in 5/8 meter. More significantly, this is the first occurrence of a partly ordered twelve-tone set (indicated by square brackets) consisting of dyadic subsets (indicated by round brackets): [(8 7) (6 5) (3 4) (2 1) (0 11) (10 9)].



Ex. 41: *Earthlight*, p. 6: "quasi una cadenza"

The permutations are as follows:

A: mm. 2-4: [(8 7) (6 5) (3 4) (2 1) (0 11) (10 9)] [(8 7) →

B: mm. 4-6: (6 5) (4 3) (1 2) (0 11) (10 9)] [(8 7) →

C: mm. 6-8: 11 (10 9)] [(8 7) (5 6) (4 3) (2 1) (0 11) (10 9)] (8 7)

B and C are obviously derived from A through permutation. Permutation, in turn, is generally obtained through transposition.²⁸⁰ Thus, $T(A, t = 10)$ produces B and $T(B, t = 4)$ yields C.²⁸¹ Within these strict operations, Kim took a few liberties: The demarcation between A and B is blurred by the trill on pc 7 interrupting the restatement. Still, in a formal representation, the dyad (6 5) would be preceded by (8 7). In addition, the first element in C, pc 11, is not produced by the operation $T(B, t = 4)$. It occurs isolated from its dyadic partner "0." The reiteration of row C is thus prefixed by the incomplete subset [(8 7) 11 (10 9)] and three dyads – (5 6), (4 3), and (2 1) are rearranged. Then the piano joins in, playing a new subset of seven pitches derived from the inner part of the original row. The following is a list of the complete transformations of this 7-element subset:

a: [(3 4) (2 1) (0 11 10)]

b: [(4 3) (1 2) (0 11 10)]

c: [(4 3) (2 1) (0 11 10)]

²⁸⁰ Babbitt (1960), 248.

²⁸¹ $T(8, t = 10) = 8 + 10 = 6 \pmod{12}$. $T(7, t = 10) = 7 + 10 = 5 \pmod{12}$ etc.

d: [(10 11 0) (1 3) (2 4)]

As is evident, 10-11-0 is now treated as a triadic subset, and in row *d* the two dyadic sets (3 4) and (2 1) are blended. The two elements (8 7) conclude the "quasi una cadenza" violin part. When both instruments simultaneously play subdued echoes of the last tones G and E, they seem almost like Beckettian voices returning to self-conscious stammering after a verbal outburst.

By now, it should have become obvious what has been said above about Kim's selective implementation of the principles of serialism: Contrary to Schönberg's initial stipulation that no element of the twelve-tone row be repeated before all the others have sounded, a principle which the master himself had violated in many of his late works, above all in *Ode to Napoleon*, certain pitch classes or pitch class combinations in Kim's music take priority over others and are, above all, subject to reorderings within the row. Perfect symmetries are juxtaposed with irregular transformations. Although Kim's miniature musical forms might be reminiscent of Webern's aphoristic brevity, his occasional disregard of symmetry set them apart from those of the Viennese composer. Absence of symmetry, of completeness, instills in the music a sense of implication, both perceptually and formally. As with Beckett's *enantiodromia*, Kim's music fluctuates between these two opposite poles of compositional modes: one traditionally associated with total control over the material, yet ultimately tilting over into the other, entailing loss of control or randomness. As seen in the other pieces, whole sections or rows are sometimes palindromic, while individual elements switch positions at others. Considering that the *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* was a well of inspiration to Kim, not abiding by the rules of dodecaphony was probably less an act of rebellion against his teacher and friend than of continuing down a road already taken.

We will see in the following that this particular twelve-tone set will remain significant for the remainder of the composition. If not merely classified as a violation of a dodecaphonic principle, the premature doubling of the dyad (8 7) (or: the grace note Ab followed by the trill on G) clearly fulfills a syntactic function: It frames the cadenza, demarcating the beginning and end of each of the three semiquaver runs. Finally, this fragmentation of twelve-tone syntax, of a musical language that had already been a thing of the past when the *Narratives* were written, may even be interpreted as a formal parallel to Beckett's incoherent syntax.

The use of twelve-tone techniques on p. 6 is combined with a musical idiom that is set in a highly evocative mode reminiscent of 19-century violin virtuosos. It seems as though Kim sought to create a musical equivalent to Lucky's speech in *Waiting for Godot*: Both Lucky's quasi-rhetoric and the violin cadenza unmistakably reveal detachment from past literary and musical styles respectively; both are best seen as stylistic quotations or fragments embedded into the work alongside others, rather than as a general paradigm underpinning the work as a whole. Before it can truly unfold, this musical episode literally vanishes into thin air, an effect which is reinforced by the downward motion of the violin runs, pointing to the literal sense of the word "cadenza": fall. This sample of 19th-century virtuoso writing is thus a mode of self-reflexivity, a brief homage of the composer to his heritage in the form of a fragmentary musical flashback. More than the other *Narratives*, *Earthlight* displays the principles of a hypertextual artistic mode commonly referred to as *pastiche*.²⁸² While its counterpart, parody, encompasses satirical or ironic connotations, pastiche is an essentially neutral form of reference to a previous style or work,²⁸³ though Kim of course added a personal, self-reflexive spin to it.

What follows is a second spoken text extract originating from the novel *Watt*, which, of all quotations used here, appears to have been Kim's primary source of inspiration when composing *Earthlight*. As in the first verse, the declamation is accompanied by interpolated *secco*-style whole-tone chords made of a subset of five pcs (2,4,5,7,8) evoking traditional harmony, e.g. Em⁷ on "to him I brought" and E⁷ on "this emptied heart."

The next two pages see the five iambic verses being reordered three times:

1. to him I brought
2. this emptied heart
3. these emptied hands
4. this mind ignoring
5. this body homeless

As the sketches for *Earthlight* reveal, this is exactly how Kim proceeded: using numbers for the verses and carefully determining their array beforehand. The reordering of the verses was originally intended as follows:

²⁸² Genette (1993), op. cit. 39.

²⁸³ Ibid.

2 3 4 5 1
3 5 2 1 4
4 2 1 5 3
5 1 5 3 2

In the final printed version, we only find three of these arrays:

p. 8: First system: 3 5 2 1 4; second system: 4 1 2 5 3, p. 9: 5 4 3 2.

The neat grid on top of the sketch sheet, consisting of five rows and five columns for the five lines and their reorderings, suggests that diminishing the text portions was an idea which occurred to him in the course of his work on *Earthlight*.

The violin joins in, playing the arpeggiated version of the piano's whole-tone chords, reminiscent – yet again – of a passage in *Pierrot Lunaire*.²⁸⁴ Sudden darkness, as suggested by the stage lighting, appears to conclude this passage, leading into silence for the duration of two bars, before the soprano and the pianist are lit again to recapitulate four of the verses without the violin arpeggios. Another miniature sonata-form, the section ends with a retrograde of the original verse order. However, the first verse is omitted, which is yet another instance of asymmetrical serialism. A brief piano coda contemplating *meno mosso* on the chord figure that previously served as accompaniment creates a transition to the next verse, which is also spoken ("it's darkening..." from the play *Cascando*), while the lights fade out. This marks the end of the exposition. After a one-bar rest in total darkness, all three musicians are illuminated at a higher intensity (7.5) than before. The heavy lighting launches a new structural episode – in conventional terms: the development – whose first subject is the repeated-note pattern first introduced on pp. 4 and 5 by both instruments, now recaptured by the soprano singing vocalises. Though Albright refers to this motive as an adaptation of Monteverdi's *stile concitato* evoking "someone on the moon (...) looking down at earth, trying to comprehend the peculiar emotion of anger,"²⁸⁵ one could argue that its similarity to laughter offers a eulogy to Beckett's sense of humor and his ability to always strike a balance between self-pity and self-irony. What is more, as outlined in the chapter 2.1.2., Fritz Mauthner considered laughter the supreme form of language criticism. At the same time, this pattern of quick repeated notes could be seen as another reference to *Pierrot*

²⁸⁴ mm. 24-28 in "Colombine."

²⁸⁵ Albright (2003), 151.

Lunaire.²⁸⁶ In any case, this passage's agitated motion serves as an irony-tinged comic relief after the tenseness of the partly serene, partly dramatic first section. The soprano's vocalises are completed by arpeggiated chords consisting of a tetrachord (C# – D# – G – A, also referred to as 4-25²⁸⁷), a subset of the octatonic scale²⁸⁸ that forms the basis of those parts of *Earthlight* in which Kim employed atonal rather than twelve-tone composition. In this scale, minor and major seconds alternate: B# – C# – D# – E – F# – G – A – A#, also referred to as pitch class set 8-28 (0,1,3,4,6,7,9,10).²⁸⁹ Both the tetrachord on pp. 10-14 and the octatonic scale show Kim's bent for recursive pitch class sets, as does the hexatonic scale used in other parts of *Narratives*. In *Earthlight*, they create ambiguities by hovering between the conceptual spaces of tonal, atonal, and dodecaphonic material throughout the piece. This tonal indeterminacy imbues the entire composition with a detached, almost other-worldly ambience, echoing the very "coolness and freshness" which Beckett had associated with the moon image.

The pitches of the hexachord also make up the "trembling" motive played by the piano in the second system on p. 10. The zigzag movement of the soprano and violin voice on the bottom of page 11 refers back to the leaping violin voice on page 1. On the following pages, these three motives – i.e. the "laughter," the "trembling," and the leaping figure – mingle and alternate until the flow is broken by a sudden fermata rest returning the listener to Tempo 1 *con duolo*, which is quite removed from the vivid flurry of sixteenth and thirty-second notes heard before. Throughout this composition, Tempo 1 demarcates the starting point or center of gravity within the composition, a state of total calmness, stasis and contemplation which bears resemblance to the aspired condition of interiority typical of Beckett's protagonists, e.g. Murphy's third zone of consciousness in which the individual is no more than a "mote in the darkness of absolute freedom." It is from this contemplative silence that Kim's music emanates and to which it returns.

²⁸⁶ See, for example, the beginning, mm. 1-2.

²⁸⁷ Forte, 179.

²⁸⁸ Forte, 25.

²⁸⁹ Forte, 179.

Ex. 42: *Earthlight*, p. 10: "laughter" (© 1978 by Mobart Music Publications. Courtesy of SCHOTT MUSIC, Mainz - Germany).

While the piano plays chords made up of a subset of 8-28, the violin sustains two octaves of pitch class 11 (B) that served as an anchor point for most of the composition up to this point. On pp. 16-17 and 21-22, twelve-tone composition again constitutes the formal design of the piece. Kim employs various pitch rows and rules by which these rows are transformed, above all, into palindromes. However, he also allows himself to violate his own rules, e.g. by leaving the second part of every line incomplete, i.e. deploying 8-pitch subsets rather than reiterating the complete aggregate. Figure 14, which provides an overview of the pitch classes used, illustrates the operations Kim used for the soprano vocalises on p. 16/17.

16

1) start cadenza in time of triplet light cue, then accelerate to M. 811

Ex. 43: *Earthlight*, p. 16. (© 1978 by Mobart Music Publications. Courtesy of SCHOTT MUSIC, Mainz - Germany).

Below is given an analysis of the soprano part.

Line 1 (p.16)	0	1	11	10	8	9	7	6	4	5	2	3
	1	0	10	11	9	8	6	7				
Line 2 (p.16)	10	9	11	0	2	1	3	4	6	5	8	7
	9	10	0	11	1	2	4	3				
Line 3 (p.17)	11	0	10	9	7	8	5	6	4	3		2
	0	11	9	10	8	7	6	5				
Line 4 (p.17)	11	10	0	1	3	2	5	4	6	7	9	8
	10	11	1	0	2	3	4	5				

Fig. 13: Soprano voice, p. 16/17

The first line of the soprano voice introduces a new pitch-class row B derived from row A employed in the violin part on page 6 and subdivided into 6 modules of 2 tones (all 12 tones). For the sake of clarity, I will utilize the following mode of notation: In 1 (8 7), "1" signifies the order number of the subset, whereas the integers 8 and 7 designate the ordered pitch classes of the disjunct dyad.

A (p. 6) = 1(8 7) 2(6 5) 3(3 4) 4(2 1) 5(0 11) 6(10 9)

Evidently, a transposition of the pc in A by 3 produces the elements that constitute B:

$$B = T(A, t = 3) = \mathbf{1}(11\ 10)\ \mathbf{2}(9\ 8)\ \mathbf{3}(6\ 7)\ \mathbf{4}(5\ 4)\ \mathbf{5}(3\ 2)\ \mathbf{6}(1\ 0)$$

Subsequently, the dyadic sets are permuted circularly. The order of the sets above 1 2 3 4 5 6 becomes 6 1 2 3 4 5. In addition, the elements in all sets are retrograded with the exception of 1. Even through fairly standardized techniques as these, Kim's characteristic bent for circular structures becomes apparent.

$$B\ (\text{p.16, line 1}): \mathbf{6}(0\ 1)\ \mathbf{1}(11\ 10)\ \mathbf{2}(8\ 9)\ \mathbf{3}(7\ 6)\ \mathbf{4}(4\ 5)\ \mathbf{5}(2\ 3)$$

In the remainder of line 1, the first 4 dyadic modules occur in the same order as before, but with pitch classes retrograded. This is a demonstration of what Babbitt meant by "extending serial transformation to compounds of serial elements,"²⁹⁰ so as to increase the degree of mobility of pitch class complexes within the system.

$$\mathbf{6}(1\ 0)\ \mathbf{1}(10\ 11)\ \mathbf{2}(9\ 8)\ \mathbf{3}(6\ 7)$$

Line 2 of the soprano voice exhibits A with order numbers retrograded:

$$\mathbf{6}(10\ 9)\ \mathbf{5}(11\ 0)\ \mathbf{4}(2\ 1)\ \mathbf{3}(3\ 4)\ \mathbf{2}(6\ 5)\ \mathbf{1}(8\ 7)$$

As is evident, set 5 is the only one in which Kim also retrogrades pitch classes.

Line 3 (p. 17) contains A with dyadic sets reordered (5 6 1 2 3 4). The remainder of the line is produced by the same operation as the second part lines of 1 and 2. Finally, line 4 consists of B in the order 1 6 5 4 3 2. For the violin part, Kim goes about quite differently, employing several permutations of the 12-tone row 10 0 3 9 11 1 5 7 2 8 4 6.

As is evident, these passages are devoid of complete symmetry and any overall ordering principle despite the obvious mechanisms by which the sets and elements are transformed. The graphic illustration shows that individual elements of the aggregate are grouped into smaller or larger modules. Some of them are shifted around systematically, while others randomly re-occur in new positions. Having at his disposal a vast amount of possible operations provided by the combination of elements to subsets,²⁹¹ the composer veered away quite far from the constraints of the system of rules established by Schönberg in the 1920s. As another example of Kim's idiosyncratic application of dodecaphony, this is in turn reminiscent of the erratic word permutations, distortions, and sentence transformations Beckett uses in *Watt* (from which most of the text lines are taken) e.g.

²⁹⁰ Babbitt (1960), 251.

²⁹¹ See formula in: Forte, 27.

As for his feet, sometimes he wore on each a sock, or on the one a sock and on the other a stocking, or a boot, or a shoe, or a slipper, or a sock and boot, or a sock and shoe, or a sock and slipper, or a sock and boot, or a sock and shoe, or a sock and slipper, or a stocking and boot, or a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all...²⁹²

Likewise, Watt himself is an 'object' that is moved around, appearing in various positions: When he moves into Mr. Knott's house, the servant he replaces moves up to the first floor. When Watt's substitute moves into the house, it is Watt who has to move up to the first floor, and so on. An even better example is the formal disposition of *How It Is*, in which the same syntactic constructions are deployed throughout the narrative. Significantly, these combinatorial games turn out to be anything but perfect: John J. Mood has determined that out of 37 series used in *Watt*, 12 turned out to be faulty, i.e. repeating or omitting certain elements.²⁹³ What seems tightly organized is permeated by chaos. Just as Beckett's word configurations and logical reasoning run on empty, some of Kim's twelve-tone rows are partial, and although single elements form a fairly translucent pattern and certain transformations, e.g. retrogrades, occur frequently, the overall structure is devoid of any regular organization or pattern. Operations apply to entire rows, but then also, as Babbitt stipulated with regard to dodecaphony, "complexes of pitch elements become, themselves, subjected to serial permutation."²⁹⁴

Repeated upward glissandi lead over to the next experiment in combinatorics. This time, only three elements are combined, the pitches D (= 2), D # (= 3) and E (= 4). Within a cell of 3 times 3 elements indicated in the illustration below, no more than one of these pitches occurs in each horizontal and vertical row. However, these cells are not always presented *en bloc*, but interrupted by rests, thus obscuring their regular arrangement.

p. 18

V	2	3	4	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	3	4
S	4	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	3
P	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	4	3	4	2

²⁹² *Watt* (1953), 200.

²⁹³ Mood (1969), 133-8.

²⁹⁴ Babbitt (1960), 255.

p.19

V	2	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	3
S	4	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	4	3	4	3
P	3	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	3	4

V	2	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	3
S	3	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	2
P	2	3	2	4	2	3	4	2	4	3	4

Fig. 14: pitch distribution of the three voices (integer notation)

On pp. 20 and 21, all 12 pitch classes (0-11) are reintroduced by the piano, this time in dyads, to accompany verses from *The Unnamable*. This can be illustrated as follows:

"before the sea"												"before the earth"											
1	10	5	6	9	2	1	10	5	6	9	0	3	8	7	10	5	2	1	10	5	6	9	
3	4	11	8	7	0	3	4	11	8	7	2	1	6	9	4	11	0	3	4	11	8	7	
"before the sky"												"at the window"											
2	9	6	1	10	5	2	1	10	5	6	9	1	0	9	4	5	8						
0	7	8	3	4	11	0	3	4	11	8	7	1	4	5	0	9	8						
"against the air"																							
0	11	8	3	4	7	1	0	9	4	5	8												
2	5	6	1	10	9	1	4	5	0	9	8												

Fig. 15

Apart from the fact that the accompaniment of the verse "before the sky" is, once again, an incomplete row, it is noteworthy that two new rows are used for the last two verses ("at the window"/"against the air") and reiterated on page 21 for the same verses. A closer look at the allocation of specific pitch rows to specific verses on p. 21 allows for semantic and formal categorization of the words "shutting" and "black" on the one hand and "opening" and "grey" on the other. The lighting direction after the first sounding of "black" indicates a total blackout.

In other words, the linear pitch sets on p. 16 and 17 are followed by vertical or dyadic sets on p. 20/21, where, in addition, entire row modules are shifted around. In the novel, Watt transforms letters within words, words within sentences, and sentences within pe-

riods. Similarly, Kim transforms pitches within linear sets, vertical sets within rows, and rows within sections of the composition.

21

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Violin I (VI.), Soprano (S.), and Piano (P.). The Soprano part has lyrics: "against the air o - pen - ing shut - ting grey", "grey black", and "at the win - dow". The Piano part includes performance directions: "poco rit.", "poco allargando", and "ritornando al tempo". The Violin I part has a "ritornando al tempo" marking. Fingering numbers are provided for the piano part. The score is labeled "M 311" at the bottom left.

Ex. 46: *Earthlight*, p. 21 (© 1978 by Mobart Music Publications. Courtesy of SCHOTT MUSIC, Mainz - Germany; pitch classes added.).

The next verse, "I see my light dying" from *Endgame*, is set to descending chromatic runs while the light is fading *colla voce*, after which the music moves into one of its most serene and peaceful episodes. Twice, the violin plays a gentle minor-sixth dyad as the light fades and unfades in between piano chords (again consisting mostly of pitches of the octatonic scale or pitch class set 8-28). Page 23 presents an extract from *Watt* that, in the original text, follows the passage "to him I brought..." These two text passages are taken from a part of the novel in which Watt's speech is becoming unintelligible, since the character begins to invert letters, words, and sentences.²⁹⁵ Analogously, Kim's compositional method is an extension of this, applied to the first *Watt* passage. Again, he transforms a closed set of three elements (the pivotal pcs 1, 3, and 9) in various permutations, in which pc 1 always occurs twice. But this time, instead of using retrogrades as an equivalent to Watt's word inversion, he arranges them in a more intricate manner, which we are only able to discern if we group the pitches in the following manner:

²⁹⁵ *Watt* (1953), 165.

Soprano:	3911	9113	1139
	1139	1391	9113
	1391	1139	3911
	9113	3911	1391

Of twelve possible permutations²⁹⁶, Kim uses four: 3911, 9113, 1139, and 1391 of the three pcs. If we number these reorderings 1, 2, 3, and 4, we obtain the following configuration:

Soprano:	1	2	3
	3	4	2
	4	3	1
	2	1	4

As is evident, there is an even distribution of all four permutations, with each one occurring three times.

In his setting of the second passage from *Watt*, Kim doubles, and thus puts an emphasis on, the first, fourth, and seventh syllables, creating a dactylic rhythm and thereby distorting the natural stress of the phrase (i.e. putting an emphasis on the second, fifth, and eighth syllables). The spoken repetition of the text is similar to the setting on pp. 5 and 6. Then, on pp. 24 and 25, the laughter/trembling/leaping motives refer back to pp. 10-15.

The next verse ("the flames...") is taken from Lucky's speech at the end of the first act of *Waiting for Godot*. This monologue, already mentioned above, is one of the pivots of the play. When Pozzo orders Lucky to "Think," what Lucky does is literally 'think out loud': His almost Joycean, spoken-out stream of consciousness is crammed with facts, names, symbols, and allusions but largely incoherent, permeated by malapropisms, puns, and redundancies. Essentially, Lucky's language fluctuates between allusive philosophical hints and a purely mechanical concatenation of semantically incoherent words and phrases. The formal layout of pp. 26 and 27, the arpeggios with accompanying piano chords, parallels that of page 8, except that the vocal part is missing. Appropriately, it is marked *una memoria*. A reiteration of the words "the stones so calm" brings this section to a close. The verse from which the composition draws its name is

²⁹⁶ $n!/2 = 4!/2 = 24/2 = 12$.

presented on the next page. It originates from *Malone Dies*, a novel centered on a lonely figure reminiscing of the past while expecting his death (cf. *They Are Far Out*). Again, Kim uses pitches of the octatonic scale or 8-28. As befits the tense atmosphere of the novel, dramatic sung passages alternate with parts of spoken text and a lyrical violin meditating *dolce espressivo* on a rhythmically augmented version on the leaping motive which returns to Tempo 1. Then, after a total blackout, a coda follows. The voice speaks the next verse: "all dark, all still" from *Play*, another flashback to an earlier point in the composition, i.e. page 9 ("it's darkening..."). After the next light cue, the piano starts playing dyads. Quite interestingly, the middle voice of the piano is made up of the same pitch dyads that accompanied the words "opening" and "grey" (juxtaposed with different rows on "shutting" and "black") on p. 21, establishing a formal parallel to the dim light that gradually starts becoming brighter as the top and the bottom voice join in and the piano part is transposed an octave higher. Thus, as in *neither*, there is a subliminal link between different representations of light. While in *neither* we observed a correspondence between the text and the acoustic evocation of bright light, in *Earthlight* the light metaphors are underscored by the choice of pitch material on the auditory or formal plane, and are additionally made visible by actual stage lighting.

The setting of the last line, another fragment from *Waiting for Godot*, is based on three pitches, D (= 2), E (= 4), and Bb (= 10), a transposition by a semitone ($t = 1$) of the central pitches 1, 3, and 9. (That the pitch letters make up the word "bed" is might be a coincidence, albeit a neat one.) It is strictly syllabic, thus sets of 8 consecutive eighth-notes for the first two lines are followed by two sets of four ("he is sleeping, he knows nothing") and one set of three notes ("let him sleep"). "On" is split off, thus causing a speech *ritardando*. Simultaneously the light steadily fades to dark.

5. Bernard Rands: ...among the voices... (1989/90)

5.1. "Inclusive rather than exclusive": Rands' aesthetic trajectory

The relationship between language and music has been an interest of mine for many years. In both cases, rhythms, sounds, patterns, all conspire to change and delineate meaning. I believe the composer and the poet to be the closest in mode. Both have a common currency, i.e., the tradition, of language, upon which to draw and which they can use for commentary. (Bernard Rands¹)

In the previous chapter we saw that Kim's reverence for composers of the recent and remote past manifested itself in references to old and new Western compositional techniques, forms, and styles. Going beyond the notion of text fidelity, Kim's musical responses to Beckett are strewn with personal associations, i.e. subtle allusions to other works of art within the scope of knowledge shared by the composer and the author, and idioms borrowed from a wide array of musical languages.

Likewise, Rands' Beckett settings bespeak the influence of other media and the mark that his teachers, above all Luigi Dallapiccola, Bruno Maderna and Luciano Berio, have left on his work.² Similarly to those of Feldman and Kim, Rands' personal creative readings and renderings of the author testify to the contingency of Beckett exegeses by shedding light on particular facets inherent in the writer's multivalent works.

5.1.1. Poetry and politics

Rands rejects the term "setting text."³ What he prefers is a de-hierarchized dialogue at eye level between text and music, a *desideratum* shared by many postserial composers, as has been established in earlier chapters:

I prefer to think of the text as **participating** in a musical form on its own terms; language certainly has a musical dimension, and this aspect helps to determine the final form of the musical piece rather than any traditional notion of 'setting' it. One gets the text to participate in an exploration of itself, of its musical possibilities on all levels; phonetic, technical, linguistic, rhythmic – even its spatial pattern on the printed page.⁴

¹ Qtd. in: Dreier, Ruth. "Bernard Rands." *Musical America* 34 (1984): 4-5; 40: 5.

² The composer acknowledges his indebtedness to these composers. Cf., for example, Bowen, M. "Bernard Rands." *Music and Musicians* 26.2 (1977): 18-22: 20. The correspondence between Rands and Berio is held by the Paul Sacher Foundation.

³ Tassel, Janet. "The Triple Life of Bernard Rands." *Harvard Magazine* 93.4 (1991): 32-9: 34.

⁴ Qtd. in: Ibid. Emphasis added.

Of all literary forms, the one which has attracted the composer the most is poetry, and particularly the verse compositions of his friends John Wain and Gilbert Sorrentino.⁵ Selected works of various Western poets lie at the core of his song cycle *Canti del Sole* (setting texts by Baudelaire, Celan, Rimbaud, Sinigalli, Dylan Thomas, and Ungaretti, among others), its "prequel," *Canti Lunatici* (based on "moon poems" by Joyce, Lorca, Plath, P. B. Shelley etc.), and its "sequel," *Canti d'Eclisse*, which are also based on a wide array of poetic text sources.

In some works, Rands combined politics and poetry, creating a type of *musique engagée*. *Metalepsis 2* (1971), for instance, is based on "Hymn to Steel" from *Wildtrack* (1965) by the English poet John Wain (1925-1994). Choosing this section of the poem, which is devoted to the oppressed people in Stalin's Soviet Union (whereby "steel" stands for "Stalin"⁶), was a straightforward political statement of the young composer, who noted in the preface that "the work should be performed in the spirit of a Requiem (with no denominational bias) for those who suffer and die as a result of tyrannies – commercial, political, or religious." In addition to Wain's poem, Rands incorporated texts from the Requiem mass, from Mao's Little Red Book, from the Communist manifesto, and the Benedictus from Palestrina's *Ut Re Mi Fa Sol La*.⁷

After his overtly expressed political views in *Metalepsis 2*, Rands moved away from the view that music is an apt vehicle of political protest. Particularly since the early 1990's, he has held the view that music should represent a (social) ideal rather than convey explicit social criticism:

I would wish my music to be politically involved exactly as Mozart's *Jupiter* symphony is. The *Jupiter* stands as a model of absolute perfection. It's a protest against anything that's less than that. Ultimately the very best, the most enduring, things are the things that change the world. I'm afraid I'm a little skeptical about anything less.⁸

Clearly, this humanistic understanding of a supposedly "politically involved" music is quite at odds with Dahlhaus' conception of *engagierte Musik/musique engagée* in non-

⁵ He worked closely with Sorrentino. Like Beckett, the latter is better known as a novelist than as a poet. Cf. Dufallo, Richard. "Bernard Rands." *Trackings: Composers Speak With Richard Dufallo*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, 125-38: 135-6.

⁶ Marsh, Roger. "Every Bloody Note." *Musical Times* 136 (1995): 397-402: 399.

⁷ A similar juxtaposition of religious and Socialist/Communist texts within the corpus of Beckett compositions is Paul-Heinz Dittrich's *Vokalblätter* (1972).

⁸ Qtd. in Tassel (1991), 35.

socialist⁹ societies: Based on the assumption that music is *per se* a medium representative of political conservatism, Dahlhaus maintains that composers of *musique engagée* have sought to rid music of its hermetic quality, instilling in it a "guilty conscience" (which applies to earlier Rands works such as *Metalepsis 2*).¹⁰

There is no denying that Rands' later disengagement from current political events in quest of universal and perennial human values marks a shift from works of overt social criticism¹¹ to more escapist, inward-turning, and metaphysical visions of artistic expression. One can hardly ignore the fact that this idealization of the composer's craft, apart from devising a present-day musical equivalent to Schiller's theater as moral institution, also draws on 19-century conceptions of the sublime (notably those of Kant and Schopenhauer¹²). Along these lines, music for Rands and like-minded composers represents a mainstay against the onslaught of chaotic reality, i.e. a consolatory force or better reality, as demonstrated in Rands' account of his poverty-stricken childhood in the aftermath of World War II in Sheffield, England: "In a city where war and poverty had made life dirty and demeaning, the integrity and joy of music had a profound impact on me."¹³ This shift from the political sphere into the realm of spiritual transcendence corresponds to a phenomenon which will be discussed below under the rubric "re-spiritualization." As will be seen, it is yet another manifestation of postmodern aesthetic democratization.

5.1.2. Influences

In unison with Sloterdijk's concept of "post-exclusivism," Rands' aesthetic self-concept is underpinned by a strong concern to be received and understood by a wide audience. As he said in 1986,

⁹ The German term occurs in the title of a chapter in Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt's *Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts*, where it primarily refers to music conveying leftist/socialist/communist ideas: Munich: Kindler 1969, new ed. 1979). 133-49.

¹⁰ Dahlhaus, Carl. "Thesen über engagierte Musik." *Musik zwischen Engagement und Kunst*. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1972 (= Studien zur Wertungsforschung 3). 7-19: 11.

¹¹ Cf., for example, Flammer, Ernst H. *Politisch engagierte Musik als kompositorisches Problem. Dargestellt am Beispiel von Luigi Nono und Hans Werner Henze*. Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1981; Hanheide, Stefan. *Pace. Musik zwischen Krieg und Frieden. Vierzig Werkporträts*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007.

¹² Kant, *Critique of Pure Judgement*, § 25, Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, § 39.

¹³ Qtd. in Jenkins, Carri. P. "Reaching for the Sublime." *Brigham Young University Magazine* 49.1 (1995): 30-35: 32.

[...] as a composer, I am concerned to be inclusive rather than exclusive, maximalist rather than minimalist, with a propensity for the intuitive rather than the scientific, and a tendency to be plebeian rather than aristocratic, colloquial in idiom, not oratorical. I am concerned to be responsive to musical manifestations and promptings wherever they occur and in whatever mode they appear. And thus I detect a great strength, richness in the musical diversity and pluralism of our time.¹⁴

This "inclusive" attitude has taken various forms in his works and statements. It is evident in a series of educational works, in the presence of aleatoric elements in many of his earlier compositions, and in the new sensuality of his works following his personal watershed (1975, the year when he permanently settled in the United States). In interviews, the composer has pointed out his humble background,¹⁵ his strict work ethic, and steady 'production rate,' which, as he claims, is rooted in his working-class childhood and adolescence.¹⁶ As with Kim, his self-narrativization through selective disclosure of autobiographical data follows the model of the American dream (even though Janet Tassel reports that Rands, like Kim, "seems genuinely repelled by the business of self-promotion"¹⁷).

Rands claims a compositional heritage no less impressive than that of his fellow Harvard 'Beckett composer.' Born in Sheffield, England, and educated at the University of Bangor, Wales, he studied in Italy with Roman Vlad, Luigi Dallapiccola, and Luciano Berio, and in Germany with Pierre Boulez and Bruno Maderna. It was the latter who premiered Rands' first work *Actions for six* in Darmstadt in 1963, through which Rands established himself as a rising talent among the Darmstadt avant-garde. It was his first composition teacher in Wales, Reginald Smith-Brindle, who had alerted Rands to the music of Dallapiccola. The young composer was impressed by its "discipline and rigor in its technical concerns,"¹⁸ which uniquely combine with an "Italianate quality" and "intense passion – both lyrical and dramatic."¹⁹ However, although Rands had adopted serial methods in his student years in Wales, he soon considered them too restrictive.²⁰ He felt that Dallapiccola became "a little pedantic about note order in serial procedures":²¹ His teacher was veering toward Webern's precision and rigor at a time

¹⁴ Dufallo, 131-2.

¹⁵ Tassel (1991), 34.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Tassel (1991), 37.

¹⁸ Dufallo, 126.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 130-1.

²¹ Ibid, 127.

when Rands himself "needed to find my way *out* of such things"²² and, instead, "open out the sound world of my music."²³ As a result, Dallapiccola suggested that he study with Berio and Maderna. Although Rands found Berio, who became not only a teacher, but also a mentor and friend,²⁴ to be scarcely less a "disciplinarian"²⁵ than Dallapiccola, he detected in his work an unequalled "feeling for musical history, and not just a knowledge of the facts [...]."²⁶ This intuitive musical knowledge is, as he argues, "fed and nurtured by experience of a broad spectrum of musics, by visual and linguistic stimuli, but one that is deeply rooted in one's cultural heritage."²⁷ Rands' penchant for the "intuitive rather than the scientific"²⁸ harks back to premodern and modern anti-scientism, as articulated, for example, by Bergson or James, who also elevated instinctive knowledge above scientific precision (see chapter 2.1.1.), or experience above knowledge. Regardless of their different compositional implementations of this belief, this also represents a point of contact between Rands and Feldman.

Berio's shadow looms large behind many of Rands' works. The composer himself admits that *Actions for Six* is modeled on Berio's *Circles* and *Differences*.²⁹ Likewise, the latter's *Sequenze* inspired Rands' *Memo* series (of which *Memo 2* is based on Beckett's *Not I*), insofar as each piece was conceived for a particular performer.³⁰ He also seems to have inherited from the Italian composer a deep fascination with James Joyce, setting 15 poems of the writer's collection entitled *Chamber Music* in his *Canti d'amor* (1991), in which he followed the model of Berio's *Chamber Music* of 1965.³¹ There are no statements by the composer as to when his interest in Beckett was awakened and whether it was through Berio (who, after all, wrote his *Sinfonia* as early as 1968) that Rands became fascinated with the euphony not only of Joyce's language, but also with that of Joyce's younger friend and disciple, Beckett. Considering, however, that Beckett's work was ubiquitous in intellectual circles after he received the Nobel Prize in 1969, it seems scarcely possible to pinpoint any particular event or person that initiated

²² Tassel (1991), 39.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid, 128.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 128.

²⁷ Ibid, 131.

²⁸ Dufallo, 132.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Bowen, 18.

³¹ For female voice, clarinet, and violoncello and harp.

his interest in the writer.

Maderna imparted to Rands a flexible approach to dodecaphony, which is evident in the partly free notation in *Actions for six*. All of Rands' compositions up to 1975 are pervaded by elements of what Roger Marsh refers to as "controlled improvisation,"³² i.e. forms of notation allowing for varying degrees of performative freedom. His *Sound Patterns 1-4* for young players (a composition revealing his enjoyment in teaching³³) are notated graphically. This strategy, of course, parallels the "free durations" and the ensuing notational eclecticism Feldman pursued between 1963 and 1969.

Rands' first two years as a Harkness fellow in the United States – first at Princeton, where he encountered Milton Babbitt, then at the University of Illinois, "where he felt more at home" (Roger Marsh)³⁴ with John Cage, Kenneth Gaburo, Salvatore Martirano, and Ben Johnson – further expanded his compositional horizon. He returned in 1969 to take up a teaching position at the progressive music department at the University of York until 1975.

5.1.3. Postmodernism in music II

Revisiting Kramer's debatable definition of the prototypical postmodern composer (cited in 4.1.3.), it appears as though Rands was one of the composers Kramer specifically had in mind when he formulated his criteria. Not only has Kramer written an essay on Rands' Beckett setting *...body and shadow...*, which he deems "a clear statement of musical postmodernism."³⁵ In addition, Rands also fully complies with Kramer's definition in quite a few other points: His early oeuvre displays the composer's keen socio-political awareness. What is more, he embraces a great scope of musical idioms of the distant and more recent past. In a similar way as other composers draw on ethnic elements as epitomes of purity and authenticity, Rands appropriates idioms from early music. This is evident, for example, in his *Madrigali* (1977), an instrumental cycle modeled on Monteverdi's Eighth Madrigal Book, in which the *Lamento della Ninfa* is

³² Marsh (1995), 398.

³³ Christopher Small has observed that "in Bernard Rands the composer and the teacher are inseparable, since as a composer he appears more concerned in communicating his own joy in sound and in creation than in constructing artifacts for his own amusement or glorification. This parallels his urge to share ideas and experience, so evident in conversation." (Small, Christopher. "Bernard Rands." *Musical Times* 107 (1967): 905-7: 905).

³⁴ Marsh (1995), 397.

³⁵ Kramer (2001), 43.

quoted in its entirety in the fifth movement.

As for other criteria put forth by Kramer, he does not shun technology as a means of music production, as is seen in *Response-Memo 1b* and *Ballad 3*. Furthermore, he evades an overarching compositional paradigm in favor of a pluralistic, or eclecticist, strategy. Overall, it seems fair to say that he has modified his idiom so as to appeal to a broader audience,³⁶ thereby, to use Leslie Fiedler's famous catch-phrase, "crossing the border" and "closing the gap"³⁷ between high- and lowbrow art. This becomes manifest in his broad understanding of music-making, which is in turn evident in the formal layout and instrumentation of numerous pieces: In his early compositions, Rands, much like his compatriots Cornelius Cardew,³⁸ Howard Skempton, Michael Parsons, and other composers involved with the *Scratch Orchestra*, displayed an acute interest in rendering his music accessible to nonprofessionals and, as in the case of *Sound Patterns 1-4*, to young amateur players who are not even familiar with musical notation. Likewise, he sought to redefine the roles of performers or vocal and instrumental forces within certain genres: In *étendre* (1974, "to spread out") for double-bass and eleven instruments, Rands invokes the solo concerto tradition. However, he replaces polarity and contrast with expansion and elaboration, and confrontation with integration.³⁹ *Actions for six* is to be performed "without a conductor whose function of co-ordinating and synchronizing is taken over by the players themselves,"⁴⁰ thus fostering communication between the players without a central agency and thereby creating the impression of free improvisation. The piece *Mésalliance* (1972) for piano and small orchestra, which gave rise to *Memo V* for solo piano (1975), is also imbued with quasi-improvisational traits.⁴¹ Finally, the aleatoric leeway he grants to the performers in *Sound Patterns* is not intended to showcase instrumental or vocal skills or to devolve responsibility to the performer, as Boulez might have suspected.⁴² Quite the contrary, it provided participatory elements with the objective of exploring sound worlds traditionally considered non-musical, such as the sound potential inherent in language.

³⁶ Kramer (1999), 7.

³⁷ Fiedler, Leslie, op. cit., 61-85.

³⁸ Morgan, 457.

³⁹ Schiffer, Brigitte. "London. Der Nachwuchs beschreitet traditionelle Wege." *Melos/Neue Musikzeitung* 1 (1975): 214-6: 262.

⁴⁰ Rands, Directions for: *Actions for six*. Universal Edition, 1965.

⁴¹ Marsh (1995), 399.

⁴² Boulez, Pierre. "Alea." *Werkstatttexte*. Frankfurt on the Main: Ullstein, 1972. 100.

5.1.4. 'Americanization' and 'New Spirituality'

Rands' aesthetic trajectory forms a continuous line if one describes his musical thinking as "recognizably humanistic and optimistic,"⁴³ as Bowen does, and if one views his vision of 'democratizing' art music as having shifted its focus from the position of the performer to that of the listener. In other words, his artistic production has been increasingly geared toward the audience's level of understanding and reception, in the sense that, since the mid-1970's Rands has undeniably attached more importance to harmonic and melodic straightforwardness.⁴⁴ Not at all coincidentally, this style shift toward simpler musical languages occurred around 1975, when Rands, having been offered a professorship from the University of California in San Diego moved to the USA, becoming an American citizen eight years later. Asked whether this geographic relocation effected a stylistic change, i.e. an "Americanization,"⁴⁵ he recounted that it was in the year 1975 that he had a fundamental insight: Noticing that the underlying harmony of Monteverdi's *Il Combattimento* is, as he puts it, "relatively simple,"⁴⁶ he concluded "that the underpinnings of much great and complex music are essentially simple and *have* to be so."⁴⁷ In this, Rands evidently deliberately disembeds the work from its historical context, thereby overlooking, for example, the much-debated controversy stirred up by Monteverdi's treatment of dissonances, as well as the intricate commingling of old and new techniques,⁴⁸ of *prima* and *seconda prattica*, that characterizes the Eighth Madrigal Book. Thus what Rands deems the perennial law of "simplicity" in music history is quite obviously a subjective appropriation of Monteverdi's style. The *Madrigali* of 1977 are Rands' most straightforward eulogy to the Eighth Book. More significantly, this return to simplicity parallels Feldman's and Kim's penchant for material reduction in the 1980s.⁴⁹

Amidst the experimentalists whom he encountered in San Diego, among them Roger

⁴³ Bowen, 20.

⁴⁴ Marsh (1995), 399.

⁴⁵ Hoyland, V. "Transatlantic Voice." *The Listener*, 29 Aug 1985. 30.

⁴⁶ Dufallo, 132.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Leopold, Silke. *Monteverdi und seine Zeit*. Laaber, 1993, 76.

⁴⁹ On Feldman's late works cf. Claren, 471-517.

Reynolds (also a "Beckett composer"⁵⁰), Pauline Oliveros, and Robert Erickson, Rands "was still a European composer, but now he seemed conservative and elitist."⁵¹ The process of "Americanization" first became manifest in his *Canti Lunatici* of 1981, and it culminated in the *Canti del Sole*, for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1984. Rands himself commented on the "Americanness" of his music:

As I work on this continent there is an evergrowing awareness of the richness of its culture, national unity and a communicability which expresses itself in a distinct musical language. I feel in the United States a sense of expansion and I thrive on the diversity; it enables me to work unencumbered aesthetically. The pioneering spirit of America serves as an antidote to my own musical background. There is an essence of energy here that I need to be involved with.⁵²

That this attunement to the taste of a wider audience was crowned with success is reflected in the vast number of performances of his works in the United States. By 1991, these amounted to over a hundred per year.⁵³ Meanwhile, "the British musical establishment rapidly forgot him," Marsh observed. "While the United States lavished honors and prizes on him (...), the British public heard almost nothing of his music."⁵⁴ Considering the advent of almost antipodal stylistic idioms, such as the "New Complexity" emerging in Britain at the same time, this oblivion is hardly surprising.

What is also noteworthy about Bernard Rands' creative trajectory in the last two decades is his effort to instill religious sentiment in his works. Perhaps this is also owing to the assimilation to a strand of art music which purports to "cross the border" to popular music (revealingly, Fiedler asserts that "pop art is always religious"⁵⁵), a tenet that, in its postmodern form, appears to have originated in minimal music. In 1999 a critic of the *New York Times* remarked that "[a] [s]earch for [s]pirituality [i]s the [s]tuff of [n]ew [d]isks," jeering that

[i]n the fin de millennium global village, channel-surfing and cross talk are the Human Condition. The eclecticism of a Gustav Mahler was once "difficult," too. Times have changed. Today his old heresy is glatt kosher. You are what you quote,⁵⁶ the more poly-

⁵⁰ Cf. his works: *Ping* (1968), *Voicespace II* (1973), *Odyssey* (1976), *Entre la lune et la galet* (1989-93).

⁵¹ Hoyland.

⁵² Rands, qtd. in: Hoyland.

⁵³ Tassel (1991), 34.

⁵⁴ Marsh (1995), 397.

⁵⁵ Fiedler, 84.

⁵⁶ An aphorism borrowed from Joseph Epstein's essay "Quotatious": "I think it was Gayelord Hauser, the nutritionist, who said that 'you are what you eat,' but if you happen to be an intellectual, you are what you quote." *A Line Out for a Walk*, op. cit., 94.

glot the better. Now, God knows, anything goes. (...) The well of spirituality shows no signs of running dry.⁵⁷

It is no surprise that Bernard Rands ranks among those "esoteric composers" whom the author addresses in his article, given his spirituality-tinged artistic credo: "Really, the commitment to be a composer – or an artist, or a poet – is no less than a commitment to seek that which is divine."⁵⁸ The last part of his Trilogy, *Canti d'Eclisse* (1992), uses extracts from Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Sun*, Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, and Pindar, and it exhibits apocalyptic, requiem-like sonorities, instrumentation and melodic gestures. The fact that works imbued with metaphysical transcendence have met with great acclaim⁵⁹ is best seen against the backdrop of postsecularism⁶⁰ and a general spiritual revival in Western societies, particularly in the United States.⁶¹ In this Rands' aesthetic stance converges with those of contemporaries such as Arvo Pärt and Dieter Schnebel,⁶² or his wife, the composer Augusta Read Thomas, who stresses that her "titles and texts are about things spiritual and things ecstatic."⁶³ As said above, it might also be regarded as a trait of musical postmodernism.⁶⁴ In regards to Rands' career, this move toward a new spirituality, just as Nono's *musique engagée*, is certainly symptomatic of a general turn against the rationalism and hermeticism of the Darmstadt composers which Rands had abandoned early in his career. To justify this move, he draws on his own biography, as shown above.

⁵⁷ Gurewitsch, Matthew. Article published in the *New York Times* on 28 Feb., 1999. 239.

⁵⁸ Jenkins, 35.

⁵⁹ Cf. Marcel Cobussen, who wrote on the parallel often drawn between the New Spirituality and postmodernism: "This musical spirituality is post-modern in the most literal and hackneyed sense of the word: it succeeds modernistic attainments of and in music and is vehemently opposed to them. [...] Spirituality and postmodernism act here on the same plane, beyond and against modernism (although the question could be raised to which extent the qualification of this music as *new* spirituality, in rejection of much of its twentieth-century past, is in fact a modernist trait). New spirituality is presented as an inextricable part of contemporary postmodernism, New Spiritual Music as a movement within the broader concept of postmodern music." In the end, he dismisses any binary opposition between New Spirituality and modernism, regarding New Spirituality as an outcome of the interrelation or "total reciprocity" (similar to Sloterdijk's conception of postmodernism as being "radically modern") between modernist and postmodernist thinking. Cf. *Thresholds: Rethinking Spirituality Through Music*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, 33-6.

⁶⁰ The term "postsecular society," here applied *avant la lettre*, was coined by Jürgen Habermas in response to the 9-11 attacks. It denotes a society marked by "ideological pluralism," in which religious values are no longer excluded from, but, on the contrary, incorporated into public discourse, and in which secular and religious institutions and communities cooperate on core issues. Cf. Habermas, Jürgen. *Glauken und Wissen*. Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp, 2001. Cf. also: Höhn, Hans-Joachim. *Postsäkular: Gesellschaft im Umbruch – Religion im Wandel*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007.

⁶¹ Douglas, Mary and Steven M. Tipton, eds. *Religion and America. Spirituality in a Secular Age*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1983.

⁶² Gröhn, Constantin. *Dieter Schnebel und Arvo Pärt: Komponisten als "Theologen"*. Berlin: Lit, 2006 (Diss. Univ. of Hamburg, 2006).

⁶³ Interview with Reed Perkins. *Journal of the Conductors Guild* 23 (2002): 2-16.

⁶⁴ Cobussen.

5.1.5. Rands and Beckett

From a biographical point of view, it seems only natural that Rands would turn to Beckett at some point in his career, given that many of his associates are Beckett-devoted composers and, what is more, he is no less erudite than Kim was, admitting to doing "more reading [...] than listening to music,"⁶⁵ and curiously, when talking about the *tertium comparationis* of Beckett and himself, he – deliberately or not – quotes Kim almost verbatim: "The aim of the poet, [Rands] says, is to find the essence, **to reduce everything to the maximum**, so to speak. And that's what composition is, too."⁶⁶ This triangle of admiration and inspiration between the two composers and the writer is also apparent in the fact that ...*among the voices...* is dedicated to Kim "in admiration and affection."

As discussed above, Rands is keen to infuse his music with a spiritual dimension, regarding the medium as a vehicle not of ephemeral ideologies, but of a perennial, universal quest for perfection in which the composer becomes the messenger of a divine truth. It may seem curious that a Beckett composer seeks to return to an aesthetic vision dating back to the late 18th and 19th centuries on which Beckett had turned his back. However, this again underscores the realm of hermeneutic possibilities opened up by Beckett's work. For example, Rands sees a political subtext in the Beckettian isolation of characters,⁶⁷ which turns the commonplace perception of Beckett as an apolitical writer on its head.

Rands has drawn on Beckett in ten of his compositions, several of which are derivative of one another. The *Memo* pieces *2b*, *2c*, and *2d* (1980) are all developed from the trombone piece *Memo 2* (1973).⁶⁸ *2b* and *2d* are music theater works for mime and trombone, and mime, trombone and string quartet, respectively. Rands suggests that an implicit dialogue between a "pair of lips"⁶⁹ is inherent in Mouth's monologue, which prompted him to place a character pair on stage, the trombone player, "dressed like an

⁶⁵ Tassel (1991), 36.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 36, emphasis added. Compare: Jeon, 8.

⁶⁷ Tassel (1991), 35.

⁶⁸ Kim's "Narrative," based on the mime play *Act Without Words*, was also composed for trombone four years earlier.

⁶⁹ Qtd. in Tassel (1991), 35.

old bum," and a girl, "who rarely moves."⁷⁰ As in Paul Rhys' version of *Not I*,⁷¹ albeit less automatically, the recurring phrases and rhythmic organization of Mouth's speech serve as a structural framework for the composition. The *Memo* pieces are the only Beckett composition not based on poetry.

Another Beckett piece, *...where the murmurs die...* (1995), is a spin-off of *...in the receding mist...* (1988). Apart from these Beckett-based works, there are other examples of this type of creative reprocessing in Rands' output: His opera *Vincent* (premiered in 2011) is an elaboration of his *Tambourin suites*, which were inspired by Vincent Van Gogh's painting techniques. *Étendre* (1974, for double-bass and ensemble) takes *Memo I* (1971, for solo double-bass) as a starting point. *Aum* (1974) grew out of *Formants I* (1965), *Memo 5* (1975) out of *Mésalliance* (1972). Comparable to intratextual recurrences of characters and motives in Beckett's output, this mode of artistic reproduction by way of reshuffling, arranging and transcribing old material, (e.g. by modifying the instrumentation, by extending or shortening it, or by converting it into an altogether different genre) boils down to the same autopoietic,⁷² i.e. self-referential vein of artistic creation that we have observed in Beckett. Apart from aesthetic motives, however, this *modus operandi* seems to be primarily a pragmatic solution for handling a large quantity of commissions and of meeting the high demand for performances of his works.

5.2. ...among the voices...

5.2.1. Beckett's poetry

Despite the enormous success of his plays and novels, Beckett's poetic output, as well as his fine translations of other poets' verses from French into English, tends to be sidelined by critics. Given their status as "intensely personal affairs," Philip Nikolayev argues, the poems fell through the cracks of 20th-century structuralist and poststructuralist discourses, which, as is well-known, tended to construe literary works as autonomous and non-autobiographical.⁷³ For a long time, Harvey's comprehensive study⁷⁴ remained

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ AM Publishing, 1995.

⁷² Luhmann, 33.

⁷³ Nikolayev, Philip. "Samuel Beckett's Poetry: In Place of an Introduction." *Fulcrum* 6 (2006): 442-453: 443-4.

⁷⁴ Harvey, Lawrence. *Samuel Beckett. Poet and Critic*. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1970.

the only staunch defense and recognition of Beckett's verse. It is against the backdrop of more recent, context-oriented literary schools such as the New Historicism that Beckett's works of poetry might finally be rediscovered and receive the critical attention which they deserve.⁷⁵

In view of the fact that his early poems in English and his late poem fragments in the 'Scottisier' notebook⁷⁶ or "What is the word" mark the beginning and the end of his writing career, this dismissive attitude toward the poems is particularly surprising. By contrast, the number of musical responses to his poetry, especially to his *Mirlitonnades*, which remain unavailable in English to date, only having been released in German,⁷⁷ is considerably large (see Appendix). These include not only the earliest Beckett setting by Henry Crowder (1930), but also works by Earl Kim (*Now and Then*), Richard Barrett, Nigel Osborne, Roger Redgate, Roger Reynolds, Rhian Samuel, Marcel Mihalovici, Stefano Gervasoni, Antonio Giacometti, Oliver Korte, Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, and György Kurtág. It appears that composers have been several steps ahead of literary critics in terms of recognizing the qualities of Beckett's verses, if only by exploiting the sheer euphony of the language.

If we agree with Coe that the formal style of Beckett's early poems in English from 1930-35, during which time the young Irishman was under the spell of the Parisian *transition* movement,⁷⁸ exhibit an unmistakably French idiom,⁷⁹ we may also assume in keeping with Fletcher's observation that the French writers he translated, notably Rimbaud and Apollinaire, exerted a strong influence on his own poetry.⁸⁰ While he adopted the "brilliant audaciousness of Rimbaud's imagery," Fletcher argues, his French poems,

with their lack of punctuation, their economy and brevity, their occasionally colloquial wording, are especially marked by the influence of Apollinaire; he has not, however, the latter's clarity, preference for rhyme, nor his superb and subtle sense of rhythm: naturally enough, for Apollinaire is a great French poet and Beckett is not.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Cf. *Fulcrum* 6 and the article by Nikolayev contained therein for recent publications and editions of Beckett's poetry.

⁷⁶ 'Scottisier' notebook, Beckett International Foundation Archives, University of Reading Library, MS 2901. Cf. Nixon, Mark. "'Unutterably faint': Beckett's Late English Poetry." *Fulcrum* 6 (2006): 507-521.

⁷⁷ Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp, 2005.

⁷⁸ Fletcher, John. "Beckett's Verse: Influences and Parallels." *The French Review* 37.3 (Jan. 1964): 320-331: 320.

⁷⁹ Coe, Richard N. "Beckett's English." *Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives*. Eds. Morris Beja et al. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983. 36-57: 45.

⁸⁰ Fletcher (1964), 321.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 322.

Fletcher also points out Pierre Jean Jouve's influence on Beckett, showing that both authors used free meter, elliptical syntax devoid of rhyme and assonance, a free rhythmic structure and "contrasting images."⁸² Finally, he argues that Tristan Tzara's proclivity for symbolic representation is echoed in Beckett's poetic style,⁸³ while he contends that analogies between T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" and "Sanies II" (i.e. the lines "And pray to God to have mercy upon us" and "Lord have mercy upon us") are either coincidental ("[s]ince both Beckett and Eliot turned to the French poets for inspiration") or parodical.⁸⁴

In his 1964 survey of Beckett's verse from 1930-1949, Fletcher maps out three main periods: The first one, spanning the first five years, he calls a "period of experimentation with little seriousness of content."⁸⁵ This judgmental assessment seems rather inappropriate unless one also dismisses his early prose-writing as frivolous and amateurish. "Whoroscope," after all, won the 1930 Nancy Cunard poetry competition for the best poem on the subject of Time.⁸⁶ Fletcher is, however, right in stating that the "compression" and "economy"⁸⁷ of "Alba" and "Echo's Bones" anticipate the third period of French poems, as does the succinctness of "Cascando," which constitutes the second stage in Beckett's poetic *œuvre* (ignoring "Ooftish," which was written two years after "Cascando," in which Beckett returns to the style of the first period). In light of the ever-widening definition of the genre, however, the standards by which Fletcher measures Beckett's poetry remain markedly narrow.

The fuzziness of generic boundaries within the Beckettian *œuvre*⁸⁸ makes it problematic to look for distinctly "lyrical" features in poetic output only. Likewise, it is difficult to tease apart "prosaic" and "poetic" traits in his late novels, or to pinpoint the "theatricality" of his *dramaticules*. To put the matter simply, his aesthetic as a whole evolved from a predominantly prosaic to a more poetic style as form and content became increasingly inseparable, culminating in the hardly translatable onomatopoetic style of his last works. As Martin Esslin argued, "all of Beckett's writing is ultimately poetry, if poetry is de-

⁸² Ibid, 322-3.

⁸³ Ibid, 324-5.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 326.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 327-8.

⁸⁶ SB, *Collected Poems* (1977), 141.

⁸⁷ Fletcher (1964), 329.

⁸⁸ For a more detailed account on the modernist precursors of generic crossovers, Joycean "poseproems" and Beckett's "imbedded" poetry, cf. Gontarski, S.E. "Samuel Beckett's 'Imbedded' Poetry and the Critique of Genre." *Fulcrum* 6 (2006): 478-83.

defined as a structure of language in which the manner of the saying is of equal importance with the matter that is said, in which indeed the manner of saying and the matter said completely and organically coincide."⁸⁹

This is evident in the fact that his early poems are marked by narrative qualities, while his late novels move closer to the realm of poetry. Thus in the same way as the media are interfused in his works, Beckett's genres dissolve into one another, becoming permeable to each other's prototypical properties, increasingly so in his later works. In addition, the development of his poetry parallels the multifarious manifestations of Beckett's skepticism of language throughout his career. As Daniel Albright puts it, "[f]or all of Beckett's rejection of mixing media, his texts are curiously fungible: his plays can be enjoyed as poems, his poems jiggle loose odd bits of action into the mind's theatre."⁹⁰ This idiosyncratic generic relativity helps shed light on his poetic trajectory better than any conventional set of poetic features could. From this viewpoint, the "perfect congruence of form and content"⁹¹ of the French verses is not to be construed as an attempt on the part of the author to perfect his command of poetry-writing by traditional standards. Instead, it is to be seen against the backdrop of the bilateral instability of word and sound and their de-hierarchized relationship, which gradually found its way into Beckett's work.⁹²

To sum up: Although these author-specific considerations make generic categorization and judgments on the quality of his poetic works rather difficult, Beckett's French poems, including the ones Rands selected for *...among the voices...*, are most likely to be considered "genuine poetry,"⁹³ to use another phrase by Fletcher, because they comply with many genre conventions. By contrast, the *Mirlitonades*, appreciated for their pure poetic qualities, i.e. for their "sheer beauty of language," as Roger Redgate explained his choice of text,⁹⁴ but also for their compactness and 'fragmentability,' seem to lend

⁸⁹ Esslin, Martin. "Samuel Beckett's Poems." *Beckett at 60*. Ed. John Calder. London: Calder, 1967. 55-60: 60.

⁹⁰ Albright, Daniel. "Beckett's Poems as Play." *Fulcrum* 6 (2006): 522-9: 527.

⁹¹ Fletcher (1964), 330.

⁹² Cf. Perloff, Marjorie. "Between Verse and Prose: Beckett and the New Poetry." *Critical Inquiry* 9.2 (December 1982): 415-34, reprinted in: *On Beckett. Essays and Criticism*. Ed. S. E. Gontarski. New York: Grove Pr., 1986. 191-206.

⁹³ Fletcher (1964), 330.

⁹⁴ E-mail received on January 12, 2010.

themselves particularly well to language experiments⁹⁵ such as Stefano Gervasoni's *Six pas*.

5.2.2. Rands' musical response

The composition to be analyzed in the following is the final part of a trilogy of Beckett pieces written in the late 1980's,⁹⁶ i.e. around the time of the author's last year. While the second and third pieces, *...in the receding mist...* and *...among the voices...*, have been largely overlooked, the first part of the trilogy, *...body and shadow...*, a work for large orchestra in two movements, has received some scholarly attention.⁹⁷ Peter Fischer's Schenkerian analysis demonstrates how the metaphor of interconnectedness of mind and body or form and content (a central theme in Beckett, as we have seen) is reflected in the relationship of the surface and deep structure⁹⁸ of the work. Kramer points out how, through a process of fragmentation, the "body" of the orchestra is broken down into echos or "shadows" of itself. Thus, both see the organic development of the material as an equivalent of the mind-body relation.

Rands has written extensively for chorus. His *Canti d'amor* (1991) and *Introit* (1992) are both for mixed chorus *a capella*. He also wrote *Bells* (1989), *Interludium* (1995) for large mixed chorus, and orchestra, as well as *Requiescant* (1996) for soprano, large mixed chorus and orchestra. According to Peter Horst Neumann, the tradition-laden genre of choir music is "the most popular, but probably also the most problematic" mode of musical performance, given its long history, which has witnessed the formation of a range of secular and ecclesiastical institutions as diverse as (medieval) hymn-singing, the 19th-century glee clubs (predominantly male), 20th-century political mass

⁹⁵ "Sprachexperimente," a term used by Reinhard Kager to designate the fragmentation of language and unconventional use of the human voice for compositional purposes, a trend emerging in the early 1960's, most prominent in compositions by Dieter Schnebel, Friedrich Cerha, Anestis Logosthetis, or Vinko Globokar. "Experimentelles Musiktheater: Von John Cage und Mauricio Kagel bis Helmut Lachenmann." *Musiktheater im 20. Jahrhundert*. Ed. Siegfried Mauser (= Handbuch der musikalischen Gattungen 14). Laaber, 2002. 329-42: 333-5.

⁹⁶ Fischer, Peter. *Structure and Organization in Rands' Work "...body and shadow..." and an Original Composition for Violin and Orchestra*. Dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1996, 1.

⁹⁷ Cf. Kramer (2001), Fischer (1996).

⁹⁸ Fischer (1996), 2.

choirs.⁹⁹ Then again, Neumann's observations refer primarily to German choral music. Needless to say that Rands' country of origin boasts its own strong choral tradition which is firmly rooted in English Cathedral music. Likewise, by the mid-20th century, choral singing was no less vital a tradition in the USA than it was in Europe. This is thanks to glee clubs which had been founded at educational institutions in the 19th century, following English models, and the *a cappella* movement which swept and is still sweeping across American colleges and universities.¹⁰⁰ Apart from this, however, it seems fair to say that Rands' interest in choir music since the late 1980's owes much to his shift to a more spiritual, transcendental conception of music, which of course involves a deliberate evocation of musical idioms as well as vocal and instrumental forces most closely associated with the genre of the oratory, in quite a similar way as demonstrated by Francis Poulenc or Olivier Messiaen in their sacred choir pieces written during and after the Second World War.¹⁰¹

In *...among the voices...*, a four-part song cycle for SATB and harp completed in 1988, Rands set to music the author's own English translations of four of his French poems. The outer movements are based on two short poems, comprising only four lines, while the middle movements are inspired by two longer poems. The movements follow one other *attacca*, with transitions played by the harp. The first Beckett poem, "Dieppe," in its concision and intensity reminiscent of a haiku, was written in 1937, apparently inspired by a passage from Friedrich Hölderlin's late poem "Der Spaziergang":¹⁰²

Der Spaziergang

Ihr Wälder schön an der Seite,
Am grünen Abhang gemalt,
Wo ich umher mich leite,
Durch süße Ruhe bezahlt
Für jeden Stachel im Herzen,
Wenn dunkel mir ist der Sinn,
Denn Kunst und Sinnen hat Schmerzen
Gekostet von Anbeginn.

⁹⁹ Neumann, Peter Horst. "Anmerkungen zum gestörten Verhältnis zeitgenössischer Poesie und Musik." *Beziehungszauber. Musik in der modernen Dichtung*. Eds. Carl Dahlhaus and Norbert Miller. Munich: Hanser, 1988. 9-18: 11. Also printed in: *Zum Verhältnis zeitgenössischer Musik und zeitgenössischer Dichtung*, ed. by Otto Kolleritsch. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1988: 68-77.

¹⁰⁰ Young, Percy M. and James G. Smith. "Chorus." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Vol. 5. Ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 1992. 767-86: 783-4.

¹⁰¹ It hardly needs to be pointed out that a general awareness of early music on the one hand and late-20th century trends such as liturgical reconstruction or the surge of Historically Informed Performance Practice on the other were mutually reinforcing, since composers now had specialized ensembles, i.e. professional chamber choirs, at their disposal.

¹⁰² *Collected Poems*, 143. Harvey, 218.

Ihr lieblichen Bilder im Tale,
 Zum Beispiel Gärten und Baum,
 Und dann der Steg, der schmale,
 Der Bach zu sehen kaum,
 Wie schön aus heiterer Ferne
 Glänzt Einem das herrliche Bild
 Der Landschaft, die ich gerne
 Besuch' in Witterung mild.
 Die Gottheit freundlich geleitet
 Uns erstlich mit Blau,
 Hernach mit Wolken bereitet,
 Gebildet wölbig und grau,
 Mit sengenden Blitzen und Rollen
 Des Donners, mit Reiz des Gefilds,
 Mit Schönheit, die gequollen
 Vom Quell ursprünglichen Bilds.¹⁰³

Although parallels between "Der Spaziergang" and "Dieppe" are rather difficult to pin down, some of the ideas contained in the poem are equally cornerstones of Beckett's work. In a similar manner as Beckett's protagonists turn to music and other media as vehicles of emotional memory to overcome the here-and-now, the lyrical subject in this poem seeks refuge and consolation in nature. However, his personal pain and the beauty of the Other, the sublime, blur into one another, as do nature and its imitation ("Bild", i.e. "image"), blue skies and a thunderstorm. The meta-aesthetic notion that art and contemplation ("Kunst und Sinnen", i.e. "art and contemplation") are a source of suffering rather than pleasure might have appealed to Beckett.

In the 1977 edition, the translation of last line reads: "towards the lights of old,"¹⁰⁴ from which it can be concluded that Rands worked with the old edition, although a new one was already available. This is also reflected in the last poem, "I would like my love to die," in which the last line was changed (by Beckett) from "mourning the first and last to love me" first into "mourning her who sought to love me" and then into "mourning her who thought she loved me."¹⁰⁵ Rands opted for the original version: the most optimistic one.

The poem "Dieppe" was conceived in a rather dismal period of Beckett's life. If, following Esslin's suggestion,¹⁰⁶ one were to look for autobiographical strands in the poems, the "lowered vitality"¹⁰⁷ expressed in these works arguably stems from a traumatic

¹⁰³ Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Sämtliche Gedichte. Text und Kommentar*. Frankfurt on the Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005, 458.

¹⁰⁴ *Collected Poems*, 143.

¹⁰⁵ *Collected Poems*, 144.

¹⁰⁶ "Of all of Samuel Beckett's writing the slim corpus of his poetry contains his most directly autobiographical utterance." Esslin (1967), 55.

¹⁰⁷ Harvey, 183.

event: In 1936, Beckett was nearly stabbed to death by a burglar in Paris. Stasis, solitude, the inseparability of mind and body, and the dependence of the self on society, are common themes of the poems in French written between 1937 and 1939. Sameness is translated into recurring tides, an image which is also found in his late poem "Roundelay." Despite its bleak beginning, there is what one could almost call an equilibrium between solitude and company, whereas in most of the other early French poems, the poet aspires to retreat from the outside world into the microcosm of the mind.¹⁰⁸ The archetypal division between darkness and light¹⁰⁹ is reflected in the equal division into two halves. In the French version, darkness is also conveyed onomatopoeically by the back vowel "o" in "encore" and "mort," and the transition between darkness and light, gloom and hope, despair and joy is reflected in the gradually lightening vowels. Moreover, the turning-point of the poem, the willful effort to bridge the gap between the two states of being, silent contemplation and (inter-)action, is expressed through a series of plosive sounds in the third line of the original,¹¹⁰ whereas the predominance of voiced consonants and liquids in the fourth line results in a "legato"¹¹¹ effect, and thus a sense of (re)connection of the narrator with the "lights of old." Harvey clearly associates the beach on which the lyrical subject stands with the "domain of death"¹¹² from which the narrator seeks to escape by approaching a locus of civilization. Invoking the imagery in the *neither* libretto, however, one may add that it is the "unspeakable home" of a final sanctuary towards which the narrator moves.

It was thanks to Debussy and Ravel that the harp was rediscovered as a solo-, chamber-, and orchestral instrument at the beginning of the 20th century, and thanks to composers such as Paul Hindemith, Ernst Křenek, Darius Milhaud, Isang Yun, and Witold Lutosławski that the instrument has occupied an important place in the modern concert repertoire. To Rands, the harp, which introduces the cycle and accompanies the choir, represents not only a link to his Italian teachers Berio and Maderna, from whom he inherited the fascination with that instrument: he also considers it a symbol of his deep

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 215.

¹⁰⁹ See chapter 4.2.

¹¹⁰ Harvey, 216.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 217.

¹¹² Ibid, 4.

interest in Celtic culture,¹¹³ which, as he reports, developed during his time at the University of Wales. Just as Kim's adaptation of allegedly Asian concepts in his music, this ethnization is indicative of the tendency in contemporary composing to draw on one's own cultural tradition or to appropriate folkish elements of a geographic area close to one's place of origin. Yet in the second half of the 20th century the harp was employed throughout the world by musicians and composers and representing the full range of musical styles and traditions, not simply confined to a few cultural centers.¹¹⁴ That being the case, Rands' equation of the instrument with Celtic culture seems no more profound or substantiated than Kim's reference to the haiku. Apart from this, Rands does not compose for the Welsh or the Gaelic variant of the instrument. Given the instrument's long-established semantic content, however, its frequent utilization in Rands' works clearly underscores his quest for spirituality: "Die Natur der Harfe hat viel Feyerliches, Andächtiges, Geisterhebendes,"¹¹⁵ C. F. D. Schubart commented in 1806 on the nature of the instrument of traveling bards and troubadours, traditionally believed to be equipped with transcendental powers.¹¹⁶ A classic example of this can be found in the "Harfenspieler" chapters and songs from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Rands' choice of this instrument clearly resonates with Beckett's fascination with the "Harfenspieler" (Mark Nixon has pointed out that the phrase "Heavenly Powers" in *Eh Joe* is a direct reference to Goethe's "himmlische Mächte" in the third "Harfenspieler" song¹¹⁷) and with his familiarity with medieval lyric and the troubadour tradition.¹¹⁸ Much like in Wilhelm Müller's *Hurdy-Gurdy Man*, the harp player's sad songs, in Goethe's *Bildungsroman*, serve as an emotional outlet for Wilhelm's grief.¹¹⁹ Wilhelm feels significantly relieved by listening to the harp-accompanied songs and afterwards finds himself in a state of exhilaration. The notion of purifying the soul by

¹¹³ Harris, Richard Leigh. "Bernard Rands at 50." *Musical Times* 126 (1985): 532-4: 532; Tassel (1991), 36. The 'cello concerto *Hiraeth* (1987) is based on a Welsh folk tune.

¹¹⁴ Sowa-Winter, Sylvia. "Geschichte der europäischen Harfe und Harfenmusik." *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sachteil 4. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 21996. 62-85.

¹¹⁵ Schubart, Christian Friedrich Daniel. *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*. Vienna, 1806, 305.

¹¹⁶ For a detailed history of harp music and iconography, cf. Wagner, Renate. *Die Harfe. Entwicklung kompositorischer Möglichkeiten im Spannungsfeld zwischen Symbolgehalt und bautechnischer Gegebenheit, 1760-1820*. Diss. Univ. of Bonn, 1987. Cf. also: Kalusche, Bernd. *Harfenbedeutungen. Ideale, ästhetische und reale Funktionen eines Musikinstruments in der abendländischen Kunst. Eine Bedeutungs-geschichte*. Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang, 1986.

¹¹⁷ Nixon (2006), 507-21. Cf. Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Part I (Book 2, Chapter 13). Stuttgart: Cotta, 1904 (= *Sämtliche Werke* 17), 155.

¹¹⁸ Zilliacus, Clas. *Beckett and Broadcasting. A Study of the Works of Samuel Beckett for and in Radio and Television*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1976, 105.

¹¹⁹ Goethe (1904), 155.

means of the transcendental power of music, and particularly through singing,¹²⁰ is of course at odds with the status of music in Beckett's works (as concluded in chapter 2.2.). At first glance, it may seem counterintuitive that Rands evokes the same metaphysical ideals ascribed to music in the late 18th and 19th centuries from Beckett was keen to depart. However, juxtaposed with modern harmonies and a relatively free treatment of the poetic forms and language, the angelic connotation of the harp, as well as its spiritual sound quality, emblematic of the "music of the spheres,"¹²¹ is recontextualized and defamiliarized in Rands' poem settings, much like Beckett recontextualized the *Enueg*, a Provençal troubadour form, in his poems of the same name, as well as in "Alba" and "Serena I-III," written in the early 1930's.

Unlike Feldman's and especially Kim's settings, instruments and voices in *...among the voices...* remain largely separate in terms of motivic material, as evident in his *Canti trilogy*. That is, the instruments serve as a mood-setting backdrop for the voice(s). Along with the bell-like repeated perfect fifth C-G at the beginning, evoking, like the "winds of winter" passage in Kim's *...dead calm...*, Schubert's *Hurdy-Gurdy Man*, and likewise conjuring up the monotonous sentiment of the Schubert piece, the two grace notes Eb and Db, together with C of the ostinato fifth, form a descending three-tone melody.

"... among the voices ..."

bernard rands

I

♩ = 56

(Bell-like) i.v. sempre

mp sempre

Harp

Ex. 46: *...among the voices...*, beginning (© UE18845L).

¹²⁰ "eines Gesanges [...], der die Seele dahin erhebt, wohin der Redner wünscht, daß sie ihren Flug nehmen möge [...]." Ibid, 157.

¹²¹ Wagner, 146.

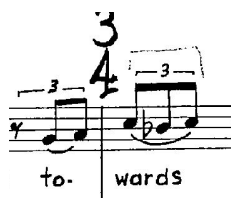
The bell motive brings to mind neither the playfulness of Liszt's *La Campanella* nor the death-knell of a requiem bell (as in Rands' *Canti d'Eclisse*). Instead, it appears as a naturalistic depiction of three bells (joined by a fourth in m. 7) swinging irregularly, the pitches Db, Eb, and the perfect fifth anticipating the monosyllabic "ebb" that Rands moves to the beginning of the piece. The pendulum motion of the bell motive – a seminal figure throughout the entire cycle which recurs in various transformations – prepares the scene for the sameness and circularity marking the first two lines of the poem. This bleakness is echoed by the closeness of the hummed pitches, again Db and Eb, and it also makes itself present in Rands' extension of the first two lines: "ebb," which initiates the vocal part, is enunciated eight times, "again," the fourth word, occurs seven times, "last" eight times, and "dead" is repeated nine times (see below).

ebb last ebb again ebb
 dead shingle again dead
 last ebb
 dead shingle the last ebb again
 the dead the last ebb dead again shingle
 the last ebb the dead shingle again the last dead shingle again the dead the last dead
 shingle
 again the last ebb the dead shingle the turning then the steps
 steps the steps towards the lighted town

As with Kim's settings, identical words are placed into modules of similar melodic, rhythmic and timbral configuration. In Rands' eight-part choral setting, vocal register is deployed as a means of prosodic differentiation: In the first two lines of the poem, the vowel in "last" and the "shwa" sound in "the" (which is, furthermore, in an unstressed syntactic position) are set to a darker timbre – the bass voices joining in – whereas the central and front vowels in "ebb," "again" and "shingle" are sung in the middle and high registers. "Dead" is set to the entire vocal spectrum six times out of nine.

Although he obviously sought to translate the aspect of sameness of the Beckett poem into music, Rands rejected a rigid macro- and microstructural organization. The reiterations of motivic cells, above all those in the harp, are marked by constant variation. The harp ostinato, from the outset never entirely regular in timing and sound (alternating between regular and octave flageolets), becomes increasingly ornamented. As with Kim, pitch material is introduced little by little. And similar to Kim's *modus operandi*, Rand's

piece starts off with a small set of pitch material, the tetrachord 0 1 3 7 (4-Z29;¹²² also subset of the Phrygian mode), to which, over the course of the piece, the other eight pitches are added: 9 in m. 6, 4 in m. 15 (last grace note in the harp), 6 in m. 21 (second bass), 10 in m. 32 (grace note, harp), 5 and 11 at the (literal) turning point of the poem, in m. 43, 2 in m. 45, and finally 8 in m. 48 (G# in the harp). Thus not until the end of the vocal delivery of the first poem have all 12 pitches sounded at least once. The transformation from a thin texture to a dense fabric of tone clusters, suggestive of Messiaen's vocal writing, culminates at the literal "turning" point of the poem (mm. 42-4) prepared by the accented "dead" marked *f* in m. 41. In m. 45, a new motive is introduced by the harp and then passed on to the voices on "towards." This motive recurs throughout the remainder of the cycle.



Ex. 47: ...among the voices..., m. 45 (© UE18845L)

The greatest density of pitch classes is exhibited in mm. 47-49 ("towards the lighted town"), the most colorful passage in this first poem. Here, all twelve pitches sound within these three bars. The harp inserts a decorative heptatonic run (C D Eb F# G# A Bb). As Feldman in *neither* and Kim in *Earthlight*, the composer attached great importance to the light imagery in this poem. In analogy to physical light, it is set to the widest range of (tonal) frequencies, representing richness and at the same time providing a contrast to the monotony of the recurring tides. The four pitches sustained by the female

¹²² Forte, 179.

voices (E Ab Bb Eb) then serve as a transition to the ensuing harp solo. They are incorporated into the hexachord C Eb E G Ab B upon which the beginning of the harp solo (quite reminiscent of the cadenza sections in Ravel's *Introduction et Allegro*, 1905) is based. Taking the bell motive as a point of departure, the harp first seems to reprise the beginning of the piece. Pseudo-improvisational ornaments are then interpolated between the bell-like fifths. The major second figures initiating the ornamental runs (mm. 58, 63, 67) are akin to the "towards" motive in the soprano, which returns in its entirety in the last section of the harp solo (m. 75-81). Starting in m. 77, a sense of tonality is established, first by a Minor-9 chord on F marked *ff*, then by the harmonic minor scale on C in mm. 79-81. The 'subdominant' F is stated repeatedly in mm. 80-1, and the tritone B-F in m. 81 in the outer voices on "way" (m. 83) is anticipated by the harp in m. 81.

The remaining three poems selected for this cycle of songs were also originally written in French in 1948, about a decade after "Dieppe." In contrast to the prewar years, the time between 1946 and 1950 was the most productive period of Beckett's life, one which gave birth to *Mercier and Camier*, *Godot*, the *Trilogy*, *Premier Amour/First Love*, and other works. Although his productiveness might have brought about a change in terms of topics and themes, the six French poems written in the late 1940s "can hardly be called optimistic pieces overflowing with joie de vivre. Their author has learned how to manage, how to survive, no more. On the whole, the 1946-1948 group represents a developing continuity more than a break."¹²³ However, the poems bespeak a shift in terms of style, moving towards a more poetic, speech-sound-oriented idiom that was characteristic especially of his middle and late period.

The poem starting "My way is in the sand flowing" reiterates the themes of temporal ("beginning"/"end," "le temps d'une porte" [in the French version]), and spatial ("between the shingle and the dune," "thresholds," "the space of a door") enclosure.¹²⁴ Gontarski has suggested that the sand metaphor is to be construed as an allusion to the transgression of generic borders,¹²⁵ as discussed above. In other words, it represents a metafictional self-reflection on the part of the author.

¹²³ Harvey, 223.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 226.

¹²⁵ Gontarski (2006), 479.

The condition of enclosure is also implicit in the images of "summer rain" and "mist" limiting the lyrical subject's vision.¹²⁶ The image of the mist receding before the lyrical subject and closing in behind him as well as life's pursuing and eluding him simultaneously, leaving him to experience only the insufferable *durée* of the present moment, are suggestive of the ubiquitous *enantiodromia*, the "to and fro" trajectory of complementary, symmetrically-shaped concepts¹²⁷ i.e. in *Rockaby*, the *neither* text (in which we also find the "door image"), or in both *Acts Without Words*. As has been demonstrated, this interconnectedness of driving and being driven, of past and future (e.g. the Bergsonian spool metaphor in *Krapp*, cf. chapter 4.2.3.), or of presence and absence may also be found in the agent-patient character constellations of *Comment C'est, Imagination*, or *What Where*. As far as this particular poem is concerned, "[p]ast and future are hidden, and the present is reduced to the sameness of sand and mist,"¹²⁸ in Harvey's words.

Despite its dark undertones, there is no clear indication of the lyrical subject's "longing for death," a motive suggested by Harvey.¹²⁹ Rather, the narrator's intention and position in the world through which he moves is left equivocal. In the French version, this indeterminate causality between the will and the world is inherent in the verb "suis," which is the first person form of both *être* ("to be") and *suivre* ("to follow"). The English translation, "my way is..." reinforces this ambiguity. To a certain degree, this foreshadows *neither*, in which, in lieu of a verb, Beckett chose the phrase "to and fro." As in "Dieppe," the fusion of form and content in the French version is partly lost in the English translation, e.g. the sibilants in the first line representing the flow or the ephemerality of existence, or the onomatopoeic "laughter" ("rideau"), the almost jocular concatenation of front vowels in line seven.

In Rands' setting, the onomatopoeic qualities of the poem are partly translated into tone-painting. "Flowing" ("glisse" in the French version), sung to an undulating melodic figure, is accompanied by glissandi that recur throughout the rest of the cycle. The first glissando in mm. 84-5 starts and ends with the transitional ornamental motive from the harp solo at the end of the first piece, occurring for the first time in m. 63. The bell mo-

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ See chapter 2.1.3.

¹²⁸ Harvey, 228.

¹²⁹ Harvey, 228.

tive functions as a syntactic link. That is, it recurs between verses, although in variegated intervallic configurations, in mm. 89-90, extended to a full chord, in mm. 99, 102-4, 110-115 (including the flageolet "echo" in m. 113) and finally in the transition from the second to the third movement. The predominance of F at the beginning of the second piece promotes the appearance of a tonal center. In addition, an air of late-19th-century tonality is created by the melodic line of the tenor, which briefly hints at C-minor, the 'Tristan chords' on "sand" and "dune," drawing attention to B and E as possible tonal centers, and the 'dominant-ninth' chords, suggestive of several possible tonalities, on "shingle" (m. 86) and "life" (m. 96). As opposed to the limited pitch material signifying sameness at the beginning of the first poem setting, Rands plays with constantly shifting tonalities by stringing together unrelated harmonies. Combined with the harp glissandi, these ephemeral tonalities could be conceived as a musical equivalent to the flux of life and the transience of experience figured in the second poem.

As we have seen, major seconds and fifths were the dominant intervals of the first movement. By contrast, from the beginning of the second movement, both melody and harmony are replete with tritones, especially the third verse ("the summer rain..."), where tritones foil the otherwise elated atmosphere produced by the onomatopoeic "summer rain" glissandi. Even the minor or major second of the wavelike up-and-down motive in the harp is transformed into a tritone in mm. 94 and 101. The prevalence of the tritone in the repertoire of the late 19th and 20th centuries (e.g. Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faun*) is, according to Marie Louise Göllner, owing to its singular neutrality.¹³⁰ Liberated from its earlier status as a dissonance, it became an emblem of order and symmetry (since it divides the octave into two equal halves) in atonal and twelve-tone music, where it was often used particularly often as a dyad.¹³¹

In Rands' composition, it retains traces of its original ambivalence, illustrating the bittersweetness of summer rain, which is also reflected in the dissonant chords (also consisting of one or two tritones) derived from the bell motive in mm. 99-104.

As is evident in the setting of the third and the fourth verses, Rands does not retain the poem's formal design. Instead, he structures his composition according to the syntactic and semantic properties of the poem: The fourth line, "my life harrying fleeing," is ex-

¹³⁰ Göllner, Marie Louise. "Der Tritonus in der Komposition des 20. Jahrhunderts." *Quo vadis musica?*, op. cit., 77-81, 78.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

tended by means of word repetitions in the Alto and Tenor, allowing for a melismatic word-setting and thus a quickening pace in the text delivery which, accompanied by a series of glissandi, corresponds to the semantic content, i.e. "harrying" and "fleeing." The line closes on the same 'Tristan chord' (Ab-Eb-B-F; in the original chord, F-B-D#-G#) that sounds on "sand" and "dune" at the beginning of the stanza, although it is now transferred to a higher register, and accented. The tritones in the bell motive (mm. 110-4) maintain the ambivalent mood of the poem and setting, echoing the peak tones sung by the female voices, the tritone B4-F5. The vocal register remains high in the verse that follows, and as in the first movement, voices are split into two groups. In a similar way as the word "lighted" in the first poem setting, "mist" (m. 118) – another unknown locus promising "peace," ergo: deliverance from the here-and-now – is set to clustered melodic lines, each one circling around a separate tone (Ab, D, A, F, Db, G, Bb, Eb). Along with the linguistic material, this melodic figure is prepared by a shorter figure hummed on the consonant "m" in m. 115. This of course is straightforward tone-painting illustrating the amorphousness of the fog hovering before the lyrical subject's eyes and blurring his vision. Thus Rands' setting highlights the uncertainty, the unspeakability of the "receding mist," the fact that it is the unknown, the future, from which the individual draws the unfading hope to obtain the most perfect knowledge of its own nature, as Schopenhauer suggested (see chapter 3.2.2.).¹³² The next verse, starting in m. 120, is opened and accompanied by the up-and-down harp motive, returning us to the beginning of the second movement. In m. 124, the harp reprises the transition from the first to the second movement (m. 81). Subsequently, in a type of coda, the narrator's yearning for clarity is translated into a unison section marked *meno mosso* and sung *a capella*, without the allusive timbre of the harp, before the vocal part closes with a resolute "quasi parlando" passage.

In the harp intermezzo following this poem setting and preparing the next one, we hear not only reiterations of the bell motive, but also, in mm. 132-3 and 136, the triplet figure underlying "towards" in the first movement, the "receding" motive derived from the women's voices in m. 117 (m. 140-1), and the up-and-down figure in m. 144.

Of the poems selected for the present song cycle, "What would I do..." testifies most

¹³² Schopenhauer, Arthur. *Sämtliche Werke*, Vols. I, II: *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I, II*. Ed. Wolfgang Frhr. v. Löhneysen. ³1859. Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp, 1986, 327.

strongly to the significance of Beckett's poetic output, which, especially in relation to his other works, can hardly be overestimated. Harvey wrote about the poem that "[i]t contains in embryonic form the essentials of the artistic enterprise to come,"¹³³ and Esslin stated that the last six lines "open up, through allusion, a vast treasure-house of the past, while, at the same time forecasting all of Beckett's writing which is as yet to come."¹³⁴

Although it is true that its two-part structure evokes the layout of a sonnet, it would unquestionably contradict Beckett's aesthetic vision to present the domains of the mental and material world as "clear-cut alternatives"¹³⁵ and as mutually exclusive,¹³⁶ as suggested by Harvey. Rather, the intertwining of "body and shadow," the interpenetration of matter and mind, is reflected in the internal structure of both sections. The first stanza is centered symmetrically around the fifth line, "body and shadow together are engulfed," which served as a basis for Rands' first composition in this group of Beckett pieces, *...body and shadow...* (1988). The dichotomies "world" (l. 1) and "silence" (l. 6), "void" (l. 3) and "pantings"/"frenzies" (l. 7), "ignorance" (l. 3) and "love" (l. 7), "wave" (l. 4) and "sky" (l. 8) delineate the same paradox that underlies nearly all his works: the enantiomorphic dynamic between inner and outer reality ("inner and outer shadow"/"self" and "unself" in *neither*).

Also found in *Rockaby* and *The Lost Ones*, the yearning and search for "another" or "lost one" (l. 11) sharing the pain of living in an ever-changing reality and providing a *raison d'être* for the self through perception appears to be the motivation behind the creation of character duets or "pseudocouples" such as Didi and Gogo or Hamm and Clov. The last two lines, in which the lyrical subject addresses the paradox of his anonymity, not despite, but because of his distinctness, "among the voices voiceless/that throng my hiddenness," from which Rands' composition derives its title, seem almost disjunct from the poem, as though constituting a lyrical form on its own.

The poem exhibits the same topic-comment structure as Didi's and Gogo's dialogues: The first stanza poses an initial question, setting up a hypothetical situation, which is then answered 'empirically' by the lyrical subject ("what I did yesterday and the day before") in the second stanza. The answer (relating to the facticity of past events), seam-

¹³³ Harvey, 240.

¹³⁴ Esslin, 59.

¹³⁵ Harvey, 241.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 243.

lessly attached to the reiterated question (relating to a hypothetical future) in line 11, leaves virtually no room for the present moment. Images of the future merge into images of the past. Thus, in a characteristically Beckettian manner, the lyrical subject compulsively fills the void of the present with ruminations on the past, based on which he creates narratives so as to escape into the realm of the fictional and hypothetical. This notion is also present in the last poem set by Rands, "I would like my love to die." The poem gave rise to the longest movement in the cycle. More than the other songs, it moves away from pure 'word-setting' (*Textvertonung*) toward 'language composition' (*Sprachkomposition*), the latter exploiting and foregrounding the phonetic qualities of the text while de-emphasizing the semantic level.¹³⁷ Talking about musical settings rather than poetry, one might prefer Kager's term "language experiments."¹³⁸ It is most notably the sibilant "s," of which Beckett used heavily in the English version and which Rands also highlights in his setting of the Gaelic poem in his *Canti lunatici*. In the Beckett poem, the unvoiced speech sound literally indicates the speechlessness of the lyrical subject.

Form and content merge not only in Beckett's poem, but also in Rands' music. The composer selects the words "murmurs" and "throng," which do not occur until the sixth and the last line, as overarching metaphors. From the outset, the image of a "murmuring throng" gives rise to a dense and heterogeneous vocal fabric of whispered, spoken and sung phrases and hummed notes interspersed with simultaneously articulated "w"-words ("what," "without," "where"). Reminiscent of his teacher Berio's language-deconstructing text collages, (*Thema-Omaggio a Joyce*, *Visage*, and above all his *Sinfonia*), this superimposition of multifarious speech sounds and melodies and the staggered vocal entries render the first four lines of the poem virtually incoherent, while highlighting the w-words which are uttered in unison. The idiosyncratic disjointed syntax of the poem virtually lends itself to such a fragmentary language treatment. By stripping the text of its syntactic framework, Rands leaves only a set of existential questions to be asked and not to be answered, following the model of Beckett's narrative: "Where now? Who now? When now?" This is how *The Unnamable* begins.

The harp plays a rhythmically augmented variant of the figures heard in mm. 144-7 in upward-downward movements, with the bell motive sounding intermittently in tritone

¹³⁷ Cf. Gruhn (1978), 152-60.

¹³⁸ Cf. Kager (2002).

configurations. The hexachord scale unfolding above the Great E (B C# D F G Ab) consists of a regular succession of whole-tone, semitone and three-semitone steps. It is, therefore, a recursive scale, thus (as with Kim's) doing justice to the Beckettian penchant for circular structures, as does the piece's rondo-like form:

part	mm.	text (ll.)
A	148-161	1-5
B	162-180	interlude
A'	181-190	6-9
B'	191-199	interlude
A''	200-212	10-13
C (coda)	212-234	14-15

Fig. 16

This hexachordal scale material is then also employed in the two voices delivering passages of sung text, e.g. alto 1 and 2 in mm.149-51, soprano 1 and tenor 1 in mm. 152-3, and in the rhythmically augmented variants of the up-and-down motive appearing, for example, in both tenors in mm. 149-51.

The symmetrical layout of the first stanza is not reflected in the musical structure. Instead, the central line, "body and shadow together are engulfed," is interlocked with the preceding verse. Moreover, it is not in any way foregrounded by means of texture, dynamics, or other parameters, aside from the synchronous ending on the first beat (m. 161). This clear-cut final quietus brings the consecutive entries of the voices to an abrupt end. A harp intermezzo on p. 26, recapitulating the solo section at the end of the second movement, is followed by the second quartet of verses, which is set in a similar fashion as the first one, apart from minor adjustments to the text: Before "the murmurs die," the texture is thinned out, and the freely spoken "murmurs" do not join in until m. 184. "Silence" (mm. 182-3) is spoken by the alto only. Ornamenting triplet figures borrowed from the harp accompaniment are sung by the first soprano and the second tenor on "love." Another harp intermezzo separates the first stanza, the "topic," from the second, the "comment." It is in keeping with the poem (and with Beckett's aesthetic as a whole) that, after the initial question "What would I do," which is spoken in unison, the lyrical subject's thought experiment remains within the confines of the same musical scenario as before, including the machinery of voices and the incessant loops of the harp accompaniment. On the one hand, this corresponds with the realization of inescapability, of the impossibility of separating the "little" from the "big" world, from which the

Beckettian individual feels distinct and alienated, thus seeing in it a cause for suffering. On the other hand, the anonymity "among the voices" also provides a sense of protection, i.e. "hiddenness."

The theme of "I would like my love to die" bears quite a resemblance to the passage starting "She comes in the ashes" in *Words and Music*, featuring the same complementarity of love on the one hand and the presence of the loved one on the other: "who...loved could not be won or...won not loved."¹³⁹ Sartre posited that the being-for-itself tends to intuit the "other," in this case the loved one, through its absence (*le néant*),¹⁴⁰ as exemplified by the relationship between the protagonist Antoine Roquentin and the character Anny in *Nausea*. The lyrical subject in the present poem desires the death of his lover. In other words, Beckett invented a fictional character who looks upon a fictionalized version of himself. Just as the escape into a hypothetical situation in "What would I do," this appears to signify a yearning for deliverance from the void and the tedium of the here-and-now, so unsustainable a state of mind that even mourning is preferable over the stupefaction and the dulling of the senses caused by habit. Despite its brevity, the poem foreshadows the creative self-reflexive microcosms of the later prose, in which the starting point is an abstract *tabula rasa* (*Imagination Dead Imagine*) or a personified one (the featureless figure of *Watt*). In this sense, one might go so far as to say that this concise poem bears first signs of "metapoetry," a label attributed by Konrad Schoell to the *Mirlitonnades*.¹⁴¹

The schizophrenic, somewhat derisive tone of the last poem set in the cycle is translated into fleeting, 'tainted' tonalities undercutting primitive, monodic melodic lines. Starting with the bell-motive in the harp, which is extended to a hexad, this final movement, as much as it inclines toward definite tonalities, is built on ambiguity from the very outset. The initial hexad could be construed in several different ways, for example, as a B-minor triad with a superimposed A-major triad, or as a minor subdominant (B-minor seventh chord with an added major second and perfect fourth) in F# minor or in C# minor (F#-minor seventh chord with added major fourth and minor sixth). Most obviously, the hummed 16-bar melody, with its warm, singable simplicity reminiscent of the *Canti*

¹³⁹ CDW, 290-1.

¹⁴⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, op. cit.

¹⁴¹ Schoell, Konrad. "Die Aufhebung der Gattungsgrenzen und die Metaliteratur." *Samuel Beckett und die Medien*, op. cit., 49-64.

d'Amor, suggests F# as a tonal center. Its hexachordal, folk-like character is a clear reference to medieval modality and, in combination with the harp's timbre, brings to the mind's eye and ear the troubadour chant that Beckett also alluded to in his poetry, and possibly also in this parodical love poem.

F#, C# and G# are doubled by flageolet tones in the harp in mm. 236, 240, and 242, intensifying the sense of a tonal center, be this F# or C#. Like the first hexad, the other harp chords in the introduction, all of which are marked *sfz*, can be identified as harmonic functions within these 'likely tonalities': The first one in m. 239 could be interpreted as a C# minor seventh chord with added perfect fourth, the second one in m. 243 as an F# minor seventh major ninth chord, and the one in m. 247 is a reiteration of the chord in m. 239. Finally, the transitional hexad in m. 250 is, like the initial one, a superimposition of two different triads, D-major (in the bottom staff), looking back on the harmonic disposition of the introduction, and the remote key of C-minor, anticipating the harmonic territory covered in next section. Before the next verse is delivered, a fermate, followed by a brief general pause, puts a temporary halt to the entire harmonic pseudo-progression. The first line, sung by the tenor only, begins in 'C-minor,' but is soon ambiguated by the unresolved suspension leading into a tritone on "die." More vagueness is created by the ensuing dominant eleventh chord on F that initiates the hummed echo in the female voices, written in a *fauxbourdon* style or, more correctly, given the interval of a perfect fifth, in *organum* style, another fairly explicit reference to medieval and renaissance idioms. At the rhythmic level, the bell-motive chords are now syncopated, sounding on the second beat. By entering in this "stumbling" manner, they roughen the entire texture. Tonality is even further out of reach when the alto, the new *vox principalis*, and the tenor as *vox organalis* are paired in tritone distance for the next verse. The semantic content of "walking" is mimicked, similarly as on "treading" and "shifting," by a three-note figure on the first syllable. "Mourning" and "love" are also highlighted by the melismatic setting analogous to that of "peace" and "mist" in the second movement. The dynamics suggest that Rands considered "love" the most important word. One might object to this emphasis on the grounds that Beckett's poem by no means glorifies, but rather parodies love and that the focus is not on the deceased loved one, but on a fictional alter ego of the lyrical subject wallowing in self-pity. Then, however, the musical language of the piece as a whole, although close to tonality, is any-

thing but sentimental or nostalgic, but instead keeps the listener ironically at arm's length through the aforementioned techniques of fragmentation, defamiliarization, and ambiguation. The hummed consonant of the word "me" establishes a musical link to "mist" in the second poem, and the vagueness it suggests, which is not dissimilar to the "impenetrable self" in *neither*.

In the reprise starting in m. 282, the bell motive is stated in its original form (283), i.e. as the perfect fifth C-G. Yet again, the tonality of C minor (suggested by the unison of the male voices) is broken, this time by non-tonal grace tones ornamenting the bell motive. Harmonic clarity is avoided consistently up to the last measure, which returns us to the simple sequence of the bell fifth heard at the beginning of the cycle.

To conclude: Of the works under discussion, this choir cycle exemplifies best what Sloterdijk referred to as "Ptolemean demobilization," which he defines as a deliberate narrowing of horizons precipitated by a detachment from the boundless quantities of creative possibilities.¹⁴² Sloterdijk argues that this phenomenon is to be considered a corrective (*Korrekturbewegung*) to the "anything goes" maxim of Copernican mobilization. Yet, despite its reactionary aura, which is underscored verbally by Rands' enthusiastic comments on musical and ethnic traditions, this tendency is to be considered an impulse *within*, rather than *against*, the postmodern current in music. This is exemplified by Rands' musical language: First, the pitches used, although limited to scales or modes (e.g. hexachords), are derived from the entire twelve-tone spectrum, suggesting a refinement of the serial techniques Rands encountered early in his career. Second, these 'pitch domains', although far less episodic than Kim's, are strung together in modules loosely connected by pitch-class subsets rather than developing organically or being connected by an overarching principle. This decentralizing strategy is clearly a descendant of Messiaen's multimodal¹⁴³ technique. In other words, the composer's familiarity with serial techniques is best seen as preliminary to this compositional strategy. Although this does, in the end, result in sonorities evoking traditional major and minor harmonic functions, his approach cannot justifiably be branded as a nostalgic yearning for tonality. Rather, it is an individualization or focalization of serialist thinking rooted in Schönberg's own idea of extending the realm of twelve-tone composition by exploit-

¹⁴² Sloterdijk, 65.

¹⁴³ Cf. Xenakis (1971), 5-8.

ing the possibilities of hexachordal subsets. As was seen in chapter 4.1., this line of thought was continued in Babbitt's mathematically underpinned extension of the twelve-tone strategy. In addition, his outwardly conservative approach to text-setting is informed, in part, by the fragmentation of linguistic material in the compositions of older colleagues such as Luigi Nono or Dieter Schnebel.

In the last poem setting in particular, Rands employs various means of defamiliarization and ambiguation at the harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic levels. In this regard, he evokes traditional musical idioms, but puts them into quotation marks, figuratively speaking. This seems to be a wider trend within the group of composers embracing a "new tonality," as Morgan has posited:

Contemporary composers necessarily view – or hear – tonality as if from a distance, as "outsiders" who must adopt its conventions by deliberate decision and must consequently use them by "calculation," in the self-conscious manner of someone employing a citation. Thus traditional gestures found in the new tonality, though in themselves quite conventional, are typically manipulated so that their larger coherence is distorted. [...] As with quotation, the goal is not to revive the past but to reconstruct it in a new image.¹⁴⁴

In other words, tonality is a tool rather than a mode, only one out many available resources, and thus susceptible to combination with alternative approaches.¹⁴⁵ Rands' aesthetic converges with Beckett's in that both allude to and defamiliarize medieval poetic forms. The combination of tonality and techniques arising from dodecaphony is no less dynamic, but far less dichotomous than in Kim's works, which still bespeak a strong perceived hiatus between them. As tonal and serial languages are no longer juxtaposed as distinct concepts (as in Kim's works), but synthetically combined, the *interferential plurality*¹⁴⁶ of the work is manifested less in the overt pastiche-like chain of stylistic quotations (as in Kim) than in the multiplicity of pitch-class combinations or 'modes' employed this cycle.

¹⁴⁴ Morgan, 437.

¹⁴⁵ Morgan, 439.

¹⁴⁶ Welsch, 14.

6. Richard Barrett: *I Open and Close* (1983-88)

6.1. "More respect for listeners": Barrett's aesthetic trajectory

Within the selection of Beckett compositions treated in the present work, the sound density of Barrett's work is unparalleled. Though, as will be argued, many of the underlying aesthetic assumptions and rationales essentially concur with those of Rands, Kim, and Feldman, they are approached from a different angle – and, geographically, from the other side of the Atlantic. While its much-debated complexity¹ may, as one critic has argued, seem to be excluding the audience, alienating, or even "humiliating the listener,"² Barrett's statements reveal that he was no less concerned with the de-hierarchization of the composer-audience relationship than many of his contemporaries.³ Interestingly, however, he turns the "accessibility" credo of other post-serial composers upside down, contending that the quotation techniques and the "New Simplicity" in music reveal elitism and condescension on the composer's part by overlooking the audience's intellectual potential. Barrett does not subscribe to the art-as-perception view or the sensualism that Feldman advocated. Nor does he embrace an aesthetics of terseness and silent contemplation in the way that Kim does, from which Barrett's "maximalism" could not be further removed. Least of all does Barrett's social-critical posture converge with Bernard Rands' spiritual, humanistic ("escapist" or "ideologically *neutral*," as Barrett would call it⁴) view of music, although Barrett's early composition *Essay in Radiance*, which is based on his reading of the *Isa Upanishad*,⁵ might suggest otherwise.

As the youngest of the composers under consideration, Barrett has been regarded as part of a movement often labeled "The New Complexity,"⁶ whose music expresses a "radical

¹ The Nieuw Ensemble refused to perform a Barrett work they had commissioned because it was too difficult. See Oehlschlägel, Reinhard. "Zur sogenannten Neuen Komplexität." *Musiktexte* 35 (1990): 3-4: 3.

² Hewett, Ivan. "Fail Worse, Fail Better." *Musical Times* 135 (1994): 148-51: 150.

³ "Because of the hierarchies which are built into our corner of the musical world, it is quite difficult under most circumstances for a composer and an ensemble to work as equal partners in the creation of music, which I would hope is self-evidently a situation to be striven for by all means necessary." Barrett, Richard. "Tracts for Our Times?" *Musical Times* 139 (1998): 21-4: 22.

⁴ Barrett, Richard. "Avant-Garde and Ideology in the UK since Cardew." *New Music, Aesthetics and Ideology*. Ed. M. Delaere. Wilhelmshaven, 1995. 170-81: 171.

⁵ Barrett wrote in the program notes to the piece that "the music represents a series of attempts toward the 'transcendental moment.'" However, he points out, too that such an attempt is "at best doomed to qualified failure." Qtd. In: Harley, James. "The New Nihilism: l'objet sonore and the music of Richard Barrett." *Musicworks* 72 (1998): 26-34: 27.

⁶ Cf. Toop, Richard. "Four Facets of the 'New Complexity.'" *Contact* 32 (1988): 4-50.

critique of mainstream contemporary music,"⁷ and a reaction against "[t]he New Capitulationism,"⁸ as Richard Toop has dubbed the tendency to conform to a wider public taste for the sake of commercial success. Not only with regard to the numerous polemical and politically charged⁹ debates on the New Complexity, to which the composer has contributed a great deal himself, his subversive complexity occupies quite an exceptional position within the corpus of Beckett compositions.

6.1.1. Complexity, capitalism, and capitulationism

As we have suggested, the penchant for intermedial artistic production – in Beckett's own works and, likewise, in musical responses – partly resulted from the *cul-de-sac* of creative production following the decline of closed semiotic systems, overarching principles or concepts (in music, the downturn of serialism) or meta-narratives. These "end-games" represent a steady dilemma in the author's works, instilling in them the "tragic temper" that Eagleton ascribes to modernism.¹⁰ Beckett and the composers under discussion have variously grappled with the problem of how and what to create in the "post-tragic"¹¹ climate of a de-mystified, deconstructed artistic world. "Depicting the complexity of the world as it is" is the answer that Richard Barrett provides, so as "to match the external complexity with that of the internal relationships."¹²

Ulrich Mosch, who deconstructed "complexity" in his article on the subject is right in positing that it is a relative term for the following reasons:

Zum einen ist er abhängig vom zugrundeliegenden Musikbegriff, der historisch veränderlich ist; zum anderen läßt sich auch für eine einzelne Epoche nicht einfach definitorisch festlegen, was als Komplexität zu gelten hat. Vielmehr lassen sich nur Bedingungen angeben, unter denen sie entsteht, und paradigmatische Werke benennen, die als Inbegriff davon gelten können. [For one thing it is dependent on an underlying concept of music, a concept that is historically subject to change; for another we cannot simply create a binding definition of what should be considered complex for a specific epoch. Instead we can only cite the conditions under which complexity arises and point out paradigmatic works that can be considered the epitome of complexity.]¹³

⁷ Fox, Christopher. "Music as Fiction: a Consideration of the Work of Richard Barrett." *Contemporary Music Review* 13 (1995): 147–57: 147.

⁸ Toop (1988), 4.

⁹ Cavalotti (2006), op. cit., 234.

¹⁰ Eagleton, Terry. *After Theory*. New York: Basic Books, 2003, 57-8.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Truax, Barry. "The Inner and Outer Complexity of Music." *Perspectives of New Music* 32.1 (Winter, 1994): 176-93: 191.

¹³ Mosch, Ulrich. "Musikalische Komplexität." *Ästhetik und Komposition*. Ed. Gianmario Borio and Ulrich Mosch. Mainz, 1990 (= Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik 20). 120-9: 126.

In the following, we will focus on said "conditions" that gave rise to this style. A first step is to take inventory of the main characteristics of this paradigm, which Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf summarized in three points:

1. **information mass** (quantitative: as a mass of real 'empirical' sound-events with a high degree of speed and density; qualitative: as a mass of 'subcutaneous' relationships in different semantic directions);
2. **polyvalence of the 'layer of sense'** (e.g. Ambiguity, ambivalence or a kind of 'mitigated' arbitrariness) with all intracompositional, stylistic, and historical implications;
3. **'bonding energies' between single events in music** (stringency, conciseness, and authenticity of the relations, particularized or supercontextualized).¹⁴

The second point makes it particularly clear that the labyrinthine construction of the works in question is not at all an end in itself; nor is it intended to "humiliate" the listener. Instead, the polyvalence of New Complexity works is no less a continuation of the ideals of pluralism and aesthetic openness than the synthetic and polystylistic tendencies of the eclecticist composers. As Cavalotti asserts, "[...] 'Multiplizität zu stiften' wird *gerade* und *insbesondere* bei den 'komplexen' Komponisten [...] Ausgangspunkt und Ziel der kompositorischen Aktivität."¹⁵ What Feyerabend states about complexity in general makes this point even clearer: "A complex medium containing surprising and unforeseen developments demands complex procedures and **defies analysis** on the basis of rules which have been set up in advance and without regard to the ever-changing conditions of history."¹⁶ In addition, Barrett himself made it clear that his complex language is meant to promote rather than defy aesthetic openness and pluralism:

It would be better to see [complexity] as a not particularly fond **farewell to the encroachments of categorization**, rather than a consolidation of any spuriously taxonomic tendencies, which, paradoxically in a time of **florid pluralism**, have never had such potency, such a seeming will to devalue.¹⁷

In this sense, Barrett takes the evolution of compositional decentralization evident in the works discussed thus far one step further.

As Michael Finnissy has argued and as stated above, art is only complex in the sense

¹⁴ Mahnkopf, Claus-Steffen. "Complexism as a New Step in Musical Evolution." *Complexity in Music: An Inquiry Into Its Nature, Motivation and Performability*. Ed. Joël Bons, Amsterdam 1990, 28-29: 28. Also published in German as: "Kundgabe. Komplexismus und der Paradigmenwechsel in der Musik." *MusikTexte* 35 (1990). 20-35: 20.

¹⁵ Cavalotti, 240.

¹⁶ Feyerabend, 18; emphasis added.

¹⁷ Bons, 11.

that it mirrors the perceived intricacy of human personalities and thought, the contemporary world, or of creative processes in general.¹⁸ For Barrett then, musical complexity is the necessary outcome of what the composer himself labels "internal realism" in his notes on *I Open And Close*, asking: "Is there any evidence that the human mind is any more rectilinear, any more *simple* than the world it tries to grasp?"¹⁹ Likewise, when Beckett said that the task of the contemporary artist was "to find a form that accommodates the mess," it might have been the aporia of internal states, rather than the chaos of the outside world, which he alluded to. In Barrett's case this aesthetic approach goes hand in hand with a sense of aesthetic social responsibility. He views his compositions as thought-provokers, as means of intellectual stimulation and challenge, as a protest against the simplification of musical languages and the perceived underlying stupefaction of the performer and the listener; hence the intricacy of his scores. As James Boros has it: "Music that is perceived as complex seems actively to encourage the coexistence, both within a single individual and amongst different individuals, and both within a single hearing and different hearings, of multiple viewpoints [...]."²⁰

In 1988 Barrett said that he regarded his compositions as personal statements and inappropriate vehicles of political protest.²¹ However, comments made on NO (1999-2004) for symphony orchestra, the first part of a cycle bearing the explicit title "Resistance and Vision," suggest otherwise: In the work description for his publisher, Barrett voices his indignation at the war in Iraq, quoting Noam Chomsky.²² In an interview with a reporter, he talked about his increasing preoccupation with writing *musique engagée*:

The detailed work on the piece began at around the time that Iraq was invaded, in March 2003, and I happened to be in London when the big demonstration took place. And I started to think that the way I had been conceiving the relationship between music and ideas had to make some radical change. How is an artist like me, who is committed to socialist ideas, to respond to this situation? We are forced to think about these things. It's incumbent upon artists, upon composers, to try and be more explicit in relating music to everything else that is going on in the world. The piece is saying: no, this is not the way the world should be, and it's not the way the musical world should be either.²³

¹⁸ Toop (1988), 5.

¹⁹ Barrett (1998), 23.

²⁰ Boros, James. "Why Complexity?" (Part Two, Guest Editor's Introduction). *Perspectives of New Music* 32.1 (Winter, 1994): 90-100: 91.

²¹ Ibid.

²² United Music Publishers Website: <http://www.ump.co.uk/composer%20pages/barrett.htm>. (Date last visited: January 17, 2011).

²³ Service, Tom. Just say no, *The Guardian* online, February 10, 2005: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2005/feb/10/classicalmusicandopera1> (date last visited: January 17, 2011).

What may be observed, then, is an increasing politicization of Barrett's music from the beginning of his compositional career in the early 1980's, when his political awareness "was nothing to speak of" (Barrett²⁴) to the conception of NO as a response to the Iraq War.

An interesting and somewhat paradoxical point about Barrett's aesthetic stance is that, although committed to left-wing ideas unmistakably anchored in Horkheimer's/Adorno's "culture industry,"²⁵ he dissociates himself from the "social realist" attitude he ascribes to Cardew.²⁶ This art movement is akin to, but not to be confused with socialist realism, the official aesthetic doctrine in Stalin's Soviet Union later adopted by all self-proclaimed socialist countries.²⁷ Rather, it denotes a type of socio-critical left-wing realism rooted in the 19th century, marked by straightforward, unadorned depictions of the working class' living conditions – not in the Soviet Union, but in the United States: "Social Realism attempted to use art to protest and dramatize injustice to the working class – the result, as these artists saw it, of capitalist exploitation. In narrative content this was an art boldly and often fiercely anti-Establishment [...]," as David Shapiro defines it.²⁸ Espoused by Marxist artists and theoreticians,²⁹ and, like socialist realism, embracing conservative aesthetic values, it was the dominant American art form in the 1930's.³⁰

It might appear somewhat inconsistent with musical history and above all with the political stigmatization of composers such as Dmitri Shostakovich in socialist regimes that music deemed to be complex should serve as a vehicle for pro-socialist and anti-capitalist ideas (and, what is more, before the end of the Cold War). Then again, if we think of Barrett as following the model of Xenakis, who, at least for part of his life, was also prone to communist ideas³¹ and whose use of technology and mathematical procedures (including Markovian Stochastic Theory, which also underlies some of Barrett's

²⁴ Barrett, Richard. "Cornelius Cardew." *New Music* 87. Ed. R. Wright and M. Finnissy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. 20-33: 21.

²⁵ Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. "Kulturindustrie. Aufklärung als Massenbetrug." *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*. Frankfurt on the Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1962. 128-76.

²⁶ Toop, Richard. "Richard Barrett in Interview." *Sounds Australian* 29 (1991): 27–31: 30.

²⁷ Cf. Redepenning, Dorothea. *Geschichte der russischen und der sowjetischen Musik*. Vol. 2. Laaber, 2008. 301-23.

²⁸ Shapiro, David. "Social Realism Reconsidered." *Social Realism: Art as a Weapon*. Ed. David Shapiro. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1973. 3-35: 3.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 18.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

³¹ He joined the resistance group of the Communist National Liberation Front (EAM) in 1941, at a time when he read Marx and Lenin (Cf. Barthel-Calvet, Anne-Sylvie. "Chronologie." *Portrait(s) de Iannis Xenakis*. Ed. François-Bernard Mâche. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2002, 26).

compositional procedures) expressed a critique of the then prevalent compositional technique of serialism,³² it becomes evident that Barrett's manner of musical protest is not an unprecedented one. Another analogy would be Luigi Nono's *musique engagée* (e.g. *Canto sospeso*), which famously expressed his political views *through*, rather than *despite* its refusal to convey an unequivocal message.³³

Barrett, who began to study composition – privately with Peter Wiegold, and in Darmstadt, with Brian Ferneyhough and Hans-Joachim Hespos, another 'Beckett composer'³⁴ – only after receiving a degree in genetics and microbiology from the University College in London in 1980, has been a staunch defender of what one might call a 're-intellectualization' of contemporary art music.³⁵ While Toop, in unison with Ferneyhough,³⁶ assails the polemical use of the umbrella term "Complexity," the critic himself expresses a fairly slanted view on what he dubs the "all-purpose anti-intellectualism"³⁷ of contemporary music, which, he argues, is "still very much embedded in the collective psyche of the musical establishment."³⁸ This perspective is shared by Barrett, who bewails the absence of a musical avant-garde in Britain due to an "'overconsumptionist' dynamic of capitalism in the Reagan/Thatcher era."³⁹ Overtly drawing support from Konrad Böhmer's harsh critique of the current state of music culture⁴⁰ (which in turn appears to be informed by the concept of 'culture industry'), Barrett contends that the pressures imposed on composers by the tendency toward compartmentalization and commodification in the field of contemporary composition, along with the decline of leftist ideologies, has precipitated a depoliticization of music, catalyzed by a fear of stirring dissent (or, as he calls it, a "play safe" attitude⁴¹) and a desire for appeasement with concert audiences. This predominant spirit of consent, as he sees it, inevitably stifles

³² Xenakis, Iannis. "La crise de la musique sérielle (1955)." *Kéleütha. Écrits*. Paris: L'Arche éditeur, 1994. 40-2. On Xenakis, cf. also: Baltensperger, André. *Iannis Xenakis und die stochastische Musik. Komposition im Spannungsfeld von Architektur und Mathematik*. Bern: Haupt, 1996.

³³ Cf. Stuckenschmidt, Hans Heinz. *Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Munich: Kindler, 1979, 144.

³⁴ Whose piece "Blackout" (1972) was inspired by Beckett, see list of Beckett-based compositions.

³⁵ Hewett claim that Barrett's music is imbued with anti-intellectualism is apparently based on a major misconception (Hewett 1994, 149).

³⁶ "'Complexity' needs to be seen more as a *terminus technicus* and less as a convenient blanket term for a style or school." Ferneyhough, Brian. *Collected Writings*. Ed. James Boros and Richard Toop. London, New York: Routledge, 2003, 67.

³⁷ Toop (1991), 30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Barrett, "Avant-Garde and Ideology...", 170.

⁴⁰ Böhmer, Konrad. "Die dritte Revolution der Musik: Vom Konzert zur Disco?" *Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie* 3 (1998): 1-14. This article is cited by Barrett: Cf. Barrett (1998), 23.

⁴¹ Barrett, "Avant-Garde...", 171.

critical and progressive voices in contemporary music and heavily impinges upon composers' creative freedom. At the same time, it promotes 'marketable' ideals such as spirituality and "accessibility."⁴² Barrett's attacks on the "philistinism"⁴³ of this new compositional establishment are clearly targeted at composers such as Bernard Rands (although the latter is not mentioned by name), who in his view have fostered an escapist "separation of art and politics."⁴⁴ The postmodern discourse, he argues, echoing Terry Eagleton's ideas,⁴⁵ represents but a "convenient *rapprochement*" between composers and increasingly commercialized aesthetics,⁴⁶ in other words, an apology to succumb to the primacy of commodification. The democratic, participatory, and anti-professionalist nature of the Scratch Orchestra,⁴⁷ much akin to the central idea behind compositions such as Rands' *Actions* or *Sound Patterns*, is considered by Barrett "no less élitist than the society from which its members came"⁴⁸ since such movements, in his view, tend to underestimate the intellectual abilities of the audiences by distracting from the main issue, that is, the intellectual vacuum he witnesses in contemporary music:

One of the axioms of leftist thought is, after all, that very nearly all people are capable of far more, have far more cognitive resources than the alienation of their living conditions enables them to express – surely it is the responsibility of the committed artist to attempt to *bring out* those resources, to have more respect for listeners than to ape the manipulations practiced by commercial music.⁴⁹

The problem of intellectual under-challenge was also addressed in an interview with Richard Toop in 1990: "I think the kind of patronising musical baby-talk purveyed by

⁴² Ibid, 180.

⁴³ Ibid, 177.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 179.

⁴⁵ Eagleton, Terry. "Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism." *New Left Review* 152 (1985): 60-73.

⁴⁶ Barrett, "Avant-garde...", 170.

⁴⁷ Morgan (1991), 457-8.

⁴⁸ Barrett, "Avant-Garde...", 174. Similarly, Dibelius remarked: "Der Bildungsnotstand im Bereich der Musik verlangt also zuallererst nach dem Abbau des herkömmlichen und zur Prämisse erhobenen Bildungsideals" ["As such, remedying the sad state of affairs in music education above all requires that we divorce ourselves from the conventional ideal of education, which has since been elevated to the status of a given truth"], and: "Es fehlt [dem Publikum] an Selbstvertrauen zum eigenen intellektuellen Vermögen" ["What is lacking (in the audience) is the self-confidence to develop an intellectual capacity of their own."] Dibelius (1970, op. cit.), 7.

⁴⁹ Barrett, "Avant-Garde...", 175. As becomes clear in his notes on *I Open And Close*, the argument of a "lack of access to productive resources" is borrowed from Marxist-Trotskyist political theorist Alex Callinicos, who has been a harsh critic of postmodernist and poststructuralist theories: "I deny the main theses of poststructuralism [...]. I doubt very much that Postmodern art represents a qualitative break from the Modernism of the early twentieth century. Moreover, much of what is written in support of the idea that we live in a postmodern epoch seems to me of small calibre intellectually, usually superficial, often ignorant, sometimes incoherent.[...] Postmodernism, then, is best seen as a symptom." Cf. Callinicos, Alex. *Against Postmodernism. A Marxist Critique*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, 4-5, 6.

many of these composers in the interests of appealing to what they are pleased to call a working class audience can only serve to make them immediately categorisable by the institutions they are seeking to fight against in the first place."⁵⁰ What is more, Barrett finds fault with the fact – again: as he perceives it – that composers are evaluated in terms of their relationship with the compositional heritage, at least those strands of it that, by the standards of a post-industrial society, are deemed acceptable.⁵¹ This is why he repudiates open inter-musical references in the form of quotations or stylistic imitation on the grounds that such allusions presuppose musical knowledge. This, he maintains, "sets up a division (a *class*-based division, largely) between 'those in the know' and everyone else."⁵² In this, he is antipodal to Rands and Kim, calling for an *ex nihilo* aesthetic much akin to the "zero hour" credo of the first Darmstadt generation or the anti-traditionalism of Morton Feldman: "I believe that every composition must attempt to manifest at least one level which is immediately engaging, without the listener's degree of knowledge of music history etc. conferring advantage or disadvantage."⁵³

Unlike the post-war generation, however, Barrett's *tabula rasa* approach does not arise from an iconoclastic attempt to disburden the composer of his compositional legacy. Apart from his objective of granting the listener 'equal chances' by dispensing with references and (stylistic) quotations, he has stated several personal reasons for this *modus operandi*, e.g. ignorance of the repertoire,⁵⁴ the belief that it makes no difference whether the composer draws his inspiration from extra- or intra-musical material,⁵⁵ and finally from the personal experience that "there has not been so much in the purely musical sources which has been useful."⁵⁶ Common to several composers of the New Complexity, this solipsism has led to an increasing self-contextualization, a phenomenon which Toop labels "cyclomania."⁵⁷ As with the idea of improvisation, Barrett's re-

⁵⁰ Toop (1991), 28.

⁵¹ Barrett, "Avant-Garde...", 173.

⁵² Buckley, D. "Richard Barrett, a Contemporary Voice." *Australian Guitar Journal* 2 (1991): 165–8, 166.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ When talking about his string quartet "I Open and Close" Barrett readily admitted: "I don't have too much trouble divesting myself of that particular millstone [i.e. the string quartet as a historical object], because for a start I don't know the repertoire that well [...]" Toop (1991), 27.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Toop (1988), 7.

pudding of the practice of writing single pieces is a form of protest against the perceived commodification of art music.⁵⁸

Because I don't think compositional thought, as it exists prior to writing out a score, is something which can be divided into those tidy bits which begin and at double bar lines. That's one aspect; and also, I suppose there's a temptation to work outside the confines, the restrictions of a certain piece – that is, to have a superformal level of compositional thinking which may include within the same series pieces with widely different formal functions.⁵⁹

Thus, what also underpins this paradigm is the idea of 'multiplicity within unity' (to use a variation of Kim's phrase), of contrasts and heterogeneity within a work or, in such cases, a cycle of works. At first glance, this hermetic "cyclomania" might appear to contradict Beckett's evident absorption and reformulation of myriad literary texts outside his own. Then again, it is well known that Beckett's texts are also self-contextualizing to a high degree (as evident in the trilogies or recurring motives and metaphors). Moreover, Beckett, like Barrett, rarely admitted to literary intertextual references in and influences on his writing. On the other hand, it is undeniable that Barrett's works, as much as they seek to break away from existing musical languages, are much indebted to other composers, most notably Ferneyhough, Finnissey, and not least Xenakis, whom he overtly acknowledges as an influence.⁶⁰

6.1.2. Postmodernism in music III: beyond modernism

Barrett criticizes the conformism of contemporary classical music he ascribes to postmodern aesthetics by invoking modernist aesthetics as an alternative. However, overcoming postmodernism *per se* is a somewhat ambitious goal if one agrees with Frederic Jameson in that postmodern pluralism has become so pervasive, or as Welsch would put it, "radical," that one cannot simply argue for or against it in a dialectic manner⁶¹ – that is, as we have seen in chapters 4.1.3 and 5.1.3., if postmodernism is to be situated *within* the modernist movement. Similarly, Eagleton posited that in postmodernity, "there is nothing left to struggle against, other than those inherited illusions (laws, eth-

⁵⁸ Barrett, Richard. "Standpoint and Sightlines." *Diskurse zur gegenwärtigen Musikkultur*. Ed. Nina Polaschegg. Regensburg: ConBrio, 1996. 21–32: 24.

⁵⁹ Toop (1991), 30.

⁶⁰ Toop (1988), 7, 32.

⁶¹ Waugh, Patricia. "Postmodern Theory: The Current Debate." *Postmodernism: A Reader*. Ed. Patricia Waugh. London: Edward Arnold, 1992. 113-6: 114.

ics, class struggle, the Oedipus complex) which prevent us from seeing things as they are."⁶² Barrett's repudiation of postmodernism thus turns out to be a fight against wind-mills since it is based on a subjective understanding thereof.

Deconstructing the composer's personal view of modernism might bring to light his real concerns: For example, as much as Barrett's "nihilism"⁶³ recalls the postwar amnesia or "zero hour" aesthetics of the serialists, Barrett seeks to expand the spectrum of acoustic experience (as did, for example, the spectralists) rather than pursuing conceptual objectivity regardless of the sounding result. Furthermore, as said above, the generative procedures in Barrett's works are not governed by an overarching paradigm, but rather driven by the ambition of decentralizing and polysemizing the sound event.⁶⁴ In other words: He intended not to sterilize it against subjective hermeneutical debates, but conversely, to open up the realm of aesthetic experience. This is substantiated by the fact that Barrett sees himself akin to the modernist aesthetic outlook mostly because he subscribes to "the view of art as awakening or nurturing a sense of human dignity [...], by explaining perceptual horizons and challenging the receiver to take an *active* part in deriving from it a significant experience for himself."⁶⁵ In other words, he was drawn toward the participatory modes to which, as he sees it, modernist aesthetics was committed. Significantly, the creative, active role of the recipient represents a point of contact between Barrett, the other Beckett composers treated in the present work, and of course Beckett himself.

What all this reveals is that Barrett's perception of modernism is, in fact, fairly biased, not least with regard to the heterogeneity of notions inherent in the term. Moreover, as with postmodernism, polemical and analytical usages of the term are rather difficult to tease apart, as is evident in Kramer's rather slanted definition:

Modernism entered music in the early years of the 20th century. Early modernist composers – such as Schönberg, Webern, Stravinsky and Bartók – sought new languages in uncompromising and challenging works of great purity, complexity, severity, autonomy, originality and perfection. These composers were (and their descendants today are) often unconcerned with mass culture or with popular acceptance; sometimes they were/are contemptuous of the average listener, for whom they rarely compromise(d). They re-

⁶² Eagleton, Terry. "Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism." *Postmodernism: A Reader*. Op. cit. 152-9: 157.

⁶³ Cf. Harley (1998).

⁶⁴ Barrett (1996), 23.

⁶⁵ Barrett (1996), 22.

main(ed) true to their own private expression, creating art for art's sake. Isolation and alienation were/are common characteristics of modernism.⁶⁶

It appears, thus, that modernism is still tied up with the stigmata of elitism and exclusivism, as a quite recent lexicon article reveals: "Modernists and their defenders would never entirely escape the charge of intolerance, snobbery and élitism and a distaste for the democratization of culture made possible, ironically, by the technological advances of modernity [...]." ⁶⁷ One hardly needs to add that this is sharply at odds with the "sense of human dignity," the composer's respect for his audience and the participatory modes that Richard Barrett detects in musical modernism.

Even this brief glimpse into a variety of perspectives on modernism demonstrates the selective manner in which Barrett and critics refer to modernism (for Richard Toop, for example, "intransigent" and "modernist" seem to be interchangeable⁶⁸). In Peter Sloterdijk's words: "Die Moderne und ihr Gerücht waren zweierlei."⁶⁹ It seems, therefore, fair to conclude that comparisons of Barrett's style to modernist visions are, in fact, beside the point. Similar to the ostensibly conservative "Neo" styles, Barrett's invocations of modernist aesthetics as a way of transcending postmodernism are best understood as a *corrective*, which still remains an integral part of the aesthetic decentralization processes Sloterdijk refers to as the "Copernican Mobilization." They rest on postmodernist ideals in the sense that they aim to foster exoteric inclusion and plurality rather than return to esoteric exclusion.

6.1.3. Corpo-reality of sound: performative realism

That Barrett's instrumental techniques are intended to mimic amateur musicianship⁷⁰ shows that Barrett's abstract notation is merely a vehicle for fairly concrete and straightforward ideas. In other words, the complexity of his scores is, in fact, a "composition of physicality."⁷¹ It formalizes the manifold technical details and possibilities of instrumental performance. The composer aims for a "recapture of performance phenomena

⁶⁶ Kramer (2001), op. cit., 29-30.

⁶⁷ Botstein, Leon. Modernism, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (date accessed: January 17, 2011).

⁶⁸ Toop (1991), 27.

⁶⁹ Sloterdijk, 15.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 150.

⁷¹ Barrett (1996), 26.

which may be 'natural' in the context of freely experimenting improvisation, but don't lend themselves to encapsulation in traditional forms of notation; in other words, to *compose* that which is *usually* unpredictable."⁷² In a similar manner as Beckett as a director retained a firm grip on the physical performance of his actors, foregrounding the heteronomy of the performance by means of strictly coordinated body movements, Barrett draws the attention of performers and audience alike to the corporeal presence of the performer and the properties of the instrument(s) played. By analogy with Barthes' postulate, he terms this paradigm the "grain of the instrument"⁷³ or "grain of the sound."⁷⁴ According to Barthes, the "grain of the voice" is "the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue; perhaps the letter, most certainly *significance*."⁷⁵ Furthermore, the "grain of the body" denotes "the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs."⁷⁶ Concentrating on universal aspects of vocal delivery, this performative concept, he postulates, allows for a new supra-subjective evaluation of music. Barrett explains his approach as a

'plunge into the instrument', an attempt to engage as intimately as possible with the musical resources at the conjunction between performer and instrument, an engagement which attempts to dissolve the boundaries between instrumentalism and compositional materials. The form of such compositions, viewed from one angle, has the aspect of an encounter with an imaginary or 'virtual' instrument, which in relation to a physically present clarinet, or violin, or whatever, is something *less*, in the sense that the encounter takes place in a shadowy, incorporeal realm through which one feels one's way as best one can; but also something *more*, in that one's itinerary through this virtual space traces out a singular poetic conception, moulding and moulded by the quasi-physical laws of motion or the 'curvature' of this space – that is, it is motivated by the desire to *realise* a sound-form and (necessarily) the collapse of what might be an ecstasy of clarity into no more than a piece of music.⁷⁷

Contrary to the premises of conceptual art, in which the idea outweighs the realization,⁷⁸ Barrett views the instrumental properties as *a priori* to the creative process. In other words, his musical ideas emerge out of the possibilities created by the (extended) playing techniques of a certain instrument. This realist approach seems to be inspired, to some extent, by Cornelius Cardew and Michael Finnissy, about whom he wrote in 1987:

⁷² Buckley, 167.

⁷³ Barrett (1998), 31.

⁷⁴ Qtd. in: Hewett, 148.

⁷⁵ Barthes. "The Grain of the Voice." *Image – Music – Text*. Op. cit. 179-89: 182.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 188.

⁷⁷ Barrett (1996), 27.

⁷⁸ "The idea becomes a machine that makes the art." LeWitt, Sol. "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art." *Artforum* 5.10 (June 1967). 79-83: 80.

"In the piano works of both, a strong and continuing source of ideas is experience of the instrument itself[.]"⁷⁹ What Barrett appears to be concerned with, then, is the interface between the *res extensa* and *res intensa* of a musical composition. The emphasis on the "intangible connections between mind and sound"⁸⁰ recalls Murphy's Cartesian illusion, that is, his futile attempt to unravel the secret of the "intercourse" between body and mind and his realization that mind and body, the self and the world, are interdependent.⁸¹ However, where Beckett's figures *shun* the materiality of the mental sphere, Barrett's compositional ideas *thrive* on this "being-in-the-world-of-sound," if Heidegger's phrase may thus be appropriated.

6.1.4. Barrett and Beckett

Like Rands and Feldman, Barrett draws his inspiration from literature and the visual arts rather than music. He first came across Beckett in 1982, at the beginning of his compositional career. He read the author's complete works twice through⁸² at "about the same time as I began to work on the ideas (in embryonic form) that have informed the pieces I've written since then."⁸³ It is worthy of note that, like Rands, Barrett has had contacts with other composers who have drawn on Beckett: Michael Finnissy, Hans-Joachim Hespos, Clarence Barlow, and Roger Redgate.

What he found in the author's output was, as he is keen to point out, *recognition* rather than *inspiration*: "When one recognises a body of work by another artist which seems to go (further) in the same direction as one's own seems to be going, then clearly this body of work must be studied closely."⁸⁴ This suggests that there was a strong perceived affinity with Beckett to begin with. A major parallel that Barrett points out is the existentialist heroic self (cf. also: "Meta-composing"): "[W]hat I recognised in Beckett was my most important lesson in *why* to do it, why to carry on when seemingly the only constant factor in one's activity is that empty certainty of its worthlessness and pointlessness which stares one in the face at every turn."⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Barrett, "Cornelius Cardew," 21.

⁸⁰ Barrett (1998), 21.

⁸¹ See chapter 2.1.

⁸² Toop (1991), 28.

⁸³ Ibid, 28-9.

⁸⁴ E-mail to the author received on November 18, 2008.

⁸⁵ Barrett (1998), 22.

Referring to the famous phrase "that there is nothing to express" from the *Three Dialogues*, he said about his motivation as a composer "that the music comes about in the way it does because one is simply unable to do anything else [...]."⁸⁶

Although his devotion to Beckett's writings underlies much of his output, vocal pieces are generally rare – perhaps a strategy of circumventing unequivocalty, as he wrote about Roger Redgate's exclusion of the voice.⁸⁷ In addition, while Beckett's ideas underpin many of his instrumental pieces, the *tertium comparationis* between Beckett's texts and Barrett's music does not seem to lie in structural parallels either: For example, *Another Heavenly Day*, which draws its title from Beckett's two-character play *Happy Days*, is written for three instruments and thus does not even retain the character constellation of Beckett's play. Instead, the aesthetic kinship is based on more general ideas such as mutual alienation (as the instruments gradually dissociate from one another) and deterioration of a situation. Though one might sense a certain likeness to Beckettian plot structures in the cyclical repetitions, Barrett is anxious to point out the differences between the musical and the dramatic form.⁸⁸ In fact, he generally hesitates to draw parallels between language and music. Unlike a composer such as Hans Werner Henze, he does not consider music compatible to language, avoiding terms such as "communication" between composer and audience.⁸⁹ As a consequence, he thinks of Beckett's influence as being a semantic "parallelism" much more than a stylistic "transposition."⁹⁰ Explicitly recognizing these medial differences or the *intermedial gap*⁹¹ while nevertheless incorporating literature into his works, such that the ambivalence of his music is reinforced by means of silent quotations, Barrett echoes the intermedial multiplication of expressive uncertainty, i.e. the bilateral instability of language and music in Beckett's works. No direct "transmission line" is established between author and composer, composer and audience, or composer and performer (given the impossibility of fully implementing the instructions as given in the score). Reflecting this dismissive attitude towards the fidelity to the author's body of work, Barrett remarked: "I had no personal

⁸⁶ Toop (1988), 32.

⁸⁷ Barrett, Richard. "Critical/Convulsive: the music of Roger Redgate." *Contemporary Music Review* 13.1 (1995): 133–46: 144.

⁸⁸ Toop (1991), 29.

⁸⁹ Hewett, 148.

⁹⁰ Toop (1988), 31.

⁹¹ Rajewsky, 70.

contact with Samuel Beckett, nor did I ever conceive of seeking any. Did he not make perfectly plain his discomfiture at such interference?"⁹²

What the relationship between the texts and the music is based on instead is *différance*. As in Watt's ditch song, the representational process, which in Barrett's case is intended to capture the natural performance details, is distorted through notational and performative representations. It is not surprising that in his article on Roger Redgate, Barrett reveals a strong interest in Derrida's *Of Grammatology* and the concept of *différance*.⁹³ Thus of the four composers discussed in this work, Barrett as the youngest abandons faithfulness to the original texts most straightforwardly: "So I don't claim to have any inside knowledge (and nor can anyone else, incidentally) as to what Beckett was thinking of when he was producing this work."⁹⁴

6.1.5. Meta-composing

"Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." This famous and much-quoted line from *Worstward Ho*⁹⁵ encapsulates the most essential point of contact between Barrett and Beckett: the pessimist aesthetics of failure, combined with the inability to surrender to nihilism on the one hand and desist from the quest for metaphysical truth on the other. I have already pointed to the hiatus between the underlying formal procedures and the hostility that Barrett's music provokes as a result of its apparent nihilism. The other dialectic, alongside this order-chaos dichotomy, is that between the mental and the corporeal, in which the failure-endeavor seesaw is found at every level down to the smallest components of Barrett's works. One might go so far as to say that, according to the principle of self-similarity (which the composer himself utilizes as a compositional paradigm, e.g. in *Liebestod*⁹⁶), Barrett instills this Sisyphean futility into every single sound event and performance movement. This takes Helmut Lachenmann's concept of instrumental *musique concrète* one step further, by instilling in it a referential meaning: The grain of sound is *indexical*⁹⁷ of the (over)strain of the composer and the

⁹² Barrett, *Notes Supposedly Concerning Samuel Beckett* (no page nos. Hereafter: *Notes...*)

⁹³ Cf. "Critical/Convulsive..."

⁹⁴ Toop (1991), 29.

⁹⁵ SB, *Nohow on* (1996), 89.

⁹⁶ Barrett, Richard. "It is in the tranquility of decomposition that I remember the long confused emotion that was my life..." Concerning *Liebestod* for four recorders and live electronics." *Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie* 6 (2001): 41-7: 42.

⁹⁷ Peirce, Charles Sanders (1993), op. cit.

performer, as well as of the material impediments inherent in the transmission of the internal or cerebral complexity into real (sound) events. In Barrett's own words, his music "does not allow the performer to demonstrate a mastery of the instrument, but instead presents her with tasks that are transparently difficult, tasks which expose the awkwardness of the instrument."⁹⁸ Invoking Camus, the component of physical strain might also be thought of as an equivalent of Sisyphus' shouldering of the burden of existence. Corporeal exertion thus expresses an existentialist quest for meaning or new directions in music (see "Barrett and Beckett"). In the early 1920's, Josef Matthias Hauer put forward a quasi-Cartesian model of music, dividing it into the realm of the spiritual and the realm of the physical. He argued that musical ideas in their purest form only exist in the composer's imagination, and, once transformed into acoustic events, they are impurified by interference factors such as noise and wrong intonation.⁹⁹ As is obvious, this strict division between a perfect "internal" Platonic ideal and its imperfect "external" manifestation is in line with the language skepticism – more precisely, the Mauthnerian *Contributions* and the *Unaussprechlichkeitstradition* – outlined in chapter 2.1. As pointed out earlier, Feldman's approach continues in this vein. In this sense, it is antipodal to Barrett's intent: What the latter emphasizes, namely, and this is perhaps the closest link between him and Beckett, is the *reciprocity* of the *res intensa* of composing music and the *res extensa* of performance. Although Barrett conceives the conceptual and the real as symbiotic, as in the case of improvisation and composition, his preoccupation with the material limitations of sound production, which he is keen to make both the performers and the audience aware of, substantially produces a tragicomic effect. This is not to say that this humorous character is intentional, given that he is reluctant to disclose the relevance of humor to his music.¹⁰⁰ Notwithstanding, a suggestion of "bitter irony"¹⁰¹ is palpable.

Thus the idea of totality and coherence¹⁰² is evoked as well as debunked in Barrett's music in quite a similar way as in Beckett. It was the composer himself who related that

⁹⁸ Fox, Christopher. "Music as Fiction: A Consideration of the Work of Richard Barrett." *Contemporary Music Review* 13 (1995): 147–57: 148.

⁹⁹ Hauer, *Vom Wesen des Musikalischen*, op. cit. Cf. also: Christensen, Thomas. *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 604; Ferruccio Busoni had taken a similar stance in 1916, discriminating between the Platonic ideal of "Musik," and its manifestation, "Tonkunst". *Entwurf zu einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst*. Op. cit., 20, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Fox (1995), 156.

¹⁰² Cf. Maier (2001, 2006, 2008).

he is concerned with a "necessary fictionalisation of the composition process."¹⁰³ As he explains it,

[o]ne needs to have in mind that there is some ineffable vision there in the midst of it, which needs to be got at, yet I know all the time, and so does everybody else, that it isn't really there. But in the sense of a novelist writing something that has autobiographical overtones, as most of Beckett's work does, it forms something to hang the narrative on.¹⁰⁴

As in metafiction, the artificiality and aporia of the creative process and product become its *raison d'être*. Accordingly, Barrett's method may be conceived as *meta-composition* in that it "gives musical expression to the impossibility of expression," as Fox commented on *I Open and Close*.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, he argues:

Where conventional practice dictates that performers should develop the ability to connect the various acoustic features of their instrument into a single coherent whole and that ensembles should strive for a similar coherent wholeness, Barrett suggests that such practice is an artifice, masking – and indeed often masquerading as – real expression.¹⁰⁶

The coherence of the work is out of reach due to the non-producibility of the notated sounds, and so are any straight links between the work and the composer, the work and the performer, the performer and his performance.

Allied to this dispersion of meaning is the changing role of the listener¹⁰⁷ in that he or she is presented with a multivalent "unfinished" process rather than a coherent product – one of the common primary tenets of the New Complexity 'school'.¹⁰⁸ Whether or not the interpretational freedom inherent in Beckett's art finds its counterpart in Barrett's scores is a question to which Brian Ferneyhough's deliberations might provide an answer: The higher the degree of complexity in music, he argues, the more amenable the listener will be to new modes of processing musical material instead of applying automatic, habitual mechanisms to new stimuli.¹⁰⁹ That is, the application of common mental conceptualizations such as metrical grouping, chunking, implication and realization will invariably fail, and as a result, complex events will cause the perceived musical

¹⁰³ Buckley, 31.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Fox (1995), 153.

¹⁰⁶ Fox (1995), 149.

¹⁰⁷ cf. pianist Marc Couroux as quoted in: Harley, 29.

¹⁰⁸ Hewett, 150. Also, Barrett said: "A performing musician is a **participant** in a phenomenon which **encompasses not only the composer but also the audience**" (Buckley, 167, emphasis added).

¹⁰⁹ Ferneyhough (2003), 66.

patterns or *Gestalten* to be in constant flux, "searching rather than settling,"¹¹⁰ as Toop described Barrett's music. This entails a complete "absence of generally interpretational norms," which

leads the 'complex' work (always understood here as a relative term, not a separate aesthetic domain!) towards the institutionalization of the Russellian 'Category Error' as a fundamental mode of address; the fluctuating relationships informing its inner life must themselves seek to suggest modes of re-ordering perceptual approaches, hierarchies, perspectives. The coming into being of the work necessarily occupies center stage; the performer (and, by extension the listener) is led to share some sense of the anxiety-generating provisional, is continually being made productively aware of his own binding contribution.¹¹¹

This is to say that, by means of its convoluted structure and by presenting "a constellation of points of departure" rather than "a narrowing of horizons,"¹¹² a work such as *I Open and Close* is meant to allocate a creative, active role to the recipient— even at the risk of producing the opposite effect, i.e. alienating the listener.¹¹³ Ferneyhough makes this point particularly clear when he pits simplicity, to which he ascribes a "PASSIVE ambiguity of import," against complexity, which in his view tends "towards an ACTIVE projection of multiplicity."¹¹⁴ Believing that the end (of involving the performer and the listener into the work's multiplicity of possible comings-into-being) justifies the means (complexity), Ferneyhough's and Barrett's complexity paradigm rests upon the (indeed very Beckettian) assumption that the listener will seek to co- and re-create upon each failed attempt.

6.2. *I Open and Close*

6.2.1. Paratextual intermediality

As was demonstrated in chapter 2.2., the connective power of music is often summoned up by Beckettian narrators and characters in an attempt to compensate (in vain) for the disintegration of language and the fragmentation of the literary system and of reality. Conversely, language in Barrett's compositions appears as a counterweight to the centrifugal forces of his compositional approach, which, as will be shown, defies micro-

¹¹⁰ Toop (1988), 6.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Barrett, *Notes...*

¹¹³ Ferneyhough admits: "I'm talking more of the intention and nature of the composition rather than its contingent reception." Ferneyhough (2003), 69.

¹¹⁴ Ferneyhough (2003), 68-9.

structural investigation in terms of motivic/thematic, serial analysis on the one hand, as well as more specialized formal procedures such as those of Xenakis on the other. Barrett enriches his opaque textures with numerous passages of text quoted from various authors and, above all, from a wide selection of Beckett texts. Unlike other composers using text that is not spoken or sung, however, Barrett refrains from exploring structural parallels between language and music. Needless to say, the partly explanatory, partly implicative *Notes Supposedly Concerning Samuel Beckett* are read prior to, in between, and after musical realizations. To a certain degree, the literary material, along with Barrett's instructions and his *Notes*, adds anchor points to a soundscape otherwise volatile, fluctuating, and irreducible. For example, in lieu of musical back-references, recurring performance directions, identical or similar to one another, establish unity between the four parts. Yet like Beckett, the composer is keen to stress that his primary concern is not to concretize his compositional ideas, but to, as he puts it in his *Notes*, "open up" the work by providing a plethora of different access and vantage points. It is therefore worth pointing out that only a relatively small number of the composer's multifarious interpretational impulses provided in his ten page-mosaic of ideas (somewhat reminiscent of John Cage's "Diary" of 1965¹¹⁵) were taken into consideration as a basis for the present approach, this being only one respect in which this extremely challenging work inevitably confronts the critic with the limits of conventional musical interpretation.

Barrett wrote nine Beckett quotations into the score, which is of course similar to the Hölderlin fragments in Luigi Nono's *Fragmente – Stille, An Diotima* (1979/80) or the Novalis verses in Paul-Heinz Dittrich's third string quartet (1987). Apart from the verses prefacing each of the four sections, one is placed at the top of the performance directions page, and four on the last page of the score, forming a type of epilogue. Thus the intermedial references occur exclusively paratextually.¹¹⁶ This method, paratextual intermediality, is quite frequent within the corpus of Beckett compositions (e.g. Rebecca Saunders' *Stirrings Still* series, 2006-12). There are a number of works in homage, whose titles allude or openly refer to Beckett without "setting" the words or even imitating the language patterns, e.g. Oliver Korte's *rien nul* (2002), Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf's

¹¹⁵ Cf. Cage, John. *A Year from Monday*. Op. cit., 3-20.

¹¹⁶ To preclude misunderstandings: Paratext, according to Genette's definition, refers to the framework of a literary work or the elements that do not form part of the body of text itself, including its title, subtitle(s), preface, epilogue, prefatory notes, introduction, foot- and endnotes etc. Genette, Gérard (1993), 11. On the phenomenon of paratextual intermediality cf. Rajewsky, 82; Wolf (1999), 56.

il faut continuer – Requiem for Samuel Beckett (1989/90), Hans-Joachim Hespos' *Blackout* (1972), or Scott Fields' two albums of jazz improvisations based on Beckett ("Beckett," 2006, and "Samuel," 2009). Furthermore, meta-medialization¹¹⁷ has become a wider trend in recent decades. That is, as a way of explaining their works in their own words, other composers have, likewise, referred to the works of other artists (e.g. Feldman talking about Mondrian). Here again, Barrett's paratextual use of Beckett quotations is exceptionally extensive.

Unlike in some of his other Beckett-based works, e.g. *Tract*, the Beckett quotations in the score are not combined with verses from works by other authors revered by Barrett. They are, however, drawn from a variety of Beckett works, ranging from the post-war short story *First Love* (French version written in 1945, English translation completed in 1973) to the late prose text *Worstward Ho* (1983). From the manner in which Barrett positioned the phrases and paragraphs in the score, it can be inferred that each of the quotations is intended as a motto or sub-heading for a particular section or the quartet as a whole. Apart from representing an inspirational framework, however, Barrett's selection of quotations provides practical instructions specifically for the performer. As the composer has explained:

At first the quotations were intended to be distributed through the score, their function partly to act as more eloquent "performance directions" than I could ever imagine, partly to hint at itineraries between these fragments of Beckett's work which might be suggested by the musical continuity. Would it have been possible to make these intentions clear? (Am I making them clear now?) Eventually I decided not; while such extranotational material might have been found interesting I could not bring myself to view it as essential, which all contents of a score ought to be.¹¹⁸

Apart from the quotations, conventional performance directions abound, some of which are also inspired by Beckett works. Echoing the precision of Beckettian stage directions, they provide detailed guidelines not only on the different manners of instrumental tone production, but also on the range of expressive modes, giving such descriptive instructions as "as if from behind a curtain" (p. 1), "plaintive, exhausted" (p. 8), "unearthly, iridescent" (p. 13), "increasingly sterile & mechanical" (p. 24), "deliquescent, obsessive" (p. 26), "paroxysmal: a failed ending," "suddenly aghast, denatured, nightmarish"

¹¹⁷ This ties in with the notion of recursive intermediality put forward in the present work (s. chapter 4). Niklas Luhmann talks about the media becoming "observers of observers" (*Beobachter von Beobachtern*) or "second-order observers" (*Beobachter zweiten Grades*), cf. Luhmann, Niklas. *Die Realität der Massenmedien*. Wiesbaden: VS, 42009.

¹¹⁸ Barrett, *Notes...*

(p. 46), or "distorted, lugubrious," "rasping, asthmatic," "hoarse, moribund," "hellish, desperate" (all on p. 47). Scattered across the entire score, these instructions almost make up a narrative of their own. Concurring with Barrett's "grain of the instrument" credo, "the instrumental sound should generally be fractured, heterogeneous, harsh and grainy" (prefatory notes). Amplification, although optional, is "desirable as an essential aspect," allowing for a wider span of possibilities, ranging from "an unreal degree of presence" to "hard and oppressive" acoustic events (prefatory notes).

Agreeing with Harley's contention that "making the *attempt* is fundamental to Barrett's musical vision,"¹¹⁹ an existentialist outlook that represents the most evident point of contact between Beckett and Barrett, it is perhaps symptomatic that Richard Barrett's string quartet, written between 1983 and 1988, draws its title from *Cascando*. Like *Words and Music*, written the year before, *Cascando* depicts the creative process as an excruciating endeavor, a kind of *via dolorosa* (rather than a "boreen"¹²⁰), and might thus be considered a highly self-reflexive work. "It does I suppose in a way show what passes for my mind and what passes for its work," Beckett wrote in a letter.¹²¹ Strain and torture are not only reflected in the name of the character in the embedded story, Woburn ("woe-burnt"¹²²) – Maunu ("naked miseries") in the original French, Missler in Elmar Tophoven's authorized German translation – but also in the physical labor and exertion conveyed in and by the vocabulary and syntax: Woburn's yearning for "sleep" and "rest," or the "ton weight"¹²³ and "huge bulk"¹²⁴ of his feet he becomes aware of when he tries to get up. Clas Zilliacus gets to the heart of the play when he writes:

Cascando is paradigmatic insofar as the play, in model form, expresses a desire which pervades the entire Beckettian oeuvre: the desire not merely to finish a story but to find that story which, when finished, and being the right one, would absolve its teller of the need to go on, and thus make peace possible. It may not be great art; it may even be brushed aside, pace Beckett, as "an unimportant work"; but it is strikingly expressive of the very concerns which sustain that art of Beckett's which is generally considered great. *Cascando*, from that point of view, is a key text in the Beckett canon.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Harley, 27.

¹²⁰ CDW, 298.

¹²¹ 21 Sept. 1962, qtd. in: Worth, Katherine. "Words for Music Perhaps." SBM. 9-20: 10.

¹²² Zilliacus, op. cit., 129.

¹²³ CDW, 299.

¹²⁴ CDW, 298, 299.

¹²⁵ Zilliacus, 119.

Cascando displays the same metafictional storytelling mode, the same self-similar, recursive structure as many of his other works: the author observing a fictional character observing a fictional character, and the recipient witnessing this entire process. Likewise, "it is a work for the radio medium about the radio medium,"¹²⁶ reflecting the work of the radio broadcaster: meta-radio, so to speak, just as the rectangular shapes in Beckett's television plays remind the spectator of the shape of the mass medium. On another plane, it is, as Knowlson suggests in regard to *Words and Music*, a reflection not only of the author's work *per se*; but it also addresses the difficulty of combining words and music,¹²⁷ in other words, intermedial projects in general.

The division of Voice and thus dispersion or 'multi-channeling' of meaning¹²⁸ excludes the possibility of finding the right story that would result in the desired state of nihilism.¹²⁹ As in *Words and Music*, music is presented as a self-external *dramatis personae*, "un troisième personnage," as Mihalovici phrased it.¹³⁰ The play was originally written in French for the Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française (RTF), and a score was commissioned from Marcel Mihalovici,¹³¹ who had taken the initiative in writing a radio piece with his friend Beckett.¹³² The title *Cascando* is not a musical term, as Ruby Cohn has suggested,¹³³ as opposed to the original title that Beckett had suggested, *Calando*, (which had to be altered because it was homophonous with a type of cheese spelled *calendau*¹³⁴), which denotes a *decrescendo* along with a *rallentando*. Not only is this procedure echoed in three of the four quotations that Barrett appends to the end of his string quartet, but it is also built into the architecture of the piece. The proportions of the four parts, 4:8:2:1 reveal a decline towards the extinction of sound after the second part.

Zilliacus noted that *Cascando* "is kept open, avoids exclusive definition, at the receiving end. What is granted the listener as interpreter is denied the performer as interpreter."¹³⁵ Implicit in this reading is the possibility of the act of "opening" and "closing" being as-

¹²⁶ Ibid, 140.

¹²⁷ Knowlson (1996), 496.

¹²⁸ Cf. also: *Not I, Krapp, That Time, What Where*.

¹²⁹ Zilliacus, 138.

¹³⁰ Letter to Clas Zilliacus, qtd. in Zilliacus, 131.

¹³¹ On Mihalovici's Beckett settings, see Näf, Lukas. *Music Always Wins*, op. cit.

¹³² Zilliacus, 131.

¹³³ Cohn, Ruby. *Back to Beckett*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, 202. "Cascando" is also the title of a poem written in 1936.

¹³⁴ Zilliacus, 133.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 145.

sociated not only with the beginning and ending of a story, but also with the opening and closing realm of contingent interpretations (see chapter 3.2.2.). "Anything one says can only restrict listeners' freedom to find their own ways in listening. Would it be possible to find words which might open up the situation?" Richard Barrett wrote in his *Notes*. Small wonder it is exactly this passage with which Barrett prefaces the score:

They say, He opens nothing, he has nothing to open, it's in his head.
They don't see me, they don't see what I do, they don't see what I have, and they say, He
opens nothing, he has nothing to open, it's in his head.
I don't protest any more, I don't say any more,
There's nothing in my head.
I don't answer any more.
I open and close.¹³⁶

Finally and perhaps most crucially, "opening and closing" a story is the only narrative and performative ritual left after everything else has been stripped away, after the story or composition has been perforated to the point where, as Barthes put it, "the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered [...]."¹³⁷ It is the ultimate act by which the author claims authority and the only temporal demarcation of the artifact. An extreme example of this thought is John Cage's *4'33"*.

Commissioned by the BBC and written between 1983 and 1988, *I Open and Close* was premiered by the Arditti Quartet, to whom the piece was dedicated, on December 15, 1988. Originally, it was conceived as a composition for bass clarinet, violin, viola and 'cello and was only converted to a string quartet after the first half had been written.¹³⁸ It is the sixth work in an 11-part series of compositions entitled *Fictions*, for which Barrett drew primarily on Beckett texts and a variety of other writers. For the purpose of a detailed study of the string quartet, the composer supplied the present author with his *Notes*. As said above, this is an unpublished collection of loosely connected personal notes and quotations from Beckett and other authors, most notably Robert Pinget, a

¹³⁶ CDW, 300.

¹³⁷ Barthes, "The Death of the Author." *Image – Music – Text*. Op. cit., 145-6.

¹³⁸ Barrett, *Notes* ...

writer personally and artistically closely affiliated with Beckett.¹³⁹ Thus, similar to Beckett's and Kim's shared appreciation of Schubert, Rilke and Keats, Pinget represents a point of contact between Beckett and Barrett.

In accordance with the Marquardian postulate that the real no longer exists *outside* the fictional and vice versa, the intrusion of performative reality into the aesthetic realm is paralleled by the fictionalization (quite literally) of a domain that is by definition non-fictional: the composer's own commentaries and annotations, which only "supposedly" relate to Samuel Beckett rather than giving a descriptive analysis of the work – the paratext, that is. Not only does the composer deprive his music and performers of the capability of successful expression and performance respectively, but he also evades the responsibility of providing a reliable account of his work in a time when, as Ferneyhough has it, "[m]usic, ephemeral by definition, is in great need of support by the written word to maintain a constant profile in the public eye."¹⁴⁰

As to the structural layout of the composition, Barrett remarks that the proportion chain 1:2:4:8 and various permutations of it dominate the entire architecture. The durations of the four parts exhibit the ratio 4:8:2:1, thus diminishing in length, which accords with the Beckettian "spiral toward zero" (Hassan), the dying away of sound inherent in the title *Cascando*, and likewise with Barrett's commentary that "the work is essentially concerned with processes of entropic degeneration, obsessive circling around an obscure fixed point, gradually encroaching distortion, chaos and failure" (prefatory notes). This is to say that Barrett creates a form of art Beckett had envisaged similarly, a form which "admits the chaos, and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The forms and the chaos remain separate...to find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now,"¹⁴¹ as Barrett quotes Beckett in his *Notes*.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Associated with the *nouveau roman* movement, Pinget's works, especially *Mahud ou le Matériau* (1953) were much admired by Beckett. Pinget befriended Beckett in the 1950s and collaborated with him on several projects. The latter's adaptation of Pinget's radio play *La Manivelle*, entitled *The Old Tune*, was broadcast on BBC 3 in 1960. Before, Pinget had translated Beckett's *All That Fall* into French (*Tous ceux qui tombent*). Cf. *Grove Companion to Beckett*, op. cit., 420, 439. To Barrett, Pinget might have been of interest in the sense that the writer's aesthetic credo, "Ecrire? Pour moi c'est respirer" reveals a perceived link between creativity and physical exertion (cf. Dolle, Verena. *Tonschrift. Die Romane Robert Pingets in der Spannung zwischen Stimme und Schrift*. Tübingen: Narr, 1999, 1). Robert M. Henkels observed that "Pinget and Beckett both describe the creative act as a continuing process of innovation, a repeatedly frustrated search in which language plays a vital role." Cf. *Robert Pinget. The Novel as Quest*, Univ. Of Alabama Pr., 1979, 214. It is this futile quest for meaning within a flux of forms that constitutes a major point of contact between Beckett, Pinget, and Barrett.

¹⁴⁰ Ferneyhough (2003), 74.

¹⁴¹ Driver (1961), 23.

¹⁴² He wrongly cites the *Three Dialogues* as the source of this statement.

Although calling to mind a traditional four-part structure, the 'movements,' according to Barrett, are not intended as separate parts, but rather as manifestations of four different forms of instrumentation: solos and accompaniment, polyphony, heterophony, and homophony, which the composer also states in the prefatory notes. Inherent in this sequence is a development from divergent to homogeneous sound. Parallel to what Barrett delineates as process 1 in his notes on the second part, the texture tends toward a single pitch.

In keeping with the four words in the title, the piece 'opens up' in terms of duration, i.e. expands in the second 'movement,' and subsequently 'closes,' i.e. decreases in length. The sequence of tempi follows this strategy: Five different tempi are used, eighth note = 108, 81, 72, 67 1/2, and 54. They all relate to what Barrett declares as the "ground tempo" 108 by whole-tone ratios: $81 = 3:4$, $72 = 2:3$, $67\ 1/2 = 5:8$, $54 = 1:2$.¹⁴³ All parts, except for the last one, begin with tempo 108, followed by 81, 72, and 67 1/2. The slowest tempo occurs at the end of parts I and III and is maintained through all of part IV. Along with this process of gradual slowing down, each part, starting with widely fluctuating dynamics, is concluded by a diminuendo into silence.

6.2.2. Part I

The quotation prefacing the first part is a phrase from the French version of *First Love*: "...là où la verbe s'arrête," which is taken from a section in which the narrator meditates on the words "vase de nuit": "J'ai beaucoup aimé, enfin assez aimé, pendant assez longtemps, les mots de vase de nuit, ils me faisaient penser à Racine ou à Baudelaire, je ne sais plus lequel, les deux peut-être, oui, je regrette, j'avais de la lecture, et par eux j'arrivais là où le verbe s'arrête, on dirait du Dante."¹⁴⁴

This paragraph was left out by Beckett in the English translation, an omission implicitly pointing to the problems of literary translation. In addition, by mentioning Racine, Baudelaire, and Dante, Beckett cited three authors whose works are known to be highly

¹⁴³ Cf. prefatory notes in the score.

¹⁴⁴ SB, *Premier Amour*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1970, 44.

difficult to translate felicitously into English.¹⁴⁵ It was, after all, Dante himself who wrote on the issue of translating poetry in the seventh chapter in the first book of his *Convivio*: "Therefore everyone should know that nothing harmonized according to the rules of poetry can be translated from its native tongue into another without destroying all its sweetness and harmony."¹⁴⁶ By selecting this passage, Barrett, intentionally or not, illustrates the point he made about the impossibility of text fidelity (see chapter on Barrett and Beckett).

As indicated by Barrett, the instrumentation of the first part follows the scheme "solo plus accompaniment." Furthermore, the part is subdivided into four sections of different tempi, each one written for a different solo instrument: violin 1 in section 1 (tempo = 108), violin 2 in section 2 (81), 'cello in section 3 (72), viola/viola and tutti in section 4 (67.5/54, see table below). Unlike the number of measures each section consists of, the tempi are related to each other by whole-number ratios (see table).

	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4
Tempo	108	81	72	67.5/54
Number of mm.	62	15	31	7
Solo instrument	Violin I	Violin II	Cello	Viola/viola+tutti

Fig. 17: *I Open and Close*, Part I: tempo, duration, and solo instruments.

Unlike Kim's or Feldman's scores, however, the structural layout is entirely dissociated from spatial proportions. According to the composer, the length of the solos is determined by the proportion chain mentioned above, thus the proportions of the solos are: 8-2-4-1 (*Notes*). The eighth-beats that each solo comprises, not counting the pauses of the solo instruments, amount to 240 in the first, 45 in the second, 80 in the third, and 18.75

¹⁴⁵ On translating Racine, cf., for example, Ricks, Christopher. "Racine's 'Phèdre': Lowell's 'Phaedra.'" *Arion* 1.2 (Spring, 1991): 44-59; on Baudelaire: Scott, Clive. "Translating Baudelaire." *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*. Ed. Rosemary Lloyd. Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Pr., 2006. 193-205; on Dante: Bergin, Thomas G. "On Translating Dante." *Annual Reports of the Dante Society* 73 (1955): 3- 22.

¹⁴⁶ Alighieri, Dante. *The Convivio*. Transl. Richard H. Lansing. New York: Garland, 1990, 18.

in the fourth section. Thus, when played in the respective tempi, the duration of the solos is in perfect accordance with the proportion chain: 2.2...'/0.5...'/1.1...'/0.27...'.¹⁴⁷

Although Barrett specifies the length of the pauses between the solos by means of the proportion chain permutation 2-4-1-8, he does not indicate where these pauses begin and end. From the last gap, which is specified by Barrett (26.3...'' or 0.4...'), we can deduce the length of the other gaps (in an ideal performance without tempo variation): The first one, between the two violin solos, mm. 63-5 (9 beats at tempo 81), is 0.1...'' in length, the second one, from m. 78-81 (16 beats at tempo 72), 0.2...'', and the third one, m. 109 (3.75 beats at tempo 67.5), lasts 0.05...''. In other words, the formal structure of events is based on an objective time frame.

In his *Notes*, the composer added an 'alternative title': "4 monologues, surrounded by an undergrowth of refractions, contradictions, qualifications," resonating, like Kim's *Monologues*, with the omnipresence of monologue forms in Beckett's works. Small wonder, then, that the first performance direction "as if from behind a curtain" is inspired by *Not I*, where Mouth's voice first sounds "unintelligible behind curtain."¹⁴⁸ Along the same lines, Barrett gave the following description: "expanding and contracting phrases separated by expanding and contracting silences (like gulps for breath)"¹⁴⁹ It is with the motion of the bow that the movement of breathing is imitated.¹⁵⁰ The four solo passages are presented as four different 'dramatis personae', the first violin "turbulent and brutal," the second (m. 66) "plaintive, exhausted," the cello "lurching, morbidly sensual" (m. 82), the viola "confused, obsessive" (m. 110) and finally "cold and paralysed" (m. 116).

¹⁴⁷ "1 und 0.3333... [s]ind gleich berechtigte, gleich lebende innerlich klingende Wesen. Warum soll man sich mit 1 begnügen? Warum soll man 0.3333... ausschließen?" ["1 and 0.3333... (a)re equally valid and equally vital sound forms. Why should we settle for 1? Why should we rule out 0.3333...?"] (Wassily Kandinsky, cf.: Kandinsky, Wassily and Franz Marc. *Der Blaue Reiter*. New edition by Klaus Lankheit. Munich: Piper, 1965, 174).

¹⁴⁸ CDW, 376.

¹⁴⁹ Barrett, *Notes*...

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

of modern microtonality,¹⁵² it is the concept of corporeality, of sound production, which again seems to underpin Barrett's interest in subdivisions of traditional pitches. In 1912, Nicolai Kulbin postulated in his "Thesen der freien Musik" that microtones could enhance the mimetic qualities of music: "Man kann die Bewegungen der Seele des Menschen voller darstellen"¹⁵³ a notion which seems to reverberate in Barrett's "internal realism." Furthermore, Kulbin likens microtonal music, which he refers to as "colored (*farbige*) music," to the hues and shades of a painting,¹⁵⁴ and Barrett's microtonal material is just as irreducible as color pigments. With Barrett, the perceptibility of this vast palette of possibilities is rather questionable, given the speed at which the piece is to be performed. Therefore, viewed as a *destructive* aesthetic force, microtonality ties in with Barrett's intention of creating a musical language of "chaos and failure" if it brings music "closer to chaos," as Leonid Sabanev asserted in the late 1920's.¹⁵⁵ Even though the meticulously specified extended playing techniques are communicated formally from the composer to the performer, the performer inevitably fails to implement and communicate them to the audience.¹⁵⁶ Barrett himself writes in his *Notes* that the solo passages contain "no overall processual tendency but a sequence or flux of situations in which diverse aspects such as dynamics, phrase-lengths, combinations of playing techniques, rotate their values within certain limits." That this description is an act of camouflage or irony rather than an explanation of the work's genesis is evident in the fact that the "limits" in question are not specified but rather vaguely defined as "the expressive identity of the music."¹⁵⁷ Barrett writes that the material of the accompanying instruments is derivative of the solo passages, and that the material is expanded so as to eventually encompass the entire first part. The "sampling time," i.e. "the length of the excerpt which may be subject to looping, permutation, etc. expands from one to seven 16th-notes." While it appears that the latter commentary refers to the first entry of the accompanying voices (where the second violin plays one, the viola three, and the 'cello seven 16-notes), the exact mechanisms of derivation, i.e. the processes of "looping, permutation,

¹⁵² Cf. Partch, Harry. *Genesis of a Music*. New York: Da Capo Press, 21974.

¹⁵³ Kulbin, Nicolai. "Die Freie Musik." *Der Blaue Reiter*. Ed. Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc. Munich: Piper, 1965. 125-31: 128.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Sabanev, Leonid. "The Possibility of Quarter-Tone and Other New Scales." *Musical Times* 70.1036 (June, 1929): 501-4: 503.

¹⁵⁶ "Die nicht absolute Übereinstimmung zwischen der notierten Musik und dem akustischen Resultat ist also eines der Elemente, die ganz bewußt der Vielschichtigkeit und Mehrdeutigkeit der komplexen Musik dienen." Cavalotti, 235.

¹⁵⁷ Barrett, *Notes*...

etc." are not disclosed. Due to microtonal progressions, a vast amount of pitch material is employed, such that, even if there were a correlation of some sort between the solo and the accompaniment, one would be unable to decode the underlying – possibly computer-generated – creative process. For a composer interested in creating a compositional mode that "resists [...] the academic/musicological process,"¹⁵⁸ this strategy is obviously a natural outcome of his aesthetic considerations. It is evident, then, that as a listener or musicologist, one is best to dispense with any traditional tools of formal exegesis.

The allegedly spun-off material following the first solo passage could not be further removed from the 'original': Whereas the solo comprises a plethora of playing techniques, rhythmic configurations, multiple-stops, dynamic differentiations, and a high tonal range (G3 to Bb 6), the "sample" in the accompaniment covers a limited range of possibilities within the aforementioned parameters, "revolving" within a relatively limited register. It is easily seen that there is a certain pitch density inherent in each of them, i.e. some pitches and their respective neighboring tones are attacked more frequently than others (which of course also depends on the instrument's tonal range) or even repeated (C 3 demisharp in violin II, Eb 6 in the viola and C 5 demiflat in the 'cello), giving an idea (or creating an illusion) of what Barrett's comment "obsessive circling around an (obscure) fixed point" might refer to. For example, the cello passage marked "quasi jeté," consisting of 24 notes in m. 10 encompasses a scope of 11 closely located pitches within an intervallic range of a minor fifth (G#-D demisharp). Yet the sequence of pitches within that material does not seem to adhere to any formal principle.

Owing to Barrett's "maximalist" utilization of a vast range of differentiations within parameters and, consequently, the ratio between these myriad possibilities and the relatively limited space of the score, any sort of predictability with respect to the musical material is undermined. Neither can repetitions (of tones and time signatures) and similarities between rhythmic and tonal configurations (e.g. cf. the first figure in mm. 4 and 23 or the recurring long flautando/flageolet quadruple-stops in the solo voice, mm. 1, 14, 19) be ruled out, nor can predictions be made based on prior deployment of material. Relations of similarity are random or rhizomatic rather than motivic/thematic, let alone serial. While they have certain features in common, they are not connected by an

¹⁵⁸ Barrett (1996), 29.

overarching property, paradigm, or process. To briefly recapture the term "rhizomatic" that has been touched upon in previous chapters, Deleuze/Guattari delineate rhizomatic systems as follows:

To these centered systems, the authors contrast acentered systems, finite networks of automata in which communication runs from any neighbor to any other, the stems or channels do not preexist, and all individuals are interchangeable, defined only by their *state* at any given moment – such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a central agency.¹⁵⁹

In other words, overarching, centralizing concepts are aborted, since, as Deleuze/Guattari assert, they contradict the "natural reality."¹⁶⁰ Binary logic, the authors maintain, is not too abstract, but conversely also not abstract *enough* to represent the natural state of things. Rhizomatic thinking thus embraces multiplicities rather than dichotomies or dialectics, "radicle-chaosmos rather than root-cosmos."¹⁶¹

It is in keeping with the overall process of "entropic degeneration" that the material of the three accompanying instruments, highly distinct from the solo passage as it is, emancipates itself from the original in the lower strings by gaining complexity. It has been pointed out that, in lack of any reproducible procedures generating the pitch material, the sequence of pitches in a work such as this string quartet may be gleaned only in terms of approximations. As far as the order of the twelve different time signatures is concerned, we will have to settle for the conclusion that the sequence is highly erratic, as seen in Fig. 18.

7	13	3	3	5	2	5	7	6	6	7	5	7	11	4	5	3	5	4	2	3	3
8	16	8	8	16	8	16	16	8	8	8	8	16	16	8	16	8	16	8	8	8	8
9	3	4	4	13	5	5	4	5	4	11	3	9	7	5	5	5	5	11	9	7	3
16	16	8	8	16	8	16	8	16	8	16	8	16	16	8	16	16	16	16	16	16	8
7	11	4	5	3	4	5	4	3	5	5	5	5	7	4	4	7	5				
16	16	8	16	8	8	8	8	16	16	16	16	16	16	8	8	8	16				

Fig. 18: *I Open and Close*, illustration of time signature variation in the first 62 measures.

¹⁵⁹ Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. London: Continuum, 2010, 19.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 6.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 7.

Naturally, Barrett's non-disclosure of his compositional processes does not rule out the possibility of underlying stochastic processes, which in lack of the required analytical tools will not be pursued in present study. This shortcoming is somewhat remedied by the fact that these possible stochastic processes are but a means to an end – the end of perceptual and conceptual flux,¹⁶² or: unpredictability. After all, Barrett's concern lies in the "psychological function" of his syntax of sound effects, rather than in conceiving compositions "out of disembodied abstractions."¹⁶³

Along similar lines, Barrett told Toop that the underlying process of generating pitch material could be likened to the principle a Markov chain.¹⁶⁴ We will refrain from defining the extent to which this principle is exploited in its actual, mathematical sense, if at all. Simply viewed as a metaphor of Barrett's *modus operandi*, however, the Markov property provides an apt description of the outwardly random pitch or time signature sequences and of the incalculability of Barrett's compositional processes in general. As Karlheinz Essl notes, "Markov chains are weighted chains of random number choices which can lead to the emergence of patterns and stable structures without fixing a specific route."¹⁶⁵ In other words: Diametrically opposed to palindromic structures, Markov chains make it impossible to predict a future event based on a sequence of events in the past. Thus, within a roughly fixed macrostructure, Barrett's strategy was to randomize the appearance of material so as to attain, as Xenakis phrased it, "the greatest possible *asymmetry* (in the etymological sense) and the *minimum of constraints, causalities, and rules*."¹⁶⁶ This artistic ideal is equidistant from aleatoric composition on the one hand and improvisation on the other. In improvisation, "[t]here is a substitution of authors"¹⁶⁷ because the interpreter "is a highly conditioned being," as Xenakis argued, which echoes Boulez' critique of aleatoricism.¹⁶⁸ Unlike Xenakis, who attached great importance to explicating the algorithms of his compositional processes in great scientific detail, Barrett's concern is obviously to obscure completely the coming-into-being of his works (which is also achieved by fictionalized paratext) and to "control the context of the tex-

¹⁶² Toop (1988), 32.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 32.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 38.

¹⁶⁵ Essl, Karlheinz. "Notes to 'Algorithmic Composition.'" *Cambridge Companion to Electronic Music*. Cambridge, NY: CUP, 2007, 259.

¹⁶⁶ Xenakis (1971), 23.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 38.

¹⁶⁸ "Alea," op. cit.

ture much more finely than Xenakis would do."¹⁶⁹ In the case of a work such as *I Open and Close*, such a compositional process may take as long as five years.

The violin II solo, starting in m. 66, is already deprived of the energy of the first solo, played in a slower tempo, "plaintive, exhausted," *con sordino*, "constantly changing pitch and dynamic, in two-part close harmony" and *legatissimo* (*Notes*). The low-key tone of the solo is inspired, among other things, by the last sentence of Beckett's short prose work *The End*, again a reflection of the creative process and of its relation to the artist: "The memory came faint and cold of the story I might have told, a story in the likeness of my life, I mean without the courage to end or the strength to go on."¹⁷⁰

Barrett's declared aim in this section is to transform what he dubs "abstract music" into "concrete" sounds, which entails a total deconstruction and deconceptualization of pitch material,¹⁷¹ thus digressing even further from the path of predictability. This is evident in the viola and 'cello voices, both of which are intended to produce pitchless sounds from m. 74 to m.77.

Contrasting starkly with the exhaustion, slower pace, and *legatissimo* of the second violin, the 'cello solo (starting in m. 82) reiterates the virtuosity of the first solo, now in a slower tempo. Barrett writes that it could be considered a "converse" of the violin I solo.¹⁷² This can be verified in terms of differences in register and expressive properties. The "lurching, morbidly sensual" (m. 82) quality of this solo passage is obviously antipodal to the paroxysmal beginning. It also differs from the first violin solo in that bow changes and other performance directions are by far sparser. Upbow prevails, and no double- or multiple stops occur. Pitches are attacked straightforwardly at the beginning of phrases and drawn out at the end. All the while, pitch content is gradually aborted. As opposed to the *diminuendi* of the violin solo at the beginning, each phrase in the 'cello solo is marked *crescendo*. Similarly, the predominantly long and labyrinthine sentences of Beckett's later prose, musically represented as a "single convoluted line"¹⁷³ (Barrett) in the 'cello solo, contrast with Mouth's stammering and irregular gulps of breath which were evoked by the frequent bow changes at the beginning. Moreover, the prescribed "morbid sensuality" is in accordance with the macabre viscerality – the juxtaposition of

¹⁶⁹ Toop (1988), 32.

¹⁷⁰ CSP, 99.

¹⁷¹ Barrett, *Notes*...

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

corporeal and geometrical forms, of spatial coordinates and human bodies – all of which lie at the core of Beckett's *All Strange Away*. Barrett quotes a consonant-laden, voluptuous sentence from this short prose work to characterize the sensuality of the 'cello solo: "Imagine him kissing, caressing, licking, sucking, fucking and bugging all this stuff, no sound."¹⁷⁴

Just as the 'cello pairs with the violin I solo, the solo of the second violin is akin to the viola solo in that it is also written in two parts. Yet just as the first violin and the 'cello, the second violin and the viola form a pair of opposites: The parallel movement of the voices in the second violin, referred to as a "two-part harmony" by the composer, contrasts with the asynchronous movement of the viola solo (starting in m. 110), called a "two-part pizzicato counterpoint,"¹⁷⁵ as does the heavily accented pizzicato of the viola solo vis-à-vis the *legatissimo* of the violin II passage.

The interpolated tutti section right before the end (mm. 113-5), a "frantic chorale,"¹⁷⁶ marked "unearthly, iridescent," is reminiscent of the serene tranquility and nostalgia of a moribund character featured in the Beckett text quoted in the *Notes* in reference to this passage, i.e. *Old Earth* or *Fizzle 6*. It provides another contrast to the nervous pizzicati of the viola before the viola's final decline. "Cold and paralysed," this last G is sustained "with no variation in timbre" after the three other instruments have faded *al niente*.

6.2.3. Part II

Parallel to the syntactic *attacca* connection between the first two 'movements,' the short prose works drawn on by the composer to illustrate the expressive content of the ending of the first part and the beginning of the second provide a semantic link between the sections: The first sentence in *All Strange Away* (quoted in the *Notes*) forms the title of the work written subsequently, *Imagination Dead Imagine* (quoted in the score, p. 14). There is, however, another textual model cited in Barrett's *Notes: How It Is*, written in French and translated into English in the early 1960's.

¹⁷⁴ CSP, 171.

¹⁷⁵ Barrett, *Notes...*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

beats by respective tempi, one finds that there is a minor deviation from the proportion chain 1-2-4-8, since the last section is slightly shorter. Rather than 5.333..., as would be expected, the resultant duration is 5.3185185...!. The durations of the first three sections, however, are accurate: 0.666...!, 1.333...!, 2.666...!.

Starting boisterously, with flights of heavily accented "hammered" 16th notes played *al tallone* (at the frog), section 1 is then subject to being gradually "eaten away by silence" as a part of process 3. This procedure of "gradual[...] splintering" (p.14), of paring down material and disintegrating coherence, is associated by the composer with Beckett's *Imagination Dead Imagine*, whose "tattered syntaxes"¹⁷⁹ are paradigmatic of Beckett's late short prose. From m. 2 onwards, pauses expand from one 16th beat (in violin II, which is played *con sordino* from the beginning) to two in mm. 4 and 5, 4 in m. 6, 7 in mm. 10 and 11, 18 in m. 12, etc. until the first general pause (m. 18). As the texture thins out, the rhythm becomes more irregular, in the course of which the mechanical 16th-figures are increasingly fragmented and diversified by grace notes and triplets. After the first "failed ending," i.e. another general pause, section two starts in tempo 81 with (temporarily) new momentum. "I began again. But little by little with a different aim, no longer in order to succeed, but in order to fail," from *Malone Dies*, quoted in the *Notes*, is the Beckettian pre-text for this second attempt. At the outset of this section, "instrument-based" material reminiscent of the solo-passages in the first part prevails, although, as with the first section, the antipode of this diversification is already built into the texture and undermines it right from the beginning: Simultaneous movement of two or more lines or "ensemble-based material," as Barrett dubs it, gradually encroaches upon larger portions of the section. The dyads together constituting the "grinding chords" toward the end of the section are clearly related to the violin II and viola solos of the first part. In addition to the second violin, the 'cello plays *con sordino*. Barrett also incorporates a passage from *Watt* into his *Notes*. It is the passage depicting Watt's sporadic perception or misperception of the Threne. Barrett writes: "The aim is always clarity of thought, the result always confusion,"¹⁸⁰ evoking the Bergsonian/Beckettian dichotomy between dynamic of living matter and the rigidity of the intellect. At the end of the section, process 1 becomes the predominant mode. As delineated by Barrett, the pitch material is reduced to smaller quantities of pitches, and ultimately to single pitches

¹⁷⁹ See *All Strange Away*. CSP, 169.

¹⁸⁰ Barrett, *Notes*...

in the outer voices (the same ending as in part I): another "failed ending" (as mapped out in process 3), marked by "immobility and silence." In the third section, another instrument, the first violin, is played *con sordino*. In his *Notes*, Barrett quotes from a French Beckett poem also set by Rands in *...among the voices...*: "My way is in the sand flowing...." He cites the second stanza, thereby referring once again to the aforementioned self-reflexive motive of "opening and closing":

my peace is there in the receding mist
when may I cease from treading these long shifting thresholds
and live the space of a door
which opens and shuts

Furthermore, a central passage from *Eh Joe*, "You know that penny farthing hell you call your mind...That's where you think this is coming from, don't you?" (discussed in chapter 4.3.4.) is included in the composer's commentary, to which he adds: "all of it with hardly a glance at the score." Turning away from the material by way of "spiralling inwards," as Barrett summarizes this section in the *Notes*, this unmistakably emulates Beckettian internal monologues. Process 2, a gradual diversification of individual instrumental voices, and, concomitantly, an unfolding of four distinct instrumental monologues, forms the basis of the present section. Process 2 is manifest from the very beginning in the sense that instruments do not enter simultaneously, as in the first two sections, but in a staggered manner. Ever greater portions of "instrument-based material" are woven into the four parts, while elements of the dyads from the previous section are retained, notably in the middle voices. Meanwhile, the first violin and the 'cello parts exhibit an increasing tonal range and scope of ornamentations, instrumental techniques, and rhythmic configurations (e.g. the trill figures in the first violin starting in m. 59, the gradual annihilation of pitch content, as in m. 74 of Part I and in m. 61, the *legno battuto* figure with the bow moving from the bridge to the fingerboard with damped third string in m. 70). From m. 81, the texture gradually thins out, as process 3, i.e. the process of disintegration, sets in: As tutti passages alternate with passages in which two or more instruments pause, the viola takes center stage, spinning out a filigree of single pitches ornamented by strings of grace notes whose "indicated starting point [...] is an approximation," as is noted in the score. Thus, as is typical of the "failed endings" of this composition, the pitch content becomes increasingly blurred. In Barrett's *Notes*, we

read: "[T]he viola scans (with increasingly elaborate curves of grace-notes) between three registral areas, triggering entries in each from one of the other instruments."

This procedure, the composer adds, emulates the structure of Beckett's *Play* (as in Kim's *Monologues*), where, apart from the obvious presence of three "registral areas," M's speech triggers responses from W1 and W2, and light provokes speech (as indicated in Beckett's stage directions). The viola, the only instrument played without a mute, triggers 16 entries in total. As with the Markov-chain-inspired series of time signatures and other parameters discussed above, the order and length of the entries shift erratically. Again, the transformation of material can only be captured in terms of approximations and tendencies, while smaller tonal and rhythmic building blocks resist analysis. The material of the violins and 'cello refers back to the "sampled" material of the first part. The mechanical character of these circular runs of 32-notes is underscored by Barrett's performance direction in m. 101: "increasingly sterile and mechanical" and by the gradual reduction of tonal material to a single pitch (process 1). Meanwhile, the viola part undergoes process 2, moving from single sustained notes delivered "non vibrato" (m. 88, 90) to the inclusion of more and more pitches into a single sound event: "poco vibrato" or "non vibrato > poco vibrato > molto vibrato" in mm. 91-101. Finally, grace notes prevail, marked "spinning wildly out of control" (m. 100). Thus a set of dichotomies closes the present section: one between definite pitch and pitch ambiguation, the other between "mechanical" material dying away before the end of the section and ornamented strings of sound events leading over to another tutti passage.

If one were to reduce the fourth section, the longest one of the second part, to a single motto, "exhaustion," "disintegration," or "winding down" would be possible ways of characterizing it, as suggested by the composer's *Notes*:

[P]rocess 3 has exhausted its repertoire of attempts to impose an overall order upon the polyphony; process 2 has degenerated almost completely into long, meandering expositions of unrelated material; process 1 is left (in a section somewhat longer than the whole of part 1) to wind down into paralysis (central E flat, never explicitly reached).

In other words, the section combines the failed workings of the three main processes, which in turn are in a cause-and-effect relationship: The failing of process 3, which catalyzes disintegration in the first three sections, thus bringing them to an end, leads to an overall expansion, a loss of control over processes 1 and 2, illustrating what Clov

says in *Endgame*: "Something is taking its course," a sentence quoted by Barrett in his *Notes* on this section. Processes 1 and 2 are thus left to engage in a mutual interplay ("counterpoint," as Barrett puts it) during which material episodes expand in duration (process 2) while being primarily "ensemble-based" (i.e. simultaneous lines as in section 2) and supposedly tending toward a single pitch (process 1). This pitch, however, is as oxymoronic as the figure of Godot in that it constitutes a point of arrival that never occurs (in keeping with the principle of "obsessive circling around an obscure fixed point").

From m. 107 to m. 110, "instrument-based" figurations set apart technically, rhythmically and dynamically from the rest are played by the viola and passed on to the second violin in m. 112. After m. 116, the *legatissimo* style and natural bowing, reminiscent of the violin II solo in the first part, becomes the predominant mode. Likewise, the "deliquescent, obsessive" character dovetails with the plaintive exhaustion associated with the second violin in the first part. There is one last brief instance of "instrument-based" material in the first violin in mm. 143-4. Gradually, durations are extended so that from pp. 30-34 onwards, longer note values (abolishing pitch content), become more frequent. Curiously, the second part ends with the opening measures of the quartet, a 'verbatim' recapitulation of the violin solo of part I.

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The image shows a page of a musical score for a string quartet, specifically page 34. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 9 to 16, and the second system covers measures 108 to 116. The instruments are Violin I, Violin II (Gamba send), Viola, and Cello. The score includes various performance instructions and dynamics. Key annotations include 'ppp non cresc.', 'pizzicato muto', 'as if from behind a curtain: bubbling and trivial but very quiet (poco giocando)', 'ppp cresc. pochiss. a pochiss...', '4 (Allegro) (as short as possible!)', and 'via send.'. The score is written in a complex, dense style with many notes and rests.

Ex. 49: Page 34: back-reference to Part I (© 1988 United Music Publishers Ltd., London. Reproduced by permission).

This straightforward back-reference is reminiscent of 18th- or 19th-century cyclical unity. In fact, such a work is cited by the composer in his *Notes*: "in its attenuated pitch-movement a distant, impoverished cousin to Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" theme, whose significance to Samuel Beckett is incontestable." As mentioned in chapter 2.2., the quartet, as well as the song on which it is based, figure prominently in *All That Fall* and *Krapp*, and Barrett's reference to Schubert is another example of recursive (see chapter 4) as well as reciprocal intermediality.

Related to the title and perhaps only general idea of this composition is the excerpt from *The Unnamable* quoted by Barrett in the *Notes* with reference to Part II, "before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, of it opens...." This passage, which was also set by Kim in *Rattling On*, once again encompasses the cardinal opening-closing theme.

6.2.4. Part III

"Heterophonies" form the basic compositional principle of the third part. As we have seen in Earl Kim's heterophonic voice-doubling, the term "heterophony," coined by Plato, although not defined by the philosopher, denotes a type of voice leading that is equidistant from polyphony and homophony. More specifically, it is a "simultaneous variation, accidental or deliberate, of what is identified as the same melody."¹⁸¹ However, Barrett conceives heterophony simply as "divergent sound" or as a "maximum divergence between simultaneous events" (*Notes*). These rather vague definitions might refer to the fact that the three instrumental voices (violin I, viola, 'cello) evolve from a common point of departure in terms of pitch. They could also be a way of describing the divergence of the "two layers" that constitute this 'movement':

1. (*con sordini*, from the end of part 2) extension of central pitch (slipped down to D) into various kinds of "heterophony" (in the more usual sense), the three instruments (violin I, viola, 'cello) leaving this strand in turn for:
2. superimposition of (different realisations of the same materials as) the four solos from part 1, beginning sequentially and ending together, with the rôles of the two violins exchanged, thus opening part 3 with violin II. This time, however, the solo material, gradually sucked further into disorder (the tempi of the four solos are also superimposed), is in

¹⁸¹ Cooke, Peter. Heterophony, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (date last accessed: January 17, 2011).

turn substituted, and eventually swept aside, by an extension of the "chorale" which brought part 1 to a halt.¹⁸²

The paratextual quotations in part III are mostly drawn from *Worstward Ho*. In addition, the *Notes* contain a sentence from the last paragraph of *First Love*: "For years I thought they would cease. Now I don't think so any more,"¹⁸³ referring to the cries of the narrator's newborn child as he leaves his lover. Another Beckett passage at the end of the *Notes* on Part III, from *How It Is*, also deals with cries, but here they have stopped, allowing for a moment of rest and silence: "in the dark the mud my head against his my side glued to his my arm round his shoulders his cries have ceased we lie thus a good moment [they] are good moments."¹⁸⁴ As with Kim's compilations and collages of text passages, this illustrates how different texts of the author can be linked to one another, due to recurrent motives and themes.

From the solo recapitulation at the end of part II onwards, sections within the 'movements' are no longer neatly demarcated. Due to the "superimposition" of solo material described above, beginnings and endings are obscured entirely, giving rise to structural polyvalence. A macrostructural division could be based on at least four different sets of parameters:

- The double bar lines (before A, before F, before L, and before O) suggest a division into five sections:

mm. 1-30

mm. 31-45

mm. 46-58

mm. 59-67

mm. 68-74

- Rehearsal numbers, suggesting a finer division (16 sections, including the beginning up to A).

- Four sections can be derived if one takes what Barrett labels "layer 1" as a starting point: beginning to A: three instruments *con sordino*; A to L: two instruments *con sordino*; L to third bar after L in violin I: one instrument *con sordino*; third bar after L to end: all instruments *senza sordino*.

¹⁸² Barrett, *Notes*...

¹⁸³ CSP, 45.

¹⁸⁴ SB, *How It Is*, 54.

- Finally, if we proceed according to the deployment of solo material, the first section begins at the end of part II and extends to the entry of the cello solo at rehearsal letter A; the second section starts at A and ends at F, when the first violin imitates the diadic *legatissimo* of violin II in part I (starting in m. 66); the third one goes from F to L and, analogously to part I, the last section goes from L (viola solo, from O-end: viola + tutti) to the end of this part.

In light of the exact durations of the sections, it becomes obvious that, unlike part I and II, the proportion chain 1:2:4:8 does not underlie the structure, since 1 a) = 0.925925...!', 1b) = 0.481481...!', 1c) = 0.407407...!', 1d) = 0.537537...!', and 1e) = 0.407407...!'. Likewise, the last type of macrostructure delineated above yields the following solo durations (counting from each instrument's entry to the end of the piece), which are not deduced from the proportion chain either: violin II: 2.907, 'cello: 1.833, violin II: 1.352, viola: 0.944.

Although Barrett's use of the words "same material" may lead one to assume that the solo passages of part I are simply restated (as at the end of part II) or appear in a slightly altered form, once again there are merely rhizomatic ties between the violin I solo of part I (from m. 4 onwards) and the violin II voice in part III. Although, as in the other solo passages, the expressive mode is identical to the 'original' ("suddenly close and oppressive..."), assuming the instrumentalist strictly adheres to the composer's instructions, there are no discernible direct back-references to the rhythmic and tonal configuration of the first part, only faint resemblances.

The accompanying material, revolving around the pitch of D, is related to the dyadic "close-harmony" (Barrett) mode of the violin II solo of the first part. Barrett weaves parts of the circulating accompanying figures of Part I (e.g. in mm. 7-8 in the 'cello, 8-9 in v. I, 18-20 in the viola) into this sound continuum. Episodes of this material encroach upon the solo passages more frequently than in part I (e.g. M. 7, 10, letter C). Thus pieces of material previously allocated to specific voices and instruments increasingly intermingle, while clear-cut distinctions between "solo" and "accompanying" material become increasingly blurred, just as the compositional processes explicated by the composer himself. Even expressive modes are subject to transformation: Since the two violins exchange roles, at rehearsal letter F, violin I takes over the dyadic progression of

the violin II solo in Part I, now faster and more energetic, containing more leaps, spread out over a larger tonal range and assigned with the attributes "awkward, dislocated" instead of "plaintive, exhausted" (as in Part I). Likewise, the last solo (viola) is marked "resigned, doggedly" as opposed to "confused, obsessive" (part I). The viola and cello trills of Part I are also reiterated after letter C. By letter O, the overall sound is "harsh, grating, poco sul ponte." At this point, the "frantic chorale" of Part I is reiterated "in a different form," as Barrett describes it, again a vague formulation, if not paradoxical. This version (0.222...) is longer than the first one (0.148148). In fact, the two chorales are in a 2:3 ratio. Notwithstanding this relation of duration and similarities in articulation ("moltissimo pesante"), dynamics (starting fff/ffff, gradual decrescendo in part I, a quite sudden pp in m. 72), rhythmic values, and register, there are no direct back-references in the form of restatements, inversions, transpositions etc. What is also evident in the performance directions is that negative notions such as failure and strain, gloom, doom and decline feature far more prominently than in part I. This is as much apparent in the last performance directions (the last two solos, as shown above, and on p. 46: "paroxysmal: a failed ending," "suddenly aghast, nightmarish") as in the "exaggerated" bow pressure.

The image shows a page of a musical score for Part III, starting at measure 4. The score is for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. It includes performance directions such as "suddenly close and aggressive: in the nat. context of bars 1-64 spec. more dislocated" and "All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better. (Beckett, Waiting for Godot)". The score is marked with dynamics like fff, mp, pp, and includes tempo markings like "molto" and "poco".

Ex. 50: Beginning of Part III (© 1988 United Music Publishers Ltd., London. Reproduced by permission).

6.2.5. Part IV

In view of the overall proportions of the string quartet, i.e. 4:8:2:1, Christopher Fox has contended that the music "dies" in the second part of *I Open and Close*, and everything that follows is but a "grim postmortal paroxysm."¹⁸⁵ The *Addenda* from *Watt*, quoted in Barrett's *Notes* on Part IV among other texts, underscore the impression of a compositional postscript or post-narrative.

By the beginning of Part IV, all contrasting layers have melted into a single homophonus whole, or "single texture" (Barrett) that is marked by three processes:

- 1 multiple octaves on B combined with a lurch into "multiphonic" sound (unstable, in between harmonic nodes) on the 'cello.
[...]
- 2 a rapidly fraying texture of high pizzicati, falling into the usual disorder.
[...]
- 3 an extension of the close-harmony texture at the end of part 2, this time forced upwards exponentially in pitch.¹⁸⁶

This concluding part brings together all types of previous material. Similarly, *The Unnamable*, from which Barrett draws the motto of this part, depicts a single mind pondering the whereabouts and the fate of earlier characters, while all external action has been annihilated. In other words, it represents the point of culmination in the process of "spiralling inwards" (Barrett's metaphorical description of the second part). A first peak of homophony is reached in m. 8, when all instruments (regardless of harmonic tones) arrive at the pitch of B.

The 'movement' is initiated by an ostinato G# and a harmonic B 3 played by the 'cello, spanning from m. 3 to m. 15. Its "rasping, asthmatic" property is reminiscent of the "low, panting"¹⁸⁷ narrative voice in *Cascando*. Likewise, the very *Cascando* quotation that appears in the prefatory notes (see above) recurs at the end of Barrett's *Notes*. It is in other words the reflection on the creative process of "opening and closing" that forms the point of departure and the terminus, the prologue and the epilogue, of Barrett's composition. Barrett's circular placement of Beckett's self-reflexive, meta-aesthetic paradigm echoes the insoluble predicament "that there is nothing to express." As with

¹⁸⁵ Fox (1995), 153.

¹⁸⁶ Barrett, *Notes*...

¹⁸⁷ CDW, 297.

Beckett, this aporia is not compensated for, but rather potentiated by reference to another semiotic system (see chapter 2.2.).

Curiously, the shortest 'movement' comes with the proportionally largest number of quotations and commentaries. Verbal expression, albeit hidden, proliferates, while music "gradually approach[es] distinction" (p. 47).

At the outset, pitch content becomes clearer, before it is obscured by diagonal bowing and a gradual decrease in finger and bow pressure from mm. 4/5 onward. Barrett notes that "a third appearance of the first chord of the part 3 "chorale" leaves in its wake a matrix of greatly denatured, hoarse and wheezing harmonic glissandi, perturbed by residual textural elements."¹⁸⁸ While it is obvious that the chord he refers to appears twice in the chorale at the end of Part III (on the first beats in mm. 69, 72), its "third appearance" is camouflaged – although one is led to assume that Barrett refers to the G# and B harmonic in the 'cello in m. 2, since he mentions this dyad as a "frame" in his *Notes*.

The stratum of pizzicati (process 2) beginning in m. 10 (first violin) and disintegrating quickly until m. 14 ('cello) is linked to a passage from the short prose piece *Sounds*.¹⁸⁹

The story is centered around the individuality and inevitability of auditory perception (similarly illustrated by John Cage's anechoic chamber experience), thus, in terms of Beckett's aesthetic vision, the impossibility of refraining from the creative process.

Prepared by the upward movement of all four instruments (process 3), the first violin's fast bow movements on the last tones, marked *poco détaché – molto spiccato*, evoke a final struggle against the overall *diminuendo al niente* and extinction of pitch content. In terms of cyclical unity, this material represents a last reference to the idiom of the first violin's solo passage in part I, mimicking its rhythmic values and articulation. Next to Kim's endlessly circling melody in *Rattling On*, the string quartet's 'coming full circle' thus represents another equivalent to the Beckettian spiralling around the paradox "I can't go on – I'll go on." Four Beckett quotations, situated on the right half of the last score page, round off the work.

¹⁸⁸ Barrett, *Notes*...

¹⁸⁹ Qtd. in Barrett's *Notes*... Published with *Still 3* in *Essays in Criticism* 28.2 (April 1978), cf. *Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, 535. Also printed in CSP, 267-8.

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello

4/8

poco distaccato
etc...
molto spiccato

(ppp) 3:2f 5:4f 11:2f mp

(ppp) 9:10f 5:4f

(ppp) 13:15f 3:2f

(ppp) 4:5f

stop bow on string(s) at end.

Highway 22 November 1988

—sleep... no more stories... come on... Wsburn... it's him...
see him... say him... to the end... don't let go...
(Beckett, *Cascando*)

Am I as much as... being seen? (Play)

But mostly not for nothing never quite for nothing even
shillest night when air too still for even the lightest leaf to
carry to sound no not to sound to carry too still for even
the lightest leaf to carry the brief way 'here and not die
the sound not die on the brief way' the wave left die
away... (Sounds)

Then all go dead still. It is perhaps the end of all. A few
seconds and it begins again. (The Lost Ones)

Ex. 51: Final page (© 1988 United Music Publishers Ltd., London. Reproduced by permission).

To summarize: Regardless of the precise temporal matrix, the musical material is devoid of any overarching compositional paradigm, be it of motivic/thematic, serial, or mathematical kind. As has become apparent, Barrett's ultimate goal was to create a maximum of organized unpredictability and irreducibility. In Beckett's dialectic phrase, the temporal framework imposed on the sounds' development is merely "a form that accommodates the mess." As was concluded in chapter 6.1.2., Barrett's approach is not a return to modernist aesthetics, as has been claimed by the composer himself, but rather a continuation of the poststructuralist/postserialist tendencies that can be subsumed under 'postmodern music': More than the other three composers discussed in the present work, Barrett, the youngest, has liberated himself from the imperative of basing his works on a limited and pre-selected set of tonal and rhythmic parameters, combinations and re-combinations or of following the model of the verbal pattern of a pre-existing text. Apart from a few intratextual cross-references, any links between text and music and within the musical material itself are utterly contingent or rhizomatic. Disregarding the much-discussed formal aspects, in particular the "musicality" of the Beckett texts, Barrett's incorporation of Beckett's language into the compositional process is quite re-

moved from the ways in which the other three composers have used the author's works. Of all the text-music relationships discussed in the present study, Barrett's is unquestionably the most non-committal one.

7. "... and I close": Conclusion

Despite his language skepticism, the German philosopher Fritz Mauthner, who has been identified as a key influence on Beckett, never engaged in any meta-linguistic discourse. While Mauthner entangled himself in the contradiction of denouncing the verbal medium at the same time as adhering to its rules, Beckett drew on other arts, particularly music, to mirror the shortcomings of his own. As a potentiation of rather than a solution to Beckett's aestheticized language crisis, the media of language and music co-occur in almost all of Beckett's works. Musical hypertexts¹ become players in Beckett's "language games."² In *Words and Music*, Ruby Cohn argues, Beckett "may be marking the death of the separation of the two forms, clearly delineated in the plays that precede *Words and Music*, becoming one in those that follow."³ Beckett's own paths to intermediality demarcate the transition from modern to postmodern aesthetics⁴ in the sense that his writing is marked by language skepticism and a nostalgic yearning for unity, while at the same time opening up to the possibilities offered by medial interaction and pluralization.

With Beckett, equating sensation with music on the one hand and intellect with language on the other turns out to be a pitfall. Although the author does toy with the expectations adhering to this archetypal division of the aesthetic realm, the acoustic images in his works reflect the fragmentation of reality and the multiphrenia⁵ of his characters. Falling short of their Romantic roles as bearers of metaphysical truth, these soundspaces instead assume the function of metafictional devices. Although it has been argued a number of times that "music always wins" (Beckett's own phrase,⁶ though almost certainly to be taken with a grain of salt), it was demonstrated in the first two chapters that he deploys pre-existing music as well as in-built musicality, or rather: euphony, as a

¹ Cf. Genette (1993), 14-5.

² As for the musicalization of fiction as language game, cf. Werner Wolf (1998), 154.

³ Ben-Zvi, Linda. *Samuel Beckett*. Boston: Twayne, 1986, 193.

⁴ Following Welsch's distinction between modern and postmodern art (Welsch 1997), 14.

⁵ See chapter "Music from without."

⁶ Stated by Adorno ("Optimistisch zu denken ist kriminell": a TV discussion on Samuel Beckett. *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter III*. Munich: Edition Text & Kritik, 1994), as well as by Katherine Worth. "Words for Music Perhaps." *SBM*. 9-20: 16. Cf. also: Näf (2008), who claims that Music clearly triumphs over Words at the end of *Words and Music*, 48.

plane of self-reflexivity⁷ rather than as a compensatory or superior 'other.' That is, music from without and from within echoes the language predicament, the expression of inexpressibility.

As initially stated, intermediality is rarely a one-way street. We have argued that Beckett's own dispersion of meaning or 'multi-channeling' by employing different semiotic systems in a de-hierarchized manner and the emergent open-endedness of his works, paralleling and feeding back into the rise of reception-based art exegeses, have led to a veritable interpretation 'industry'; in addition, they have drawn numerous composers to his work, particularly so since the author received the Nobel Prize in 1969. While Beckett's language, as was also established at the beginning, has served as a musical *lingua franca* or common ground between composers, strategies of setting literature to music have diversified significantly. Much like the multiplicity of critical approaches, musical adaptations of various styles and genres have documented the multi-interpretability of Beckett's art. It would appear that the factual and the perceived openness of his works – to various interpretations, but also to different musical traditions, forms, and sounds – have had a similar share in their global musical reception. What is more, Beckett's incoherent narratives render his work particularly 'fragmentable' and thus particularly quotable. If we agree with Wolfgang Iser, Umberto Eco and Robbe-Grillet⁸ that literature of the mid- to late 20th century shifted its focus from mimetic representation to incorporating the reader into the creative process (as Iser has it, "[a]uthors play games with readers, and the text is the playground"⁹), it is conceivable that the participatory aspect of Beckett's language and language games has encouraged many composers/recipients to view his art as "material from which something new" can be formed (Iser¹⁰) or, in Robbe-Grillet's words, "to participate in a creation, to invent in his turn the work – and the world – and thus to invent his own life."¹¹ The demand for fragmentary, open texts on the part of the composers suggests that the literary outcomes of the *linguistic turn* have, to some degree, spilled over the bounds of language and made its way into musical composition¹² (György Kurtág's stammering voice in *What is the Word* opp. 30a/b is

⁷ Worth (1998), 10.

⁸ Robbe-Grillet (1989), 156.

⁹ Iser, Wolfgang. "The Play of the Text." *Languages of the Unsayable*. Ed. Wolfgang Iser, Sanford Budick. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989. 325-339: 327.

¹⁰ Ibid, 325.

¹¹ Robbe-Grillet, 156.

¹² Cf. Gruhn (1978), op. cit., 10.

probably the best example of the 'infectiousness' of the language crisis). This is, however, not to disregard a similar dynamic in music, which simultaneously underwent 'cleansing' processes¹³ in that its traditional, "congealed formulas and its function" ("geronnenen Formeln und ihre Funktion") were dismissed as "mechanical,"¹⁴ as Adorno put it. As a result of this system crisis, many postserial composers pursued the ideal of ambiguous or "multiordinal" (Earle Brown¹⁵) aesthetics. In Feldman's terms, the aim was to write music that was "free from a compositional rhetoric"¹⁶ – a phrase that, together with Feldman's susceptibility to Fritz Mauthner's ideas¹⁷ – clearly demonstrates the interconnectedness and co-occurrence of medial crises. Thus it is also owing to this 'musical language crisis' precipitated by the decline of serialism, arguably the last stronghold of structuralist thinking in music, that music, reciprocally, has become more permeable to influences from other media. In other words, the representational crises of the media were a major precondition for the *intermedial turn*.

As has been demonstrated, Beckett's work (has) occupied a prominent position in the lives and works of the four composers featured in the present work, notwithstanding their rather heterogenous artistic *desiderata*, influences, and styles. Morton Feldman, whose Beckett adaptations have met with so much acclaim that one critic mockingly asked: "Isn't Morton Beckett...Samuel Feldman...?"¹⁸ was tackled in the third chapter. I delineated a number of convergences between Beckett's and Feldman's aesthetic visions, such as the elevation of the perceptual above the conceptual, of *naïveté* above knowledge, their common preoccupation with silence and memory, and their propensity for drawing small differences from repetition within permutations and other re-arrangements of a limited scope of material. I then investigated Feldman's equivalent to Beckett's self/unself dichotomy in *neither*, which reveals that, although Feldman musically adopted the Beckettian *enantiodromia* – in this case, the inverse proportionality of inside and outside – Beckett's "self" took the form of Feldman's own compositional

¹³ Cf. Gruhn (1981), 17-8.

¹⁴ Adorno, Theodor W. "Fragment über Musik und Sprache." *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 16: *Musikalische Schriften I-III*. Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp, 1978. 251-6: 252.

¹⁵ "Es geht um die Produktion einer 'multiordinalen', in vielen Ordnungen sich bewegenden Kommunikation zwischen dem Ausführenden und dem Komponisten und um ein ähnlich 'offenes' Erlebnispotential für den Zuhörer." Brown, Earle. "Notation und Ausführung Neuer Musik." *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik 9: Notation*. Ed. Ernst Thomas. Mainz: Schott, 1965. 64-86: 84.

¹⁶ Feldman, "Autobiography," 38.

¹⁷ see chapter 2.1.2.

¹⁸ Jahn, Hans-Peter. Liner notes accompanying the CD of Feldman's "For Samuel Beckett" performed by Klangforum Vienna, conducted by Sylvain Cambreling. Kairos, 2003 (0012012KAI).

ideal, whereas the composer musically interpreted the "unself" as "a perfect type of machinery," though one that turns out to be musically or graphically inextricable with Feldman's compositional "self." Although Beckett wrote *neither* on Feldman's commission and despite Feldman's reactions to the text and the conventional combination of the 'librettino' and the music, both artists made a highly self-referential contribution to their common opera project, essentially remaining within the aesthetic coordinates or continuing the trajectories of their own previous works. With Beckett, this is particularly evident, since he had not even heard, only seen, samples of Feldman's music when he wrote the text. These interlocking aesthetic monologues in turn amount not merely to an increase in their respective ambiguity, but also to a double negation and double ambiguity of the ritualistic word-music interaction in opera.

As seen in the fourth chapter, analogies between Beckett and the Korean-American composer Earl Kim are more difficult to put in a nutshell, since the latter's eclectic responses to Beckett include a wide array of compositional strategies and stylistic quotations arising from Kim's own diverse text interpretations. Occasionally the composer even projects putative intertextual or intermedial references onto the writings. Thus Kim foregrounds his awareness of authors and composers enamored by both Beckett and himself, a phenomenon we have referred to as "recursive intermediality." Kim's correlation of time and space (most palpable in the work *...dead calm...*), which is inspired by filmmaking, although it might as well be rooted in Bergsonian thought, is a concern not only shared with Beckett, but also with Feldman; so is his frequent use of silences or low dynamics. Furthermore, his proclivity for recursive forms and mirror techniques could be thought of as resonating with Beckett's self-reproducing infinite forms (e.g. the dog song in *Godot*). Given that all his Beckett compositions are chamber works, Kim's textures are of course more sparse in instrumentation than Feldman's. The author's linguistic economy finds a counterpart in Kim's microscopic compositional techniques, e.g. pitch class semantics, by which he nonetheless manages to construct musical subtexts that convey a message of their own. Finally, the idiosyncratic instrumental doubling of the singing or speaking voice inspired by Korean music might be thought of as corresponding with the ambiguous proximity or oscillation between sound and meaning, i.e. the bilateral instability of Beckett's language.

Although critics as well as composers have focused on multitudinous facets of Beckett's

œuvre, his poetic output has received significantly more attention from composers than from critics. In his song cycle *...among the voices...* examined in chapter five, the British-American composer Bernard Rands set four of Beckett's early poems. More than Kim, Rands seeks to render his music accessible to a wide audience. His avowed mission to rekindle public interest in contemporary art music is evident in his credo "to include rather than exclude," in his reverence for particular stages of compositional history, and in his absorption of popular trends, such as the new quest for spirituality. With Rands, who likes to think of the text as "participating" in the music, it is particularly obvious that Beckett's double-coded and reference-strewn language served as a model for what Sloterdijk calls "post-exclusivism." What is more, by drawing on Beckett, he paid homage to his teacher Earl Kim, to whom he dedicated the piece. This substantiates the claim put forward in the introduction that Beckett's œuvre has served as a common ground between composers who, in times of growing art music markets and fervent competition, are keen to disengage from one another in musical terms, seeking alternative intersubjective bases of discourse instead. The modal language in *...among the voices...* parallels Beckett's invocation of the Provençal troubadour tradition, and the prominence of the harp timbre, a long-established visual and auditory symbol of spiritual transcendence and harmony of the spheres, echo Beckett's references to the "Harfenspieler" (the harp player) in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. The harp and modal scales, harking back to musical languages of the past in a retrospectively transfigured way, clearly tie into Rands' "New Spirituality." At the same time, the cluster chords sung by the choir and the polymodal use of pitch-class sets are essentially offshoots of modernist, i.e. serial compositional techniques. This is reflective of the composer's trajectory: Just as Kim, Rands studied with composers of serial music at the beginning of his career. As a result, with both Harvard composers, tonality and modality are inevitably defamiliarized, fragmented and recontextualized rather than simply reconstructed. It has been established that the formal idiosyncrasies of Beckett's style, such as his euphonious language and his pseudo-serial treatment of words and phrases, contributed a great deal to his widespread musical reception. That being the case, it might seem somewhat curious that Beckett's language takes the form of a hidden, virtual presence in Richard Barrett's string quartet *I Open and Close*, discussed in chapter six. Beckett quotations are transferred from the actual 'text' to the paratext of the composition, occurring

as titles, subtitles, performance instructions, and program notes. Thus the line between the factual and the fictional, between the paratext and the text, is blurred in quite a similar manner as the line between Beckett's art and his comments on it. More than Feldman, Kim, and Rands, Barrett's musical reading of Beckett focuses on Beckett's meta-aesthetic ideas. The paradoxical depiction of the creative process "I can't go on – I'll go on" is translated into meticulously encrypted performance directions and textures of utmost complexity that are scarcely realizable as instructed. Not only does this ironically foreground the ritualistic nature of the musical performance *per se* (i.e. the concert situation, the corporeal presence of the musicians) just as Beckett sought to highlight the artificiality of his stage characters by demanding mechanical, heteronomous movements (control and coercion being Beckettian leitmotifs). This complexity also interrupts the 'transmission lines' – closing any channel of direct aesthetic communication and thereby opening up spaces for personal readings and listenings – between the composer, the performer and the audience. In this way, Barrett's goal of granting the listener more interpretational freedom by way of decentralizing the creative process is realized, rendering the composition irreducible, unpredictable, and, as some performers may find, unplayable. What remains unequivocal, on the other hand, is the temporal framework: the mere ritual of "opening" and "closing" the work of art, reminiscent of the storytelling mode of Opener in *Cascando*. In Barrett's string quartet, this form is indicated by strictly measured durations not dissimilar to John Cage's time brackets.

Notwithstanding the outlined differences between the four compositional approaches to Beckett – Kim's minimal deployment of material and Rands' "New Simplicity" versus Barrett's maximalism and complexity, Feldman's *crippled symmetry* versus Barrett's durational symmetries and Kim's palindromes, or the New York School's self-referential art versus Kim's polystylism – we have extracted a number of common denominators between the musical works, the most significant of which seem to be: first, a penchant for decentralized compositional processes free from overarching principles, eluding reductionist analyses – in Feldman's words: "the contradiction in not having the sum of the parts equal the whole;"¹⁹ and second, to borrow Sloterdijk's term, the all-pervasive tendency toward "aesthetic democracy":²⁰ that is, the creative role assumed by the composers in understanding, arranging and musicalizing each text and, by extension, the

¹⁹ "Crippled Symmetry," 137.

²⁰ Sloterdijk, 11.

active part attributed to the listener in interpreting the emergent ambivalence of the interplays of text and music. In the irreducible plurivocality and participation-encouraging open-endedness of Beckett's œuvre, the four composers seem to have found a true model.

Paradoxical as it may appear, Beckett's writing tends to be perceived as a closed book, and yet simultaneously as an open work – arcane, yet never hermetic. Regardless of the multi-interpretability of Beckett's works, it has become apparent that – presumably as a side effect of participatory aesthetics, proliferating intermedial networks, and technology-driven aesthetic globalization in the past decades – a quest for interpretational freedom, contingency, and semantic malleability on the part of the composers has supplanted textual fidelity. Needless to say, this circumstance rules out *a priori* any objective comparison of the arts. Umberto Eco bewailed this development in 1990 when he wrote: "I have the impression that, in the course of the last few decades, the rights of the interpreters have been overstressed."²¹ However, who should assume the authority to determine the "limits of interpretation" which he proposes if the author (Beckett) himself displayed no interest in doing so? If, in the heyday of constructivist theories,²² criticism's humble status is that of a "rat in a maze" choosing the ideal position from which to "observe other rats" (to borrow Luhmann's epistemological metaphor)²³ this entails that any ostensible *tertium comparationis* between Beckett and a given composer is, by default, beyond generalizability. If anything, it can be investigated from the vantage point of the composer by taking into account their individual compositional trajectory and tenets against the backdrop of the overall artistic climate and cultural dynamics. Given the virtually illimitable field of viable musical Beckett interpretations, which undoubtedly poses great challenges to literary critics and musicologists alike, we have regarded it as necessary to delimit the hermeneutic horizon of this study by looking at

²¹ Eco (1990), 6.

²² E.g. radical constructivism, a strand of philosophy ruling out objective epistemology *a priori*: "Radical constructivism [...] is radical because it breaks with convention and develops a theory of knowledge in which knowledge does not reflect an 'objective' ontological reality, but exclusively an ordering and organization of a world constituted by our experience." Watzlawick, Paul, ed. *The Invented Reality: How Do We Know What We Believe We Know? Contributions to Constructivism*. New York: Norton, 1984, 24. This volume also contains Rolf Breuer's article on Beckett's Trilogy: "Self-Reflexivity in Literature: The Example of Samuel Beckett's Novel Trilogy." 145-68. Cf. also: Luhmann's (2009) "Operative Constructivism," 14-5, whose epistemological approach lies in "observing the observer."

²³ Luhmann, Niklas. "Erkenntnis als Konstruktion." *Niklas Luhmann. Aufsätze und Reden*. Ed. Oliver Jahraus. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001. 218-242: 227.

each musical response to Beckett primarily through the lens of a given composer, in other words: by "second-order observation" (Luhmann²⁴). This method is a corollary not only of the interpretational contingency described above, but also of its concomitant, i.e. the increasingly self-referential appropriation of existing musical and verbal material. As was suggested in chapter 4.1.3, this tendency of aesthetic personalization – of which the composers' highly subjective musical Beckett interpretations are, of course, symptomatic – can be seen as a reaction to the centrifugal force of "anything goes" which in turn superseded the determinism of serial thinking.

"*Nec tecum nec sine te*," a Latin phrase by Ovid cited by Beckett to describe the double-edged relationship between Hamm and Clov – interdependent yet noncommittal – equally applies to the ambivalent text-music interplays portrayed in the present work. As has been amply demonstrated, they form part of a larger aesthetic development gravitating toward intermedial networks of increasing complexity, in which pairs of categories, no longer considered hierarchically opposed, converge, but continue to demarcate realms of dialectic fluctuation: fiction and reality, art production and reception, high and popular culture, time and space, noise and sound, European and American composition, and, above all, media: language and music.

²⁴ Luhmann, Niklas. *The Reality of the Mass Media*. Transl. Kathleen Cross. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000. 4-5. (original German ed.: *Die Realität der Massenmedien*, op. cit.)

Appendix

Beckett-based compositions (sorted alphabetically by composer's last name)

	Year	Composer	Composer's Origin	Title	Instrumentation	Text
1	1961	Aguilar (Ahumada), Miguel	Chile	Frase y variación	S, cl, 2 b cl, tp, hn, trb, 2 hp, str, perc	
	1994	Aguilar (Ahumada), Miguel	Chile	Homenaje a Samuel Beckett	choir	
	1987	Amirkhanian, Charles	United States	Pas de voix (Portrait of Samuel Beckett)	electronics	
	1980	Balsach, Llorenç	Spain (Catalonia)	Oh! Els bons dies	vl	Happy Days
	1971	Barlow, Klar-enz	Germany/India, GB/US/NL	Textmusik für Klavier 6	solo p	Ping
	1982	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Invention 6	solo p	Company
	1984-9	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Tract (Fictions 8)	solo p	Worstward Ho, How It Is, Waiting for Godot, Texts for Nothing
	1985-86	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Ne songe pas à fuir (After Matta 2)	solo vc, amplified	Molloy, As The Story Was Told
	1985-86	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Anatomy (Fictions 1)	fl, cor angl., b cl, bsn, hn, 1 perc, vl 1+2, va, vc, cb	How It Is, All Strange Away
10	1985-95	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Ruin (Fictions 11)	2 fl, sop sax, b cl, hn; 2 tbn, tba; 3 perc; 2 vn, va; 2 vc, cb	How It Is
	1986-87	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Alba (Fictions 3)	solo bsn, electronics	Molloy
	1987-88	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Earth (Fictions 5)	trb, perc	For Avigdor Arikha, Fizzles: Old earth'
	1987	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Nothing Elsewhere (Fictions 4)	va	Imagination Dead Imagine
	1988	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	I Open and Close (Fictions 6)	str qrt, optional amplification	Cascando, First Love, Imagination Dead Imagine, Worstward Ho, The Unnamable, Play, Sounds, The Lost Ones
	1990	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Another Heavenly Day (Fictions 7)	cl, el. gt, cb	Happy Days
	2000-2003	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	faux départs	p qnt	Faux départs
	2001	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Stirrings (from Dark Matter)	b cl, perc, p, str	Stirrings Still
	2004	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Lost	solo p	Imagination Dead Imagine, Three Dialogues
	2008	Barrett, Richard	Great Britain	Nacht und Träume	vc, p (amplified), electronics	Nacht und Träume
20	1972	Barry, Gerald	Ireland	Lessness		Lessness
	1974-75	Barry, Gerald	Ireland	All the dead voices		Waiting for Godot
	2004	Bauer, Martin	Argentina	Conferencia		Watt
	1956	Beckett, John	Great Britain	Act Without Words		Act Without Words
	1962	Beckett, John	Great Britain	Music for "Words and Music"		Words and Music
	1968	Berio, Luciano	Italy	Sinfonia	orch, 8 V, amplified	The Unnamable (fragments)
	2004	Billian, Christian	Germany	"zu Beckett"	cl, acc, cb, speaker	
	1981	Boretz, Benjamin A.	United States	An Experiment in Reading		Cascando
	1974	Bosseur, Jean-Yves	France	Le dernière bande		Krapp's Last Tape

	1980-81, rev. 2000	Bosseur, Jean-Yves	France	Bing	MS, speaker, b fl, b cl, vc	Bing/Ping
30	2015 (announced)	Boulez, Pierre	France	Opera based on En attendant Godot		Waiting for Godot
	1999	Buhkert, Klaus	Germany	...the whole thing is coming out of the dark...	V, helicon, trp, trb,	Molloy, l'Image, Company
	1978	Bussotti, Sylvano	Italy	Winnie dello sguardo		Happy Days
	1980	Camilleri, Charles	Malta	The Spirit of Solitude (to Samuel Beckett)	vl, p	
	1990	Capdeville, Constança	Portugal	Silêncio, depois		
	1976	Christiansen, Henning	Denmark	3 Beckett-sange		poems
	2006	Clark, Paul	Ireland	Music for Cascando		Cascando
	2006	Clark, Paul	Ireland	Music for Words and Music		Words and Music
	1968	Connolly, Justin (Riveagh)	Great Britain	M-piriform, op. 10	S, fl, vl, tape	
	2009	Copley, Peter	Great Britain	Music for Cascando	cl	Cascando
40	1930	Crowder, Henry (1896-1954)	United States	From the Only Poet to a Shining Whore	solo p	poem "From the Only Poet..."
	1975	Csapó, Gyula	Hungary	Krapp's Last Tape		Krapp's Last Tape
	1985	Csemiczky, Miklós	Hungary	Commedia senza parole	fl, trp, hpd, 2 vl, cb	Act Without Words
	1972	Curtis-Smith, Curtis (O)tto (B)ismarck	United States	Comédie		Play
	1968-?	Daiken, Melanie	Great Britain	Eusebius		
	1975	Daiken, Melanie	Great Britain	Gems of Erin	woodwind, p, brass, perc	poem: "Echo's Bones"
	1995	Daiken, Melanie	Great Britain	Quatre poèmes	cl, va, p	poem: "I Would Like My Love to Die"
	1986	Danieli, Irlando	Italy	Miroirs I, II, III	S, live e-electronics	
	2005	David J	Great Britain	Music for Cascando		Cascando
	1970	de Boer, Lodewijk	Netherlands	Music for Cascando		Cascando
50	1992	Denhoff, Michael	Germany	Two Once So One, op. 66 - Since Atwain I, II (op. 66 a, b)	str qrt, va, vc	Worstward Ho
	1992	Denhoff, Michael	Germany	Unverändert verändert op. 67 (a)	alto sax/cl, p	Worstward Ho
	1992	Denhoff, Michael	Germany	Somehow Unchanged, op. 67 (b)	cl, vl, vc, p, perc. (ad lib.)	Worstward Ho
	1994	Denhoff, Michael	Germany	Innenräume...Erinnernd, op. 71	orch	Stirrings Still
	1996	Denhoff, Michael	Germany	As when no words op. 77	p, remote vc (ad lib.)	Worstward Ho
	1999	Denhoff, Michael	Germany	Unreceding on op. 83e - Nebenweg V	vc, p	
	1996	Dészy, Thomas	Austria	Becketts Knochen. Nekrolog für Stimmen, Klavier und Midi	vc, p, midi	texts written by composer, based on Beckett texts
	1998-9	Dionne, Andrew	United States	Quad	vl, cl, hand bells	Quad
	1971	Dittrich, Paul-Heinz	Germany (former GDR)	Schlagzeilen		Waiting for Godot
	1972	Dittrich, Paul-Heinz	Germany (former GDR)	Die anonyme Stimme	ob, trb, tape	How It Is
60	1986	Dittrich, Paul-Heinz	Germany (former GDR)	Spiel	3 speakers, 3 V, 9 insts, live e-electronics	Play
	1978	Dodge, Charles Malcolm	United States	Cascando	actor, tape	Cascando
	1985	Dodge, Charles Malcolm	United States	Roundelay	SATB, cptr-synth tape	Roundelay
	1967/68	Döhl, Friedhelm	Germany	Melancolia. Magische Quadrate		Quad
	1996	Duncan, John, Günter, Bernhard	United States/Germany	Home: Unspeakable		neither

	1997	Dusapin, Pascal	France	Cascando	fl (or picc), ob (or English horn), cl, bsn, French horn, trp (or picc trp), trb, cb	Cascando
	2003	Eaves, Obadi-ah	United States	Music for Cascando		Cascando
	1972	Eötvös, Peter	Hungary	Now, Miss!	vl, synth, tape	Embers
	2008	Eötvös, Peter	Hungary	Octet plus (New version of "Now, Miss")	S, fl, cl, 2 bsn, 2 trp, 2 trb	Embers
	1992	Erić, Zoran	Serbia	Waiting for Godot	electronics, trb, hpsc	Waiting for Godot
70	ca. 2007	Etkin, Mariano	Argentina	Poem settings		poems
	1976	Feldman, Morton	United States	Elemental Procedures	S, chorus, orch	Film
	1977	Feldman, Morton	United States	Neither	S, orch	neither
	1987	Feldman, Morton	United States	Words and Music	str, p, fl, perc, picc	Words and Music
	1987	Feldman, Morton	United States	For Samuel Beckett	2 fl, 2 ob, 2 cl, 2 bsn, 2 hn, 2 tr, 2 trb, tb, hp, p, vib, vl, 1+2, va, vc, cb	
	1984	Fernández-Guerra, Jorge	Spain	Final de Partida		Endgame
	2006	Fields, Scott	United States	Breath (Album „Beckett“)	modern jazz ensemble	Breath
	2006	Fields, Scott	United States	Play (Album „Beckett“)	modern jazz ensemble	Play
	2006	Fields, Scott	United States	Come and Go (Album „Beckett“)	modern jazz ensemble	Come and Go
	2006	Fields, Scott	United States	What Where (Album „Beckett“)	modern jazz ensemble	What Where
80	2006	Fields, Scott	United States	Rockaby (Album „Beckett“)	modern jazz ensemble	Rockaby
	2009	Fields, Scott	United States	Not I (Album „Samuel“)	modern jazz ensemble	Not I
	2009	Fields, Scott	United States	Ghost Trio (Album „Samuel“)	modern jazz ensemble	Ghost Trio
	2009	Fields, Scott	United States	Eh Joe (Album „Samuel“)	modern jazz ensemble	Eh Joe
	2001	Finnissy, Michael	Great Britain	Enough	solo p	Enough
	1988	Finsterer, Mary	Australia	Madam He	S, ob, vc, p	Rough for Radio I
	1977	Fortner, Wolfgang	Germany	That Time	MS, Bar, actor, speaker, gt, hpsc, p, live electronics ad lib.	That Time
	1992	Fritsch, Johannes (Georg)	Germany	Das bittersüße Büchlein	ob, acc, cb	not an actual Beckett setting, but part of the triptych composed for a 1992 performance of That Time
	1992	Fritsch, Johannes (Georg)	Germany	Damals	speaker/tape, org	That Time
	1992	Fritsch, Johannes (Georg)	Germany	Trio vom Ende (Damals)	B, a fl, perc	That Time
90	1995	Gervasoni, Stefano	Italy	2 poesie francesi di Beckett	1 V, b fl, va, perc	Mirlitonades
	1998 rev. 2008	Gervasoni, Stefano	Italy	Pas si (new version: Si(x) Pas)	2 singers, acc, new version: Bar, A, acc	Mirlitonades
	1980	Giacometti, Antonio	Italy	Musica di scena per "Happy Days"		Happy Days

	1982	Giacometti, Antonio	Italy	Le allucinazioni di Watt	2 readers (1 m/1 f), tape, ensemble	Watt, Mirlitonades, Poems
	1982	Giacometti, Antonio	Italy	Reliqua: 12 Mirlitonades di S.Beckett	CA, 4 instruments: fl, perc, gui, va	Mirlitonades
	1965	Glass, Philip	United States	Music for "Play"		Play
	1975	Glass, Philip	United States	Music for "The Lost Ones"		The Lost Ones
	1983	Glass, Philip	United States	Company	str qrt	Company
	1975	Gnazzo, Anthony	United States	Ping		Ping
	2006	Goetsch, Stefan	Germany	Tafelrunde		Not I (+ other authors)
100	1966	González (García de) Acilu, Agustín	Spain	Música y palabras		Words and Music
	1966	Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, Pelle	Denmark	Je ne me tairais jamais, jamais	reciter, choir (SATB), orch	The Unnamable
	1976	Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, Pelle	Denmark	Songs Without	MS, p	poems in English: "Dieppe," "I Would Like My Love to Die"
	1989	Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, Pelle	Denmark	Trois Poèmes de Samuel Beckett	choir (S, MS, A, T, B)	poems: "I Would Like My Love to Die," "Dieppe," "My Way Is In the Sand Flowing"
	1975	Hajdú, Júlia	Hungary	Act Sans Paroles		Act Without Words
	2009	Hall, Tom	Great Britain	Until Unbidden Go	solo vl	poem "Roundelay"
	2011	Harron, Damien	Great Britain	what is the word	perc, p, fl, electronics	what is the word
	1960	Haubenstock-Ramati, Roman	Poland/Austria	"Credentials" or "Think, think, Lucky"	1 V, cl, trb, vib+glock, 2 perc, vc, p, vl	Waiting for Godot (Lucky's monologue)
	1967-8	Haubenstock-Ramati, Roman	Poland/Austria	"Spiel": Anti-Oper in einem Akt	3 V (f, f, m), perc 1 and 2, p, cel	Play
	1972	Hespos, Hans-Joachim	Germany	Blackout (dedicated to S.B.)	orch	
110	1995	Hoffmann, Nicolaus	Germany	...alias Samuel Beckett	solo cb	
	1976/77	Holliger, Heinz	Switzerland	Come and Go	3 actresses, singers, 3 recorders, 3 va, 3 cl	Come and Go
	1978-80	Holliger, Heinz	Switzerland	Not I	S, tape	Not I
	1988	Holliger, Heinz	Switzerland	What Where	Bar, 3 B-Bar, 4 trb, perc, tape	What Where
	1964-65	Hopkins, Bill [G(eorge) W(illiam)]	Great Britain	Musique de l'indifference	orch	poem: "Musique de l'indifférence"
	1965	Hopkins, Bill [G(eorge) W(illiam)]	Great Britain	Sensation	S, t sax, trp, hp, va	poems in French
	1976/77	Hopkins, Bill [G(eorge) W(illiam)]	Great Britain	En attendant	fl, ob, vc, hpsc	Waiting for Godot
	1979	Horvitz, Wayne B.	United States	Music for "Cascando"		Cascando
	2005	Huber, Margarete	Germany	Härtsfeld		
	1984	Hufschmidt, Wolfgang	Germany	Beckett-Projekt 1984	fl, cl, vc, gt, p, perc	
120	2009	Iddon, Martin	Great Britain	head down among the stems and bells	prepared p	
	1991	Jacquemyn, Peter	Belgium	Music for Cascando		Cascando
	1986	Janssen, Guus	Netherlands	Zonder		Lessness
	2011	Jovasevic, Zarko	Serbia	Room of Illusions	piano, perc, vl, vc	Words and Music, Come and Go
	2007	Judson, Tohm	United States	Imagination Dead Imagine		Imagination Dead Imagine
	1986	Kara(y)ev, Faraj	Azerbaijan	Waiting for...	4 V, chbr ens	Waiting for Godot

	1965	Kasemets, Udo	Estonia/Canada	Cascando	1-128 performers	Cascando
	1994	Kasemets, Udo	Estonia/Canada	MONoLLOYgue	actor, bsn	Molloy
	1996-98	Käser, Mischa	Switzerland	Mirliton	solo V	Mirlitonnades
	1970s	Kim, Earl	United States	Not I (sketches)		Not I
130	late 1990s	Kim, Earl	United States	Play (fragment)		Play
	1961-70	Kim, Earl	United States	Excercises en Route		Watt (addendum), Malone Dies, Krapp's Last Tape, The Unnamable
	1971	Kim, Earl	United States	Day of Most	V, fl, cl, vl, vc, perc	Watt
	1971-78	Kim, Earl	United States	Narratives	actress/female narrator, actor, S, 2 trp, trb, 2 vn, 2 vc, p, TV, lights	Words and Music, Watt, Cascando, The Unnamable, Endgame, Waiting for Godot, Malone Dies, Play, That Time
	1980	Kim, Earl	United States	Footfalls		Footfalls
	1981	Kim, Earl	United States	Now and Then		2 poems: "Roundelay," "Thither"
	1983	Kim, Earl	United States	Where Grief Slumbers (based on Beckett's translations of French poets)	S, hp, str orch	SB's translations of Appollinaire, Rimbaud
	2002	Korte, Oliver	Germany	rien nul - Musik für Samuel Beckett	(b) fl, (b) cl, prep. p, vl, va, vc	Mirlitonnades
	1988	Kraft, William	United States	Cascando		Cascando
	2005	Kubo, Mayako	Japan	Mirlitonnades	2 S, gt	Mirlitonnades
140	1975	Kurtág, György	Hungary	Footfalls (fragment)		Footfalls
	1991	Kurtág, György	Hungary	Samuel Beckett Sends Word Through Ildikó Mornyók in István Siklós's Translation, op. 30 a. New version: What is the Word, op. 30 b	1st version: V, p, 2nd version: Reciter (A), choir, chbr ens	what is the word
	1993-97	Kurtág, György	Hungary	pas à pas...nulle part op. 36	B, str, perc	poems: "Mirlitonnades," "Dieppe," "elles viennent," SB's translations of Chamfort texts
	1980	Lam, Bunching	Macau	4 Beckett Songs	S, vl, cl, perc	
	2009	Lam, Fung	Hong Kong	Something There	S, cl	
	1990	Laporte, André	Belgium	Transit - Hommage à Beckett	str orch, taped V	The Unnamable
	1997	Lewensohn, Gideon	Israel	Aren't we Luckie? A Piano Monologue after Samuel Beckett	p	Waiting for Godot (Lucky's Monologue)
	1964 (rev. 1968)	Linjama, Jouko (Sakari)	Finland	Millaista on (How it Is), op. 7	Bar, 6 male Vs, orch, 3 tape recorders	How It Is
	1977	Lutyens, (Agnes) Elisabeth	Great Britain	Cascando, op. 117	CA, V, str orch	Cascando
	1978	Lutyens, (Agnes) Elisabeth	Great Britain	Footfalls, op. 128	fl, p, opt. speaker(s)	Footfalls
150	1989/90	Mahnkopf, Claus-Steffen	Germany	il faut continuer - Requiem for Samuel Beckett	fl, picc, a fl, ob, cor angl, cl (b flat), b-cl, cl (e flat), perc	
	1976	Maiguashca, Mesias	Ecuador/Germany	Lindgren	vc, tape	Krapp's Last Tape
	1997-98	Maiwald, Torben	Germany	Nacht und Träume	2 vl, vc, p	Nacht und Träume
	1973	Mantler, Michael	Germany	No Answer	Vs, bsn, p, cl, org, trp	How It Is
	1987	Mantler, Michael	Germany	Many Have No Speech	Vs, trp, gt, orch	poems
	1992	Mantler, Michael	Germany	Folly Seeing All This	V, str qrt, trp, gt, a fl, p, perc	what is the word
	1971	Manzoni, Giacomo	Italy	Parole da Beckett	2 choirs, 3 instr. groups, tape	various

	1971	Marsh, Roger	Great Britain	PS		
	1979	Marsh, Roger	Great Britain	Bits & Scraps		How It Is
	ca. 1998	Mastropietro, Carlos	Argentina	Viejo Final de Partida		Endgame
160	1988	McIntosh, Michael	United States	Watt	V, cl, bass, trb, cb, acc, p (continuo)	Watt
	1960-61	Mihalovici, Marcel	France/Romania	"Krapp" ou La dernière bande		Krapp's Last Tape
	1963	Mihalovici, Marcel	France/Romania	Music for "Cascando"		Cascando
	1966-69	Mihalovici, Marcel	France/Romania	Symphony No. 5 op. 94	orch	poem in French: "que ferais-je dans ce monde..."
	1979	Miller, Mark E.	United States	Music for "Words and Music"		words and music
	2003	Momi, Marco	Italy	Hox on Beckett	vl, va, hb, b cl	Mirlitonades
	1998	Müller-Siemens, Detlev	Germany	Light Blue, Almost White	11 instruments	Ping
	1990-2001	Müller-Siemens, Detlev	Germany	Bing	2 S, 2 Vs, chbr orch	Ping
	2007	Mullaney, Hillary	Great Britain	Electronic Sounds Unspoken	audio-visual installation	
	1985	Mundry, Isabel	Germany	4 Lieder	MS, p	
170	1966	Nørgård, Per	Denmark	Act Without Words		Act Without Words
	2000	Nyman, Michael	United States	Act Without Words		Act Without Words
	2009	Oliver, Ben	Great Britain	again and again	prepared p, electronics	
	1974	Oliver, Stephen	Great Britain	Past Tense		
	1984	Osborne, Nigel	Great Britain	Alba	MS, ens	poems: "Saint-Lo", "Alba", "musique de l'indifférence", "Roundelay"
	1999	Parsons, Michael	Great Britain	Krapp Music	p, tape	Krapp's Last Tape
	1992	Patten, James	Great Britain	...for nothing. In memoriam Samuel Beckett	cl	
	2000	Patten, James	Great Britain	In memory of...	fl, va, gt	
	2006	Pearlman, Martin	United States	Music for ...but the clouds...		...but the clouds...
	2006	Pearlman, Martin	United States	Music for Words and Music		Words and Music
180	2006	Pearlman, Martin	United States	Music for Cascando		Cascando
	1993	Perezzi, Paolo	Italy	Imagine si ceci	male V, bsn, vc	Mirlitonades
	1997	Perezzi, Paolo	Italy	Un beau jour	male V bsn, vc	Mirlitonades
	2003	Perezzi, Paolo	Italy	All for Company - cantata scenica (omaggio a Beckett)	3 female Vs	Company; three poems: "Pss." "Something There," "Roundelay"; what is the word
	2005	Perezzi, Paolo	Italy	Brume Lumière (omaggio a Beckett)	six Vs, electronics	Ill Seen Ill Said (French and English)
	1990	Phillips, John J. H.	United States	The Thing one has to listen to...		The Unnamable
	2002	Plonsey, Dan	United States	Music for Cascando		Cascando
	2002	Qanč'eli, Gia / Kancheli, Giya	Georgia	Waiting for Godot		Waiting for Godot
	1973	Rands, Bernard	United States	Memo 2, 2b, 2c, 2d	trb, str qrt, female mime	Not I
	1973	Rands, Bernard	United States	Wildtrack 2	S, orch	
190	1988	Rands, Bernard	United States	...in the receding mist...	fl, hp, str trio	poems 1947-49
	1988	Rands, Bernard	United States	...body and shadow..	orch	poems 1947-49
	1989	Rands, Bernard	United States	...among the voices...	SATB chorus, hp	poems 1947-49
	1993	Rands, Bernard	United States	...where the murmurs die...		poems 1947-49

	1994	Rands, Bernard	United States	...and the rain...	hn, hp, vl, va, vc	poems 1947-49
	1995	Rands, Bernard	United States	Sans voix parmi les voix	fl, hp, va	poems 1947-49
	1966	Rasmussen, Karl Aage	Denmark	Krapp's sidste bånd	Bar, tape, orch, elec gt.	Krapp's Last Tape
	2004	Redgate, Roger	Great Britain	Mirlitonrades	S, piano	Mirlitonrades
	2004	Redgate, Roger	Great Britain	...still...	b fl, str trio, hp	shorter prose works
	2004	Redgate, Roger	Great Britain	ruins true refuge	cb solo	shorter prose works
200	2005	Redgate, Roger	Great Britain	Disjecta	10 str gt solo	Disjecta
	2009	Redgate, Roger	Great Britain	Residua	hpsc solo	shorter prose works
	1968	Reynolds, Roger	United States	Ping	fl, perc, p, 35mm slide projections, 16mm film, quadraphonic electroacoustic sound, live electronics	Ping
	1973	Reynolds, Roger	United States	Voicespace II: A Merciful Coincidence	3 Vs, electroacoustic sound (and quadraphonic electroacoustic version: 35:47')	extract from <i>Watt</i>
	1976	Reynolds, Roger	United States	Odyssey	MS, B-Bar, ens (16 players), 8-channel (4 + 4) computer processed sound, lighting, fl (picc), ob, Cl, bsn (cbsn), hn, trp, tbn, b tbn, 3 perc, p, 2 vl, vc, cb	poems: "they come," "what would I do," "my way is in the sand..."; section IX from <i>Texts for Nothing</i>
	1989-93	Reynolds, Roger	United States	Entre le galet et la dune	2 V, ens	
	1995	Rhys, Paul	Great Britain (Wales)	Not I	solo p	Not I
	1964	Riedl, Josef Anton	Germany	Spiel		Play
	1991	Rijnvos, Richard	Netherlands	Radio 1	3 speakers, ens	Rough for Radio I
	1968	Ruthenfranz, Robert	Germany	Evokationen auf Beckett	vc	inspired by a performance of <i>Happy Days</i>
210	1990	Salerni, Paul	United States	Waiting for Godot (2 songs)		
	2006	Samuel, Rhian	Great Britain (Wales)	The flowing sand: five songs to poems of Samuel Beckett	Bar, piano	poems 1947-49, "Echo's Bones"
	2007/08	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	Company	CT, trp, vc, acc, electric gt	Company
	2004	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	Miniata	solo p, solo acc, choir, orch	several Beckett quotations originally used, then withdrawn
	2009	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	Murmurs	10 players	builds on <i>Stirrings Still</i> series (s. below)
	2010	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	Neither	2 db bell trombones	neither
	2007	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	Soliloquy	6 Vs, a cappella	Company
	2006	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	Stirrings Still	a fl, ob, cl in A, crotales, p	Stirrings Still

	2008	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	Stirrings Still II	a fl, ob, cl in A, crotales, p, cb	Stirrings Still
	2012 (announced)	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	Stirrings Still III		Stirrings Still
220	2010	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	to and fro	vl, ob	neither
	2006/2009	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	traces	orch	La peinture de Van Velde ou le Monde et le Pantalon
	2006	Saunders, Rebecca	Great Britain	A visible trace	a fl. (doubling picc.), ob, cl, trp, tbn, p, electr. gt. (doubling tenor banjo), vl, va, vc, cb	
	1990	Saunway, Theodore	United States	Waiting for Samuel Beckett	solo cl	
	1995	Schulkowsky, Robyn	United States	Hastening Westward	trp, perc	Title: Stirrings Still
	1973	Searle, Humphrey	Great Britain	Music for "Cascando"		Cascando
	1973	Searle, Humphrey	Great Britain	Music for "Words and Music"		Words and Music
	1971	Siegmeister, Elie	United States	Beckett (No. 1 in „Five Fantasies of the Theater“)	orch	
	1981	Sikorski, Tomasz	Poland	W Dali Ptak ("Afar a bird")	clavchd, tape, reciter	Afar A Bird
	1979-80	Spahlinger, Mathias	Germany	extension	vl, p	quotations from The Unnamable, Endgame
230	1988	Stahmer, Klaus Hinrich	Germany	Momentaufnahmen	reciter, chbr ens	
	1988	Stahmer, Klaus Hinrich	Germany	Voices to B.		
	1993	Steenhuisen, Paul	Canada	Between Lips and Lips There Are Cities	2 8-part antiphonal choirs	
	2006	Tam, David	United States	Music for Cascando		Cascando
	2005	Tilbury, John/ Sebastian Lexer	Great Britain	Rough for Radio I		Rough for Radio I
	1991	Taricco, Giorgio	Italy	Elegia II		poem "Echo's Bones"
	2005	Tilbury, John/ Sebastian Lexer	Great Britain	Cascando	p, electronics	Cascando
	1993	Turnage, Mark Anthony	Great Britain	Your Rockaby	sax, orch	Rockaby
	1992	Van der Hoff, Jeroen	Netherlands	Music (Improvisations) for a reading of How It Is	tape, V, perc	How It Is
	1991	Victory, Gerard	Ireland	Music for Cascando		Cascando
240	1977	Voigtländer, Lothar	Germany	Einmal -	V, p	
	1983	Voigtländer, Lothar	Germany	vergesse...durcheinander...o süße	V, 4 trb, 4 drums sets	
	2005	Voigtländer, Lothar	Germany	Don't forget (new version of "vergesse...")	V, 4 trb, 4 drums sets, tape	
	1991	Wai-On, Ho (aka Ann-Kay Lin)	Hong Kong/ Great Britain	Journey (1st version, for Contemporary Noh)	female V	Worstward Ho
	1998	Wai-On, Ho (aka Ann-Kay Lin)	Hong Kong/ Great Britain	Journey (2nd version)	ob	Worstward Ho
	2004	Waterhouse, Graham	Great Britain	Dragoncello	cl solo	
	1986	Weidberg, Ron	Israel	Waiting for Godot		Waiting for Godot
	1973-75	Wildberger, Jacques	Switzerland	...die Stimme, die alte, schwächer werdende Stimme...	S, vc, orch, tape	
	1960	Wilkinson, Marc	Australia/Great Britain	Voices: from Waiting for Godot	CA, fl, cl, b cl, vc	Waiting for Godot

	1996-97	Yanov-Yanovsky, Dmitry Feliksovich	Russia	Come and Go	3 female Vs, fl, gt, vc, p	Come and Go
250	1999	Yanov-Yanovsky, Dmitry Feliksovich	Russia	Breath	fl, cl, vl, vc, perc, tape	Breath
	2001	Yanov-Yanovsky, Dmitry Feliksovich	Russia	Eh Joe	MS, actor/video	
	1996	Zazhyt'ko, Serhy	Ukraine	Semyuelyu Bekketu [To Samuel Beckett]	mute reader, cb	
	1978	Zielińska, Lidia	Poland	Słuchaj, Joe [Listen, Joe]	mime, tape, orch	Eh Joe
	1983 (rev. 1991)	Zielińska, Lidia	Poland	Cascando	actor, db mixed chorus (1983) rev. actor, chbr chorus (1991)	Cascando
	2007	Zubel, Agata	Poland	Cascando	V, fl, cl, vl, vc	Cascando

Abbreviations

Editions of Samuel Beckett's works (for full titles, see bibliography)

CDW = Beckett, Complete Dramatic Works

CSP = Beckett, Complete Short Prose

LSB = Beckett, Letters of Samuel Beckett

DFMW = Beckett, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*

Editions of Morton Feldman's works (for full titles, see bibliography)

MFS = Villars, Chris, ed. *Morton Feldman Says*

MFE = Zimmermann, Walter, ed. *Morton Feldman Essays*

GMR = Friedman, B. H. *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*

Other abbreviations

HL = Houghton Library for Rare Manuscripts, Harvard University

MF = microfilm

PSS = archive of the Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel

UE = Universal Edition

UMP = United Music Publishers

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