1993

Text and intertextuality: words about music about words

Andrew Ford
University of Wollongong
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
TEXT AND INTERTEXTUALITY:
WORDS ABOUT MUSIC ABOUT WORDS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF CREATIVE ARTS

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

ANDREW FORD, BA

SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS

1993
Abstract

The writings embodied in this thesis relate to five of the six musical works in the accompanying folio in that they consider the range of relationships between words and music in a musical setting of a literary (or at least verbal) text. The musical examples discussed range from the art song to rock and roll, from music-theatre to solo vocal pieces employing extended vocal techniques. Texts range from complex poetry to paralinguistics to simple pop lyrics.

The thesis draws on the writer's experience as a composer and performer of vocal music, as well as a variety of secondary sources, analytical, musicological and descriptive. A unifying theoretical thread is provided by the post-structuralist concept(s) of intertextuality, both in specific senses proposed by Barthes, Eco and others, and in the more inclusive sense advanced by Kristeva. Part 1 of these writings consists of four, informal radio talks scripted and presented by the author for ABC Radio National in 1989.

Tapes of the radio programs are included, together with recordings of four of the accompanying scores and the four rock and roll songs discussed.
Table of Contents

Preface iv
Introduction iv

Part 1
1. Ancestral Voices 1
2. Speech into Song 15
3. Getting the Sense Across 31
4. The Song Remains the Same 47

Part 2
5. Text and Intertextuality 64
6. Post-modern Pop: Intertextuality in the Songs of Bruce Springsteen and Elvis Costello 78
8. Themes in the Late Vocal Music of Elliott Carter 134
9. A Mirror on Which to Dwell 173
10. Conclusion 203

Musical Examples 208
Bibliography 231
Preface

In the folio of recent compositions which accompanies these writings, five of the six scores involve the setting of literary texts to music. This thesis seeks to provide a counterpart to that folio in terms of my ideas on the intertextual relationship of words and music in a vocal work.

I wish to thank the following people without whose advice and encouragement these writings might never have been completed. My supervisor, Dr Andrew Schultz, was patient and meticulous in his reading of my work, and his probing questions were invaluable. Prof Barry Conyngham, likewise, offered many useful comments. I am grateful to many people for conversations which have helped me to define thoughts about the topics covered, but especially Dr Martin Buzacott, Dr Gerald English and Dr Patience Hook. Elliott Carter and Karlheinz Stockhausen generously granted me interviews, in the course of which a number of points relating to this thesis were clarified.¹ Margaret Morgan provided many editorial suggestions for Part 1, as did my ABC producer Judith Irvine. Graham Devlin and Dave Watts supplied elucidation on the lyrics of Chuck

¹ These interviews are fully reported in my book Composer to Composer: Conversations About Contemporary Music, to be published by Allen & Unwin in July 1993.
Berry and Elvis Costello, respectively. Peter Grimshaw (of Boosey & Hawkes) was both forbearing to a fault and unstinting in his supply of scores and recordings of Carter's music.
Introduction

These writings deal with aspects of musical text-setting, particularly in terms of 20th century music. They are divided into two parts. The first consists of four radio scripts which deal with the subject of words and music, and their relationship in the context of song. The second begins with a discussion of critical methodologies for illuminating that relationship, and proceeds to a series of case studies of some rather starkly contrasting instances of 20th century word-setting.

As a composer, I have frequently been drawn to literary texts, finding them inspirational in one way or another. In some cases they have provided the germ of an idea for a piece of music, in others they have suggested possible musical structures. However, by far the most common and direct way in which words have impinged upon my music is when they have seemed to want to be sung. It would, I think, be true to say that the human voice is my favourite musical instrument, although I recognise that when that voice is given words to sing (as opposed merely to sounds) a complex set of relationships occurs which goes far beyond pure music.
Among the vocal works in the folio accompanying this thesis, a range of attitudes is taken to the setting of the literary text. Four of the works were collaborations: Parabola (1989), Whispers (1990), The Laughter of Mermaids (1991) and Harbour (1992). In each case I was able to discuss with the writer the kind of text I imagined. In the cases of Parabola and Harbour, Barbara Blackman and Margaret Morgan both asked me to provide them in advance with an outline of the musical structure I proposed. On both occasions I suggested a seven movement structure, and nominated tempo relationships between the movements.

In the case of Parabola this led to an overall shape which mirrored the one described by the title. The Latin word "parabola" is that from which we get our word "parable". On one level Parabola is just that --a parable--since "[w]hen Icarus falls . . . / . . . / . . . we fall--we". But Icarus's flight, culminating in his fall, is also the shape of a parabola, and in order to reflect this in the structure of the piece, I suggested placing the description of his flight--and the musical climax--fifth in the sequence of seven continuous movements. I also asked Blackman for words which could be repeated in a rhythmic, chanted manner, suggesting the casting of a spell. Given these requests, my
musical responses to Blackman's words were already, to some extent, present in the words themselves. They were further coloured by the fact that Parabola is a piece for actors (rather than singers) and instruments. Consequently it was not possible to write musically elaborate vocal lines. In terms of notation, the score had to be unconventional, since my performers would not be able to read music. My solution, at certain points in the score, was to ask the actors to listen to the instruments and adopt the rhythms and/or pitches which they heard. The result is a score which, despite its lack of conventional vocal notation, insists upon a very high degree of interaction between voices and instruments. Music and text, therefore, are inextricably linked in a very practical manner.

In Harbour the seven movement structure needed to reflect the fact that the work would be a song cycle in the original sense, just as Beethoven's An die ferne Geliebte and Schumann's Frauenliebe und -leben are cycles. In other words, the first and last songs have a strong connection; there is a feeling of coming full circle at the end of the piece. The title (which I wanted to use before I knew anything else about the piece) also suggested this sense of homecoming. This led, in turn, to a view of the piece as a palindrome, although I was anxious to
avoid a strict mirroring of tempos. The final structure for the tempos was: slow--fast--moderate--extremely fast--moderate--slow--very slow. Within these broad tempo indications there are numerous modifications. For example, the second, fast movement contains tense pauses, which heighten the sense of speed; the third movement, although retaining one tempo throughout, moves towards a climax which appears to accelerate. The musical imagery is largely abstract in that it makes few attempts to illustrate Morgan's texts. There are, however, a few moments when purely illustrative sounds creep into the orchestra. One small example (bar 77) is the col legno beating of the cellos at the words "stab a blue tattoo". A more thorough occurrence comes in the final song. Here the words make specific, though veiled, reference to the geographic location of Sydney's Circular Quay: the "inverted grin with gunboat teeth" is the Harbour Bridge; the "waving, white-nailed hand" is the Opera House; the "velvet bed . . . sliced with opal" is the water itself. The song begins with four strokes on a tubular bell, a fifth occurring four bars later. This is a reference to Slessor's poem about Sydney Harbour--"Five Bells". The pitches which form the orchestral accompaniment to the song are based upon the harmonics of the bell. In bar 337 the cellos' reiterated open D string suggests the
warning sound emitted by a ferry casting off from its moorings.

With The Laughter of Mermaids, I knew in advance that I wanted The Song Company, who commissioned the work, to use microphones. This was something which they had not previously done, but to which they readily agreed. It allowed me the possibility of a greater range of vocal nuances than would otherwise have been possible. Specifically, it permitted a variety of soft sounds—whispering, muttering, breathing and so forth—but it did not preclude a more operatic style of vocalising. I asked Maria Blakey for a text which would contain many contrasting moods, tones of voice and styles of speech. Her original libretto was 24 pages long (about 22 pages too long). From this, we compressed the text and, in the process, heightened the degree of contrast in mood. When I began writing the music I realised that in certain places I wanted individual voices to chatter away for long periods, detached from the main body of the piece, and asked Blakey to provide some extra texts which would amplify certain ideas in the principal text, acting, as it were, like satellites to it. In this case, then, the process of musical composition generated a requirement for texts of a particular nature.
Whispers is a music-theatre work, written at the behest of the tenor Gerald English, who specifically asked for a mad scene. The first problem which the librettist Rodney Hall and I discussed was the raison d'être for the tenor to be on stage with 11 musicians. We settled upon a scenario in which a conductor is rehearsing an orchestra. This provided a reason for the players to play and for the tenor to sing (since conductors frequently do sing in rehearsals). Moreover, the piece that they rehearse is the final, vocal movement of Mahler's fourth symphony, the tenor/conductor filling in for the absent soprano. This scenario also allowed us to begin with music familiar to the audience and later to distort it in a way which mirrored the protagonist's slackening grip on reality. The dramatic style of the text moves from naturalism to surrealism, the music from Mahler to Ford. However, both Hall and I wished the work to retain a strong degree of unity. In writing the "mad" music, I restricted myself, as far as possible, to exaggerated Mahlerian gestures, so that everything progresses from the score being "rehearsed". The percussionist, for instance, plays only on instruments in the fourth symphony (the exception being a single tubular bell). Hall's text contains many small resonances of the text from Das Knabenwunderhorn which Mahler set in the symphony.
Finally, there is always a dramatic reason for music in this work. The first notated sound is of a glissando (A to G) on a timpanum: the Mahler is in G and the timpanist would have to make this adjustment in a real rehearsal (although perhaps a little more discreetly). By the end of the piece the music is that which is inside the conductor's head, driving him mad, or, at least, letting the audience hear the madness. So, once again, text and music are fundamentally inter-related.

The fifth work involving texts, In somnia, differs from the others in two principal ways. First, it involves a chorus, as well as solo voices. Second, it is macaronic, drawing on texts in four languages, spanning centuries. My choice of texts was governed partly by their common concern with night—in particular, with sleeplessness—and partly by the range of moods they present. The title of the work means "into" or "towards dreams" or "fantasies", and the prevailing atmosphere of the piece relates to those moments before sleep, when thoughts and images pass through one's consciousness in a seemingly random configuration. To an extent, this is reflected in the music, which, on one level, exaggerates the abrupt shifts of mood suggested by the literary texts, whilst, on another level, aiming
to unify the disparate dictions and points of view they represent.

I have found some of the most consistently stimulating scores of recent years to be the three vocal pieces composed by the American Elliott Carter between 1975 and 1981—*A Mirror on Which to Dwell*, to texts by Elizabeth Bishop, *Syringa*, which superimposes fragments of ancient Greek texts on a specially written poem by John Ashbery, and *In Sleep, in Thunder*, Carter's setting of poems by his late friend Robert Lowell. Because of the complexity of the original texts, and, arguably, because of the generally neutral approach which the composer adopts to them (he has spoken of attempting to "mirror" the words in his music),\(^1\) the intertextual relationship between music and texts is multifarious. Chapter 8 offers an overview of Carter's late vocal music and seeks to account for his return to text-setting, after almost 30 years of purely instrumental music, by placing the three vocal pieces in the context of the composer's entire musical output. Chapter 9 examines the first of the late vocal pieces, *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* in greater detail.

\(^1\) Conversation with the author 7 June 1991.
In a sense, the piece for solo, unaccompanied voice presents an extreme instance of the collision of words and music, since they are uttered simultaneously and from the same sound source—words and music are truly combined. Since 1984, I have performed a number of works from this rather small repertoire and two of these are examined in chapter 7: Aria by John Cage and Fast Talking: The Last Words of Dutch Schultz (a work I commissioned) by Andrew Schultz. Alongside these solo pieces I have placed two other vocal works which I have performed: Peter Maxwell Davies's music-theatre piece for voice and ensemble, Eight Songs for a Mad King, which I have conducted on several occasions and on one occasion "sung", and Stockhausen's Stimmung for vocal sextet, whose Australian premiere I directed and sang in during 1986. Each of these four works establishes its own system of relationships between the verbal text or texts and the musical setting. Furthermore, each requires a specific and unconventional form of vocal production which amplifies that system. In an introduction to the chapter which deals with these four works, a historical context is suggested for the development of "extended" vocal techniques.

My earliest musical enthusiasm was the pop music of the 1960s, the literary merit of which was often
doubtful. Nevertheless, pop music, and specifically rock and roll, have formed the crucible in which the merging of words and music occurs most commonly in the late 20th century. The growing awareness of pop music's history, which coincided with a wave of musical nostalgia in the late 1970s, allowed the song writers and performers of the time to adopt a more or less consciously appropriative attitude to the pop music of the previous two decades. Two of the most important figures of that period were Bruce Springsteen and Elvis Costello: their understanding of the immediate history of 1970s pop led them both to revivify the genre and to adopt a critical attitude to it. Chapter 6, then, is a discussion of the intertextual influences to be found in examples of the work of Springsteen and Costello.

Throughout the second part of this thesis I have drawn on certain ideas on intertextuality advanced by Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco and Julia Kristeva. Chapter 5 discusses these approaches.

As already mentioned, Part 1 consists of the scripts of four radio programs on the subject of Words and Music, written and produced in late 1989 for ABC Radio National's Mainstream. They consider the use of the voice in a variety of musical genres, differing responses to word setting and ways in
which literary (at least, verbal) texts and musical texts intersect and alter or affect each other's meanings. They appear here in a slightly re-edited (and corrected) fashion, although I have not attempted to alter the informal style of the originals, nor to disguise the fact that they were intended to be broadcast. Consequently they retain the format of the radio script complete with details and timings of the musical examples inserted into the original (cassette tapes of the broadcasts accompany the thesis). The scripts range widely in terms of the musical reference. Many of the themes and concerns which are discussed in the scripts are followed up in Part 2 of the thesis.
Part 1

Words and Music: Four Radio Scripts
1. Ancestral Voices

PLAY EXTRACT FROM ALLEGRI MISERERE . . . FADE UNDER . . .

The human voice is our primary means of communication. We can use it to declare undying love or to have a political discussion or cry for help. But we can also use it to sing, and in doing so we join in the earliest and most fundamental of musical traditions.

PLAY OPENING TRACK OF LE MYSTERE DES VOIX BULGARES . . . FADE UNDER . . .

These Bulgarian women are not professional singers. What we hear when we listen to them is a traditional form of singing which dates back centuries. Perhaps, to our ears, some of the harmonies they use are a little unexpected, even dissonant. Just as there are many singing traditions, there are many types of voice. Indeed, the fact that police can employ voice prints (like finger prints) to assist in identification suggests that there are as many vocal types as there are people.

Even within the context of what we call music, we can discover an enormous range of vocal types.
Joan Sutherland represents one of the pinnacles of achievement in the area of operatic singing. Her voice is merely the most famous from a particular musical tradition which has produced its own set of vocal characteristics, techniques, habits and affectations. In our society we're led to believe that operatic singing is the human voice at its best, at its most accomplished.

What links Dame Joan with this singer from East Africa, is the use of the voice to portray a range of emotions, to tell a story, to stir its listeners. But the two voices are also separated by barriers of tradition. I suspect, however, that Joan Sutherland would seem far odder to the average citizen of Burundi than their representative does to us. And here's the reason.
Rock and roll is an American invention and approximately 35 years old. It owes much to the traditional music of Africa—especially West Africa. If African music, as a result, seems somehow familiar to us, it isn't surprising. We hear rock and roll most days of our lives whether we want to or not. Opera is still that much more rarefied, we're unlikely to encounter it accidentally. In a Burundian context it would seem very odd indeed. Many of the operatic characteristics we take for granted would quickly appear bizarre affectations heard through Burundian ears. In fact they seem bizarre affectations to the average rock and roll fan.

In this first of four programs dealing with words and music, I want to examine the human voice itself and the vocal traditions in which that voice is active. The vocal timbres of Bob Dylan are just as distinctive as those of Dame Joan, but they clearly belong to a different tradition. Just as we are encouraged to accept that operatic singing is a noble endeavour, we somehow believe that singers like Dylan are less worthy, that what they do is untutored and homespun. In a sense this is correct, but, besides the loaded socio-political implications involved in this distinction, the whole comparison is far more complex than such glib value judgements
would suggest. For the truth of the matter we must return, in the first instance to Africa.

. . . FADE UP BURUNDI WHISPERER BRIEFLY . . . FADE UNDER . . .

There's one concept in particular which is sometimes in danger of becoming too important in Western opera, but which doesn't exist at all in most traditional musics. And that's the idea of the beautiful voice. From the Sydney Opera House to the Met, from La Scala to Covent Garden, patrons debate the relative merits of Domingos, Te Kanawas, Pavarottis and so on. And frequently it is the beauty of these singers' voices which is the subject of discussion: the way Pavarotti takes that top C, Dame Kiri's lyrical pianissimo. Sure, it's to do with technique as well, but first and foremost an opera singer's career is launched because he or she possesses a beautiful vocal instrument.

Of course, there's an element of fashion involved here. Fifty years ago there was a tendency for opera singers to begin singing a note before they'd pitched it, then to slide into tune. Today, this is generally considered an ugly affectation. But whatever the criteria, beauty of voice is important.
Not so in traditional African singing. Skill, of course, is highly prized and, whilst there's a communal, participatory aspect to much tribal music, there's still a star system—Africa has its master singers. But it's these singers' ability to put across a song—to sing a story—which gains them their notoriety; it's not the beauty of their voices.

I've singled out Africa because of the relationship of its vocal tradition to that of today's Western rock music. But there are other musical traditions in which the same lack of concern with vocal beauty applies, one of these is the Anglo-Celtic folk song: another tradition in which the singing of stories is important and, incidentally, another influence on modern rock music.

QUICK BURST OF BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN SINGING "BORN IN THE USA" [BEGIN HARD AT 0'34"] . . . FADE UNDER . . .

I don't want to offend anyone by reducing this program's audience to a set of cultural stereotypes, but I would guess that many regular listeners to a show which deals with mainstream classical music, might find Bruce Springsteen's voice disturbing,
ugly, intolerable and so on. Vocal beauty is in the ear of the beholder.

Springsteen's voice—at least in that song—is strident and robust. The raw, cracked quality creates a sense of urgency appropriate to the sentiments he is expressing. This ability to adapt a voice to a particular musical situation and, in this case, to make the voice sound deliberately strident--almost physically hurting--is typical of rock and roll and is found also in traditional African music and most ballad traditions. It's harder to imagine in an operatic context.

But what we consider to be a typical or even outstanding operatic voice today is not at all the same thing as audiences in Mozart's day would have recognized. I talked to the distinguished tenor, Gerald English, about the vocal habits--good and bad--of the modern opera singer, compared with operatic practice in former times.

PLAY INTERVIEW . . .

SEGUE WITH GERALD ENGLISH SINGING MONTEVERDI VESPERS . . . FADE UNDER . . .
I was talking with the tenor, Gerald English, whom we just heard singing "Nigra sum" from the Monteverdi Vespers of 1610.

Modern opera singers--particularly those of the stature of Sutherland or Pavarotti--earn considerable incomes from their work: reason enough, one might think, for singing. But what of the traditional folk singer, the African tribal singer, the Saturday morning garage band, or, for that matter, the ubiquitous bathroom singer. What is it makes them sing, and how does this singing differ from any other form of expression? How does it differ, for instance, from speech?

I once heard an English vicar telling his congregation that we sing in the bath because we are celebrating becoming clean. Well, I suppose that's the sort of thing a vicar would say. Actually my theory about English people singing in the bath is that it's entirely territorial--they're desperately trying to avoid the embarrassment of someone accidentally walking in on them. And singing obviously has an advantage over speech in this respect, not only because singing to oneself is more socially acceptable than talking to oneself, but also because singing carries that much better to the other side of the bathroom door.
So when we want to call someone's name across a distance we tend to sing it. If the talkback button in front of me has failed and I want to contact the Mainstream producer on the other side of the glass I might call out [SING] "Ju--dith!" And the interval of the falling minor third which I would use is employed for this pretty much universally. Cricket fans, for instance, will remember the cry of [SING] "Lil--lee". It works even without the name. Suburban housewives used to call [SING] "Yoo--hoo!" across their garden fences. Perhaps they still do.

The reason for this universality is to do with the physics of music. The interval in question, the falling minor third, is formed by singing the first two pitches in the harmonic series (ignoring repeats of the fundamental). If we add the next pitch in the series, we produce another familiar musical sound with an equally international application: [SING] "Ford is a sis--sy!" The fact that small children can mock each other with this series of pitches, without even employing words, ([SING] "Nya, Nya--nya, Nya, Nya") demonstrates how basic the series is. I suppose it's the very banality of this succession of pitches which gives it its power as a device for ridicule.
In Stravinsky's Les Noces, virtually every pitch in the piece is related to that sequence: the first three different pitches in the harmonic series are also the first three notes of the pentatonic scale and the basis of just about every folk music in the world—including the folk music of Russia which Stravinsky is celebrating here.

When we pitch syllables, we're really only exaggerating what happens anyway when we speak. If we talk on a monotone no one will want to listen to us, there's even some doubt as to whether we'd be understood. So our speech rises and falls in pitch. We don't generally employ the same range of pitches as a singer, but, nevertheless, the variety helps others to follow—or want to follow—what we are saying.

In fact pitching is only one of a whole series of musical devices we employ when we speak. Tempo, for example, is something which is important in speech. If we speak more quickly than normal we may create difficulties for our listener in terms of
comprehension, but a certain urgency will probably register, and this will tend to make them listen harder. Similarly if we increase the musical dynamic of our speech (or, rather, raise our voices), we send out another kind of signal. Pitch, tempo, dynamics.

But these are not the only musical elements in speech. In a sense, we are not only all singers, we also compose the sounds we sing. We employ compositional devices in our speech. We can heighten the effect of our words by the use of repetition: repetition of a sound, repetition of a phrase, repetition of an idea, or, as in this case, repetition of a word—the word repetition. Rhythm can be very important in speech and so can the judicious use ... of the pause.

In fact, if we were not all, at least on a subconscious level, both composers and singers, we would fail, more often than not, to achieve genuine communication with anyone. It's often the way we say something, rather than what we say, which conveys our meaning. And so it's possible to say "Yes" and mean "I thought you'd never ask", or "Yes" in the sense of "Well, maybe", or, for that matter, we can say "Yes" and convey the meaning "No". These musical aspects of speech greatly enrich our
communicative skills. We may not be consciously aware of them, but our brains are constantly performing musical analyses of the speech we hear. And the applications of this can be highly practical, particularly when it comes to disentangling the true meaning of sentences such as "I mailed that cheque to you yesterday".

If we use musical devices in speech, what is it which distinguishes speech from song? Well, there's the extended range of pitch, as I've already said, and with it comes a stronger, more focused sense of tone. This is often emphasised by slowing down the rate of speech: we seldom sing words as quickly as we would speak them. The pitch is rather purer, then, in song, and the sounds themselves occur more slowly, so that the individual pitches can be clearly heard. This is particularly the case, once again, in Western art music which celebrates the beauty of the voice.

FADE UP KING'S COLLEGE ALLEGRI MISERERE . . .
CONTINUE UNDER . . .

Allegri's famous Miserere has become one of those works which we associate with the purest of vocal qualities--the boy soprano. In fact, we probably associate it with a particular boy soprano
tradition—that of the English cathedral, best typified by the Choir of King's College Cambridge. It's a rather ethereal sound. Some have described it as angelic, although I don't see how they could know. It wasn't a style of singing which appealed to the composer Benjamin Britten. The King's College treble is essentially a head voice and, as Britten pointed out, the average, untrained boy sings from the chest, if not the stomach. When he wrote the roles of the fairies in his opera A Midsummer Night's Dream for boys' voices, Britten chose the more natural chest voice. His mischievous fairies are very much naughty children, rather than fallen angels. [MISERERE SHOULD BE OUT BY NOW.]

Grigorio Allegri almost certainly wrote his Miserere with castrati in mind. It was composed for the choir of the Vatican's Sistine chapel, and at the time of its composition, around 1638, the soprano and many of the alto voices in the choir would have belonged to castrated men. Unfortunately for us (fortunately for the singers) we no longer have castrati, but the tone of that voice, it seems, was closer to a vibratoless female than to either the boy soprano or the male falsetto. When Andrew Parrot came to record the Miserere with his Taverner Consort, then, he used women for the soprano lines.
We also know, from various reports, that the chanted sections of the *Miserere* were performed with a Springsteen-like urgency. All right, perhaps not with strained, cracked voices, but certainly, as Mendelssohn recorded, "loud and fast".

*PLAY TAVERNER CONSORT'S ALLEGRI MISERERE . . . FADE UNDER . . .*

If the English cathedral sound is not the most stylistically authentic for the Allegri *Miserere*, we should not despise it out of hand. As with the modern operatic voice, the English boy soprano is a result of tastes and practices to do with historical or geographical circumstances. We shouldn't be surprised, though, that, with the massive escalation of musicological research in the twentieth century and the availability of recordings of many different kinds of singing from other cultures and other times, today's composers are beginning to experiment as never before with the human voice and its manifold possibilities.

In *Laborintus II*, by the Italian composer, Luciano Berio, the work opens with our calling interval, the falling minor third, and goes on to exploit an enormous range of vocal techniques and voice types.
not normally associated with the comparatively limited repertoire of the operatic singer.

PLAY BEGINNING OF LABORINTUS II . . . FADE UNDER . . .

One of the characteristics of Berio's vocal music is the way in which elements of folk, jazz and baroque techniques are appropriated. More important still, perhaps, is the relationship of music and text.

Singing can be a means of making oneself heard, of celebrating or mourning; we can use it to encourage our favourite football team, or to poke fun in the playground. Singing has helped sailors keep time when hauling sails and provided a sense of solidarity for political demonstrations. And when music is linked to words—as it is in many of these activities—it becomes a particularly potent form of expression.

(broadcast 3 September 1989)
2. Speech into Song

PLAY WOODY GUTHRIE SINGING "THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND"

... FADE END UNDER ...

Most of us think we know the difference between speech and song. And most of us would have no hesitation in saying that man was singing. Even if we don't know the song itself--and it's a pretty famous song--we recognise a number of distinctive sounds, characteristic of song. In fact so characteristic are they that you may be forgiven for thinking I'm stating the obvious. But what is it that makes it obvious?

The singer was Woody Guthrie and the song is the sort which Guthrie made famous in the 1940s, heralding the American folk song revival which flourished in the 50s and 60s and paving the way for performers like Bob Dylan.

What interests me, from a structural point of view, is the way in which the inflections of everyday speech infiltrate Guthrie's vocal lines. If these songs represented the downtrodden worker, from California "to the New York island", they did so because they spoke with a directness which came, at least partly, from the rhythms of these people's
speech. It's precisely the same device which lends the writing of John Steinbeck its great power.

In fact, Woody Guthrie made the connection between speech and song in his music abundantly clear by popularising another, related musical form, the "talking blues". In this distinctly White, folk-influenced form of the blues, the vocal line is literally spoken, with a laconic lilt, in rhyming couplets and with a certain stylisation of inflection, but essentially with the just the same internal rhythm you'd find in everyday speech. Here's a sample of Guthrie's Washington Talkin' Blues.

PLAY "WASHINGTON TALKIN' BLUES" . . . FADE UNDER . . .

The connection between speech and song, of course, goes back much further than Woody Guthrie or the talking blues. It can be found in Schoenberg's use of Sprechstimme and Debussy's rather flat vocal lines in Pelléas et Mélisande. It's there in the recitative of baroque and classical opera. And it's there in the plainsong of the Roman church, and earlier in Byzantine and Jewish chant.
Early English poetry, it seems, was a performance art. In Chaucer's day, poets would recite their work. It makes sense that a figure like Chaucer, whose work had enormous popular appeal would have to have been a performer--so many of his potential audience couldn't read and, anyway, the poems are really stories to be told aloud.

In Chaucer's most famous work, he describes the scene for us himself. Chaucer's pilgrims all perform their party pieces on the road to Canterbury in much the same fashion that the poet himself presumably did--over a drink in a pub. A far cry from Tennyson, to be sure, but not a million miles from more contemporary practice.

In Anglo-Saxon poetry, too, we can find descriptions of bards performing their work. It's likely that an epic such as *Beowulf* was chanted, perhaps to the musical accompaniment of a lyre. And the structure of Anglo-Saxon poetry itself suggests some sort of musical presentation--it's extremely rhythmic, each line being divided in two to emphasise the metre. I won't commit sacrilege on early English literature by attempting to read from *Beowulf*, but here's a riddle--of which, it seems, the Anglo-Saxons were inordinately fond--which demonstrates the rhythm drive of their poetry.
READ ANGLO-SAXON RIDDLE

It translates, approximately, as follows: "A moth ate words. I thought this was quite extraordinary when I heard about the event: a worm had swallowed someone's poem; a thief in the night had devoured the mighty utterance which, nonetheless, remained intact. When it had eaten, the villain was none the wiser." The answer, of course, is a book worm. Well, I said it was rhythmic, not funny.

In its liturgical use, chanting is a means of putting over religious texts in a way which heightens their meaning. Frequently, the texts in question were not originally intended to be pitched. The rhythm is generally unnotated and derived from the words themselves, which also dictate when the pitch should be changed. And so performance practice stems directly from the structure of the text and also from the way in which those words would normally be spoken.

In more musically developed chanting, for example Gregorian chant (so named because it was formalised under the aegis of Pope Gregory I), melodic extension of certain syllables leads the chanting onto a new plain of expressivity. Melismas—melodic
arabesques attached to a particular syllable—serve
to lend colour and emphasis to the meaning of the
words.

Some particularly beautiful examples of melodically
developed chant can be found amongst the songs of
the 12th century Hildegard of Bingen. Hildegard was
a mystic, theologian, naturalist, poet and Abbess of
a small community of nuns attached to the
Benedictine order; she was also an exceptionally
gifted composer, and has left us some of the most
uplifting music of the middle ages.

PLAY EXTRACT FROM A FEATHER ON THE BREATH OF GOD
... FADE UNDER ... 

A Sequence in honour of St Rupert, composed by
Hildegard of Bingen. And in Hildegard's music one
can almost hear the process by which the rhythm and
the sense of the words lead towards purely melodic
singing. Religious contemplation and celebration is
taken into a new artistic realm in music like this.
The music not only supports the text, it mirrors it
and comes to stand for it. The melodic line floats,
in Hildegard's own words, like "a feather on the
breath of God".
There's much evidence, however, to suggest that Hildegard's musical style extended well beyond the purely contemplative. It seems the Abbess and her sisters exhibited a strongly dramatic flair in their worship, involving the semi-staging of Hildegard's work in a manner which may have been of a cross between a musical mystery play (presumably minus the secularised bawdy which characterised the genuine article) and a kind of proto-opera.

There's a fair amount of scholarly debate surrounding the precise nature of these mini-pageants, and we can't be entirely sure just how theatrical they were. But it seems that the music associated with them consisted of a mixture of the extremely melodic chant we heard before and a rather starker, more naturalistic representation of speech with a greater capacity to be genuinely dramatic.

It was precisely the need to find a more dramatic singing style--a style closer to speech--which led early opera composers such as Monteverdi to develop what they called *stile rappresentativo*, a type of singing which came close to declamation. We can be far more certain what this entailed because here the documentation is more plentiful.
In the introduction to his 1602 collection of songs *Le nuove musiche* (The New Music), Giulio Caccini berates the singers of his day for that for which singers, it seems, are always being criticised by composers--being stupid. If only, Caccini laments, they would bother to understand what they're singing, they might do it better. What really got Caccini's goat was the unintelligent and indiscriminate use of musical embellishments. For Caccini, these were to be employed to heighten the passion of the music--in particular, to lend expressive emphasis to the words. For the singers, apparently, musical ornamentation was something with which to show off their voices and their techniques.

Two centuries later, incidentally, we find Mozart and Rossini making precisely the same complaints about their singers, and for precisely the same reasons. When we talk today about historical authenticity in performance, perhaps we ought to specify whether we are trying to capture the way in which music was performed, or the manner in which its composers wanted it to be performed.

For the composers of the early Italian baroque, the dramatic effect of a text was most important. This was an age which in many ways was the spiritual precursor of Hollywood--every opportunity for
placing art at the service of passionate expression was grabbed. And baroque composers, like their 20th century counterparts, loved special effects. In Monteverdi's dramatic madrigal, *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (that's "The Fight between Tancred and Clorinda"), the composer has his instrumental forces conjure clashing swords and galloping horses with all the enthusiasm of a musical Spielberg.

The *rappresentativo* style, then, was an attempt to do the same for the vocal lines. The need was for the music not merely to reflect the drama but to advance it. As we know from the Broadway musical, everything stops for a song. If we're lucky the song might be relevant to the story, but the action itself grinds to a halt for the duration. This was something which bothered Monteverdi and his contemporaries. What these composers sought was a singing style which could actually advance the story line.

In his first opera, *Orfeo*, Monteverdi's hero is that most famous musician of them all, he who made stones to sing. Orpheus must cross the river Styx and he employs his singing to send the ferryman Charon to sleep.
The style of the music is florid and ornate as Orpheus's song weaves its magic. In fact, we are hearing the song through Charon's ears. As he begins to nod off, the singing becomes simpler, the musical structure looser, and Orpheus's voice takes on a more gentle tone.

PLAY "POSENTE SPIRTO" FROM ORFEO

Orpheus's song, "Posente spirto" is interesting for a number of reasons. Monteverdi, like any good child of the High Renaissance, believed in the Platonic theory that the music should serve the text. Above all, then, the words had to be audible, and the best way of achieving this was to have them sung as naturalistically as possible, without distortion and with the accompaniment being just that--lending support and not disguise. Monteverdi and his progressive contemporaries like Caccini considered that Renaissance polyphony too often destroyed the text--and really they were right. The English madrigalists of the Elizabethan period got around this problem by employing fa-la-la-ing texts of such small literary merit that they could be destroyed with impunity.

But, for the Italians, the solution was either primitive recitativo (as in the early Florentine
operas) or, at any rate, monody in a highly naturalistic style. And if Orpheus's *Posente spirto* seems vastly too ornate to be naturalistic, we must remember its dramatic context, and the fact that Orpheus, here, is giving a display of his musicianship—rather like those singers whom Caccini so much loathed.

PLAY FROM OPENING OF *PELLEAS ET MELISANDE* . . .
FADE UNDER . . .

In Debussy's opera *Pelléas and Mélisande* the composer uses a vocal style which, in a way, comes close to Monteverdi's *stile rappresentativo*.

Debussy's vocal lines tend to consist of only a few pitches over a rather restricted range. By limiting his singers in this way, the composer was able to create a fair approximation of normal speech patterns. His methods may have been different to those of Monteverdi, but his aim was essentially the same—a kind of naturalism.

Now this, of course, is in stark contrast to Maurice Maeterlinck's quintessentially Symbolist libretto. Everything is hinted at, nothing is spelled out. Melisande is a sad, pale pre-Raphaelite princess, lost in a forest. Asked where she comes from, she
says: "Far from here." Asked who has hurt her, she replies: "Everyone."

The questions are put to her by the Prince Golaud who, in this first scene of the opera, has been hunting (he's always searching for something) and is now himself lost. When he comments that Melisande never blinks ("Don't you ever shut your eyes?") , she tells him: "I shut them at night."

Well, if we read Freud, we learn that women who never blink are—a pound to a penny—nymphomaniacs. But I don't really believe this is what Maeterlinck had in mind. In fact the point of much fin de siècle Symbolism is that the symbols themselves have no specific meaning at all. I feel that by adopting such a quiet, conversational tone with his sung dialogue, Debussy greatly enhances the power of Maeterlinck's words—if they had been rendered portentously they could have sounded extremely crass.

The story of Pelléas and Mélisande is similar to the Cornish myth adopted by Wagner, that of Tristan and Iseult. And comparisons between the two operas are inevitable, particularly since we know that Wagner presented such a strong fascination for Debussy. One of the points of contact between Pelléas and
Wagner's operatic practice is in the way in which the orchestra itself often carries forward the drama.

And yet, in Act 4 of Pelléas and Mélisande, the eponymous couple meet by arrangement and at last admit their love for each other. The orchestra rushes forward, stops dead and Pelleas blurts out the admission—we can almost hear him clapping his hand over his mouth immediately he's done so. Then Melisande whispers that she also loves him, and Pelleas can't believe it. How very human, how very natural, and how very unlike Wagner!

PLAY RELEVANT MOMENT . . . FADE QUICKLY UNDER . . .

"The ice has been broken with red hot irons," sings Pelleas, as though in a trance. It's one of Maeterlinck's most remarkable lines in the libretto. Can you imagine what Wagner might have done with it?

In Pelléas and Mélisande, Debussy limits the vocal range and produces, by default, a kind of perpetual parlando, a semi-spoken tone. The effect is naturalistic and yet, in its understated manner, it also beautifully compliments a libretto which is careful never to call a spade a spade.
Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* of 1912 was not quite the first use of *Sprechstimme* in history, but it remains the most famous. *Sprechstimme* (speech-voice) or *Sprechgesang* (speech-song) is a half-way house between singing and declaiming. To put it another way, it's pitched speech.

It's usually notated in just the same way as a sung vocal line, but with little crosses through the stems of the notes. All well and good. But it begs the questions, "How pitched? How spoken?" It's a puzzle.

On the one hand, we have Schoenberg's preface to the score, which insists that the pitch should be momentarily voiced and then left, the performer reaching the next note by means of an exaggerated glissando. As you can imagine, this sounds hugely melodramatic. Schoenberg himself left on old 78 rpm recording of the work with the reciter he liked best, Erika Stiedry-Wagner. She definitely acts the part, speaking rather than singing, and paying very little attention to the notated pitches. So, one wonders, if that's how Schoenberg wanted the piece to sound, why did he write the pitches in such a
specific manner? Why work out an intricate melodic line only to ask for it to be ignored?

Here's the soprano Helga Pilarczyk performing one of the 21 numbers with Pierre Boulez conducting in 1962. She strikes a happy medium which I feel is about right. Notice, however, how Schoenberg uses the dark sonority of the voice’s low register to increase the tension already inherent in the sound of the words. The poems, by the Belgian Albert Giraud, had been translated into German by Hartleben and, in the process, given some wonderful colouristic effects. The English translation here reads something like "Sinister giant black moths blot out the light of the sun. . . ." The German, however, is incredibly atmospheric: "Finstre schwarze riesenfalte toteten den Sonnen Glanz . . ."

FADE UP MUSIC UNDER LAST FEW WORDS. PLAY TO END OF ITEM.

In fact, I suspect that the problem with *Pierrot lunaire* is notational. If Schoenberg recorded it with a largely spoken voice, that is surely how he wanted it to sound. If he wrote it differently, perhaps it was because he couldn't imagine another notation. By the time he came to write the part for the reciter in *A Survivor from Warsaw*, some 35 years
later, he had graduated to using just a single stave line, instead of the usual five, writing the pitch on it, above it or below it. For some reason best known to himself he continued to employ sharps and flats, presumably to provide certain modifications of pitch, but, there is nothing in the score to indicate how the reciter should deal with them.

Sprechstimme's principal contribution to music, it seems to me, has been in the area of opera. Even when it is not asked for, its example in a number of 20th century works has perhaps encouraged performers to sing their parts less and act them more. In suggesting this, of course, I return to my original point about the closeness of speech and song.

The American composer, Steve Reich, has long been interested in the musical possibilities of speech. In an early work of his, from the 1960s, *Come Out*, he takes a recording of the voice of a young black involved in the 1964 Harlem riots, Daniel Hamm, and he subjects it to a system of phasing, where the same recording gets slowly out of synch with itself until there is a multilayered texture, a kind of micro-canon, which is enormously powerful. Hamm, then 19, described being beaten up by police in Harlem's 28th Precinct station. Only those with visible bleeding were being taken to hospital and
Hamm only had bruises. Hamm had to squeeze his bruises until they bled.

OUT ON REICH'S COME OUT . . .

(broadcast 1 October 1989)
3. Getting the Sense Across

PLAY OPENING OF PART TWO OF A CHILD OF OUR TIME

. . . FADE UNDER JOHN WEST'S ANNOUNCEMENT . . .

FADE UP TO END OF TRACK. (3.46)

Just before the outbreak of the second world war, Michael Tippett took the outline for his oratorio A Child of Our Time to T.S. Eliot, hoping that the poet might agree to provide the text. Eliot, perhaps a little imperiously, suggested to the composer that he should write his own words for the piece, since anything he, Eliot, might come up with would be of such greater poetic quality it would "stick out a mile".

In spite of this rather curt brush-off, Eliot became for Tippett, in the composer's own words, a sort of artistic mentor. And he gave Tippett one other piece of important advice. A composer should never do to a text what the poet has already done. In other words, one has to be aware and respectful of the poet's own musical devices. As we've seen already in these programs, speech carries its own rhythm, dynamics, articulation, tempo and sense of pitch. How much more important, then, are these musical characteristics in poetry!
It was typical of the young Tippett to take Eliot's pontifications rather literally. With the exception of his song cycle, *The Heart's Assurance* and a handful of small, madrigal-like choral pieces, Tippett never set a poet's words to music again.\(^1\) In *Boyhood's End* he set W.H. Hudson's rather purple and self-consciously mystical prose, and in his large choral work, *The Vision of St Augustine*, he set another mystic's rather greater prose—this time in Latin. But in every other vocal work he has composed in the last 50 years, and in his five operas, he's written his own texts. And there are those who would blame Eliot for unleashing on an unsuspecting world a less than great literary talent—in Tippett's work there's often a sense of having to tolerate a good deal of verbal naivety in order to hear his beautiful, idiosyncratic music.

But what of Eliot's advice? Was he right?

For this program I've tried to concentrate on settings of the English language so that we can hear more clearly what happens to a text when it's sung. How is the meaning emphasised or altered? But there's an inherent problem with this, as Nicholas

\(^1\) In 1990 Tippett finally broke this pattern with an extended setting, for soprano and orchestra of Yeats's poem "Byzantium".
Routley of the Music Department at Sydney University has pointed out to me.

When a text is set to music, it's almost certainly destroyed—at least for the duration of that music. A text is usually open to a great many readings or interpretations. A musical setting frequently reduces the number of possible readings to one—the composer's reading. Whether they've been instinctively aware of this, or simply in awe of the poetic tradition with which they're dealing, composers who set the English language—and, in particular, English composers—have tended to steer away from too much tampering with the text. They seem to have been at pains to attempt to allow the text still to speak for itself. As Nicholas Routley points out, no such qualms have afflicted their German or French cousins.

PLAY SCHUBERT'S "ERLKÖNIG" . . . FADE & CONTINUE UNDER . . .

In Schubert's famous setting of Goethe's "Elf King", the composer conjures the sound of a galloping horse, which the poet never actually describes, and sets the entire poem against it. This obsessive accompaniment is in the nature of a sound effect, and it establishes the mood for Schubert's reading.
of the text. Time and again in this composer's vocal works a particular rhythmic pattern forms an ostinato which acts as a backdrop or an acoustic environment within which one understands the poem. And this ostinato, whether it represents a mill-wheel or a spinning wheel, lapping waters or a babbling brook, latches on to a sound idea inspired by the text.

. . . BRING UP "ERLKÖNIG" AND FADE UNDER . . .

The effect of the piano accompaniment in Schubert's "Elf King" is, at one level—at the level of the poetic reading—to limit our interpretations of the text. The galloping piano refers to an authorial, third person account of a father, riding a horse for all he's worth, late at night, with his son clasped tightly to him—a son who, by the end of the poem, is dead. But this narrative occupies only the first and last stanzas of Goethe's eight-stanza poem. In between, the narrator's voice is absent and we hear, instead, the voices of the father, the son and the ghostly, treacherous elf king, who lures, in some intangible way, the boy to his death.

Through his choice of accompaniment, Schubert spotlights the father, since he—or, at least, his horse—is the one doing the galloping. And so the
composer invites us to read the text through the character of the father. We empathise with the father's plight in a manner which Goethe's poem does not encourage. When the elf king speaks, the galloping accompaniment ceases. In other words, we still have the father's point of view—so ghastly is the elf king's ethereal voice that it blots out the sound of the horse's hooves.

In his marvellous book *Music and Poetry*, Lawrence Kramer discusses Schubert's "Elf King" in much the terms I have employed. Kramer argues that Schubert does not merely impose a single reading on the listener, removing the ambiguities of Goethe's text, substituting emotion for enigma, Romantic pathos for Romantic irony. The composer also steers the text away from its concerns with what Kramer calls "the daemonic aspects of the imagination", turning it into a "terrified recognition of something elemental and malevolent".

One might say that Schubert's reading of the "Elf King" is single-mindedly melodramatic. This is not to deprecate its musical achievement, rather to emphasise what can happen to a text when it's sung and accompanied.

Let's hear the whole song.
Elsewhere in his book *Music and Poetry*, Lawrence Kramer—still on the subject of how a musical setting acts to deconstruct a literary text—suggests that music is often a form of translation, but that if it merely mirrors the mood of a poem it may lapse into, on the one hand, melodrama, on the other hand, sentimentality. It seems to me that in this sense Schubert's "Elf King" tends towards being ambidextrous.

If we want to discuss English musical settings of the English language we must consider the cases of three related, though very different composers: John Dowland, Henry Purcell and Benjamin Britten.

Like his contemporary, Thomas Campion, Dowland is notable for setting his own texts. Here's one of his most famous.

PLAY OPENING OF "FLOW, MY TEARS" . . . FADE UNDER . . .

What John Dowland does in the opening lines of his song, "Flow, my tears", is to have the music descend, both in terms of its melodic lines and also
the prevailing harmony. There's nothing terribly innovative about this, it's just stock Renaissance word-painting; the tears in the poem flow downwards, therefore so should the music. As we know, England had its artistic Renaissance rather later than the rest of Europe, and Dowland had spent a fair bit of time abroad and was well aware of the latest trends. What's new is the application of such musical sensitivity to the English language and, not to put too fine a point on it, the creation of the English art song. In the closing moments of "Flow, my tears", as the tears and the music begin to descend once more, listen to the way in which the purity of the vocal line with its subtly inflected rhythm, lends itself to delicate ornamentation. The singer is Alfred Deller.

FADE UP AND PLAY TO END. (5.12)

John Dowland's vocal music is remarkable for its purity and for its simplicity. There's no place in these songs for vocal display, except in the sense of a display of control and quiet intensity. Dowland didn't so much respect the poet's text--it was his text, after all, and he could do what he liked with it--rather he was a respecter of words and of the capacity of words--of poetry--to move an audience. We should remember that he composed at a
time when English literature was surely at its zenith. This is the age of Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh, Samuel Daniel; of Marlowe and Ben Jonson; of Shakespeare. And Dowland's contribution to the art of the Elizabethan age was to find a hitherto unknown correspondence—a fundamental interdependency—between words and music.

With the following generation, and the music of Purcell in particular, the situation changed somewhat. Purcell was quite as sensitive to the language as his predecessor Dowland, and quite as apt to derive melodic invention from speech patterns, musical rhythm from verbal rhythm. But in addition, Purcell had a dramatic sense which manifested itself not only in his music for the stage but also in his other vocal writing—even his music for the church.


In his verse anthem, My Beloved Spake, Purcell invents singularly appropriate musical counterparts for the strange, sensual language of The Song of Songs. The infectious joy of the choral refrain "And the time of the singing of birds is come" makes all the more striking the sudden key shift and
strange harmonies which accompany the words which follow: "And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." The New English Bible renders "the voice of the turtle" as "the turtle-dove's cooing"—a piece of fundamentalist demystification I personally resent. I prefer to imagine a talking turtle, and so, I'm sure, did Purcell.

One aspect of Purcell's dramatic sensibility relates specifically to his placing of words in music, and a good example of this might be his response to the grimly honest poetry of the Funeral Sentences in the Book of Common Prayer.

While still in his teens, Purcell began setting the Funeral Sentences to music. They are characterised by gentle word painting, reminiscent of Dowland. In this setting of the last of the sentences, beginning "Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our heart", the hope at the words "But spare us, Lord most holy" is reflected in the turn which the music takes: a new key, a new sonority and a new metre.
To employ Lawrence Kramer's terminology, then, we might see this setting as a "translation" of the text; some of the sense comes across via the music. And since the music's polyphonic texture tends to obscure, rather than clarify, the physical sound of the words, this is only appropriate.

At the end of his life, Purcell set this final Funeral Sentence once more, for the funeral of Queen Mary in 1695. This time the setting is homophonic. That's to say the voices sing in rhythmic and verbal unison. The effect, not unnaturally, is that the words are far more audible. The universally lamented death of a well-loved Queen was, clearly, not a time to indulge in even the most restrained of dramatic devices. The words are left to speak for themselves, as they did when this music was sung at Purcell's own funeral, a few months later.

PLAY HOMOPHONIC SETTING OF "THOU KNOWEST, LORD"
If there is one composer whose vocal music has a strong relationship to Purcell's, it's Benjamin Britten. The burgeoning of Britten's career coincided with a spate of musicological archaeology on the 17th century and the unearthing and dusting off of many of Purcell's songs.

Britten inherited from Purcell not only the ability to turn the rhythms and cadences of the English language into elegant vocal lines, but also that very Purcellian way of illustrating (or translating) the individual word or phrase. Here's Britten's setting of Keats's sonnet "To Sleep", from the Serenade for tenor, horn and strings. Listen particularly for the downward swoop of the voice on the phrase "gloom-pleased eyes" and the gentle, melismatic rocking on "lulling charities".

PLAY SERENADE TRACK 7. (4.10)

Peter Pears was singing Keats's sonnet from Britten's Serenade. I specially like the low, slow vocal trill the composer employs for "burrowing like a mole".

In word-setting like this, Britten comes dangerously close to pure illustration, leaving himself wide open to Eliot's charge of "doing to the poem what
the poet's already done". But Britten was not always so literal, and I can think of at least one example where he seems to go quite against the wishes of the poet.

In the War Requiem of 1962, Britten interpolated into the Mass for the Dead a number of the poems of Wilfred Owen. The last of these was Owen's greatest achievement, "Strange Meeting".

JOHN WEST READS "STRANGE MEETING".

The final half line of the poem ("Let us sleep now . . . ") trails away to silence. The poem, like the vision, fades. So it does seem uncharacteristically wilful of Britten to compose a long, canonic stretch of music based on the melodic fragment which accompanies those words, a passage in which the only words, sung over and over by the tenor and bass soloists, are that "throwaway" line.

FADE UP WAR REQUIEM AT END OF "STRANGE MEETING"

. . . FADE UNDER . . .

The music may not contradict the words, but it certainly goes against the spirit of the original poem. There are, however plenty of examples of vocal music which does indeed contradict the sense
of the words. Perhaps the best examples are in the realm of popular music--and one genre in particular is founded upon a dichotomy between what the words say and what the music achieves.

PLAY BUDDY GUY "THE FIRST TIME I MET THE BLUES"
(2.08)

That was the great Chicago blues singer Buddy Guy describing the first time he met the blues. The blues tradition--whether in its original acoustic incarnation in the Mississippi delta, or its later, electrified Chicago form--has always employed song as a kind of remedy for despair. After all, the expression "blues" indicates as much. "Singing the blues" is shorthand for "singing the blues away". It's a restorative process: the words might be full of pain, but the singing itself is a positive act designed to purge it.

Listen to "The Empress of the Blues", Bessie Smith, singing one of the most famous songs of all time. The performance begins with an intoned verse which recounts the various wrongs done to the singer, in particular the problems with her man. But by the end of the song, by singing the blues, hopelessness has become hope. W.C.Handy's "St Louis Blues".
Bessie Smith's version of the "St Louis Blues".
Music redeeming text.

The relationship between words and music need not, of course, be semantic. The music doesn't have to support or contradict the meaning of the words. It is possible for it to remain coolly neutral.

One composer who has been less concerned with the meaning of a text and more concerned with its structure is Pierre Boulez. He is interested in laying bare what we might call the deep structure of a text. He wants his listeners to understand his music not so much as an interpretation of the words, more as a representation of their large scale form. And then he wants us to read the literary text alongside the music. But Boulez is also concerned with the grammar of the poem he is setting, with its small scale structure, and he is particularly drawn to those writers who are themselves overtly interested in grammar—which explains why he's composed an hour long study of Mallarme and plans something similar for e.e. cummings. I say "study", because Boulez's music actually analyses the text as it goes along.
In his setting of three poems of Rene Char, Le marteau sans maître (The Hammer without a Master), composed between 1953 and 1955, Pierre Boulez allocates a number of pieces to each of three poems. There are four for one poem, three for another and two for the last. These three separate strands are woven together to form a work of nine movements made up of the three interlocking cycles. Boulez's analyses of the poems—his musical responses to them—are not simply vocal, they also involve purely instrumental commentaries on the structures he has revealed. And if all this sounds dry and academic, well the music itself doesn't.

BEGIN FINAL MOV'T (TRACK 9) OF LE MARTEAU SANS MAÎTRE
. . . CONTINUE UNDER . . .

The range of attitudes which composers exhibit towards word setting is wide. They range from the personal to the emotional, from the descriptive to the imitative, from the neutral to the analytical. I suppose most vocal music—even Boulez's—encompasses a range of these characteristics. The music we are listening to, perhaps because of its studied coolness, seems to me, beneath its surface, to be deeply emotional. Here's the final part of Pierre Boulez's Le marteau sans maître.
. . . FADE UP FINAL MOVEMENT OF LE MARTEAU SANS MAITRE AND PLAY TO END.

(broadcast 5 November 1989)
4. The Song Remains the Same

PLAY "SEMPRE LIBERA DELL GIO" FROM LA TRAVIATA . . . CROSS-FADE WITH ABORIGINAL SONG "MALKARI" (CAPE YORK) . . . FADE UNDER . . .

On the face of it, there seems a world of difference between what that singer from the Cape York peninsula is doing and what opera singers do. In this last in the series Words and Music, I want to sum up some of the themes of the previous programs and to address, in particular, the question: what is it which links songs of different genres and of different cultures?

And the best way, it seems to me, to discover the common characteristics of song, is to look for the differences.

PLAY NENEH CHERRY "BUFFALO STANCE" . . . FADE UNDER . . .

The musical language of the disco is something which has evolved over the last ten years. And, probably, it will continue to develop. From its origin as pure dance music, it has gained what we might describe as secondary characteristics--scratching, for instance, produced by the rhythmic manoeuvring of the disc under the stylus, has become one of
disco's most distinctive sounds. More significant developments have occurred as disco (music for the feet) has teemed up with rap (music for the feet and mind).

Like scratching, rap is distinctive in sonority. But through its absorption of Black street poetry, it has become possible for disco music to address issues and make statements. And, in turn, the disco has given rap a wider currency.

FADE UP NENEH CHERRY AND FADE OUT UNDER...

Like all musical forms, then, disco music has a set of characteristics which make it unique. It's no more possible to mistake disco music for rhythm and blues than it is to confuse Wagner with Mozart. In other words, while the character traits of musical styles make it possible for us to distinguish between them, the very existence of such strong characteristics (we might think of them almost as genetic codes) is a common factor in musical styles. This is especially true in traditional musics, but no less so for something as recent as disco.

The important point here is that in making music, as in playing a game, it's necessary first to understand the rules. Now different traditions
respond in individual ways to these rules. In the Western classical tradition, for instance, rules have existed in order to be broken. The history of classical music arguably consists of roughly seven centuries of composers who have continually overturned the music of their forebears.

This is not, of course, to suggest that 18th century music is better than 17th, or that 20th century music is better than 19th, but, when reviewing the past seven centuries, the names which loom largest belong to those composers who have advanced the language of music. In that sense, the Western classical tradition has been—at least until very recently—an evolving one.

In jazz there have also been iconoclasts. As with classical music, the regular overturning of conventions has itself become a tradition. But we must remember that jazz is largely unwritten. In performance, then, musicians need a strong sense of where the guidelines lie, and within any one particular type of jazz—whether it's Dixieland, swing or bebop—participants must understand the relevant performance traditions; they must obey the rules.
With most traditional musics, the rule book is more important still. All music is in some sense ritual, but traditional musics tend to be closely linked to a specific social function, and therefore getting the music right is vital. The Indian raga, for example, is usually related to a certain time of day. Playing an early morning raga in the evening would be like serving cornflakes at a dinner party.

Musics depend upon an understanding of traditions, whether they function within them or seek to break them. This is at once the difference and the link between various types of music.

With vocal music, however—with song—there is a stronger link still between different genres. And that is the tradition of the voice itself, and a recognition of what the voice is capable of.

An example of this might be jodelling. Jodelling is the alternation of the head and chest voice, and you might be forgiven for thinking that it evolved in the Swiss Alps, found its way (along with European dance forms such as the polka and the waltz) into Country & Western music, and thence to Mr Frank Ifield.
In fact, jodelling is much more widespread than that. These two young girls from East Africa, for example, are splendid jodellers.

PLAY BURUNDI DISC TRACK 10 (1'33")

The 17th century composer Henry Purcell was also interested in the sometimes subtle distinction between head voice and chest voice. In his Birthday Ode, *Come Ye Sons of Art Away*, the duet "Sound the Trumpet" was probably meant to be sung by a high tenor employing his chest voice and a counter-tenor using his falsetto voice. Purcell's singers don't actually jodel (more's the pity!) but the composer does alternate them so that we can hear the unusual effect. On a new CD, Andrew Parrott's Taverner Consort has recorded the piece in the way the composer intended. The head voice goes first.

PLAY "SOUND THE TRUMPET" (2'29")

So, forming a counterpoint to stylistic tradition, there is also a vocal tradition, associated with the voice's capabilities, and this is an important link between the songs of various cultures. How do these connections manifest themselves? To put it another way, what is it which encourages human beings to sing?
Singing is a form of expression—that's uncontestable. I'd go further and argue that singing is a form of artistic expression, although I realise that some of my colleagues might want to argue about the artistic merits of the singing of a bunch of drunken football supporters or a political demonstration. This is neither the time nor place to embark on a discussion of the nature of art, but it seems to me that in one sense, at least, political demonstrators and football fans can be considered to be making art. If we believe—as the composer Michael Tippett does—that art gives expression to what Jung called "the collective unconscious" then community singing of the sort I've described is a particularly good example.

We should remember that in his St Matthew and St John Passions, Bach intended his audience—or congregation—to join in the Lutheran chorales (which they would have known by heart) and so give the music a collectivity it would otherwise not have had. Today's commercial pop music is intentionally ephemeral—it has built-in obsolescence—and no-one knows folk-songs any more, and few people go to
church. So probably our nearest equivalent of the Lutheran chorale, of music known to an entire community, would be something like "We shall not be moved . . . "

PLAY CHORALE FROM ST JOHN PASSION TRACK 28, DISC 2 (1'56")

I've been talking about singing as a collective act, an act which binds people together because it taps something inside everyone. If suddenly, amongst strangers, we discover ourselves to have something in common--common ancestry, similar taste in shoes, a belief that the world is flat--barriers dissolve, the social ice is broken, and we can relate. Communal singing produces the same effect.

But it's not merely the fact that we all know and sing the same words; it's the ability to sing (even by most of those who might normally profess no competence in this area) which binds us.

These days music has become a highly specialised art. Where, less than a hundred years ago, most homes had a musical instrument and most people could produce some sort of music on it, today this is no longer the case. If you think that it's coming back, as our middle-class children walk to school
through leafy suburbs with their flutes and violins tucked under their arms, I suggest this isn't at all the case. Jason and Kylie may be having their violin and flute lessons today, but tomorrow it'll be ballet and Tae Kwon Do. I hate to be cynical, but I think we live in an age where, in music as in all else, there are producers and consumers. The amateur musician has a very low status in that world. Some of my fellow composers won't even write for amateurs—they consider it infra dig. All of which I find quite depressing.

But singing is a different matter, because as I said in the first of these programs, it's something which most of us do—even if only in the shower. And even if we never sing, we've most us got a voice. When Rostropovitch plays his cello, we are dazzled, partly because he is doing something few of us can imagine doing. But when a singer sings a song, that's quite different.

Even in this age of temperamental superstars, of expensive frocks and massive fees, even as we suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous ticket prices, there is something in us which identifies with a singer—there is something even about a performance by Pavarotti which is, at one level, a collective experience.
Those Georgian voices, from Rustavi, south of the Caucasus, belong to a living folk tradition, one which, as you heard, particularly celebrates the male voice. In a way, it's the male counterpart of the Bulgarian female voices we heard in the first of these programs. The arts thrive in all their forms in this remote part of the Soviet Union, they are as distinctive as the Georgian language itself. But the male voice choir tradition is particularly virulent.

Which brings me to consider—as I had to eventually—whether there is, perhaps, something about singing, that most widespread type of music, which is different from the other arts; different from painting and sculpting; different from theatre; different from literature.

Of course the answer is yes, but we need to know what, exactly that difference is. Why is it that, when people are in love, or angry at their government, or when they worship their god, or encourage their sporting heros—why is it they chose to express their sentiments in song?
I've spoken, in these programs, of song as a heightened form of speech, as a natural extension and a stylisation of what the voice does anyway. And I've demonstrated ways in which words set to music can have their meaning altered or intensified. Is there something more? Is there a quality in music itself which goes beyond illustrating or reinforcing the sense of the text?

Let's return to where we began, to that most stylised and, in the best sense artificial of singing arts, to opera.

PLAY "CHE FARO SENZA EURYDICE" FROM GLUCK'S ORPHEUS ED EURYDICE

Peter Conrad is a Tasmanian musicologist who lives in Oxford. His book, A Song of Love and Death: the Meaning of Opera was published a couple of years ago, is now available in paperback and, if you don't know it, order a copy and change your life.

Peter Conrad is interested in what distinguishes opera from straight theatre. And it's a problem, I suspect, which is at the root of many people's love/hate relationship with opera. For myself I find a difficulty with operatic works which don't
need to be operatic. Perhaps this is due to a certain literalness on my part, but I make no apology for it and I believe it's the same for others.

Put simply--too simply--I need to know why the people on stage are singing and not speaking. More specifically, there must, for me, be something more than a play with tunes.

This isn't at all as black and white as it seems. Wagner's *The Mastersingers* is an opera about singing, Berg's *Wozzeck*, like Britten's *Peter Grimes*, contains many moments when "real" music occurs--marching bands, dance halls and the like. In Britten's operatic version of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, the composer translates into music an extraordinary sound which the novelist describes towards the end of his story, as Billy's fellow sailors begin their inarticulate roar of anger:

> Whosoever has heard the freshet-wave of a torrent suddenly swelled by pouring showers in tropical mountains . . . may form some conception of the sound now heard . . . Being inarticulate, it was dubious in significance further than it seemed to indicate some capricious
revulsion of thought or feeling such as mobs ashore are liable to . . .

PLAY EXTRACT FROM BILLY BUDD . . . FADE UNDER . . .

So, that's one example of opera which can only be opera. For a purely theatrical staging of that moment, a director would probably have to resort to a quasi-operatic effect.

But, bold and remarkable as moments such as these may be, we're very much in the realm of sound effects. What of those moments when there is no dramatic requirement for music, no need for sound effects? This is where Peter Conrad's book is especially fascinating.

"These people," writes Conrad, "sing what they feel, rather than tamely saying (like the rest of us) what they think they ought to say. Love and hate tend to reduce us to speechlessness--to embarrassed stammering, or to expletives . . . Words are always failing us when we need them most. To remain articulate in states of extreme emotional intensity almost convicts you of insincerity. Love poetry often apologises for its linguistic fluency, afraid it will seem specious. But when words give up, music takes over."
"Operatic characters [as we've seen from Billy Budd] can dispense with words altogether . . ." 

FADE UP PAPAGENO AND PAPAGENA'S DUET FROM THE MAGIC FLUTE: "PA, PA, PA . . ." FADE UNDER . . .

Music in place of words.

In A Song of Love and Death, Peter Conrad suggests that since music is set apart from reason, it can convince us of things which words cannot. "Opera," says Conrad, "is drama about music, not just accompanied by it." And one of the aspects which Conrad singles out is how music works in time. This, of course, is what really separates music from the other arts. This ability of music to distort time (or at least our perception of time—which may, in any case, be the same thing) together with music's unresponsiveness to reason, make it quite unlike any other kind of art.

In the modern concert hall, where talking and walking about are seriously discouraged, music's relationship to time is exaggerated. Because concert audiences today give their undivided attention to the music they've paid to hear, it is that much easier to be transported, to lose all
sense of time. Anything less and we might well question whether we have value for money. And, indeed, if we are trapped with a piece of music we don't much care for, we can become horribly aware of the clock.

It follows, then, that to sing words (or even just notes) is to become involved in a kind of magical timelessness. It not only links us spiritually to those who may be singing with us, it also links us somehow to existence itself, since it cuts us off from the ticking clock. And in this sense one doesn't have to be a singing participant at all. To listen is to participate.

In recent years a fair bit of scholarship has gone into the lullaby. It's been suggested--convincingly I think--that lullabies serve a dual role. On the one hand, if one's lucky, they induce sleep in a child who may otherwise want to spend the evening with you. Their rocking 6/8 rhythm lulls the baby to sleep.

The words of the average lullaby--on the other hand--contain often violent images which, if the poor infant could only understand the words, would keep it awake all night. ("When the bough breaks the cradle will fall / Down will come baby cradle and
Lullabies, then, double as work songs for mothers, and comparisons with sea shanties and cotton picking songs are very apposite indeed. In each case the music helps to get the work done (the sail hauled, the cotton picked, the baby to sleep), but the words heap abuse on the head of the taskmaster (the ship's captain, the plantation owner, the baby).

Mark W. Booth, in his book, *The Experience of Songs*, discusses the dual function of the lullaby and, in the process, seems to me to throw considerable light on this whole business of singing. Just as we have seen that the listener (who can, after all, sing) identifies with the singer, and that the singer identifies with other singers, so, says Mark Booth, the child in the cradle identifies with the singer of lullabies.

"The baby's experience of the mother's song," says Booth, "is more than response to music in itself and more than response to the mother's ordinary speaking voice. In singing, whatever version of motherhood the words express, the mother's voice is especially motherly. Separation, which is only coming to be established in the child's life, is suspended. The mother having entered into her song, the child
enters it too, they are fully together, anxiety is irrelevant, and sleep is easy."

The child, fortunately, can't understand the words, but can understand the voice (rather like opera without the surtitles). And so the singing voice triumphs over the words in a lullaby in a way which emulates all song. And the music—which owes nothing to reason or logic, save perhaps a purely musical logic—triumphs over time. And who is to say which is reality?

At the end of Wagner's opera, Tristan and Isolde, Isolde finds complete fulfilment, spiritual and sexual, in the presence of the body of her dead lover Tristan. She and he are united in a perpetual night, which is both love and death.

None of which, frankfly, makes a lot of sense, until one hears it sung.

PLAY LIEBESTOD FROM TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

(broadcast 3 December 1989)
Part 2

Words and Music: Case Studies in 20th Century Song
5. Text and Intertextuality

In the academically fashionable area of post-structural theory, the term "intertextuality" is bandied about to such a degree that it is difficult to discover two critics who agree on its precise meaning.

Julia Kristeva, who has written more than most on the subject, maintains that:

The term *inter-textuality* denotes [the] transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of "study of sources", we prefer the term *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic--of enunciative and denotative positionality.

(*Revolution* 59-60)

Kristeva's warning here against "banal" interpretations of the term, might relate to uses of it by Bloom (and even Barthes) which dwell on "the anxiety of influence" (*Bloom* 3). These writers tend to concentrate on the usage of the term to describe the inability of a writer to be, in any real sense, original, any text being merely an assemblage of
other texts—"anonymous, untraceable" but, "quotations" nonetheless (Barthes, S/Z 21). Martin Buzacott has written engagingly about this dilemma:

As a theoretical model, Barthes' intertextuality is an impressive expose of the myth of originality in literary discourse, as well as an attractive alternative to the ubiquitous and insidious genetic theory of verbal creation, but because of its diversity, anonymity and downright vagueness, its applicability in practical criticism remains quite limited. (124)

He goes on (more engagingly still) to assert that the intertextual experience of literature becomes a kind of high-class brothel where the nobleman which is the primary text gains and demonstrates its power and stamina through its deliciously immoral seduction and ravishing of every floozie or secondary text in sight.

The writings which follow will by no means ignore Barthes's approach to intertextuality. On the contrary, his attitude is useful, for instance, in gaining an understanding of the system of stylistic confluences in Peter Maxwell Davies's Eight Songs for a Mad King, in that the composer's references to
other music range from distorted quotation (in the case of Handel's Messiah), to parody, to the presentation of sonic objets trouvés (a railway guard's whistle, a "crow", a collection of mechanical bird calls). For an average audience, then, this passing parade of secondary texts includes the familiar, the half-remembered and the instantly identifiable; the anonymous and the famous. It is through the lens of these often abrupt and jarring quotations (both acknowledged and anonymous) that the madness of the figure at the centre of the work is examined. What is important for an understanding of Eight Songs for a Mad King is not so much the audience's ability to identify these intertextual transpositions as its mere recognition that they are occurring. The fact that these are primarily transpositions of style rather than content assists that recognition.

Eco describes a form of intertextuality in which the identification of secondary sources is essential to a proper understanding of the primary text. Acknowledging that "the notion of intertextuality... has been elaborated within the framework of a reflection on 'high' art", Eco proceeds to a discussion of popular films which draws upon this terminology. He cites the Hallowe'en scene in Steven Spielberg's ET (1982)
where the creature from outer space (an invention of Spielberg) . . . encounters another personage, disguised as the gnome in The Empire Strikes Back (an invention of Lucas). ET is jolted and seeks to hurl himself upon the gnome in order to embrace him, as if he had met an old friend. Here the spectators must know many things: they must certainly know of the existence of another film (intertextual knowledge), but they must also know that both monsters were created by Rambaldi and that the directors of the two films are linked together for various reasons (not least because they are two of the most successful directors of the decade); they must, in short, have not only a knowledge of the texts but also a knowledge of the world, of circumstances external to the texts. . . . [The] spectator who knows nothing of the production of the two films . . . cannot succeed in understanding why what happens does happen. . . . The understanding of this device is a condition for its aesthetic enjoyment.
(89-94)
The intertextuality that Eco reveals in 
ET is a far from anonymous quotation, and in the nature of an in-joke. The movie-goer who spots the reference to The Empire Strikes Back not only understands the device and gains "aesthetic enjoyment" from it, but also derives pleasure from having the esoteric knowledge necessary for this understanding.

In Gremlins (1984)—another Spielberg production—the fictional American mid-west town of Kingston Falls is closely modelled on that of Bedford Falls in Frank Capra's It's a Wonderful Life (1946). In the opening scene, the film's central character Billy runs down the main street of Kingston Falls calling out "Good morning!" to passers by in vivid emulation of the scene in Capra's film in which James Stewart runs through Bedford Falls shouting "Merry Christmas!". The architecture visible in both scenes is similar and in both towns snow is falling. The difference between the quotations in Gremlins and ET is that, in the former, moments after the reference to It's a Wonderful Life, we see Billy entering his parents' home where his mother is watching that very scene from Capra's film on television. Later in Gremlins, while Billy awaits the emergence of the creatures from their pupae, he himself watches on television Don Spiegel's Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)—another film set in a
small American town. The scene which Billy watches is that in which the alien pods hatch, and it offers a premonition of what is to come in the film that we, the audience, are currently viewing. Both *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Invasion of the Body-Snatchers* are classics of their genres, and *Gremlins* is a conflagration of the archetypal Hollywood themes they represent: the small town as haven (epitomised by *It's a Wonderful Life*) and the small town under threat (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*). The fact that the makers of *Gremlins* felt it necessary to spell out these references to such well-known material is clearly indicative of the importance they attached to their viewers' understanding of those references and of the genres which they typify. In the songs of Bruce Springsteen and Elvis Costello (discussed in chapter 4) the appropriation of models by Chuck Berry and The Beatles functions in a similar manner to Spielberg's quotations of other films. In order fully to understand the new

---

1 Another classic film of Hollywood is alluded to in *Gremlins* (although this time there is no explanatory clip from it) in the form of Mrs Deagle whose character, voice, bustling walk and eagerness to harm small dogs are closely modelled on Elmira Gulch in Victor Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Like Miss Gulch, who owns "half the county", Mrs Deagle is a property owner and (also like Miss Gulch) her villainy is apparent in the early scenes of the film. Both, naturally, come to a bad end. It should also be noted that just as Miss Gulch is transformed into the Wicked Witch of the West, so the last we see of Mrs Deagle is her body flying across the night sky.
songs we must know the old; only then can we appreciate the commentary function of the former.

Eco discusses a further type of cinematic intertextuality with regard to popular American film. This is a form of quotation which is non-specific, although not exactly anonymous. It is not a reference to any one other film, but to dozens of others. The example Eco cites is the scene in Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) in which Indiana Jones shoots a large Arab who is threatening him with a bullwhip. The scene is set for hand to hand combat; the underdog Jones will wrestle the Arab to the ground. When Jones takes out his gun and shoots the (unarmed) aggressor, Spielberg is presenting a Hollywood cliché (the large Arab with the whip bearing down on the smaller, unarmed man) in order to contradict it (when Jones produces the gun and shoots the Arab). As Eco reads the scene:

Here we are faced with a comic ploy which exploits the presupposition . . . that the public will recognize the original topos, will apply to the quotation the normal system of expectations . . . and will enjoy the way in which its expectations are frustrated. (88)
Although scarcely "comic", Springsteen's "The Promised Land" uses a similar device. Here, however, the reference to a generic commonplace is amplified through a superimposed reference to a specific example of that genre. Springsteen's "The Promised Land" alludes both to the Chuck Berry song of the same name and to the genre to which Berry's song belongs.

In calling his song after Berry's, Springsteen--like Spielberg in *Gremlins*--is priming his audience to recognise the intertextual play in his song; he is identifying the quotation in advance. But whereas Berry's song is one of pure optimism--the events which conspire to prevent him reaching his promised land are overcome with ease--Springsteen's is much darker. There is hope in Springsteen's song, but the singer is battling against the odds.

The genre to which Berry's "The Promised Land" belongs--and the topos to which Springsteen's makes reference--is that of the American travelling song, and there are numerous examples of it in the blues, in country music and in rock and roll. There are two main forms of the travelling song. In the first, the singer is moving on to a better life and improved employment prospects, and the songs which celebrate this travel tend to be buoyant and
optimistic, frequently imitating the characteristic rhythmic momentum and ecstatic whistle of a steam locomotive. There are many examples of this amongst the songs of Sonny Terry. Equally, during the agricultural depression of the 1930s, workers on southern plantations moved north to industrialised cities such as Detroit and Chicago, with high expectations of finding work. In the process they kept alive the travelling song genre, as songs such as Jimmy Roger's "Chicago Bound" reflect. The second form of travelling song is that in which the singer is going home. Sleepy John Estes's "Going to Brownsville" is a good example, where the singer "Ain't gonna stop walking / 'Til I step in sweet mama's door". Either way, the travelling song is positive and dynamic.

In adapting this genre, then, Springsteen is also subverting it. Just as the experienced film-goers who see Spielberg's Raiders expect to see Indiana Jones, bare handed, take on the large Arab with the whip and win, so Springsteen's audience, steeped in the traditions of American popular music, might reasonably anticipate unalloyed hope from a travelling song entitled "The Promised Land". But, Jones produces a gun and shoots the man with the bullwhip, while Springsteen, in the first line of
his song, is "On a rattlesnake speedway in the Utah desert" and heading "back into town".

This form of intertextual quotation differs from those identified by Barthes and Kristeva in two ways. The first is that it is conscious—even self-conscious: the film maker or song writer is staking a claim to part of a tradition and employing its clichés in order to make (in the above examples) an ironic point. The other distinction is that these authors expect their (mass) audiences to recognise the stereotypes, to form expectations, and to understand the ironic implications when those expectations are subverted. This sort of intertextuality will only work, therefore, when the film or the song is placed squarely within a particular tradition, and, furthermore, it requires the audience's connivance.

For Barthes, such collusion between author and reader would have been unthinkable, since the text is not a single line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of an Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. (Image--Music--Text 146)
As Culler points out, discussing Barthes's comment, the "emphasis falls on the reader as a function rather than as a person" (33), and, for Barthes, that function was necessarily unpredictable and certainly beyond the power of the author to control.

The relationships of words to music (and of music to words) in the four principal works discussed in chapter 7, offer different aspects of intertextual play from each other. These range from an essentially conventional, musical extension of verbal meaning in Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (albeit one tempered by the unpredictable actions of the insane protagonist), to a systematically deconstructive text-setting in Schultz's *Fast Talking: the Last Words of Dutch Schultz*, to a more arbitrary version of the same in Cage's *Aria*, to a neutral and ever changing relationship in Stockhausen's *Stimmung*.

Elliott Carter's text-setting in his three late vocal works (see chapters 8 and 9), like Stockhausen's in *Stimmung*, also affects disinterest, although in a far more complex manner and without the built-in freedoms presented to the performer in *Stimmung*. There are moments when Carter makes a specific allusion (Orpheus's guitar/lyre in *Syringa* for instance, or the oboe/sandpiper in *A Mirror on*
Which to Dwell), but they are few and almost charming in their pictorial naivety. For the most part, Carter's music and the texts he sets stand in a semantically neutral relationship to each other. The extreme clarity of the texts allowed by the composer's predominantly syllabic setting strongly suggests Carter's desire not to influence his audience's understanding of Bishop, Ashbery and Lowell, not to tamper with the function of the reader.

And yet the intersection of words and music--however neutral, however arbitrary--constantly generates a series of possible relationships which neither author nor composer may have intended. It is here that Kristeva's definition, with its concomitant warning, serves best to describe the intertextual function, "the transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another". Kristeva's definition allows the specificity of Eco's examples, where the reader must have prior knowledge, but it stresses Barthes's position that all texts are continually intertextual, comprising, as they do, a constant stream of more or less anonymous quotations. If, as Barthes posited, "The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas" (Pleasure 17), how much more "pleasurable" is a musical text in which the body experiences sounds, in which the
text is made physical and temporal, in which the word is made flesh! Musical settings of words provide a fertile source of intertextual relationships, from the stylistic reference, to the quotation, to the illustrative, to the arbitrary, and they amplify these relationships through the essentially contradictory alliance between words (which are outside temporality) and music (which depends upon temporality).

Lawrence Kramer refers to this when he writes of the "intertextual link" which arises from the convergence of poetry and music (23), the kind of link which Kristeva, in a quite different (and purely literary) context refers to as "polyphonic" (Desire 71). Kramer and Kristeva's use of the term denotes an interplay between texts which, in the case of a musical setting of words, produces far more than mere illustration or "word painting". At one level, for example, the secondary text (words) comments on the primary or usurping text (music). In the case of Carter's vocal pieces, however, the texts are capable of reversing their roles. The words also comment on the music, and the composer's selection of specific literary texts permits an interpretation of his musical scores which goes far beyond these vocal works, illuminating, to a remarkable degree, Carter's entire oeuvre.
The variety of "transpositional" relationships suggested by the works considered in this thesis, make Kristeva's precise yet broad definition, with its implicit mobility of intertextual function, an apt analytical starting point for the examination of the manner in which words and music affect one another when they collide, combine or merely coexist.
6. Post-Modern Pop: Intertextuality in the songs of Bruce Springsteen and Elvis Costello

6.1. Rock and Roll and Historical Perspective

The rich seam of innovation mined by the commercial music industry in the 1960s is popularly supposed to have been exhausted by the following decade. But, by the late 1970s, rock and roll had developed something it had previously lacked: a history. Performers had always been influenced by the work of their predecessors and contemporaries: the Rolling Stones, for example, were influenced by Muddy Waters; the band even took its name from one of his songs. But, 20 years after "Rock Around the Clock", it became possible to put early rock music into some sort of perspective and for song writers and performers to use that sense of rock history as a conscious source of reference.

Both Bruce Springsteen and Elvis Costello are song writers and performers well aware of the traditions in which they work, and each of them has taken many of the archetypes of that tradition and used them as the basis for new work. Springsteen has frequently performed Chuck Berry's songs of the late 1950s and early 1960s as concert encores, along with such minor "classics" as Mitch Ryder's "Devil With A Blue
Dress On" and Gary "U.S." Bonds's "Quarter To Three". In Costello's case, this appropriation of the past included assuming the name of one of the most important early rock performers and the appearance of another (the spectacles and hair-cut of Buddy Holly).

Two songs which reveal the extent of Springsteen's and Costello's borrowings as songwriters are Springsteen's "The Promised Land" (from the 1978 album, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*) and Costello's "Possession" (from *Get Happy* of 1980) modelled, respectively, on Chuck Berry's "The Promised Land" and the Beatles' "From Me to You".

6.2. "The Promised Land": a comparative analysis of the songs by Chuck Berry and Bruce Springsteen

Chuck Berry's music of the late 1950s was a formative influence on many of the musicians who

---

1 Indeed, after hearing Bonds perform at an obscure nightclub in 1980, Springsteen revived his boyhood hero's long-flagging career and produced two albums by him.
followed him. What made Berry's work so distinctive were his exuberant, light fingered guitar playing style and the sophistication of his lyrics. In the 1950s, lines such as "I've got a rocking pneumonia / I need a shot of rhythm and blues" (from "Roll Over Beethoven") were hardly the norm. Another striking feature of much of Berry's work is its story-telling function. A Chuck Berry song, like a traditional ballad, tends to relate a series of events which occur to its "hero", a picaresque tale of adventure from which the singer emerges unscathed. Certainly this is the case in "The Promised Land" (1964).

Indeed, "The Promised Land" is a typical example of Berry's work. The song actually begins with a self-quotation: the familiar guitar riff with which the song commences is an abbreviated version of the openings of what are, arguably, Berry's most famous songs: "Roll Over Beethoven" (1956) and "Johnny B. Goode" (1958). "The Promised Land" is also typical of Berry in its high spirits; it exudes that sense of optimism characteristic of early rock and roll.

In 1963, the Rolling Stones' first single was Chuck Berry's "Come On"; the following year, Berry's "Route 66" was the opening track on their first, eponymous album. The Beatles included two of Berry's songs on their early albums: "Roll Over Beethoven" on With The Beatles and "Rock and Roll Music" on Beatles For Sale (both 1964). John Lennon once suggested that Berry's name might be a synonym for rock and roll.
Springsteen's song of the same name is also ultimately optimistic, though hardly in the same carefree manner as Berry's. In Springsteen's "The Promised Land", the driving, urgent musical propulsion is at odds with the words, which assert, almost with a sense of desperation, the singer's belief "in a promised land".

Berry's opening lines establish the mood of his song instantly:

I Left my home in Norfolk, Virginia,
California on my mind.
I straddled that Greyhound and rode him into Raleigh
And on across Caroline.

The imagery surrounding the Greyhound bus is especially noteworthy, since it sets the tone for what will follow; although the singer is travelling to California by bus (and later train, car and aeroplane), his use of the term "straddled" makes the following "rode him into Raleigh" seem like a dynamic and even heroic act. Before the end of the two-and-a-half minute song, he has been "Rolling out of Georgia," "flying out of Birmingham" (on a train) and "Smoking into New Orleans". The attribution of animal characteristics to the Greyhound bus in the first lines of the song is balanced by a more complex image in the final verse. "Swing low
chariot, come down easy," Berry implores the aeroplane. This is a double reference of the sort typical of Elvis Costello's songs some 20 years later. The plane is a chariot--another heroic form of transportation; but it is also the "sweet chariot" which swings low--the symbol of hope which African Americans had sung about for centuries. The use of the image in this context strengthens the central image of California as "The Promised Land".

Musically, Chuck Berry's song is optimistic, from its introductory four-bar guitar "lick", to its never changing, eight-bar boogie-woogie harmonic structure, reinforced by the occasional high register piano glissando in the style of Fats Domino. The tempo is fast and the music is for dancing,¹ the whole being propelled along by Berry's distinctive tremolo style of guitar solo between each pair of four-line stanzas. Berry's articulation of the words is clear (as befits a lyric of this sophistication) and largely uninflected, with the exception of one moment of highly effective word-painting--the downward glissando on the last word in the phrase "Swing low chariot, go down easy".

¹ Something which Johnnie Allan clearly understood when, in 1974, he took this song and turned it (with remarkably little alteration) into a traditional Cajun two-step.
It is a glissando, too, which begins Bruce Springsteen's "The Promised Land", however, far from being a felicitous vocal affectation, this is a "bent" note on a harmonica, instantly conjuring the sound world of the blues, with all that that implies. Berry's confident vocal demeanour is replaced by Springsteen's characteristically tortured timbre. By contrast with Berry's naively optimistic setting-out from home with "California on my mind", Springsteen finds himself "On a rattlesnake speedway in the Utah desert". Where Berry "straddled that Greyhound and rode him" to the next town, en route to "The Promised Land", Springsteen's treacherous "rattlesnake" only leads him "back into town"; where Berry, all action, is "90 miles out of Atlanta by sundown / Rolling out of Georgia state", Springsteen is "just killing time" and, when he does drive all night he is aimlessly "chasing some mirage"; where Berry is having adventures in such comparatively exotic locations as New Orleans, as he traverses the southern United

\* This might be considered an oblique and rather sour echo of another Chuck Berry song, "No Particular Place To Go" (1964). Like Springsteen, Berry is also "Cruising and playing my radio . . . With no particular place to go", but although Berry's song is also about frustration (namely his continued failure to unfasten his girl friend's safety belt--coitus interruptus in a mobile "calaboose"), it is light-hearted and humorous in tone.
States, Springsteen is "driving across the Waynesboro county line". He may claim that "Pretty soon . . . I'm gonna take charge", but we do not quite believe him.

And yet, harmonically, there is something afoot which maintains our interest in this loser. Unlike Berry's I-IV-V-I boogie bass, Springsteen's song steadfastly refuses to state the (implied) dominant. The eight bars of the introduction (which also form the structure for each of the first two pairs of lines) leave the tonic G for the sub-dominant C, as one might expect, but then shift to the relative E minor and back to the sub-dominant. It is not until the 12 bars beginning "Working all day in my daddy's garage" (which commence with an oscillation between E minor and G) that the music, at last, begins its climb (ii-IV-V [-I]) to the dominant. The effect of this simple progression is enhanced by its delay, and the first proper appearance of the dominant D comes at the words "I'm gonna take charge", followed by a rather triumphant return to G major as Steve van Zandt joins Springsteen in the chorus and "The dogs on main street howl", van Zandt's voice rising to a strident high A (the dominant of the dominant), trumpeting his threatened manhood ("Mister, I ain't a boy, no, I'm a man") in the sub-dominant key of C.
In the second verse (harmonically identical to the first), when Springsteen confides, "Sometimes I feel so weak I just want to explode", it seems unlikely that such a "weak" explosion will have the imagined effect of tearing "this town apart". And indeed, following the second chorus, the musical energy is abruptly dissipated in an instrumental interlude of some subtlety, punctuated by Springsteen's bocca chiusa moans. Over the eight-bar chord progression of the opening, now functioning something like a ground bass, the music gradually builds to a climax. A gently rippling piano, accompanied by light, dry flicks of the cymbals and underpinned by bass drum, is joined first by the organ and then a guitar, the music building (as the tom-toms return) to Clarence Clemons's distinctive tenor saxophone whose 16-bar solo heralds the reappearance of Springsteen's harmonica from the opening bars. It is a build-up typical of the production values of Springsteen's albums at this time which leads to a third and final verse of a rather more positive nature (including, for the first time, some sustained backing vocals).

At last the singer appears to act (instead of merely threatening to act), "heading into the storm" which is

Gonna be a twister to blow everything down
That ain't got the faith to stand its ground
Blow away the dreams that tear you apart
Blow away the dreams that break your heart
Blow away the lies that leave you nothing but lost and brokenhearted

These may still be the words of a desperate man, but the repeated hemiolas with their off-beat attacks on the words "Blow away" push the music forward, even as the extra line, and the extra four bars of minor-major prevarication required to accommodate it, try to hold it back. The prolonging of this tension gives the ii-IV-V-I progression at the end of the verse (beneath a chain of melodic triplets on "leave you nothing . . . brokenhearted") an even more pronounced feeling of inevitable home-coming and, as Springsteen sings the chorus for the last time and "The dogs on main street howl" their final, baleful howl, there is something about the music which transcends the desperation and bravado of the words. As Springsteen reaffirms, "I believe in a promised land," over and over, there is hope amidst the

5 Springsteen has typically presented a Steinbeck-like image of the down-trodden worker. On the night of Ronald Reagan's inauguration as President of the United States in January 1979, Springsteen began his concert with "Badlands", whose opening lines are "Lights out tonight, / Trouble in the heartland . . . "
gloom. And as his harmonica performs its now wailing, now almost jaunty coda, with a touch of hoe-down about its rhythm, Springsteen dares his audience also to "believe in a promised land".  

6.3. Elvis Costello's "Possession" and the Beatles' "From Me to You"

If a reading of Springsteen's "The Promised Land" benefits from a knowledge of Chuck Berry's song of the same name, an understanding of Elvis Costello's "Possession" virtually necessitates acquaintance with the Beatles' "From Me to You". Costello tells us as much in his first line ("If there's anything that you want") which is identical to the first line of the Beatles' song. Unlike "From Me to You", however, Costello's "Possession" is not a simplistic love song.

"From Me to You" (1963) was only the Beatles' third single, after the moderate commercial success (by the Beatles' standards) of "Love Me Do" (1962) and the run-away success of "Please, Please Me" (1963).

6 In concert at the Birmingham Entertainment Centre, England, in June 1981, this coda was considerably extended compared with the quick fade on Darkness on the Edge of Town, affecting a far greater dispelling of gloom.
In terms of its lyrics, then, it is hardly very sophisticated, particularly by comparison with some of the later Lennon-McCartney songs. Indeed, the entire verbal content of "From Me to You" is as follows:

If there's anything that you want,
If there's anything I can do,
Just call on me, and I'll send it along,
With love, from me to you.

I've got everything that you want,
Like a heart that's oh so true.
Just call on me and I'll send it along,
With love from me to you.

I've got arms that long to hold you
And keep you by my side;
I've got lips that long to kiss you
And keep you satisfied.

Aside from the potentially macabre ramifications of the second verse (presumably unintentional), there

---

As early as 1963, William Mann, the chief music critic of The Times, wrote of the "chains of pandiatonic clusters" in "This Boy" and compared the Aeolian cadence of "Not a Second Time" to the final bars of Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde. He went on to suggest that "the autocratic but not by any means ungrammatical attitude to harmony" was "closer to, say, Peter Maxwell Davies's carols in O Magnum Mysterium than to Gershwin. . . ."
is nothing in these lyrics to distinguish "From Me to You" from a thousand other "pop songs" of the period. Musically, however, it has one distinctive touch, which, in its day, lent it considerable originality and which still has a certain freshness, namely the opening, wordless motif with its heavy sub-mediant fall from C major to its relative minor, A. This is also the beginning of the melodic line for the opening words: "If there's anything that you want / If there's anything I can do . . . " In "Possession", Costello employs an altered, instrumental version of the same motif, in the same key, but "normalises" the harmony by rising melodically to the dominant G before settling back on C. Where the Beatles' original was striking and memorable, Costello's appropriation of it is deliberately banal--a contrast between the innocent, generous early 1960s and the tired, derivative early 1980s--and as the motif is repeated (on a 1960s-sounding electronic organ), Costello spits out the one-word chorus of his song: "Possession".

There is, as is often the case with this songwriter, a double meaning in Costello's lyrics. If "From Me to You" is about giving, "Possession" is about having and keeping, and, whereas the gifts are free in the former, in the latter "money talks and it's persuasive". But, beyond that, the uncritically
happy relationship described in the Beatles' song, becomes in Costello's "Possession" a stultifying, suffocating affair--the "possession" of one person by another. The only thing being sent to anyone in "Possession" is "your best wishes", but they are "signed with love and vicious kisses" (unlike the kisses which, in "From Me to You", will "keep you satisfied"). In typical pieces of Costello word play, the singer asserts, "You lack lust; you're so lack-lustre" and "My case is closed, my case is packed". Compared to the Beatles' formulaic, "middle eight" bars with their purposeful modulations (A minor-D-G-B minor-E-A, with an added ninth--the leading note B, which returns us ineluctably to the home key), Costello heads off rather waywardly towards B flat (via E minor, A minor and F), before lurching back to C, claiming, after only six of the traditional eight bars, that he has already "seen too much", and plunging into the final verse. The final line of the song, chilling in its realism ("I'll get out before the violence or the tears or the silence"), could hardly be further removed from "Just call on me and I'll send it along / With love from me to you".
6.4. Renewal and Criticism

It is worth briefly discussing Springsteen's "The Promised Land" and Costello's "Possession" both in terms of their production values and in the context of the albums from which they come. In the 1970s, Springsteen's E Street Band had seven members, including Springsteen himself, comprising tenor saxophone, two guitars, two keyboards, bass and drums. Its sound is multilayered and grandiloquent, with a far wider range of percussion employed than would normally be the case for rock and roll. Perhaps more importantly, Springsteen's 1950s rock and roll heroes employed nothing like the panoply of instrumental resources at the disposal of the E Street Band. The length of Springsteen's songs also tended to be greatly expanded from those of Chuck Berry or Mitch Ryder, and there are just ten of them on Darkness On The Edge Of Town.⁸

Elvis Costello's band at the time of Get Happy was the three piece Attractions--mirroring Buddy Holly's Crickets in consisting of keyboard, bass and drums, together with Costello himself (like Holly) playing guitar. There are few added production effects on the album; it is rather like hearing a pub band

⁸ Springsteen's concerts typically last over four hours.
plough through an hour-long set. And plough they do, through 20 songs in the course of the album, most of them, inevitably, very short. This, in itself, might be considered a reference to the two minute single of the 1950s and 1960s.

Springsteen's epic approach to rock and roll is, then, very different to Costello's small-scale one. This is reflected in the subject matter of their songs. Springsteen's songs tend to project their downtrodden hero (or anti-hero) as a symbol of the American dream; his hero's concerns are cars, girls, work, bosses and his father; he resembles James Dean in *East of Eden*. Costello's songs tend to deal in private, rather grubby relationships with which, one suspects, his listeners might possibly identify, but to which no-one would aspire.⁹

Costello's "Possession" is a bitter song, made all the more so by virtue of the listener's knowledge of its innocent source material. Springsteen's "The Promised Land", on the contrary, is a song of hope (and hype). For all the violence of its verbal

⁹ In a 1982 interview, Costello argued that most people are "confused because they're not given a voice, they don't have many songs written for or about them. . . . There's a dishonesty in so much pop . . . all that starry stuff. I believe I fulfil the role of writing songs that aren't starry eyed all the time (New Musical Express, 21 August 1982, 10).
imagery, Springsteen's music is positive—it reinvents the genre of rock and roll, in the spirit of "singing the blues away", to transcend unhappiness and frustration. This, then, is the essential difference between their approaches: where Springsteen appropriates earlier music in order to continue the tradition—Costello appropriates in order to present an ironic contrast with the original material. On Costello's album Mighty Like a Rose (1991), "The Other Side Of Summer" places a bitter lyric about environmental destruction ("From the foaming breakers of the poisonous surf / . . . / To the burning forests in the hills of Astroturf") in the context of the carefree style of the pop "single" which in the 1960s was issued to coincide with summer holidays. Springsteen's stance, then, is ultimately celebratory; Costello's is generally critical.

6.5. Quotation and Intertextuality

All forms of quotation are necessarily intertextual, though intertextuality is not always quotational. In these songs of Springsteen and Costello intertextuality functions at several levels, all of them forms of quotation. There is, to employ Buzacott's useful distinction, "biographical"
quotation. It is this form of intertextuality to which Bloom subscribes—the intertextuality of influence. A rock musician working in the late 1970s, could scarcely avoid being influenced by what had gone before, as well as by what else was current. Bloom, of course, goes much further, suggesting that no writer can avoid being influenced by what that writer has read (Anxiety passim).

Barthes's "anonymous" quotations differ from Bloom's "biographical" ones only in that, for Barthes, the "anxiety of influence" extends beyond the directly experienced to embrace all previous writing—read, unread, overheard, understood and misunderstood.

The tradition within which Springsteen works offers all these possibilities. It also allows the conscious reference to genre and the potentiality of aroused expectations in the listener, described by Eco with reference to Raiders of the Lost Ark (see chapter 5).

But Eco also proposes—with reference to the scene in ET—the most deliberate form of intertextual reference of all, that which requires prior knowledge on the part of the spectator in order for the spectator to understand the scene. Costello's "Possession" operates in much the same way. The listener who does not know the Beatles' "From Me to
You" can still derive pleasure from Costello's song but will miss the main point. In choosing a Beatles' song and in appropriating its famous first line, Costello is virtually ensuring that his audience will spot the reference, just as the makers of Gremlins safeguarded against misunderstanding by alluding to It's a Wonderful Life and then allowing the audience to glimpse the original. Whilst Springsteen's appropriative device is almost equally direct (he does after all take Chuck Berry's title, and there are sufficient distortions of Berry's imagery to indicate a conscious reworking of the earlier song) there is a more subtle level of intertextuality at work. It consists, as I have already suggested, of a general working within and continuation of the traditions of rock and roll. To this extent it is virtually impossible to be precise as to Springsteen's sources; they are "anonymous, untraceable and nevertheless 'already read'" (Barthes, S/Z 21).

6.6. Pheno-Song and Geno-Song

There is one final intertextual issue raised by Springsteen's "The Promised Land" and Costello's "Possession", and that concerns their performances. Included within this are the instrumental
accompaniments and production values of the two recordings (already discussed), but perhaps more significant still are the singers' voices.

In *Image--Music--Text*, Barthes, drawing on Kristeva, proposes the concepts of *pheno-song* and *geno-song*, where the former covers all the phenomena, all the features which belong to the structure of the language being sung, the rules of the genre, the coded form of the melisma, the composer's idiolect, the style of the interpretation: in short, everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression, everything which is customary to talk about. . . . The *geno-song* is the volume of the singing and speaking voice, the space where significations germinate "from within language and in its very materiality"; it forms a signifying play having nothing to do with communication, representation (of feelings), expression; it is that apex (or that depth) of production where the melody really works at the language--not at what it says, but the voluptuousness of its sounds, signifiers, of its letters--where melody
explores how the language works and identifies with that work. It is, in a very simple word but which must be taken seriously, the diction of the language. (182-83)

In his next sentence, Barthes names Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau as "an artist beyond reproach" in this regard.

Barthes's distinction is certainly important in terms of the Lieder repertoire, and it emphasises, as was Barthes's structuralist wont, the supremacy of the text. However, transferring this distinction to the area of rock and roll is by no means simple. There are two principal differences between what Fischer-Dieskau does, for instance, with Schubert's Erlkönig and what Springsteen does with "The Promised Land". Fischer-Dieskau is interpreting a song composed by another almost two centuries ago. There may be a tradition of Lieder singing within whose parameters he works, but the quality (and "volume") of his voice may differ markedly from that of, say, Peter Schreier. Springsteen, on the other hand, is performing a song he composed himself, and that very fact may make his vocal delivery difficult to separate from the act of composition. Moreover, rock and roll has tended to emphasise the peculiar quality of the individual singer's voice--commercial
music in general (from Glenn Miller to the Rolling Stones) has been concerned with finding new, distinctive and readily identifiable sounds. For the singer-songwriter, these sounds may be as much a part of the "composer's idiolect" as melodic patterning; "the style of the interpretation" may be inextricably linked to the strident, gravelly or reedy quality of the voice. In short, in rock and roll the recording is the text, and the elements of composition and performance which constitute that text tend to be inscrutably intertwined.

7.1. Historical Background

Pelléas et Mélisande, Pierrot lunaire, Pribaoutki: by the outbreak of the first world war, and in the space of little more than a decade, Debussy, Schoenberg and Stravinsky had quite radically extended the possible uses of the voice in the concert hall. Such extensions were not without precedent and each departure was based, to a degree, either on previous developments or on the appropriation of traditional, non-classical singing techniques. Nevertheless, the broadening of vocal styles exemplified by these three scores would continue to be built upon by composers for the next 80 years, especially after the second world war.

In Pelléas et Mélisande (first performed in 1902), Debussy's naturalistic word setting was partly influenced by Wagner, as, for that matter, was the opera's plot and its orchestration. Neither should
the example of Boris Gudonov be forgotten. But perhaps the tradition can be traced back at least as far as the stile rappresentativo of the composers of the seconda prattica. When Debussy speaks of wanting "the characters of this opera to sing like real people, and not in an arbitrary language made up of worn-out clichés" (75), he might almost be paraphrasing Monteverdi in the introduction to Madrigali querrieri ed amorosi of 1638, in which he states his desire to represent "agitated speech" (Strunk 53-55); when Debussy attacks those who have criticised him for "my so-called taste for monotonous declamation", he is rebuking some latter day Artusis.

Peter Conrad has pointed out that, for all Debussy's protestations that Pelléas owed nothing to Wagner, it could scarcely have been written without the examples of the latter's music dramas against which to react (204). Robin Holloway finds examples of Wagnerian influence in Pelléas as well as of Debussy's rejection of the German's approach (60-142). Nonetheless, whether reacting against Wagner or permitting his influence, Debussy goes much farther along the path of naturalistic word setting

---

1 For further discussion of Debussy's debt to Mussorgsky, see my chapter "The Strange Case of Modest Mussorgsky" in Speaking of Music.
than his predecessor. Wagner, like Weber before him, may have eschewed bel canto, he may have resisted the division of his music-dramas into recitatives and arias, but his characters are allowed to sing, and at great length and volume.

In Pelléas we witness the first wholesale abandoning of song in opera. When Méliande, at the beginning of Act 3, is combing her long hair, Rapunzel-like at the window of the tower, she sings a song, but it is simple, strophic, unaccompanied and, in the context of the opera, in quotation marks; on the sole occasion that an aria seems to be taking shape, at Pelléas's line "On dirait que ta voix a passé sur la mer au printemps!" in Act 4, Scene 4, Pelléas is immediately interrupted by his own aside ("Je ne l'ai jamais entendue jusqu'ici"). Conrad's description of the vocal reticence of the characters in Pelléas et Méliande and of the music Debussy writes for them is worth quoting at some length.

Golaud orders Yniold to speak more softly, and Arkel tells Golaud to lower his voice as Méliande dies: the human soul is itself silent. Debussy's aim was to muffle the tumult of Wagner. When Méliande says that she loves Pelléas, he doesn't hear her and asks her to repeat it. . . . Debussy's characters rely on
half-made admissions and incomplete gestures, and he writes for them a music which respects the hesitations of their prose and—in the interludes—wanders and wavers, drifting with plaintive uncertainty rather than treading solemnly towards its destination like the processional scene-changes in *Parsifal*.

(203-04)

The effect of the "half-made admissions and incomplete gestures" of these characters' vocal lines is conversational. Debussy's motivation for this was unquestionably his desire to inject a strong dose of dramatic naturalism into Maeterlinck's symbolist play. The approach is by no means at odds with symbolism--on the contrary, it tends to heighten the effect of Maeterlinck's work—but it is very much at odds with the popular notion of Debussy as an "Impressionist". One effect of allocating the sometimes obscure words which Maeterlinck's characters must speak, to a faltering, all-too-human style of sung vocal utterance is to heighten the drama. This approach in itself owes much to the aesthetic of Edgar Allan Poe, whose stories and poems were popular in 19th century France in translations by Baudelaire and others, and had been read by Maeterlinck in their original
language (Langham Smith 3). It is also worth recalling Debussy's interest in Poe as evinced by his incomplete operatic project *La chute de la maison Usher*.

Whatever the origins of Debussy's vocal naturalism in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, its legacy in terms of later operatic works—from Ravel to Britten and beyond—and in other vocal music which places clarity of diction and dramatic immediacy above sheer lyricism is arguably significant.²

The *Sprechstimme* of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912) is not unlike the practice of *stile rappresentativo*, although it seems most unlikely that Schoenberg had this in mind. Humperdinck had employed a form of *Sprechstimme* in his opera *Königskinder* (1897), but a more direct source for the concept of pitched speech in *Pierrot* is probably the German tradition of the melodrama, a declaimed dramatic text recited to musical accompaniment, popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, and already employed by Schoenberg in *Erwartung* Op.17. Boulez suggests a further possible source for both the

² *Pelléas* will, however, always have its detractors. Even one as knowledgable about opera as W.H.Auden was frankly dismissive of Debussy's work: "No, dear, you take it from mother, *Pelléas* is shit!" (Osborne, 315).
voice and form of the work, referring to it as "a superior, 'intellectualised' cabaret" (Orientations 331).

It should be stressed that the influence which Pierrot has exerted since its premiere is only partly due to Schoenberg's concept of Sprechstimme. More radical—and better understood—than the vocal style, was the ensemble itself, consisting of flute (doubling piccolo), clarinet (doubling bass clarinet), violin (doubling viola), cello and piano. Whilst examples of mixed instrumental ensembles can be found in earlier music (at least as early as the Elizabethan "broken consort"), the Pierrot ensemble was still innovative. Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven composed works for strings and piano or wind and piano; Beethoven's Septet and Schubert's Octet both employ wind and string instruments, but no keyboard; Schubert, Schumann and Brahms had composed songs with piano and a second obbligato instrument. It was Schoenberg himself who first wrote for wind (oboe and clarinet), strings (violin and cello) and piano in the abandoned Ein Stelldichein (1905), but the first major work to employ the three instrumental categories was Pierrot. It offered Schoenberg (and every composer since) the possibility of writing a quasi-orchestral music of extreme flexibility of colour for just five players. As if to draw
attention to the possibilities present in his ensemble, Schoenberg scored each of the 21 numbers of *Pierrot lunaire* for different instrumental forces.

If the *Pierrot* ensemble provided Schoenberg and his followers with a very specific range of possibilities, *Sprechstimme* offered rather more vague ones. The problem with this vocal technique (at least as it is notated in the score of *Pierrot lunaire*, explained in its prefatory remarks and heard on the composer's own recording of the work) is that it generates a mass of contradictions. On the one hand, the vocal line is notated in a perfectly conventional manner, save for the little crosses on the stems of the notes, and it makes complete contrapuntal sense in terms of the instrumental parts. On the other hand, Schoenberg apparently encourages his reciter to commit lese-majesty with the notated pitches: in his preface, he suggests that the voice should merely touch one pitch before sliding towards the next (on the composer's recording, Erika Stiedry-Wagner in fact articulates very few of the pitches at all). It is difficult to know just what Schoenberg had in mind, particularly given that there are certain moments in the score where the composer actually specifies song or speech or whispering. Boulez, who has conducted
the work a great many times and has written about this paradox, points out that, by the time of *Ode to Napoleon* and *Moses und Aron*, Schoenberg had adopted a far freer notational approach to Sprechstimme, suggesting that he was, perhaps, aware of the problem (*Orientations* 333). Boulez's own recordings of *Pierrot* display a range of options when it comes to the interpretation of the vocal part, from the very speech-like (with Helga Pilarczyk), to the almost sung (Yvonne Minton, whose pitching, in any case, is sometimes far from accurate).

Whatever Schoenberg intended at the time of *Pierrot*'s composition, and conceivably because of the multiple possible interpretations, Sprechstimme of one sort or another and a wide range of non-singing vocal techniques have become characteristic (sometimes to the point of self-parody) of later 20th century music involving the human voice. In works by Cage, Berio and Ligeti and many others, Schoenberg's innovations have been developed in a number of directions.

That Stravinsky's contribution to the development of vocal music is, to some extent, less well understood than that of Debussy and Schoenberg, might be accounted for by the overshadowing effect of his novel approaches to rhythm, and by the great
popularity of his early orchestral music. Also, Stravinsky's innovations in the area of song consisted very largely of admitting folkloric influences to his vocal lines and, here too, his work tends to be overshadowed by that of his contemporary Bartók. In fact, Stravinsky's Pribaoutki (1914) is a piece of great originality, composed at a time when Bartók was making field trips to collect folksongs (something he took far more seriously than Stravinsky, who was a virtual dilettante in this as in much else), but before the Hungarian composer had really begun to allow his researches to influence his own compositions in any genuinely integrated manner.

It is precisely this facility for integrating other musics which Stravinsky demonstrates in Pribaoutki, for these four "song games" are not folk music at all, but fabrications. That they might be mistaken for skilful arrangements is testimony to their composer's powers of assimilation. Whilst, as Eric Walter White has pointed out (236-37), the vocal lines are generally diatonic, the significance of

3 Admitting folkloric influences was not, in any case, new. Romantic composers from Weber to Chopin had, in their different ways, permitted folk music to influence their operatic and concert works. But where a composer like Chopin tended to make "respectable" his sources, Stravinsky seems to have been attracted by their very artlessness and at pains to preserve it.
the work, for its composer, was the realisation that when rhymes such as these are sung (in authentic folkloric settings) the normal spoken stresses are replaced by purely musical ones. Stravinsky was consequently able to make the syllable the basic unit of his vocal music, just as he had previously made the semi-quaver the common denominator of rhythm in works such as *Petrushka* (1911) and *The Rite of Spring* (1912). It was a principle he was later to apply (with scant respect for the Purcellian trochee) to setting English words, whether by Auden and Kallman in *The Rake's Progress* (1951) or the anonymous Old English lyrics he employed in his *Cantata* (1952). However, if Stravinsky's attitude to setting the English language can at times seem a little cavalier, this is not the case with the Russian texts in *Pribaoutki*. Not only is the occasional misplaced accent sanctioned in this folkloric form, but, as Mussorgsky, Janáček and Bartók also realised, folk song to a great extent draws on native speech rhythms for its melodic structure. In applying such knowledge (however instinctively) to his vocal settings, Stravinsky was distantly aligning himself with Debussy's intention of admitting "real people" to *Pelléas* and Schoenberg's adaptation of speech in
Furthermore, *Pribaoutki* and other works in a similar vein by Stravinsky, such as *Berceuse du chat* (1915), *Renard* (1916) and *Les Noces* (1914-1921), together with a number of pieces by Bartok, served to authenticate a more folkloric (and less operatic) singing style in the concert hall, paving the way not only for the gentle "folksong" miniatures of John Cage—for example *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* (1942)—but also for far more ambitious works, like Berio's hour-long *Coro* (1977).

7.2. John Cage's *Aria* (1958)

Composed for the unusual vocal gifts of the mezzo-soprano Cathy Berberian, though performable by a solo voice of any range, *Aria* is a small, but notable landmark in the vocal repertoire of the 20th century. The text is macaronic, drawing on phrases, words and parts of words from Armenian (Berberian's native tongue), Russian, Italian, French and English. In terms of its notation, it is

---

4 Stravinsky was also influenced by *Pierrot* in the instrumentation of his *Japanese Lyrics* (1913), although at the time of their composition he had only heard about the piece. In *Pribaoutki* the instrumentation for small ensemble, leaves out the piano, and adds in an oboe, bassoon and double bass, clearly anticipating the pit band of *The Soldier's Tale*. 

---
conventional, only in that pitch is represented vertically and time horizontally. In place of staves, note-heads, stems and beams (to provide specific indications of pitch and duration), Cage provides curling lines which describe the contours of the vocal part. As the composer states in his introduction to the score, these are "in black, with or without parallel dotted lines, or in one or more of 8 colours" (Ex.1). Each of these ten distinct forms of notation represents a vocal type, which the performer may interpret. Cage explains that the original performer employed the following voices:
"dark blue = jazz; red = contralto (and contralto lyric); black with parallel dotted line = Sprechstimme; black = dramatic; purple = Marlene Dietrich; yellow = coloratura (and coloratura lyric); green = folk; orange = oriental; light blue = baby; brown = nasal."\(^5\)

In addition to the vocal types selected by the performer and associated with the ten different coloured lines, the score of Aria also includes 16 small black squares. These represent "any noises

\(^5\) In my own performances of Aria I have employed the following voices: dark blue = Louis Armstrong; red = baritone; black with parallel dotted line = Edith Piaf; black = Helden tenor; purple = Sprechstimme; yellow = lyric soprano; green = Elvis Presley; orange = Anglican chant; light blue = dramatic contralto; brown = Bob Dylan.
('unmusical' use of the voice, auxiliary percussion, mechanical or electronic devices). Berberian's chosen "noises", according to Cage's preface, were as follows: "Tsk, tsk; footstomp; bird roll; snap, snap (fingers); clap; bark (dog); pained inhalation; peaceful exhalation; hoot of disdain; tongue click; exclamation of disgust; of anger; scream (having seen a mouse); ugh (as suggesting an American indian); ha, ha (laughter); expression of sexual pleasure.\footnote{In my performances, I have preferred to leave decisions regarding the precise nature of these noises until the performance itself. They are, consequently, different each time.} Cage adds: "All aspects of a performance (dynamics etc.) which are not notated may be freely determined by the singer."

Although Cage's score is, in Griffiths's words, "comic and virtuoso" (Modern Music 124), it is far more than that. On the one hand, it exemplifies Cage's approach both to composition and performance and his commitment to "chance procedures", on the other, it admits as many as ten "non-classical" voices to the performance of the work. That the piece was composed for Berberian (whose own repertoire encompassed, to use the title of her famous recital program, "Monteverdi to the Beatles"), throws down the gauntlet to other performers of this piece, to approach the work with
the widest possible variety of vocal styles.\(^7\) Cage's score, moreover, implies considerable flexibility in the production of these voices, since the colour of the line will alter, frequently, in mid phrase (Ex.2).

7.3. Karlheinz Stockhausen's Stimmung (1968)

Stimmung differs from the other works described here in several ways. The most obvious of these is that it is a work for six closely "miked" voices. It also employs a single vocal technique throughout its 60-90 minute span, namely the production of a range of overtones in the nasal cavity; by means of the careful rhythmic articulation of designated vowel sounds, melodic lines emerge consisting entirely of vocal harmonics. The harmonics are generated from fundamentals which are themselves derived from the positions of the harmonics of a low, unheard B flat. The sung fundamentals are required to be produced very gently so that the overtones may be heard as

\(^7\) Luciano Berio provided Berberian with the most extended vehicle for the demonstration of her vocal and stylistic range when he composed Recital 1: For Cathy (1972). This music-theatre work, which is a study in performance nerves, bravado and paranoia, involves a singer who must select up to 20 extracts from her or his own repertoire. These are then integrated in the performance of Berio's 50 minute work.
clearly as possible. The resulting harmony of **Stimmung** is, then, essentially static.

As in other works by Stockhausen, for example *Solo* (1965-66), **Stimmung** has a "form-scheme" which is separate from the performing score. The form-scheme designates the 51 sections, the voices to be heard in each, and the leader of each. Other than this the musical content of each section is left to the performers.

Each singer is allocated a sheet of either eight or nine "models", which he or she employs to lead their allocated sections, a precise order for the use of these models is not given, and neither is an indication of which singer receives which model, beyond the fact that three are marked for female voices and three for male (Ex.3). The models contain syllables--occasionally grouped so as to resemble actual words--to be sung to repeated rhythmic patterns, notated with strict tempos, the changes in vowel sounds producing the desired harmonics (which are also identified by their numbers). One meaning of the German word **Stimmung** is "tuning", and as each model is begun by its leader, the other singers participating in that section gradually **tune** in and begin to transform the
Some of the models contain erotic poems by the composer which are to be spoken by the singer leading the models in which they appear. Additionally, a sheet of "magic names" is given to each singer. These are the names of divinities from many different cultures and they are called out at moments determined in the form-scheme. They give rise to the work's most important textural (and, perhaps, textual) feature since their appearances are followed by all the participating singers attempting to integrate the name into whatever model is currently being sung.

These gradual transformations provide a dynamic element in the music which enhances the repeated rhythmic cells and gently propels the piece forwards, even as it remains harmonically anchored in B flat. Similarly, there is a powerful contradiction between the fixed structural grid of the form-scheme and the fact that neither the sung models nor the magic names are fixed at all: any model and any magic name can collide and consequently the range of possible transformations is enormous.
In *Stimmung*, then, the text has a free-floating relationship to the structure of the piece. From a point of view of pitch (at least the pitches which form the fundamentals) there is comparatively little variation and absolutely no freedom (except that singers are permitted to drop out at will and to vary intonation from time to time). However, in terms of tempo and rhythm and of the overtone "melodies", there is maximum freedom for the performers: it is perfectly possible to begin the piece with a succession of fast, highly rhythmic models, or with the slowest, most melodically restricted models. By the end of the piece, although all the models must have been employed (though not all the magic names), the order in which they have been employed will have significantly affected the work's overall shape (Ex.4). It is the sung texts (both literary and paralinguistic) which control these parameters, since the vowel sounds in each model produce the overtones, and it is the convergence of these models with certain magic names which promote transformation.
7.4. Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (1969)

This music-theatre work grew from a confluence of circumstances which included the staged performances of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* in the 1960s by Mary Thomas with Maxwell Davies's own ensemble The Pierrot Players (later known as The Fires of London) and the composer's meeting with the extraordinary vocalist Roy Hart. *Eight Songs* not only shares its subject matter of insanity with Schoenberg's work, it also employs a *Pierrot* ensemble (plus a percussionist). But, thanks to Hart's remarkable voice, Maxwell Davies's work goes far beyond the vague Schoenbergian distinctions between speech, song and speech-song. Besides possessing an enormous vocal range, Hart had the ability to produce chords with his voice. In *Eight Songs for a Mad King* Maxwell Davies takes the voice to its extremes in terms of both tessitura (Ex.5) and timbre, which ranges from cracked, throaty noise to shrieks, from "knifelike" falsetto to dog-like ululations, and from "strangled high wheezing harmonics" to an "in style" baroque trill which

---

8 Maxwell Davies's interest in the ethos of *Pierrot* was already evident in his music from the earlier work *Revelation and Fall* (1966), a theatrical setting of the German expressionist poet Trakl, in which the soprano, in the guise of a mutilated nun, screams through a megaphone.
transforms into a fast melisma "like a horse". These relate to what the composer, in his introduction to the score, calls "the sounds made by human beings under extreme duress, physical and mental".

Just as the vocal mannerisms of Eight Songs go greatly beyond anything Schoenberg might have had in mind for Pierrot, so the inherent ambiguities associated with the interpretation of Schoenberg's Sprechstimme are significantly multiplied in Maxwell Davies's score. The vocal part (cf. Berio's Sequenza III) is littered with verbal exhortations to the performer ("dreamily", "harsh tone", "gasperg", "nasal, evil", "regular, as drill-sergeant", "regal" and "silky" are just a few of them), but quite apart from the difficulty of interpreting these terms (what does "silky" mean?), there is the far more baffling task of interpreting the actual musical notation.

Roy Hart was killed in a motor accident not long after giving the premiere of this work and before a recording could be made, consequently there are various possible interpretations of what Maxwell Davies had in mind. It seems safe to assume that Hart demonstrated the capabilities of his voice to the composer, and that Maxwell Davies, in turn,
devised types of notation which represented what Hart could do. The notation of the vocal part is as unconventional as, presumably, were the original vocalisations, but since no key is provided to explain these symbols, later performers have had to draw their own conclusions. Ex. 6 shows four examples of vocal notation (all from the first song) for which there is no obvious interpretive solution.

In spite of the extreme vocal demands made on a performer of this work, *Eight Songs for a Mad King* is arguably the most traditional of these four works in terms of word setting, since unlike the pieces by Cage, Stockhausen and Schultz, it aims at interpreting and enhancing the meaning of the sung text. In other words, there is a sense in which *Eight Songs* employs conventional "word painting", even if the words are painted by means of a blowtorch and a spray gun. Where the composer diverges from this approach is in his characterisation of the king's madness, so that, for no reason in the text itself, the singer may suddenly be required to make a horse-like whinny in the midst of one of his historically authenticated quotations from Handel (Ex. 7).

Notwithstanding the appropriation of baroque musical devices (such as the occasional appearance of
figured bass notation in the harpsichord part and elaborate ornamentation in all the instrumental parts, save the percussion) there is stronger and more all-encompassing link between *Eight Songs* and the baroque world. In the popular theatre of Restoration London, there was a fascination with madness and with the volatile behaviour of mad people. Seventeenth century Londoners took themselves off to see the lunatics in the Bethlehem Hospital (Bedlam) in much the same spirit as their present day descendants might go to a soccer match, and contemporary theatre reflected this enthusiasm in its relishing of the mad scene. There was not always a "plot point" being served by the appearance in Restoration plays of Mad Bess or Tom o' Bedlam; rather, these scenes were often self-contained and they almost always involved a mad song. Tom D'Urfey's theatrical adaptation of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1694) contained no fewer than three mad songs (one in each act), including Henry Purcell's celebrated "From rosy bow'rs", in which the character singing the song is merely feigning madness (Roberts, 8-9).

In this connection, it is doubtless significant that Maxwell Davies entitled his piece *Eight Songs for a*
Mad King as opposed to, say, "Mad King George".9

Certainly, the mercurial nature of Maxwell Davies's songs, with their sudden and unpredictable mood swings, was also a standard feature of their Restoration counterparts, and the association of madness with vocal virtuosity also seems to have had its origins in 17th century theatre. Just as 20th century prima donnas such as Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland achieved their greatest popular fame through the vocal pyrotechnics demanded by mad scenes in such operas as Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor (1835), so Anne Bracegirdle's fame on the stages of Restoration London arose primarily from her ability to sing the mad songs of Purcell and John Eccles (Roberts, 9).10

---

9 In the year before the composition of Eight Songs Maxwell Davies had "arranged" three pieces of Purcell in Fantasia on a Ground and Two Pavans (1968) whose matter-of-fact title disguises the manic nature of the music. Employing such instruments as an out-of-tune honky-tonk piano, a railway guard's whistle and a jazz kit, Maxwell Davies turns Purcell's originals into wild and disturbing parodies of 1920s popular dance music.

10 So impressed was Eccles with Bracegirdle's performance of "I burn, my brain consumes to ashes" --his contribution to the mad songs in D'Urfey's Don Quixote--that he wrote a poem in praise of her performance, beginning

While I with wounding grief did look,
when love had turn'd your brain;
from you the dire disease I took,
and bore myself the pain.

The poem was, in turn, set to music by both Purcell and Godfrey Finger.
Maxwell Davies, then, is working at two levels in this piece. On the first he invests the verbal text with meaning, and on the other he occasionally allows the "madness" to override the text's semantic sense.


This work was composed at my request and given its first performance by me in a concert at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts on 13 June 1989.

The notorious American gangster Dutch Schultz (an alias for Arthur Flegenheimer) was gunned down in the toilet of the Palace Chop House in Newark, New Jersey on 24 October 1935 by the underworld hit-man Charley "The Bug". He did not die immediately, but made a long and rambling statement which was recorded by a police stenographer at the gangster's bedside. The published text of Dutch Schultz's last words, in the spirit of the "stream of consciousness" (which his outpouring surely was), contains no punctuation. It is from this starting point that Andrew Schultz's solo vocal work commences; on one level it is almost an attempt at musical punctuation.
In the key to the score of *Fast Talking*, the composer indicates nine basic vocal types, namely: panting, moaning, whispering, speaking, shouting, hoarse shouting, singing falsetto, sobbing falsetto and singing with a constricted throat. In performance, the nature of the texts to which these styles are applied tends to alter them further, producing an even greater range of voices. Additionally the performer must make a series of physical gestures (some of which produce sounds), linked to the spoken text. There are six of these: hand claps, finger clicks, hands thrust above the head, two-handed karate chops at the air (downward and outward from the body), a fist punched into the palm of the other hand and a bowed head posture in which the performer must remain quite still.

For the majority of the work the performer must speak/sing/shout the words as quickly as possible, making comprehension of the text virtually impossible. Nevertheless, the composer is greatly concerned with meaning, his approach to this textual *donne* being essentially deconstructive, since certain words, phrases or types of speech tend to be associated with specific vocal techniques and these
remain fixed for the work's duration.\textsuperscript{11} The frequently reiterated "PLEASE", for example, is always vocalised as a moan (in 33 of its 35 appearances as a shaky downward glissando, on the other two occasions as an upward glissando). Although the precise articulation and dynamic of these implorings tends to vary, there is also generally a decrescendo from a forte attack (in six instances the descending moan remains forte, in four it begins and remains pianissimo; the upward glissandos are both marked with a crescendo). Ex.8 shows a series of these moments.

Further examples of Schultz's deconstruction of his namesake's last words include the sharply shouted articulation of exclamations such as "OH", "YES", "NO" and "HEH" (accompanied at all times by a physical gesture), the "strangled chord sound" which is always employed for "MAMA" and "MOTHER", and the allocation of a "childlike" voice to the gangster's most nonsensical ramblings.

Whilst Fast Talking, like Eight Songs, is a virtuoso vocal display piece and a somewhat gruelling piece of theatre (for performer and audience alike), at a purely structural level it consists of the

\textsuperscript{11} See Schultz (1992).
imposition of order on the dying gangster's stream of consciousness; the unpunctuated text is treated to a form of monophonic "counterpoint" in which various vocal types denote grammatical parts of speech (such as exclamations) or styles of utterance (such as the nonsensical ramblings). In the process, and possibly unwittingly, the composer also uncovers some of the intended meaning behind Dutch's words which seems to have been missed by the police stenographer. For instance the line "THEY DIED MY SHOES", when spoken very quickly (as the score specifies) and in the New Jersey accent which a performance of the piece seems to enforce, emerges sounding very much like "they had to hide my shoes". Given that these words are preceded by "I AM HALF CRAZY THEY WON'T LET ME GET UP", it seems far more likely that the spoken line was indeed "they had to hide my shoes" and that it was misheard by the police. So Fast Talking, in restoring, perhaps, some of the general tenor of Dutch Schultz's own "performance", succeeds in suggesting at least one possible meaning which seems to have eluded the New Jersey police.
7.6. Music and Theatre

There is a more or less strong music-theatre aspect to all four of the works under discussion in this chapter. Even for Stimmung--arguably the least "dramatic" work of the four--the composer specifies a performance mode and setting which, though unchanging, provides a visual counterpart to the music: the six singers sit cross-legged on the floor or on low stools, the lights are dim, the sheets of music are on the floor or a small table (invisible to the audience), the singers read by the light of a small lamp--an ambience is created. Musically the performance depends upon co-operation between the singers. They must know each other's parts, listen hard to them and throw the occasional glance to pass on the role of leading a model, or to achieve synchronization. In the otherwise static scenario described above, such minimal gestures take on great significance, just as the long time span, the prevailing B flat harmony and the constant low dynamic allow the smallest musical transformation to register powerfully.

Aria and Fast Talking share an attitude to performance, namely that of one vocalist playing many parts. In the former, these are the distinct vocal styles decided by the singer; in the latter
they are extremes of vocal declamation (including extremes of speed) dictated by the composer. Either way, there is a certain extrovert virtuosity involved in the performance of these works, and whilst Stimmung also might be said to employ an extreme of vocal style and even an element of virtuosity, it is far from extrovert.

Eight Songs for a Mad King is clearly the most theatrical of the four pieces and contains (in the composer's staging of the work) the largest amount of visual information. Four of the instrumentalists sit in cages (they represent, at one level, the bullfinches which George III tried to teach to sing Handel). The king moves amongst them, attempting to seduce the flautist, stealing and breaking the violinist's instrument and finally being led off stage by the percussionist, flogging the bass drum with two cat-o'-nine-tails. This minimal staging has, in recent years, been greatly elaborated upon by directors such as David Freeman in his 1989 Opera Factory production in London.\[12\]

\[12\] In this production, the action is set in a white-tiled lunatic asylum, the singer is mainly naked and smears human excrement over himself and the walls. The composer dissociated himself from the production in the strongest terms.
In each of these four pieces the annunciation of text plays a vital role in the theatricality of the work. Moreover it is in the relationship between text and music that much of the drama lies. In Aria and Stimmung, which employ phonemes more than actual words, part of the dramatic situation consists of the audience's attempt to make sense of the sounds it hears. Schultz has written that "disruptions to text are often more disturbing for listeners than complex or unconventional musical expression". This is almost the opposite of the effect of Aria and Stimmung where the sudden appearance of recognisable words comes as relief, often comic relief (see below). In Fast Talking and Eight Songs for a Mad King, however, where there are verbal texts, the words are frequently obscured—in the former by the velocity of utterance; in the latter by the extremes of vocal style. The disturbing nature of these "disruptions" is fully in keeping with the dramatic scenarios of a dying gangster and a mad monarch.

7.7. Uses of Humour

All four works consciously employ humour as a dramatic device. In Eight Songs for a Mad King this is particularly dramatically potent since most audiences feel guilty about laughing at madness.
When the king attempts a seduction of a lady-in-waiting by means of cooing bird song or cups his hands, 1920s style, to declaim a foxtrot, the intent is presumably humorous. But audiences laugh in other places too, most notably at the king's first startling appearance. It is nervous laughter and all the more powerful for being so, in that the audience wishes it were not laughing.

**Fast Talking** works in much the same way. Audiences tend be laughing at the outset of the work, but later are generally stunned into silence. As the piece progresses, even the gangster's more incongruous ejaculations (for example "FRENCH CANADIAN BEAN SOUP" just before the end of the piece) fail to elicit laughter.

**Aria** is potentially the most comic work of the four. The piece itself is simply an object and as such has no dramatic axe to grind (certainly it is not attempting to make a point about such weighty issues as madness or death). The humour, in a good performance, is simply a by-product of the performer's vocal agility in moving from language to language, from style to style, and of the resulting juxtapositions and correspondences.
The humorous component of *Stimmung* is rather harder to account for, though it is quite deliberate on the part of the composer. Occasionally, humour emanates from the transformations wrought by the calling of the magic names, but there are other places in which the names of days of the week are sung, the word "salami" (for no obvious reason) is called out, and there is an optional moment at which the entire vocal ensemble focuses (in close harmony) on the word "barbershop". In a work which can span as many as 90 minutes, such moments offer a form of light relief.

7.8. Virtuosity and Intertextuality

The four principal works discussed above all require elements of virtuosity in performance, and in this context that very virtuosity becomes tied up with questions of intertextuality. To adapt Barthes's distinction between *geno-song* and *pheno-song* (see 6.6.), it is possible in each of these cases to separate text from performance. The scores of *Stimmung* and *Aria* have, built into them, freedoms which ensure that each performance of the score will be at least slightly different from the last. Eight

---

Songs and Fast Talking contain graphic notation which it is up to the performer to interpret. Even at the simplest level, when the score of Fast Talking indicates the performer to declaim the text very loudly and as fast as possible, this will vary at each performance. This is the same distinction which Barthes intends with reference to Lieder singing (precisely how fast is "allegro"? how loud is "mezzo-forte"?).

However, there is a form of cultural intertextuality functioning at a more interesting level. Unlike, say, the extension of traditional techniques necessary to interpret "difficult" music from Liszt to Ferneyhough, these pieces require the appropriation of techniques from other genres and media. Stimmung demands the learning of non-Western techniques, Eight Songs for a Mad King, Fast Talking and possibly Aria (depending upon how the vocalist chooses to perform it) demand extra-musical abilities, and all four works require vocal skills which go well beyond conventional classical training. This incorporation of non-classical techniques is at the level of geno-song. The precise nature of the intertextuality in Fast Talking, for example, will depend upon the performer's decision whether to employ a New Jersey accent (it is not actually stated in the score that
he should use one) as well as his competence at it. The extent of the shouting, screaming, sobbing and falsetto singing will be affected by both the performer's ability and the condition of his voice at the time of the performance. This differs significantly from Barthes's comments on Fischer-Dieskau (Image--Music--Text 183), in that if a Lieder singer is unable to manage the top notes in a Schumann song on a particular day, the performance will simply be inaccurate. The score of Fast Talking, on the other hand, deals in possibilities: "as fast as possible" mean just that; there is no ideal speed and so, strictly speaking, no possibility of being inaccurate.

**Aria**, **Eight Songs** and **Stimmung** offer still more extreme examples of the same freedom with regard to performance. **Aria** leaves the precise selection of voices to the singer (the degree of intertextual reference depends entirely upon those choices). The vocal part of **Eight Songs** contains symbols for whose interpretation not even a hint is provided. The score of **Stimmung** permits singers to drop in and out of the texture at will--even silence is countenanced--and to go out of and come back into tune. At another, rather basic level, the names of the deities called out during the piece is also the singers' responsibility, and so that particular
piece of cultural intertextuality is also an aspect of the performance itself.

Whilst the types of intertextual references—general and frequently unintentional—described by Kristeva and Barthes, and aphorised by Derrida,\(^\text{14}\) are understood to be common to structuralist and post-structuralist thinking, the more deliberate, appropriative act is often seen as a symptom of post-modernism. Notwithstanding the fact that this form of conscious intertextuality has existed at least since the Renaissance, and reached something of a climax during the early 20th century in the writings of such "card carrying" modernists as Eliot and Joyce, the trend towards a more "playful" use of appropriation, such as that discussed by Eco, does appear to be of our own time.\(^\text{15}\) The four works discussed above all consciously allude to other cultures, genres and media than those normally associated with the concert hall, all demand the acquisition of virtuoso vocal techniques equally foreign to the Western tradition, and all make use of humour. What is significant is that these characteristics are related. The pieces employ

\(^\text{14}\) "Toute these est une prothese" (189).

\(^\text{15}\) It must be acknowledged, however, that the sense of "play" in Finnegans Wake is extremely strong.
intertextuality, particularly at the level of geno-song, which allows them to criticise and comment upon other art and upon themselves. This relates to Eco's discussion of intertextuality in film, but interestingly it is at odds with Springsteen and Costello's stance, since—in these pieces--Cage, Stockhausen, Maxwell Davies and Schultz extend and expand traditions, rather than working solely within them.
26 March 1974
Iterated my usual spiel about how all music, even non-vocal timpani solos or computerised fugues, is primarily a sung expression; further, all music, even the pre-verbal music of Neanderthals, is a setting of texts—wordless texts, perhaps, but nonetheless texts drawn from some extramusical language. For instance (said I), Mr. Carter here is hardly known for his contributions to song literature, yet I contend (nor can he prove otherwise) that his composing impulse lies in the primal speech of his unconscious, a speech whose grammar is particularized through his string quartets. (Rorem 65)

8.1. Carter and the Literary Text

The American composer Elliott Carter's musical association with the literary text has been strikingly unusual. Word-setting characterised his early output: of the 29 he composed up to 1947, 17 employed texts. There then followed nearly three decades before the composer's next vocal work, the song cycle to poems by Elizabeth Bishop, A Mirror on Which to Dwell (1975). Over the next six years

Placing Carter's abandonment of vocal music and his eventual return to it in the context of his complete oeuvre, a pattern emerges. The text-setting ceased as Carter's musical style grew more complex and personal; it commenced again at the moment at which his music began to embrace a more direct and dramatic manner.

Poetry, particularly American poetry, has always held a strong fascination for Carter. The subjects he read as a Harvard undergraduate included literature, philosophy and classics, but not music, although he later obtained a Masters degree in music from the same University. In his 1971 interviews with Allen Edwards, *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds*, Carter made a series of references to writers whom he admires and, particularly, to those who have influenced his way of thinking, both philosophically and musically. Amongst others, he cites William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, T.S. Eliot, Gerard Manley Hopkins, e e cummings, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and Gertrude Stein as those
whom he read outside his designated studies, "which in those days stopped with Tennyson" (Edwards 47). This displays not only a voracious appetite for ideas, but also, and perhaps more significantly, an interest in what was current. Carter says that he "read Ulysses practically when it came out and was reading Proust as the later volumes of *A la recherche du temps perdu* were being printed" (Edwards 61).

Carter's early vocal works display a thorough knowledge of American literature, together with a shrewdness of judgement concerning the choice of texts for musical setting and an often profound insight into those texts.\(^1\) Some of the most influential and innovative American poets are represented in Carter's early vocal and choral works: Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Hart Crane, Robert Frost and Allen Tate among them.

The musical language which Carter employed at this time equates strongly with his political commitments. Like Aaron Copland, Carter initially believed that his music should attempt to reach the

\(^1\) Lloyd Schwartz mentions Carter's written commentary on the third of Hart Crane's "Voyages" which, he states, is "among the most lucid explanations I know of what Crane is actually saying" (2).
widest possible public. His symphony and his early ballets all inhabit an essentially tonal harmonic world in which folk- and jazz-influenced melodic lines are never far away. Although the composer was later to abandon, quite consciously, such attempts to make his music easily accessible, the jazz influence remained a significant factor in his work. There may no longer be even a hint of the harmonic language of jazz, but the extreme rhythmic flexibility which characterises Carter's post-war compositions, derives substantially from the composer's early experiences of swing and bebop.

One consequence of Carter's stylistic development, was that, given his music's greater complexity, the composer felt he was no longer able to employ texts effectively:

I find that the speed of presentation in words is very different from the speed of presentation in my music. Also, I don't understand words very well when they're sung (Edwards 106).

The loss of verbal clarity, to which Carter alludes, was largely a consequence of the rhythmic and

² The pianist and composer Richard Rodney Bennett has commented that his early facility with jazz and the need in that music to listen to "an internal click" enabled him better to cope with the complex, off-beat rhythms of much contemporary piano music. (Interview with the author, 10 March 1990.)
textural complexity created by the metric independence of parts, first properly achieved by him in sections of his cello sonata (1948), taken further in the work which first brought the composer a large measure of international acclaim, the first string quartet (1951) and, finally, dominating the writing of his second string quartet (1959). It is no coincidence that the year of the cello sonata's composition marked the beginning of nearly 30 years of purely instrumental music.

Besides Carter's Platonic concern with the potential loss of textual clarity, resulting from the complexity of his musical writing, there was a further problem with setting words. In his book, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, David Schiff identifies a major practical deterrent which kept the composer from further works involving the voice: the inability of singers to cope with the composer's complex rhythms and flexible, ever-shifting tempos (280). It was this concern which, even after the vocal works of the 1970s and 80s, dissuaded Carter from attempting an opera, in spite of repeated requests from opera companies (Swed).

\[^3\] Schiff's *The Music of Elliott Carter* is abbreviated to MEC in later references.
Carter's return to text-setting in 1975 surprised many people. But, even in the chamber and orchestral works of the 1950s and 60s, Carter had never abandoned his literary interests. In the Double Concerto for Harpsichord and Piano with Two Chamber Orchestras (1961), two contrasting literary texts provided inspiration. The stark and appalling lines about chaos from Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* and a wryly ironic passage on the same topic in Pope's *Dunciad*, helped Carter to discover the idiosyncratic formal plan--one might almost call it a *scenario*--for his concerto. They also suggested a solution to the problem of handling the very different characters of the work's two solo instruments.  

The relationship between the Concerto for Orchestra (1969) and St John Perse's poem, "Winds", is particularly strong. Although the text itself is still absent from the music, it is inextricably woven into the fabric of Carter's multi-faceted

---

4 However, in discussing the origins of the Double Concerto, David Harvey is right to stress that the work's musical coherence cannot be explained by reference to Lucretius and Pope. "Moreover," he writes, "to claim that these frankly programmatic elements are direct causes of the musical language in Carter's compositions would be as extreme as claiming, for example, that Berlioz's infatuation with Harriet Smithson was responsible for the structural characteristics of the tonal language of the *Symphonie fantastique* . . . " (93).
score, serving as what Boulez once described as "an irrigation source" for the work (Stocktaking 40). "Winds" provided Carter not only with the windy sound world of the work's opening and concluding passages, but also the exceptionally complex, four-in-one movement structure of the whole.⁵

Similarly, A Symphony of Three Orchestras (1976), was the result of its composer's long term fascination with Hart Crane's poem, "The Bridge". Although A Symphony of Three Orchestras was completed immediately after A Mirror on Which to Dwell, the composer's association with Crane's poem dates back to his student days at Harvard, when he intended to employ the text in a large scale choral work. The mooted cantata came to nothing, the composer rejecting the text "because the poem is profoundly pessimistic and he could not bear to be depressed for the length of time it would take" (Clements). But the text remained important to Carter, and one section of it surfaced again in the scenario of his ballet, Pocohontas. When he finally composed A Symphony of Three Orchestras he did so in the space of six months (remarkably quickly for

⁵ Jonathan W. Bernard's paper, The Poem as Non-Verbal Text: Elliott Carter's Concerto for Orchestra and Saint-John Perse's 'Winds' provides an illuminating account of the complex relationship between these two works.
Carter), suggesting that the plan of the work was clearly formulated before the Bishop cycle.

The opening lines of "The Bridge" inspired both the form and, in a sense, the content of A Symphony of Three Orchestras; the introductory bars of this work, with their misty, stratospheric strings, squawking flutes and clarinets, and high, wheeling solo trumpet, evoke Crane's opening lines, describing a grey dawn over Brooklyn Bridge:

How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest

The seagull's wings shall dip and pivot him,

Shedding white rings of tumult, building high

Over the chained bay waters Liberty.

(1-4)

The composer himself acknowledges this link between poem and music in his program note for the piece, saying that "although A Symphony of Three Orchestras is not in any sense an attempt to express the poem of Hart Crane in music, many of the musical ideas were suggested by it and other works of his" (Carter 367).

The use of illustrative devices in Carter's work is by no means unusual (the windy instrumental
sonorities of the Concerto for Orchestra is another example). Nevertheless, in being so specifically programmatic, the introduction to A Symphony is rare for Carter; Clements calls it "a piece of literalism almost unparalleled in his mature work", though it must be said that it does equate with similar moments in the vocal trilogy.

Some commentators have remarked upon a burgeoning lyricism in Carter's later music, as well as its tendency to avoid the extreme complexity of his works of the 1960s. Arnold Whittall, for example, links this development to the composer's return to vocal music (234). Carter himself has claimed to be largely unaware of this, saying, in a radio interview with Peter Dickinson: "Maybe I'm just getting tired of writing lots of notes. I haven't made a specific effort to write simpler music" (BBC 5 Oct. 1989). But it is interesting to compare the composer's remarks in this interview with a statement he made to Edwards in 1971, concerning his then 20 year-old String Quartet no.1:

I decided for once to write a work very interesting to myself, and to say to hell with the public and the performers too. I wanted to write a work that carried out completely the various ideas I had at that time about the form of music, about
This painstakingly rigorous approach characterises not only the String Quartet no. 1 (1951), but also his music of the next 25 years. Schiff refers to "thousands of pages of sketches for each major composition" (MEC 21). But the composer tells Dickinson:

[t]he music I used to write, like the Double Concerto and the Concerto for Orchestra, took an enormous amount of effort and time, because they were so elaborately conceived. I'm getting a little impatient with that now, and I kept feeling that I was more interested in writing pieces that were concerned with the actual performance problems, rather than with more arcane, technical things that were very difficult for us to solve... Now I feel a little freer. (BBC 5 Oct. 1989)

Elliott Carter has often described his music in terms which suggest a human drama. In his string quartets, for instance, the composer invests individual instruments, or pairs of instruments, with discreet, anthropomorphic characteristics.
Writing of his String Quartet no.2 (1959), Carter states:

In it the four instruments are individualised, each being given its own character . . . It is out of the interactions, combinations, and oppositions . . . that the details of musical discourse . . . are built . . . The first violin reveals itself . . . is fantastic, ornate, and mercurial . . . The second violin . . . has a laconic, orderly character which is sometimes humorous . . . The viola adds its repertory of expressive motifs to the group. . . . The somewhat impetuous cello part frequently breaks out of the rhythmic scheme . . . The form of the work . . . is developed directly from the relationship and interactions of the four instruments, which result in varying activities, tempos, moods and feelings. (Carter 273-74)

Elsewhere, the composer has referred to this work as "a four-way conversation" and likened each instrument to "a character in an opera".

The individuals of this group are related to each other in what might be metaphorically termed three forms of
responsiveness: discipleship, companionship, and confrontation. (278)

Similar analogies have been drawn, both by Carter and by commentators on his work, for the cello sonata, String Quartet no.3 (1971), the Duo for Violin and Piano (1974), Triple Duo (1983) and String Quartet no.4 (1986).

To maintain, as Carter has, that music should be as complex as the best poetry or philosophy (MEC 19), sets him apart from the post-modern mainstream of late 20th century music. In believing that the string quartet might be a crucible for the playing out of abstract dramas and the portrayal and discussion of human relationships, Carter is surely unique. However, this may well be one of the aspects of Carter's work which led him back to the voice. Those texts which relate to the large scale orchestral utterances of the 1960s and 70s are themselves abstract and philosophical in nature. For the vocal works which followed, Carter selected poems by Bishop, Ashbery and Lowell, which, although undeniably philosophical, also deal directly in human relationships and personal experience. For this reason it is possible to view the triptych of pieces, A Mirror on Which to Dwell, Syringa and In Sleep, in Thunder, not so much as a relaxation of Carter's intense, complex orchestral music--a search
for simplicity—but rather as a clarification and a concentration of precisely those compositional concerns which had been fundamental to the composer since the late 1940s. In the work of Bishop, Ashbery and Lowell, the composer found poetic counterparts for his own musical ideas, and, in setting this poetry to music, Carter was able to project and extend the aesthetic and technical preoccupations of his string quartets, reducing the level of abstraction by means of verbal clarification. The composer may be careful in these settings not to tell his listeners what to think about the poetry, but there is a very real sense in which Carter permits the poetry to help us to think about his music.

There is one particular difficulty with analysing any of Carter's later work and the composer himself has alluded to it:

Any technical or esthetic consideration of music really must begin with the matter of time. The basic problem has always been that analysts of music tend to treat its elements as static rather than as what they are—that is, transitive steps from one formation in time to another.

(Edwards 90)
If, as Carter suggests, this is a deficiency of musical analysis in general, it becomes a primary consideration when examining Carter's own pieces, which are "always concerned with motion . . . with the flow of music" (BBC Oct. 1989). By working with literary texts once more, the composer at once exacerbates this problem and clarifies it.

Introducing W.H. Auden, at a poetry reading in 1969, Carter quoted the poet on the differences between poetry and music: "A verbal art like poetry is reflective; it stops to think. Music is immediate, it goes on to become" (Carter 256-257). It is not surprising that Carter should value this statement, given the important role which literature has played in his life and the constitutional function of temporality in his music. Auden's distinction creates a conflict between Carter's injunction to the analyst to consider music as it moves through time, and the necessity, in analysing a song, of reading both words and music. And yet there is also a sense in which Auden's observation provides a clue to anyone attempting an analysis of Carter's vocal works, since that very distinction which Auden insists upon lies at the heart of these pieces. Carter's use of poetry draws attention to the dynamic, transitive character of his music, counterpoised with the poetry's own "reflective" nature. Indeed the poetry sometimes appears to be
providing a commentary on this very dichotomy, as when the speaker in Ashbery's "Syringa", mentions

The way music passes, emblematic

Of life and how you cannot isolate a note of it

And say it is good or bad. . . .

If one accepts Auden's distinction, it follows that, even in song, music and poetry function at different levels--one might say on different "planes". Leaving aside folk traditions, in which it can be difficult to separate the words from their musical contexts, and in which the words, arguably, are not poetry in the first place, it is important, in examining song, to allow the component parts to retain their own identity. Only then is it possible to see how they might affect each other. To put it another way, reading the poetry through the music, or the music through the poetry is limiting, they must be read alongside one another.

In examining Carter's vocal triptych, whose texts are independent and already complex, this is particularly important. Ultimately, the poetry of Bishop, Ashbery and Lowell serves not merely as a Boulezian "irrigation source" (Stocktaking 40) for the music which it inspired, but relates to Carter's creative concerns in general and to his artistic
output as a whole. In reading these literary texts alongside Carter's music, one comes closer to an understanding of Carter's art.

8.2. An Overview of Elliott Carter's Later Vocal Music

In comparing the texts which Carter selected for his three mature vocal works, it is possible to emphasise the stylistic contrasts which emerge. But, as Schiff has suggested, the three pieces, A Mirror on Which to Dwell, Syringa and In Sleep, in Thunder, are closely related. They form a group, not merely because of their chronological proximity in Carter's oeuvre, but also because of textual correspondences in the poetry they set. There are points of contact between the three literary texts which outweigh the perceived differences of subject, tone and diction. According to Schiff:

[t]he three can be heard as a three-act opera whose tragic protagonist is the American artist . . . Carter started out with the well-focused tensions of Bishop, then moved to Ashbery's wildly colliding ironies. With the Lowell cycle the submerged frustration, anxiety and anger of the earlier works come to the fore. If
Carter's vocal triptych is an opera, *In Sleep, In Thunder* is its mad scene.

(Jacket Note)

An examination of Carter's choice of texts and his musical treatment of them, reveals a web of cross-reference. What emerges, as in the composer's other music and in the other poetry of Bishop, Ashbery and Lowell, is a mixture of private person and public artist, now in conflict, now resolved. The musical works (again, like their texts) range in tone from the bold public gesture to the frankly autobiographical, from anecdote to political comment to metaphysical doubt.

In purely biographical terms there are important links between the three works and particularly between *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* and *In Sleep, in Thunder*. The poets of these two cycles knew each other well and admired one another's work (Hamilton 235-7); Lowell, indeed, once announced that he was going to marry Bishop (135). Carter, anxious to find poems by a woman for *A Mirror*, in order that "the singer's relation to the text would be very direct" (MEC 282), consulted Lowell, who had been a friend of the composer since the early 1960s. Lowell suggested that Carter might discover suitable texts amongst Bishop's writing. John Ashbery, who
belongs to the following generation of American poets, has likewise highly praised Bishop's work (Bloom Bishop 1-3).

8.3. The choice and organisation of texts for A Mirror on Which to Dwell and In Sleep, in Thunder

With both his Bishop and Lowell cycles, Carter did not select a pre-existing, homogeneous group from the poets' work; instead he discovered his texts in a number of published collections. Each cycle employs six poems and each cycle begins with a poem which actually appears last in its book of origin: "Anaphora" was the final poem of Bishop's first collection, North & South (1946); "Dolphin" concludes The Dolphin (1973), one of Lowell's last books. Carter's settings of both these poems are annunciations; each forms a kind of overture. The music for "Anaphora", like the poem itself, with its bells and whistles, opens in a festive, celebratory manner; it marks a dawning. "Dolphin", on the other hand, as Schwartz remarks, is really an epitaph, both verbally and musically--Lowell's poem concludes with a line of self-realisation, appalling in its clarity ("my eyes have seen what my hand did"), while the published score of In Sleep, in Thunder bears, at its head, the inscription: "In Memory of
the Poet and friend". In both the Bishop and Lowell cycles the first song sets the scene for the five which follow. However, the opening songs are more than introductory devices, they are also both integrated within overall structures which consist of two interlocking groups of three songs. As will be shown, in the case of *In Sleep* this structure is ambiguous.

8.5. Bishop and Carter: *A Mirror on Which to Dwell*

In *A Mirror on Which to Dwell*, Carter chose poems by Bishop which deal with the private and the public person, with isolation--geographic and emotional--and with attempts at communication through artistic creativity. These thematic distinctions are by no means mutually exclusive or even clear cut. Bishop, for example, was always fascinated with geography. Her first book, *North & South*, opens with a poem entitled "The Map", her third collection, *Questions of Travel* (1965), is divided into two sections, subtitled Brazil and Elsewhere, and the last publication in her lifetime she entitled *Geography III* (1977). Even in poems which deal directly with human relationships (for example "Argument", the second poem in Carter's cycle), there is a strong
sense of place; the argument is partly one between time and space, "Days" and "Distance".

One of Bishop's most remarkable poems, "In the Waiting Room" which opens Geography III, is primarily about self-discovery, the moment when a child is first aware of its own existence, identity and (perhaps) mortality:

... I felt: you are an I,
you are an Elizabeth,
you are one of them.

Why should you be one, too? (60-63)

This realisation is partly reached through the 7 year-old speaker's awareness of the other occupants of the dentist's waiting room, partly through her pouring over a magazine as she waits there for her aunt:

and while I waited I read
the National Geographic
... and carefully
studied the photographs: (13-16)

The photographs of volcanos, a dead man, "Babies with pointed heads" and "black, naked women with necks / wound round and round with wire / like the necks of light bulbs" and with "horrifying" breasts, all conspire to produce a sudden "oh! of pain", which the child slowly realises came from within her.
Just as geography informs much of Bishop's poetry, so do animals. Frequently their function is anthropomorphic: the depilated bitch in "Pink Dog" and the finical bird in "Sandpiper" are, on one level, the poet's alter egos. Often their appearances are sudden and epiphanous, as in "The Moose":

--Suddenly the bus driver stops with a jolt, 
turns off his lights.

A moose has come out of the impenetrable wood and stands there, looms, rather, in the middle of the road. (130-136)

Invariably Bishop's creatures prove benign:

Towering, antlerless, high as a church, homely as a house (or safe as houses).

A man's voice assures us "Perfectly harmless . . ." (139-144) But the bus's passengers require no such assurance: they feel, instead, "this sweet / sensation of joy".
Carter's selections from Bishop embrace all these aspects of her work, even in the one poem. "Sandpiper", for instance, has a vivid geographical setting (the beach with its waves "roaring alongside" and sand hissing "like fat"), but on the beach is the bird of the poem's title ("finical, awkward, / in a state of controlled panic"). If any evidence, besides the text, were needed to demonstrate the use of this image of a sandpiper who is "a student of Blake" to stand for the poet herself, it could be found in Bishop's speech upon accepting the 1976 Neustadt International Award from the University of Oklahoma. She referred to herself as "having spent most of my life timorously pecking around the coastlines of the world".

Rather than separate Carter's selection of Bishop's poetry into the human and the geographical (since most of the poems contain elements of both), it is more useful to distinguish between those texts which deal with artistic creativity--the private person attempting to place herself in a public context ("Anaphora", "Sandpiper" and "View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress")--and those which, rather, show the private person simply being private ("Argument", "Insomnia" and "O Breath"). This second group, on the face of it, is concerned with
love, but, even in "O Breath", where the loved one is present, in bed beside the speaker, there is no communication between them: the speaker is physically close—close enough to observe the "nine black hairs / four around one // five the other nipple"—but still feels "never with" her companion.

Carter's distribution of the poems might be represented in the following diagrammatic fashion:

```
Private/Public   Private
   "Anaphora"
   "Argument"
   "Sandpiper"
   "Insomnia"
   "A View of the Capitol . . . "
   "O Breath"
```

The two interlaced cycles are distinguished musically, since the first group of settings have relatively quick tempos which gain in momentum as the cycle proceeds, whilst the other group slows—in "O Breath"—almost to a halt. This much is not clear from the metronome markings ascribed to the individual songs, rather it depends both upon the actual speed of the notes and, as Carter warns his analysts, upon what one actually hears. For example, the speed of presentation of the oboe's chirruping in "Sandpiper" is certainly greater than anything in "View of the Capitol", but the velocity
of the music as a whole in the former song is lessened by its comparatively static background. Each group, then, moves to an opposite extreme, the penultimate song being the fastest of the whole cycle, the final song, its slowest. A Mirror shares this procedure with Berg's Lyric Suite, a work which Carter has cited as an early influence on him. (Edwards 35)

8.6. Lowell and Carter: In Sleep, in Thunder

In Sleep, in Thunder must be considered alongside A Mirror on Which to Dwell since, structurally, it both closely resembles and contrasts with the earlier cycle. It is possible to perceive three distinct structures in Carter's In Sleep. As with A Mirror, there are six poems in the Lowell cycle. In his preface to the published score, Carter divides the six into "three primarily about the poet's personal relationships, and three about his crises of religious belief". But the composer also told Schiff: "There are three poems about women and three about God" ("In Sleep, in Thunder: Elliott Carter's portrait of Robert Lowell" in Tempo 142, 4). It is curious that, in this statement, Carter

^ Henceforth ISIT.
fails to say which poems are which, and it is certainly feasible to arrive at more than one interpretation of the mooted division. As with Bishop's poems, such distinctions are seldom clear cut.

Lowell's late poetry is heavily autobiographical. This is hardly unusual in itself: Bishop and Ashbery, too, employ autobiography, and Lowell's earlier book, *Life Studies* (1959), is a family album of his famous New England ancestors. However, by the time he began to write his extended and much revised collection, *Notebook* (1967-70), Lowell's work had become, for those close to him, often embarrassingly personal. By the time of *The Dolphin* (1973), he was not above lifting fragments of letters and telephone conversations, from his daughter Harriet and ex-wife Elizabeth Hardwick and including them verbatim (or, perhaps worse, distorting them) in his poetry. After reading *The Dolphin*, Elizabeth Bishop wrote to Lowell: "One can use one's life a [sic] material--one does, anyway--but these letters--aren't you violating a trust?" (qtd. in Hamilton 423). It is from among these poems that Carter made his selection. "Dolphin" and "Careless Night" are taken from *The Dolphin*, "Harriet" is from *For Lizzie and Harriet* and the other poems appear in *History*. All three volumes
appeared in 1973, although earlier versions of the four texts not from *The Dolphin* had been published in *Notebook*.

If Lowell's marital break-up and his unstable mental condition were frequently the subject matter of his late poetry, another fundamental preoccupation, running as an undercurrent through the texts of *In Sleep, in Thunder*, is the relationship between the poet and his God. Lowell's rejection of Catholicism was as ardent as his faith had once been devout. Whether or not the subject of a particular poem is overtly spiritual, images relating to Lowell's personal life attest to his fixation on religious doubt. In "Dies Irae", for instance, the poet calls his bouts of insanity days "when I am Satan's" and, in "Careless Night", the Christ-Child becomes a metaphor for his own "late-born child", but the "drifter shepherds have left this field". As with Bishop's poems in *A Mirror on Which to Dwell*, where geographical metaphor can be applied to domestic life, where the public poet and private person collide, so, with the poet of *In Sleep*, there is a volatile interchangeability of the metaphysical and the worldly. The verbal clarity and precision of Bishop, however, is frequently replaced in Lowell's work by a lexical and syntactic obliquity, which
sometimes obscures the poetry's meaning and sometimes renders it frighteningly immediate.

Schiff insists that the structure of In Sleep is quite different from that of A Mirror (ISIT 4). He accepts the alternating "double sequence of fast and slow movements" in the latter, and contrasts this with the structure of In Sleep, in which he perceives the first song, "Dolphin", to be "set apart from the others . . . The five succeeding movements [forming] an arch whose keystone is 'Dies Irae'". Schiff's evidence for the separation of "Dolphin" from the rest of the cycle appears to hinge on its scoring, which is for strings alone, and which Schiff suggests provides a link with the private world of Carter's string quartets. In fact, each of the six songs has a different instrumentation (though it is true none has such reduced forces as "Dolphin") and both the poetry and the music of the opening movement link it to the rest of the piece. As already discussed, it is equally possible to view "Anaphora" as a detached prelude to the Bishop cycle, but ultimately it must be understood as a fully integrated element in the two interleaved sequences of A Mirror. Taking Carter's preface to the score as a guide, a similar interleaving may be seen to obtain in In Sleep, in Thunder:
Viewed in this way, the cycle not only has its alternating sequences in common with A Mirror, it also shares the pattern of decreasing and increasing velocity: the settings of poems dealing with personal relationships become slower; those concerning the poet's faith become faster. However, Carter's alternative account, cited by Schiff, indicates a third possible interpretation of the formal lay-out:
Of the three versions of *In Sleep*'s ground plan, it is (pace Schiff) the second, based on the composer's preface, which seems the most convincing. But other explications are by no means invalid. Lowell's poetry--particularly his late work--is not only complex in its formal design, its syntax and its diction, it is also often semantically abstruse. In providing an equally recondite structure for his song cycle, Carter achieves a thoroughly appropriate musical vehicle for Lowell's words and provides, as Schiff suggests, a "portrait" of the poet (ISIT 2-9). It is tempting, here, to draw a comparison between *In Sleep, in Thunder* and Boulez's rather more ambitious "portrait de Mallarmé", *Pli selon pli*. For all the obvious differences (the latter is nearly four times longer, it uses a large orchestra and Boulez employs not only complete poems, but also fragments) the similarities are striking: both composers construct musical devices--large-scale and small-scale--which reflect the lexical and structural idiosyncrasies of the literary texts to which they respond; both composers are primarily concerned with poetic form, revealing and commenting on it through their music. Boulez goes so far as to "take it for granted that the listener has read the poem, is aware of its direct meaning, and has assimilated the data on which the composer builds" (*Orientations* 175), and is consequently better able
to focus on these matters of form. Carter also concentrates on such considerations, writing in his preface to *In Sleep*: "What attracted me about these texts were their rapid, controlled changes from passion to tenderness, to humor and to a sense of loss." He "reflects" these "constantly shifting qualities" in "music of continuous but coherent change, which to me is the most evocative kind."

8.7. Similarities of diction in *Syringa* and the Bishop and Lowell cycles

It is clear that the selection and ordering of texts in *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* and *In Sleep*, in *Thunder* were as much an act of composition as was the creation of musical contexts for those poems. The final form of *In Sleep* was apparently a late decision. Schiff writes that Carter sketched double the number of Lowell settings that appeared in the completed cycle, and states that Carter's final choice and ordering of the songs was "the result of much study and deliberation" (ISIT 4). Even in *Syringa*, which, from its outset, Carter and Ashbery conceived together, it was the composer who selected

---

7 In the following paragraph Schiff contradicts himself, writing of Carter's "casual approach to the ultimate shape of the Lowell Cycle".
the text from a number of poems which Ashbery produced specially for the project. It was also the composer who culled, from various sources, quotations from the ancient Greek to juxtapose with Ashbery's poem. The Greek texts fulfil a number of functions in this work. Ashbery's "Syringa" makes consistent use of the Orpheus myth as an allegory for a personal loss to which the poem's speaker alludes, at first elliptically and later rather dismissively ("it is no longer / Material for a poem"). The diction of "Syringa" is, for the most part, everyday, conversational, non-poetic, and the reader must guess at the poem's emotional content. In supplementing Ashbery's poem with the Greek texts, Carter provided himself with a verbal strand at once more formal than Ashbery's and better suited to emotional declamation. The Greek texts fill in the "hidden syllables" of Ashbery's "Syringa".

Although the Ashbery text in Syringa is often colloquial in its diction, eliciting from Carter's mezzo-soprano a strikingly flexible style of delivery, there are instances in the Bishop and Lowell texts of similar informality: Bishop's air force Band "is playing hard and loud, but--queer-- / the music doesn't quite come through"; Lowell "would have given / the janitor three months rent" for a room "Across the Yard" from his rehearsing soprano.
But it is Ashbery's text which most consistently and consciously inhabits the domain of the everyday, and it is Ashbery's text which elicits from Carter, in his preface to the score, the instruction to his singer to "maintain a very simple and straightforward delivery, even if this requires slight adjustments of the notated rhythm."

8.8. Carter's vocal writing

It is possible to detect a development in vocal style from *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* to *In Sleep, in Thunder*—a development for which, in one sense, *Syringa* may have been responsible. Writing of *Syringa*, Rorem complains that Carter's "premise for word-setting is too opposed to mine for me ever to see things his way" (225), and yet of *In Sleep, in Thunder* Rorem writes that he would not "have done so differently, in the vocal line, with such texts" (442). Reading (as one must) between the lines of Rorem's journal, the diarist appears to have perceived (and grudgingly approved of) an extra lyricism in the tenor's part of *In Sleep*. It is possible that the gestural, melismatic outpouring of the bass voice in *Syringa* might have led Carter to employ a broader lyrical brush with his vocal line in *In Sleep*. But, if lyricism seems heightened in
this work, it is partly because the vocal line, though not tonally derived, frequently seems related to a rather expanded tonal harmony (Ex.9).

If there are some minor variations in Carter's treatment of the voice from one work to the next, they are small beer set next to what is, in general, a profoundly unified approach to text-setting. Carter seems less interested in the singing voice *qua* voice, than in a singer's ability to project a text. His vocal writing is predominantly syllabic, presenting the poetry as simply and directly as possible. There are two striking exceptions to this general rule, namely the Orphic bass voice in *Syringa* and the final song, "O Breath", in *A Mirror on Which to Dwell*. In the case of the former, the singer's text is in ancient Greek, so, forming an undercurrent to the mezzo-soprano's Ashbery poem, the bass's vocal line already contains a strong element of stylisation. In addition, the bass voice in *Syringa* sings as though from another world, commenting on Ashbery's lines and providing a background to them which is at once emotional in tone and classical in reference. Besides this, the text comprises a series of quotations and fragments which benefit from a musically florid treatment which lends them a sense of cohesion (Ex.10).
In "O Breath", the melismatic material is allocated principally to the first two words of the song--"O Breath". Indeed the first of these is turned into a series of what are really brief vocalises (Ex.11). The setting of these words in the song's opening bars is also the only example of verbal repetition in the entire triptych. But, in fact, the words "O Breath" are not a part of Bishop's poem; they are its title. Bishop's actual poetry (like Ashbery's and Lowell's) is given a far simpler vocal treatment. In Syringa, the mezzo-soprano sings Ashbery's text in a highly naturalistic manner—something close to the conversational tone of the original: there are 42 instances where a syllable is allocated two pitches and only four occasions when three pitches are given; Carter sets more than 95 per cent of Ashbery's syllables to single pitches.

In A Mirror and In Sleep, the word-setting is equally syllabic; in each cycle the second song is entirely syllabic. In Sleep contains four examples of three-note melismas (in the first and last songs) and three examples of four-note melismas (all in the final song). Similarly, A Mirror contains a three-note melisma in its first song and, after the words "O Breath", the final song contains two four-note and two six-note melismas and one of eight notes.
The scarcity of melismatic writing in Carter's vocal lines leads one to enquire precisely where, in terms of the text, such moments actually occur. From a purely vocal point of view, Carter's melismas are well placed, they lie gratefully for the voice and are always sung on long, open vowels. Their semantic function is also perfectly traditional: they are frequently associated with words which describe movement ("some--thing mov--ing" and "fly--ing" in "O Breath"; "wan--d'ring" in "Dolphin"; "The serpent walked on foot" in "In Genesis"). This application is much as one encounters it in the vocal "word painting" of the high Renaissance or the baroque period; Carter's musical observance of the characteristic English trochee is Purcellian.  

8.9. Instrumental Obbligatos

Much of the vocal writing in Carter's later work is underpinned or counterpoised with a solo instrument: in A Mirror on Which to Dwell there is the double bass of "Argument" and the oboe of "Sandpiper"; in Syringa, the Orphic guitar; in In Sleep, in Thunder,
the rehearsing trumpet of "Across the Yard" and the trombone of "Dies Irae".

It is tempting to draw a comparison between these obbligato instruments and those of the cantatas of J.S. Bach. Carter has acknowledged that his exposure to Bach's cantatas, as a student in Nadia Boulanger's class, remains a "central musical experience" (Edwards 49). Boulanger's students were required to sight-sing their way through these cantatas, largely as a form of aural training, and, for Carter, the experience of confronting these scores was indelible. And yet, Carter's use of obbligato instruments in his vocal works is both like and unlike Bach's use. It is true that, when they appear in Carter's works, there is a strong relationship between these instrumental solos and the voice; there is a sense in which, as in Bach, the two form a duet, apart from the main instrumental body. But, whereas Bach's obbligato instruments have an occasionally symbolic function outside their essentially musical one, in Carter's songs there is often an identification of the instrument with a central figure or theme in the text. The obbligato takes on an illustrative function (see 8.10).
The use of the instrumental obbligato in the vocal works also relates to an increasing preoccupation with solo instruments in Carter's other music. Since 1975, Carter has produced four solo works, Night Fantasies (1980) for piano, Changes (1983) for guitar, Riconoscenza per Goffredo Petrassi (1984) for violin and Scrivo in vento (1991) for flute; he has also written two concertos--for oboe (1987) and for violin (1990). In addition, A Symphony of Three Orchestras has the wide-ranging lyricism of a solo trumpet at the work's opening, and the brief orchestral Remembrance (1988) gives a prominent solo to the tenor-bass trombone. There is a striking degree of overlap between the instruments which have obbligato roles in the vocal works and those allocated solos in these non-vocal works (oboe, guitar, trumpet and trombone are common to both groups of pieces). Furthermore, the use of solo instruments in Carter's non-vocal works sometimes carries verbal associations: the solo trumpet of A Symphony relates directly to Hart Crane's image of the free-wheeling seagull, whereas Carter has said that the trombone in Remembrance represents, on one level, the speaking voice of Paul Fromm, to whose memory the work is dedicated (BBC Oct. 1989).
8.10. Musical Illustration and Reference

Although it has been stated that Carter's vocal music refuses to "read" the poetry, to offer a composer's interpretation of the literary texts, there are, nonetheless, many examples of instrumental employment in the three scores which relate directly to ideas in the poems. Some of these, as suggested above, are provided by the instrumental obbligatos: the oboe becomes Bishop's "Sandpiper"; the trumpet is Lowell's "Brunnhilde", flinging "her high aria to the trash . . . ."

Sometimes the entire accompaniment has this function: in "O Breath" the faltering instrumental ensemble, like Berg's barrack-room sleepers in Wozzeck, presents chords which rise and fall, on the verge of snoring. These are instances in which Carter musically illustrates his literary texts.

But there are also examples of the use of instrumental sonority, which act both as references outside and comments upon those texts. The guitar in Syringa is closely associated with the bass voice: in the most obviously programmatic sense, it is Orpheus's lute. In "Dies Irae", the trombone emerges from the full ensemble to claim an agile solo. Speaking of Remembrance, Carter has linked the solo trombone of that piece and of "Dies Irae" to the Tuba mirum of Mozart's Requiem (BBC
Oct. 1989). In the context of the Lowell setting, however, the trombone additionally and irresistibly recalls Mozart's other famous—and related—use of the instrument, in *Don Giovanni*.

Instances of both illustration and reference are dealt with in the context of the analyses of the individual songs of *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* which comprise the following chapter.
9. A Mirror on Which to Dwell

9.1. Overview

Carter's *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* is a day-to-night cycle—specifically, a dawn-to-mid-night cycle, beginning "with so much ceremony" and ending in insomniac loneliness as the poet watches her lover sleep. For its composer, it is, arguably, a turning point of sorts, not because it was his return to vocal writing, and still less because it marks the beginning of a simplification of his musical style (cf. Whittall 234), but because it provided Carter with the opportunity to explain his musical aesthetic in the context of a piece itself. To that extent, *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* is the first part of musical autobiography.

9.2. "Anaphora"

From Elizabeth Bishop's first collection of poetry, *North and South* (1946), Carter selected the final poem, "Anaphora", to open the cycle *A Mirror On Which To Dwell*. 
Anaphora

Each day with so much ceremony
begins with birds, with bells,
with whistles from a factory;
such white-gold skies our eyes
first open on, such brilliant walls
that for a moment we wonder
"Where is the music coming from, the
energy?"
The day was meant for what ineffable
creature
we must have missed?" Oh promptly he
appears and takes his earthly nature
instantly, instantly falls
victim of long intrigue,
assuming memory and mortal
mortal fatigue.

More slowly falling into sight
and showering into stippled faces,
darkening, condensing all his light;
in spite of all the dreaming
squandered upon him with that look,
suffers our uses and abuses,
sinks through the drift of bodies,
sinks through the drift of classes,
to evening to the beggar in the park
who, weary, without lamp or book
prepares stupendous studies:
the fiery event
of every day in endless
endless assent.

The word "anaphora" is from the Greek, and literally means "a carrying back". For the first song in a cycle which marks the composer's return to vocal writing after nearly 30 years, this title is certainly apt.

In literature, anaphora is the term which denotes the repetition of a word or a phrase in successive clauses and contexts. In Bishop's poem, there are two types of anaphora. The first involves the rhetorical repetition of the word or phrase at the beginning of a series of clauses: "with birds, with bells, / with whistles from a factory" and "sinks through the drift of bodies, / sinks through the drift of classes". But anaphora can also refer to the immediate repetition of a word (still in a new context); for example, "instantly, instantly", "mortal / mortal" and "endless / endless". Carter responds to Bishop's literary use of anaphora with a range of inexact repetitions in his music.
Before commenting on Carter's musical solutions for "Anaphora", there appears to be one further significance in Carter's choice of this poem. The composition of A Symphony of Three Orchestras, which swiftly followed that of the Bishop cycle, contains Carter's musical responses to Hart Crane's "The Bridge", a poem with striking resemblances to "Anaphora".

Both poems describe a fall. Besides the metaphorical fall implied and alluded to in each text, there is also a physical descent. This is partly achieved by the passage of day to night and consequently both poems open with evocations of dawn. Bishop's daybreak is altogether more startling and celebratory than Crane's, involving, as it does, "bells" and "whistles". But both mention birds. In Bishop's context ("birds... bells... whistles") we can assume they are noisy birds, and Crane tells us that his bird is a seagull (which we know to be noisy).

Other points of correspondence between Crane's and Bishop's imagery include the swift descent from the bird-populated dawn skies into a synthetic, mechanised, work-filled world of humans. Crane's poem makes its abrupt descent to the office and "Some page of figures to be filed away; / --Till
elevators drop us from our day". Bishop's whistles come "from a factory".

If Carter's soundscape in A Symphony of Three Orchestras is vividly pictorial (see 8.1.), it is almost equally so in "Anaphora". Carter's music here deals in repetitious, ostinato-like figures of surging energy, since bells, birds and factory whistles—not to mention the poet's use of language--are also repetitious. But there are, naturally, more differences than similarities between these musical works and the most important is structural. A Symphony of Three Orchestras—like Crane's poem—moves from the free-wheeling of the seagull/trumpet at the work's opening to the automatic sterility of banal wind ostinati, locked and immobile at the work's memorable conclusion. In Carter's "Anaphora" the process is more or less the opposite. Once again it is Bishop's text which provides the clue to the music's carefully wrought structure.

The poem employs imagery which portrays the human condition not only as a descent from dawn to dusk, but also in terms of social degradation. The "ineffable creature / we must have missed . . . appears and takes his earthly nature" but "instantly / falls victim of long intrigue" and is encumbered by "memory" and "mortal fatigue." Who is the
"ineffable creature"? Willard Spiegelman has suggested that the unnamed figure is "Hyperion-Apollo, the Romantics' fair-haired youth of morn" (Bloom Bishop 98). He is the sun personified, but he is also Adam, notwithstanding his Puckishly prompt appearance. As he "sinks . . . to evening" his human attributes are affirmed. He "sinks through the drift of bodies . . . of classes . . . to the beggar in the park"--the poet/necromancer, identified by "lamp and book", the absence of which implies society's indifference and neglect. Even so, the poet "prepares stupendous studies" because that is what a poet must do, whether or not society values it. The poet's ability to turn "the fiery event / of every day" into "endless assent" is shamanistic. The "endless assent" is infinitely affirmative (conjuring a world comprising, in cummings's words, "everything / which is natural which is infinite which is yes" [663]). But "assent" also has a punning symmetry. The falling and sinking is balanced by this "endless assent"/ascent, and the sun is carried back (as with anaphora) to repeat its appearance at the beginning of the next day.

The structure of Carter's setting is rather rigid, and derives from Bishop's own structure, from her grammar and diction, and from her subject. Carter's
music for "Anaphora" is both complex and severely restricted. In addition to the soprano voice, he employs the full ensemble of nine players (alto flute, oboe, clarinet, vibraphone, piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass). Each performer has an identical set of pitches which remain fixed in their given octaves. The pitches form a 12-note chord and the positions of the individual pitches are dictated by the vocal range of the soprano (Ex.12). In fact, as Schiff points out, the twelve note chord is seldom heard as such (MEC 283-5). Instead, a six note chord (0,1,2,4,7,8) is mapped onto the rigid grid of pitches in ever-changing transpositions. This is the all-triad hexachord which Carter numbers 6-35 and Forte calls 6-17 (MEC 325; Forte 180). The chord's appearances in "Anaphora" more or less systematically exploit and emphasise the 12 characteristic triads. The flexibility inherent in Carter's strict design is illustrated, as Schiff explains, in the piece's final stages, where the piano and vibraphone play triads whose seeming variety disguises the fact that only two basic chords are in use: 3-2 and 3-6 in Carter's terminology; 3-9 and 3-11 in Forte's (Ex.13).

It is typical of Carter's music that the underlying temporal structure, as well as the moment to moment
rhythmic development of "Anaphora", both relate to and, in a sense, help to clarify the harmonic character of the piece. The temporal structure consists of two pulses, principally demarcated by the vibraphone and piano, which define an extremely slow polymetre. The piano chords appear every 23 semi-quavers until the metric shift at bar 22. After this, the piano plays every 23 quintuplet semi-quavers--its pulse remaining regular, even when the overall tempo of the music has slowed. And from the tempo change, the piano's pulse is overlaid by another, associated with the vibraphone, playing every 13 triplet quavers. The resulting polymetre is in the ratio of 65:69 (piano:vibraphone) (Ex.14).

This relationship is even more complex than Schiff suggests, however, since, as Ex.14 demonstrates, the piano's entries are grouped into larger numerical components of 69 (comprising three cycles of 23) and the vibraphone's into 65 (five cycles of 13). These groupings correspond inversely to the pulse ratio.

The urban setting of Bishop's poem is not specific, but the "white-gold skies", the "darkening" as we descend, "the drift of bodies... the drift of classes" and "the beggar in the park" all suggest, as Andrew Porter observes, the composer's home town
of New York (308). This is the same setting as for Crane's *The Bridge* and Carter's *A Symphony of Three Orchestras*. It is probably fanciful to relate the rigid structure of this piece's metrical skeleton, particularly the interlocking nature of its numerical components, to the grid system of streets in that city. It is a comparison, however, which seems less forced, set in the context of the teeming surface activity of the music.

The musical lines which scurry across this metrical grid are notable for their fluency, their apparent spontaneity and, given the severe restrictions imposed on tessitura, their remarkable abundance of colour and character. All this is typical of the composer's tendency to establish a tension between the fixed and free elements in his scores. In this case the tension is not only between the percussive stabs of the unchanging pulses and the arabesques of the other instruments, but also between the nature of those arabesques and the pitch restrictions imposed upon them.

9.3. "Argument"

The second song in Carter's cycle sets a poem from Bishop's second volume of Poetry, *A Cold Spring*
(1955). The poem's rhetorical nature (in keeping with its title), disguises the essential semantic ambiguity wrought through Bishop's use of diction. Who are the adversaries in this argument? The poet and her lover? "Days" and "Distance"? Time and space?

Argument

Days that cannot bring you near
or will not,
Distance trying to appear
something more than obstinate,
argue argue argue with me
endlessly
neither proving you less wanted nor less dear.

Distance: Remember all that land
beneath the plane;
that coastline
of dim beaches deep in sand
stretching indistinguishably
all the way,
all the way to where my reasons end?

Days: And think
of all those cluttered instruments,
one to a fact,
canceling each other's experience;
how they were
like some hideous calendar
"Compliments of Never & Forever, Inc."

The intimidating sound
of these voices
we must separately find
can and shall be vanquished:
Days and Distance disarrayed again
and gone
both for good and from the gentle
battleground.

The ambiguity is partly the result of Bishop's cool
language. This argument is no screaming match,
rather, as Craig Raine has suggested, "There is pain
but no turmoil in Elizabeth Bishop's measured work
... [she] examines life, even in extremity, with
the calm and precision of a gifted family doctor"
(340).

Carter is almost equally cool in his musical
treatment of the poem. The vocal line is entirely
syllabic and the rhythms assigned to it are
essentially those of naturalistic speech. The
composer emphasises the "Days"/"Distance" polarity
by allocating each word a specific pitch; "Days" is always sung on G sharp; "Distance" is always on the B above it (the "calling" interval of a minor third, appropriate to a setting of a poem which, at one level, concerns a distant lover). Moreover, the repetition of the word "argue" is allocated those same notes (Ex.15).

Carter again divides his ensemble in two, teaming up alto flute, bass clarinet, cello and a rather virtuoso, rhetorical solo double bass, all of whom play with considerable flexibility, and counterpoising them with scurrying piano and bongos, always at the same fast tempo. These two musical types are further distinguished by their pitch material, which consists of chords centred, respectively, around the voice's (and the poem's) G sharp and B. However, these chords are the Z-related chords 6-37 and 6-38 (in Carter's nomenclature), their identical interval vectors fundamentally linking the two instrumental groups harmonically, even as they go their own ways in terms of tempo, rhythm and articulation.\(^1\) Carter, here, has found a series of musical equivalents for

\(^1\) Schiff incorrectly identifies chord 6-38 as (0,1,2,5,8,9) and consequently misses the Z-relationship (MEC 289). In fact the chord is (0,1,2,5,6,9).
the tensions in Bishop's poem, the "Days and Distance disarrayed".

9.4. "Sandpiper"

The third song in the cycle is taken from Bishop's third collection, *Questions of Travel* (1965). For a poem of this period it is unusually autobiographical; her final work more typically inhabits this domain. The sandpiper is an image of the poet herself, a more optimistic characterisation than "the beggar in the park" of "Anaphora", though no less industrious: the beggar "prepares stupendous studies", whereas the sandpiper is merely "looking for something, something, something".

Sandpiper

The roaring alongside he takes for granted, and that every so often the world is bound to shake. He runs, he runs to the south, finical, awkward, in a state of controlled panic, a student of Blake.
The beach hisses like fat. On his left, a sheet of interrupting water comes and goes and glazes over his dark and brittle feet. He runs, he runs straight through it, watching his toes.

--Watching, rather, the spaces of sand between them, where (no detail too small) the Atlantic drains rapidly backwards and downwards. As he runs, he stares at the dragging grains.

The world is a mist. And then the world is minute and vast and clear. The tide is higher or lower. He couldn't tell you which. His beak is focussed; he is preoccupied, looking for something, something, something.

Poor bird, he is obsessed!
The millions of grains are black, white, tan, and gray, mixed with quartz grains, rose and amethyst.
The avian subject of the poem is represented by a chirping oboe. One significant factor, governing both the poet's choice of bird and the composer's musical translation of it, might be the Blakean allusion. The words "sand", "grains" and "world", add up to a scrambled reference to Blake's "Auguries of Innocence" and its first line: "To see the world in a grain of sand." Blake's "Auguries" in turn relate to his Songs of Innocence and Experience, in which piping is associated with the innocence of childhood. In "Infant Sorrow" from Songs of Experience, the piping is metaphoric:

Into the dangerous world I leapt,

Helpless, naked, piping loud . . . . (2-3)

In the "Introduction" to Songs of Innocence, the piper, who is depicted in the work's frontispiece, is addressed by a child on a cloud:

"Pipe a song about a lamb."

So I piped with merry cheer;

"Piper, pipe that song again."

So I piped; he wept to hear. (5-8)

Vaughan Williams chose a solo oboe to accompany the tenor voice in his Ten Blake Songs (1956).
However, Carter does not employ a piping instrument merely to stand for a piping bird or to enrich the Blakean reference, he is responding to the poet's own identification with the sandpiper, to the poem's autobiographical element, by giving an obbligato role to his own instrument (Carter had played the oboe as a student). Besides Bishop's description of her "timorously pecking" self (see 8.5.), there are images in this poem which are strikingly autobiographical. The sandpiper "runs, he runs to the south", as Bishop herself ran away to Brazil. For the bird, "The world is a mist. And then the world is / minute and vast and clear": it would be hard to find a better description of the tendency in Bishop's poetry to focus on the familiar detail of the everyday, then suddenly to switch to the general, the universal. But perhaps best of all is the preoccupied bird "looking for something, something, something". The line not only sums up the poet's search for the correct image or phrase, but, more than that (in a line which echoes the previous song's "argue argue argue"), it becomes the search itself: she already has the rhythm--the "something, something, something"--but has yet to discover the precise words.

Clearly, the echo of "Argument", alluded to above, is Carter's rather than Bishop's (it was the
composer who selected and juxtaposed the poems). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that he should also choose to provide a musical echo at the very beginning of "Sandpiper". The first sounds, from the obbligato oboe, are an instant recall of the final moment of "Argument" (Ex.16); it is as though Carter wishes to stress the continuity of his group of songs and their inter-relatedness.

The oboe is indeed almost more than an obbligato instrument in this song; it is as though the oboe is the soloist, and the voice the obbligato. This is at once both a Boulezian "irrigation source" and also a rather striking instance of Carter's intertextual play between words and music. He not only allows the words to "set" the music, as much as the music sets the words, he also has Bishop's poetry relate to and serve to explicate one of the most typical devices in all of Carter's work: metrical modulation. In "Sandpiper" the pecking oboe scurries along the shore at 525 notes to the minute. It remains, independently, at this speed, even as the voice and ensemble shift their tempi (Ex.17).

To be sure, the ensemble's flexible music is a metaphor for the "sheet / of interrupting water" which "comes and goes," but the oboe/sandpiper
remains "focussed; he is preoccupied". Carter's use of metrical modulation to allow one (or more) instruments to retain their independent tempo, whilst having other instruments speed up or slow down, is so widespread in his work, that this epiphanous, poetic image—explanatory of the device—comes as something of a revelation. (In this context, it is worth restating the especially autobiographical nature of the song: Bishop's identification with the bird; Carter's use of his own instrument to represent it.)

9.5. Insomnia

"Insomnia" (and indeed both remaining poems in this cycle) come from A Cold Spring. Once again, Carter's juxtaposition of this poem with "Sandpiper" points up a number of correspondences, verbal and musical. Where, in the previous poem, the sandpiper's "world is a mist. And then the world is / minute and vast and clear," here, the distant "moon in the bureau mirror / looks out a million miles." These are shifts of perspective, typical of Bishop's poetry, but made the more telling by virtue of their close proximity in Carter's cycle.
Insomnia

The moon in the bureau mirror looks out a million miles (and perhaps with pride, at herself, but she never, never smiles) far and away beyond sleep, or perhaps she's a daytime sleeper.

By the Universe deserted, she'd tell it to go to hell, and she'd find a body of water, or a mirror, on which to dwell. So wrap up care in a cobweb and drop it down the well into that world inverted where left is always right, where the shadows are really the body, where we stay awake all night, where the heavens are shallow as the sea is now deep, and you love me.

The anthropomorphised moon, whose wakefulness matches the poet's, offers a lesson in self-possession, substituting narcissism for dependency on others. From out of a shimmering, Bartókian
night music emerges a glacial surface in which the moon may admire herself (Ex.18).

This is a continuation of previous musical ideas. On the one hand the marimba and viola's fluttering night music continues the piano-bongo motifs of "Argument" and the "finical" oboe's "pecking" from "Sandpiper", rushing on at its own tempo, seemingly oblivious to the fact that this is essentially a slow song. On the other hand is a development of the music associated with the calmly hissing beach in "Sandpiper", now even calmer and higher in tessitura (piccolo and violin) to represent the mirror (after all, glass is made with sand) (Ex.19).

Such is the moon's self-confident demeanour that, "By the Universe deserted, / she'd tell it to go to hell", content instead to "find a body of water, / or a mirror, on which to dwell". Carter's appropriately dramatic setting of this line, underpinned by the marimba's nocturnal flourishes, is immediately becalmed by the childlike banality of the following lines. Indeed, the diction of Bishop's "Insomnia" is frequently childlike, in spite of the adult sentiments expressed. The incantation to "wrap up care in a cobweb" is sung to a naive, "nursery rhyme" figure, followed by some
deliberately trite word painting for "and drop it down the well / into that world inverted." This is continued in the perfectly audible mirror of palindromic pitches "where left is always right" (Ex.20).

Throughout this section and in the following "dream" of a perfect, looking-glass world, the marimba and viola have stabilised, the former now producing gentle, soft-mallet rolls, the latter joining the violin and piccolo in high, floating stasis. The music captures the mood of the inverted world which the poet conjures, resembles, in both innocent tone and grammatic structure, e e cummings's "keen city / in the sky" in "who knows if the moon's / a balloon":

where

always

it's

Spring)and everyone's

in love and flowers pick themselves (12-16)
9.6. "View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress"

In many ways, this is the cycle's climax. It contains the fastest music of the entire work and also the most flexible: the "music of continuous but coherent change," typical of its composer and, according to him "the most evocative kind". But it is not only the piece which most reflects Carter's principal compositional concerns, it is the piece in which he takes stock of his national musical heritage: "View of the Capitol . . . " is bursting with musical gestures from John Philip Sousa, filtered through a splintered, Ivesian lens.

View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress

Moving from left to left, the light is heavy on the Dome, and coarse. One small lunette turns it aside and blankly stares off to the side like a big white old wall-eyed horse.

On the east steps the Air Force Band in uniforms of Air Force blue

[^1] From the composer's introduction to the score of *In Sleep, in Thunder*. 
is playing hard and loud, but—queer—the music doesn't quite come through.

It comes in snatches, dim then keen, then mute, and yet there is no breeze. The giant trees stand in between. I think the trees must intervene,

catching the music in their leaves like gold-dust, till each big leaf sags. Unceasingly the little flags feed their limp stripes into the air, and the band's efforts vanish there.

Great shades, edge over, give the music room.
The gathered brasses want to go boom--boom.

This is also the poem which is the most extreme example of Bishop's public/private polarity. On the one hand are the pomp and (very public) circumstance of the Air Force band "playing hard and loud" on the steps of the Capitol (which, since it is symbolic of American democracy, and belongs to the people is, perhaps the most public place in the United States). On the other hand, the music the band plays "doesn't quite come through" to the private listener, deep in
her own revery, and wondering, Alice-like, whether perhaps the intervening trees are "catching the music in their leaves / like gold-dust, till each big leaf sags."^4

Carter's setting begins with an instant continuation of his, by now, familiar musical polarity: the Maestoso marking at the head of the score is undermined by the gently stabbing piano flourishes, soon imitated by the flute and the clarinet (Ex. 21). Indeed these flourishes (by bar 7 indicated to be played "angrily") will eventually (bar 24) become the quasi da lontano march with snare drum which "doesn't quite come through". By contrast, the Maestoso chords from the opening bars are quickly transformed into yet another appearance of the drifting, glacial music already heard in "Sandpiper" and "Insomnia" (Ex. 22).

This occurs, moreover, at the poet's words which describe the light reflecting off the dome's "small lunette" which "blankly stares off to the side"—in Schiff, indeed, suggests that this is more than a poem concerning public/private polarity; it is about a poet's relationship with a government (MEC 293). In this context, it is significant that the view of the Capitol is from a library. Schiff goes on to propose that the "gathered brasses" which "want to / boom--boom"—words which are whispered "intensely" in Carter's setting—are a comment on the Cold War (the poem was first published in 1955).
other words, another reflecting surface like the wet, hissing sand in "Sandpiper" and the moon's looking-glass in "Insomnia". As these transformations take place, the viola begins to assume an important obbligato role, in itself a transformation of the restless, insomniac night music it shared with the marimba in the previous song. Here, however, the viola's function is not to disrupt the calm, but to provide a musical continuum, a linking thread which strings together the disparate "snatches, dim then keen, / then mute" of the military march. The viola's function links it to the slow polyrhythm of piano and vibraphone in "Anaphora," although here the continuum is more rhetorical than mathematically precise.

9.7. O Breath

Out of the "heavy" late afternoon sunlight of "A View of the Capitol . . . " the cycle returns to the bedroom, in a poem which more clearly invokes insomnia than does the poem which bears that title.
O Breath

Beneath that loved and celebrated breast,
silent, bored really blindly veined,
grieves, maybe lives and lets live, passes bets,
something moving but invisibly,
and with what clamour why restrained
I cannot fathom even a ripple.
(See the thin flying of nine black hairs four around one five the other nipple, flying almost intolerably on your own breath.)

Equivocal, but what we have in common's bound to be there,
whatever we must own equivalents for,
something that maybe I could bargain with
and make a separate peace beneath within if never with.

Bishop's use of the mid-line caesura in this poem (the only example in all her poetry) not only evokes the rise and fall of her sleeping lover's breast, it also, surely, refers to the characteristic line breaks in the poetry of Emily Dickinson; without stating it, Bishop is once more identifying herself
with the figure of the poet, just as she did in "Anaphora" ("the beggar in the park"), in "Sandpiper" ("a student of Blake") and in "View of the Capitol . . ." (" . . . from the Library of Congress").

As Bishop's lover sleeps, the poetic tone reaches its most intimate yet in the cycle, not simply because we, the readers, observe with Bishop the tiniest details ("the thin flying // of nine black hairs / four around one // five the other nipple"), but because the point of view is so much the poet's that we share the intimacy; it is as though we are "in bed" with the poet and her lover.

Carter's music immediately captures the serenity of the scene. The instrumental accompaniment, scored for the full ensemble, employs alto flue, English horn and bass clarinet, with their darker timbres (as distinct from the E flat clarinet which characterised the final stages of "View of the Capitol . . ."). It is prevailingly slow and quite music, though given a lilt when the voice enters to make sense of the 12/8 metre. Singing "as if out of breath", the soprano's vocalise-like repetitions of the poem's title imitate the somnolent moans of the lover (Ex.11). This even carries over into the poem
Schiff has pointed out the slow, complex, three-part polyrhythm of the ensemble (MEC 294). These begin in the first bar, and resemble the piano-vibraphone cross-play of "Anaphora":

Every 43 \( \frac{4}{4} \) (beginning in alto flute)
Every 37 \( \frac{5}{4} \) (beginning in viola)
Every 65 \( \frac{3}{4} \) (beginning in cello and bass)

Even were this polyrhythm heavily accented, it would be difficult to detect with the ear. As it is, the notes tend to begin extremely quietly, swelling (like the breathing in the title) and dying away (Ex.24). The effect is of regular, gentle breathing, but it also provides a rigid structure which may have a secondary, illustrative function. Just as in "Anaphora" the piano/vibraphone's polyrhythm creates a grid in and around which runs the other, teemingly active instrumental lines (conjuring an abstract vision of New York City), here, the similarly implacable tripartite structure, created by the entire ensemble, meshes gently to entrap the poet in a relationship in which she can only hope to "bargain with" her lover, "and make a
Although the composer has stated that he was drawn to employ this cycle's reflective title by the fact that the work was a commission from the New York-based ensemble Speculum Musicae (a mirror of music), it is difficult not to see the title also as a statement of autobiographical intent--after all, how else does one paint a self-portrait?

The suggestion that Carter's music began to become simpler in *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* is clearly incorrect. Certainly, the textures of his instrumental writing are more transparent than formerly, allowing Bishop's text to speak for itself. But the composer seems well aware of the intertextual function of placing these poems in his music--so aware, indeed, that he has consciously sought out poetry which, on one level, speaks about his work. In *A Mirror*--as in many of the works which have followed--Carter's complex musical language of the 1960s and early 70s is distilled. That distillation is aided and perhaps even made possible by the music's interaction with Bishop's
words (and, later, Ashbery's and Lowell's), and those words allow the composer and his listeners to take stock of the richness of expression which characterises Carter's work. *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* is clarification, rather than simplification, and, to the extent that it marks the beginning of the clarification of a composer's life's work, it is the first volume of a musical autobiography which continues with *Syringa* and *In Sleep, in Thunder.*
10. Conclusion

A verbal art like poetry is reflective; it stops to think. Music is immediate, it goes on to become.

(Auden, qtd in Carter 256-57)

A text provides from the start definite conceptions and thereby rescues consciousness from that dreamier element of feeling without concepts . . .

(Hegel, qtd in Dahlhaus 29)

A musician . . . possesses an ability, based on rational theory and in accordance with music, to judge melodies and rhythms, as well as all kinds of song and the verses of poets.

(Boethius, qtd in Strunk 84)

. . . it isn't enough

To just go on singing.

(Ashbery "Syringa" 29-30)

The singing of songs is generally accepted to be one of the most fundamental of human impulses. The majority of the earliest musical manuscripts are of vocal music, and singing constitutes an important part of most musical traditions. Moreover, it is
almost a commonplace to find instrumentalists aspiring to vocal qualities in their playing--this is as true in the classical music of India as it was for Giulio Caccini. Similarly, the relationship between words and music has engendered a long-running debate whose origins apparently lie with Plato, who considered that meddling with the established order of things in the writing of songs might lead to political instability:

Men care most for the song, which is newest to the singer, lest anyone should praise this, thinking that the poet meant not new songs but new ways of singing. One should not praise such a thing nor take it up; one should be cautious in adopting a new kind of poetry and music, for this endangers the whole system. The ways of poetry and music are not changed anywhere without change in the most important laws of the city. (90)

In the late 20th century it is difficult, perhaps, to credit that the singing of songs might be such a vital issue, and yet, like it or not, most of us cannot avoid daily confrontation with one sort of song or another. No form of music has so colonised the globe as the pop song, and, since this music has the backing of an American-based multi-national
industry of gigantic proportions, there can be no doubt that the colonisation is political as well as aesthetic. To alter the status quo, to create, for example, a world-wide enthusiasm for banjo music, would, at least in the short term, engender considerable instability in the commerce of the United States. It is also worth noting the change which has occurred in this industry in recent years, perhaps best typified by the successful marketing of Madonna, based, as it is, not upon songs at all, but on the creation of an image. To an extent this has been true of pop music at least since Frank Sinatra's career began, but, in the 1940s, the image was always allied to the singing of songs. Madonna's image--in books and on video--is arguably far more important than what and how she sings.

Given such developments, the art song in the concert hall may appear a more specialist taste than ever. And yet, for those of us who write them, the relationship between words and music continues to be a fascinating one. On the one hand, a composer like Virgil Thomson was able, in his book *Music with Words*, to ignore most of the potential ramifications of the confluence of music and text; for Thomson, it was simply a matter of finding appropriate sounding melodic lines to fit to the words he was setting (in this context, "appropriate sounding" seems to have
implied little more than melodies which would do no violence to the natural rhythm of the words). Without doubt this is a useful starting point and it is one which concerns me as much as it seems to concern Elvis Costello or Elliott Carter.

But if theories of intertextuality—particularly as espoused by Kristeva—show us anything, it is that the "new articulation of the thetic" demanded by the "transposition of one ... sign system ... into another" creates a series of relationships of great complexity and flux. Words may comment on the very music which they inspire, on

The way music passes, emblematic
Of life and how you cannot isolate a note of it

And say it is good or bad ...

(Ashbery "Syringa" 36-38)

Music, equally, may speed up or slow down, obscure or replace, illustrate or seek to contradict its literary text.

As a composer working with words, it is that very state of flux in the relationship between music and literary text which most excites me. I like the unpredictability of their interaction, the clashes, coincidences, and shades of meaning thrown up "[a]s they happen along, bumping into one another, getting
along" (Ashbery "Syringa" 16). I am convinced of Auden's rightness in identifying the "reflective" nature of words and the "immediate" nature of music: for me, it is precisely the intertextual play of these disparate elements which is the fascination of song.
Musical Examples

Ex.1: Cage Aria, page 6
Ex. 2: Cage *Aria*, page 8
Ex.3: Stockhausen *Stimmung*, page of models for female voice
Ex. 4: Stockhausen *Stimmung* (Wollongong Version 1986), bass's score (fold out)
Ex. 5: Maxwell Davies Eight Songs for a Mad King, vocal tessitura

You are a pretty fellow;

I = 44

shrieking

UN-DO THE DOOR!

ha-has, who? has?

Ex. 6: Maxwell Davies Eight Songs for a Mad King, vocal notations from the first song

my kingdom is snakes! snakes and dancing, my kingdon is loud and glibbery.
Ex. 7: Maxwell Davies *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, quotation from Handel's *Messiah*
Ex. 8: Schultz, Fast Talking: The Last Words of Dutch Schultz, variations in vocal attack
Ex. 9: Carter In Sleep, in Thunder: 3. "Harriet", bars 40-48
FL.
E. H.
B* Cl.
Ba.
Pno.
Ten.
I
Vln. I
Vla.
Vcl.
D. B.

half... Juliet, already risen for the night on...
Ex. 10: Carter Syringa, bars 24-26
Ex. 11: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
6. "O Breath", vocal line, bars 5-8

Ex. 12: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
1. "Anaphora", 12-note chord encompassed within soprano tessitura
Vibraphone triad: 3-6 (0,3,7)

Piano triad: 3-2 (0,2,7)

Ex.13: Carter *A Mirror on Which to Dwell*:
1. "Anaphora", piano and vibraphone triads, bar 59 to end
Ex. 14: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
1. "Anaphora", pulse ratio
Ex. 15: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
2. "Argument", vocal line, bars 10 and 11

Ex. 16a: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
2. "Argument", bongo line, final bar

Ex. 16b: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
3. "Sandpiper", oboe line, first bar
Ex. 17: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
3. "Sandpiper", bars 22 and 23
4. Insomnia

Ex.18: Carter: A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
4. "Insomnia", beginning to bar 5
Ex. 19: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
4. "Insomnia", bars 10-16
Ex. 20: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
4. "Insomnia", vocal line, bars 23 and 24
Ex. 21: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
5. "View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress", bars 4-6
Ex. 22: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
5. "View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress", bars 38-41
Ex. 23: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
6. "O Breath", vocal line, bar 9

"loved and cele-, cele-brat-ed breast,"

\[
\text{\textcopyright 2023}\]

Ex. 24: Carter A Mirror on Which to Dwell:
6. "O Breath", beginning to bar 10
O, o breath, O, o breath, bree-theath, Be -neath that loved-
and cele-bre-breast, si-lent, bored rea-lly
Bibliography

1. Books


Buzacott, Martin. The Death of the Actor: 
Shakespeare on Page and Stage. London: 

Carter, Elliott. The Writings of Elliott Carter. 
Comp., Ed. and Annot. Else Stone and Kurt 

Conrad, Peter. A Song of Love and Death: The 

Culler, Jonathan. On Deconstruction: Theory and 
Criticism after Structuralism. London: 
Routledge, 1983.

cummings, e e. Complete Poems 1913-1962. New York: 
Harvest, 1980.


Eco, Umberto. The Limits of Interpretation. 

Edwards, Allen. Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: 
A Conversation with Elliott Carter. New York: 

Forte, Allen. The Structure of Atonal Music. New 


2. Articles and Papers


Schultz, Andrew. "There has to be a Reason' or 'Composition as Text Analysis'." New Music Australia Conference, University of Melbourne, 2-5 July 1992.


3. Radio and Television Programs


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track Number</th>
<th>Title/Artist</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chuck Berry: The Promised Land (2.20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruce Springsteen: The Promised Land (4.24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Beatles: From Me to You (1.57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elvis Costello: Possession (2.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ford/Blackman: PARABOLA (20.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annette Tesoriero, Richard More (voices), Bronwen Jones (bass clarinet), Daryl Pratt (percussion), Lisa Moore (piano)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ford/Blakely: THE LAUGHTER OF MERM (12.28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Song Company conducted by Roland Peelman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ford/Morgan: HARBOUR (17.40)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gerald English (tenor and conductor), Australian Chamber Orchestra, WASO 20th Ensemble conducted by David Stanhope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ford/Hall: WHISPERS (23.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words and Music 1: Ancestral Voices
Speech into Song

Words and Music 3: Getting the Sense Across
The Song Remains the Same