

The Gould Variations: Technology, Philosophy
And Criticism in Glenn Gould's
Thought and Musical Practice

by

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Thesis

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I have been working on this thesis for a long time. Life has taken me through unexpected routes and finishing graduate studies at Brown University has been all but straightforward business for me. However, in spite of a decade-long period engaged in the research of my topic, the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould (1932–1982) has not lost his grip on me as an intellectual challenge. Ever since my first serious encounter with Glenn Gould's musicianship in 1999, I have always thoroughly enjoyed scrutinizing the thought and musical practice of this fascinating intellectual whose new and fresh ideas concerning the making of music initially provoked my musicological interest.

I am very grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, David Josephson, Marc Perlman and Alan Williams for their insightful comments concerning my work at its various stages over the years, as well as for their encouragement to work on this exceptional topic. David, being a Canadian intellectual himself, was an invaluable source of useful information when I was planning this research project. Most of all, I wish to thank my advisor Rose Rosengard Subotnik, whose intellectual presence and support I have had the privilege to enjoy for over more than a decade. Rose's help in the last stages of this work has been enormous, and her committed contribution to my development as a musicologist is something for which I will be eternally grateful. In short, Rose has been the best advisor there ever could have been for me.

I also wish to thank friends and musicological role models in Finland and in the United States. These colleagues of mine have given useful comments on my work at congresses, symposia and seminars. Lawrence Kramer helped me in long discussions I had with him in Turku, Finland, to begin to understand the complex relationship between sound and image. Eero Tarasti taught me everything I know about musical semiotics during the years I studied with him at the University of Helsinki. Pirkko Moisala has been an important teacher who has supported me in my early career in the ethnomusicological study of Classical music and through her knowledgeable comments on my earlier writings on Gould. I owe all these more experienced senior colleagues my heartfelt gratitude.

I have had the luck of being employed in the difficult field of musicology since I left residence at Brown in 2001. In my current position as the coordinator of the Graduate Program of Music, Theatre and Dance at Sibelius Academy, Finland, I have had the best and most supportive boss in the world: Dr. Vesa Kurkela. He has, over the years, given me his unwavering support in all matters musicological – first as teacher and later as senior colleague. As far as the finishing of this work is concerned, Vesa, as the chair of the program, let me take some time off from my administrative work to wrap it all up.

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When I finished my Master's degree in ethnomusicology at the University of Tampere, Finland, in 1998, the initiative to come to study in the U.S. came from my aunt Maria Tulokas. This was a good choice – my years at Brown University, first on a Fulbright scholarship, then on generous funding from this wonderful, intellectually vibrant academic institution, made me the musicologist I wanted to become. During the busy and financially uncertain years of a graduate student, I was never alone with my problems in the new and unfamiliar surroundings. Maria was always ready to help with housing, food, writing in English, money – sometimes even materializing as a welcome subsidy to green fees to rounds of golf on Friday afternoons! I am eternally grateful for the support, caring and presence that she has shown to me and my family during and after my years in the U.S. Her sister and my mother Sirkku Tulokas, too, has always supported me in good and bad times. She has always done all she can to make my dreams in life become a reality – and many of them have indeed become that. My words can no longer reach my friend, the writer Keith Fleming, whose untimely death in 2009 left us all wordless. Keith was a talented writer and intellectual who had incredible patience and true commitment to teach me the subtleties of academic writing in English. Thank you, Keith, for your help and friendship.

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INTRODUCTION

"Enough of Glenn Gould!" This is what my piano teacher, having heard my Gould-inspired interpretation of J.S. Bach's *Prelude* in C-major in the first book of the *Wohltemperierte Klavier*, in obvious desperation, cried out during one of my last piano lessons in the spring of 1995. The previous week I had asked her recommendations for recordings to listen to in order to make progress with this deceptively simple piece of music, the first real challenge in polyphony I had ever put my fingers on. I wanted to progress as efficiently as possible and also become familiar with the performance tradition of Bach's Preludes and Fugues, one of the cornerstones in the standard repertory for the piano.

My teacher, an elderly Greek woman with a long experience in various conservatories, listed for me several pianists through whom I could gain a deeper understanding of the interpretation of Bach's music: Walter Gieseking for his sonorous richness, Sjatoslav Richter and Murray Perahia for their analytic playing, Andras Schiff for his energy and rhythmic drive, and Tatjana Nikolajeva for the sheer poetry of her playing Bach.

But no Glenn Gould. Looking at my teacher's strict and patronizing approach more than a decade later, I realize that she failed to see me as an individual, a pianist-novice with my own aspirations, goals, and opinions about music, and as a student capable of taking responsibility for my interpretative choices. Instead, she thought she knew best how I should practice, whom I should listen to – whom to exclude from my musical world in my process of becoming a pianist.

You can guess what happened. Gould's recording was the first one I picked up from the shelves of the local music library. This strange, wildly gesticulating pianist, whose nose seemed to almost wipe the dust from the keyboard as he played, was something I'd never encountered before. His tempos were sometimes outrageous, his dynamics often absurd, and his choppy non-legato articulation funny. In the Preludes and Fugues, he did things none of which were indicated by the score, and after a good while of careful listening, this pianistic narcissism was beginning to irritate me. I did not want this lunatic to be my pianistic role model. I think I listened mostly to Nikolajeva's recordings for the sheer joy of sound they let me experience. And I did learn to play the fugue, the C-major in *Wohl-temperierte Klavier* I after weeks of intense practice.

I completely forgot about Gould for years. I was busy trying to find my way to the world of Classical music, desperate to learn the norms and ideals of musical practice. In music history classes, I learned about the Great German Men: Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms, the musical *Genius*, which for some reason existed solely within Classical music, not folk or popular music. I also learned a fair amount of prejudice: I remember heated arguments with my friends on whether folk music could ever begin to achieve the same kind of complexity and musical sophistication as Beethoven's symphonies. At that point, my unwavering conviction was "no," and to question this conviction in any way was beyond my intellectual reach at that time. Of course, my years in the conservatory also gave me a lot: aesthetic experiences, facility at the instrument, musical understanding, and first-hand

knowledge of the cultural domain called “Classical music.” I had become a musician, which had been the dream of my earlier life.

At a later point in my musical career, having realized that I would never be able to make my living as a professional pianist, I applied to the university in my hometown, Tampere. Even though I majored in ethnomusicology, I now realize that I never really left the conservatory: every assignment for courses I took – essays, term papers, presentations – dealt with Classical music. I never got into the world music groove; neither was popular music as an academic subject area my cup of tea. In my B.A. thesis, I tried to look at a conservatory student recital through ethnographic lenses, as a kind of a ritual in which values and norms of Classical music culture are being maintained and affirmed. I did some fieldwork, interviews, and documentation to gain “an outsider’s view” to a domain I knew inside out from my studying piano at a conservatory. Later, in my Master’s thesis (Mantere 1998), I replaced fieldwork with textual analysis: looking at how the legendary pianist Heinrich Neuhaus’s (1888–1964) musical world-view is reflected in his well-known treatise, *The Art of Playing Piano*. The main theoretical goal in my thesis was to apply discourse analysis, a method very much in vogue in Finnish musicology of the late 1990’s, to a musician’s speech about his music-making. It is not too far from the truth to say that I am, in many ways, still writing the same thesis. The characters have changed, my thinking – I hope – has become more elaborate and theoretically informed and my writing clearer, but still – I look at the world through the eyes of a pianist, and most of what I have to say is targeted to readers equally fascinated with the wonderful world of the white and black keys.

A Fulbright scholarship, which I was awarded in 1999, brought me to the U.S. I was accepted to the graduate program at Brown University, a distinguished Ivy League institution on the East Coast. I learned a lot – Anglo-American scholarly ideals of clarity, logic, and common sense replaced in my thinking a fair amount of what I had somehow come to think as sophisticated: academic jargon, paragraph-long sentences, and intense name-dropping. Looking at my writings from those years, I realize that I very seldom wrote a paragraph with no reference to Derrida, Foucault, Stuart Hall or Terry Eagleton. My teachers at Brown challenged me – reading my essays for courses I took, they wanted to know what it was that I wanted to argue, not how many books in continental philosophy (at that time Foucault, in my mind, came next to God) I had read while preparing my work. It was a shock to see that sometimes I did not know the answer. I hadn't realized that scholarly work can be a way of *living* intellectually with music, of making it meaningful, even of expressing oneself. Inspired by what I saw around me, I started to work towards those kinds of ideals. Gradually, that kind of an ideal of an intellectual life with music became very important for me.

Gould suddenly came back to my life. In one of the first seminars I took at Brown, “Adorno’s sociology of Music,” taught by my great mentor Rose Rosengard Subotnik, we were trying to understand, equipped with a huge load of assigned readings, what this notably difficult German philosopher thought about reproduction, mediation, and the meaning of music in the modern world. More exactly, we were trying to find an answer to the following question in Adorno’s musical philosophy: how could scholarly criticism

of music that was at the same time informative and also truthful to the essence of music be possible within “culture industry,” an unavoidable network of music’s marketing and mediation, consisting of record companies, newspapers, institutions and concert agencies? Adorno’s cynical and pessimistic views about music in the modern world seemed so aptly to recapture the state of music in the world around us that I was, in the spring of 2000, in awe of his philosophy, indeed I was ready to give him the “thinker of the century” -award.

In this seminar, a Canadian graduate student brought up Gould. His take on this peculiar musician was to emphasize his role as a North American technology visionary, whose revolutionary innovation was the idea that a given musical interpretation does not have to be bound to the concert situation, which, in Gould’s mind, symbolically represented the worst sides in human character – “gladiatorial instinct” and “lust for blood.” In other words, technology – itself a commercial phenomenon – could, Gould argued, paradoxically be a means to avoid music’s commercialism itself. So it appeared that Gould and Adorno, in spite of everything that separates them, had at least an unwavering distaste for culture industry’s concert life in common.

Gould obviously shared the same concerns with Adorno: the star cult in Classical music; technically flawless but superficial interpretations of works in the canon of Classical music; and narcissistic virtuoso display. Adorno, in turn, seemed to provide me with answers, or at the very least, new viewpoints, to questions arising from the tensions between critical and truthful ideals of interpretation on the one hand and the commodifica-

tion of music by culture industry on the other. I was particularly haunted by one question: could a musician's interpretation of musical works be a type of musical *criticism*, an intellectual undertaking which not only aims at delivering the music to the listener, but also making it meaningful. I read all the texts by Gould and Adorno that I could get hold of, along with texts by such scholars as Lydia Goehr and Richard Taruskin, whose writings have always been of great help. This new idea of musical interpretation as a form of *criticism*, in Adorno's sense of the term, started to look like a fascinating prospect to take on in my scholarly effort to understand what Gould's musicianship was all about. Indeed, I was intuitively sure that his music-making was about *something* of musicological interest, even though I did not have any tools to prove this intuition worthwhile at that point. Intuition had to suffice – I did not know back then that scholars such as Jose A. Bowen had broken away from the musicological way of studying solely works and composers to studying performance. I did only one thing differently – I engaged in a study of a performer.

At first I thought I had to (again) become a pianist in order to understand Gould. I imitated all of Gould's recordings of works I had studied before, and even tried my hands on a few new ones, such as Gould's strange recording of Mozart's Sonata in A-major (KV 331). I tried, in a quasi-phenomenological manner, to get a sense of how his playing must have "felt" in his hands. I did a number of gigs on the Brown campus on various occasions – I don't even dare to think what my listeners thought of a wildly gesticulating, loudly humming amateur, who was such an obvious disciple of a maverick deceased more than 20 years ago! In retrospect, I am glad that this phase in my development as a

musician – interestingly enough, I did develop through these experiments! – was over fairly soon after it had started. You can only step in the same river once, and even then following the path you have chosen yourself, not, as I had done, so obviously in the footsteps of another musician.

The rest of the story is in your hands now. I took all the literature I had by and about Gould with me to my native Finland, got a job, and started teaching in a small university. I published articles on Gould and gave presentations in various conferences and seminars. All this, naturally, found its way to this thesis. In spring 2005, I spent a month in Ottawa, researching the Gould archives at the National Library. I listened to all Gould’s commercial recordings (and a number of unpublished ones) – only to leave all of them out of my inquiry in the last phases of the whole process. In some way, though, all that music is in the background of all I have been writing about Gould – I can honestly say that most of the time I have been writing this thesis, there has been music playing in my head.

My trip to Canada gave me a lot to think about, most of which I had never known before. For instance, “Idea of North” – and most of all, the *Idealization* of it – that Gould so vehemently spoke about, has been, so I learned in Ottawa, a prevalent theme in Canadian arts and letters for at least two centuries; it was something that I had previously thought of as Gould’s own ideological obsession but that now revealed itself as an aspect that made him, after all, “more Canadian” than I had ever realized. I spent a number of evenings at National Gallery of Canada, trying to focus my microfilm-worn eyes on Lawren Harris’s, A.Y. Jackson’s, and F.H. Varley’s artistic depictions of what Gould spoke

about: the North of individual freedom, the North of reunion with Mother Earth, the North as an alternative to the creativity-numbing lifestyle of the urban civilization.

Another eye-opening benefit of my trip was to realize how thoroughly Gould's ideas about information technology were embedded in the Canadian intellectual climate of the 1960s and 70s. Throughout his career, Gould not only read, wrote, and lectured about technology's potential contribution to musical life in the future but also was in continuous correspondence with intellectuals such as Marshall McLuhan. In this sense, I found it justified to discuss Gould's technological utopia, which it indeed was in the 1960s, within a larger ideological and cultural horizon – the post-war North American technological discourse. I also ended up playing with the idea of "Gould in the age of the Internet" – how, and to what extent, have Gould's prophecies of "creative listening" been made possible by advanced technology and become musical everyday for millions of people? In my thesis, I make some arguments about this as well.

Gould has been part of my intellectual life for roughly a decade. During this time, I've learned a lot. Through Gould, I have come to ponder larger issues as well: what is the meaning of tradition, conventions and institutions for artistic creativity? What is musical thinking after all? Is it something extraneous to "music" that we listen to, or irrevocably involved in our experience? Or neither? How about an artist's ethical responsibility – is it a responsibility towards himself, the composer, or the audience? Does it exist in the first place? What would be the normative basis for such ethics?

This is the background of my thesis. On the one hand, I am trying to understand and analyze the musical thought of one of the most significant musicians of the 20th century; on the other hand, however, I have tried to summarize what I know about music and the interpretation of it. I hope to continue this intellectual journey and avoid taking anything related to music and life for granted.

The main character of my thesis, the Canadian pianist Glenn Herbert Gould (1932–1982) is one of the best known musicians of the 20th century. In his native country he gained fame almost immediately¹ after having begun his studies at the Toronto Conservatory in 1940. (He never studied anywhere else). Gould-literature has been unanimous in emphasizing his talent and incredible maturity at a young age: at the age of 12, Gould graduated from the Conservatory with a professional degree, Associate Diploma, and three years later he made his debut as a soloist, playing Beethoven's G-major Concerto with the Toronto Symphony. At the beginning of the 1950s, Gould had already become a national celebrity through his public concerts, radio and television engagements and small-budget recordings on Hallmark-label. (Beckwith 1983; Bazzana 2003, 16–144.)

¹ Looking at Gould's early reception and fame in Canada in the 1950s, it should be kept in mind that Gould, as a native North American prodigy, was an exception in his time. Gould's hometown Toronto, in particular, was very conservative and its musical life colonial. As Bazzana (2003, 43–44) observes, most of the prominent musicians were British by birth, training or inclination, and most musical organizations were based on British models. Local composers were grounded in the English church tradition and late-Romantic musical idioms. This state of things made R. Murray Schafer, then a young composer in his 20s, to lament the "dummy culture ... with a British organist in every cuckoo-nest." (Ibid., 44)

Gould broke into a general North American consciousness only in 1955, which is when he held his debut recitals in Washington and New York. After his recital in New York, Gould was offered an exclusive contract to Columbia Records, with which he stayed until the end of his life. From the very start of his career, Gould was different: already the programming of his first recitals in the U.S. (Sweelinck, Gibbons, Bach, Beethoven, Berg and Webern), as well as his unconventional appearance on stage put forth his reputation as an eccentric iconoclast, something that he never got rid of in his lifetime. Partly this image was due to circumstances not dependent on Gould: Columbia Records, for instance, had its own marketing campaign of Gould as “eccentric genius,” which of course had its own impact on Gould’s later reception. (See Bazzana 2003, 151–153; also Teachout 2002.)

One particularly interesting aspect of Gould’s musicianship, as already suggested, is that he built his career on recordings, not live concerts. It is, indeed, noteworthy that after the hugely successful Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* recording for Columbia in 1955, Gould ended up giving public concerts for only 9 more years, stopping in 1964.² This period included three cross-Atlantic tours. The first one of them, the 1957 tour to the Soviet Union, Germany and Austria, drew a lot of attention because of its sensitive nature – it was the first visit of a North American artist to the post-Stalin U.S.S.R., and it obviously took a lot of organizational and managerial effort to tackle the necessary bureaucratic hurdles.

² In all, Gould gave 256 concerts between the years 1955–1964. The year-by-year allocation of this sum total shows an increase until the year 1959, followed by a sharp decline beginning in 1961: 1955/13, 1956/23, 1957/38, 1958/41, 1959/52, 1960/21, 1961/32, 1962/26, 1963/8, and 1964/2. Gould had an active correspondence during his concert years; see Monsaingeon 2002 for reference.

(For further detail, see Bazzana 2001a; Bazzana 2003, 163–172; Moshevich 1997.) This tour, in spite of its being Gould’s only visit to the U.S.S.R., set up the background of Gould’s later popularity in that country. The musical Soviet elite of the time was enchanted as well: Gould became friends with Sjatoslav Richter and his legendary teacher, Heinrich Neuhaus. The latter praised Gould in his review of Gould’s concerts, going as far as to say that “Gould is not 24 years of age, but almost 300” – referring of course to Gould’s musical maturity in his interpretation of Bach’s music.

The next year (1958) Gould returned to Europe on a tour that took him to Austria, Germany, Sweden,³ Italy and Israel. In 1959, Gould gave concerts in Europe for the third time, this time in Berlin and London. After these three tours, and between them, Gould kept on with public concerts, giving solo recitals and performing as a soloist with all the major North American orchestras.

With the start of Gould’s public career he emerges as the very Gould that I am discussing in this thesis. Gould had, unlike most of his contemporaries, no reservations towards electronic media, information technology, and recordings as the future of music, and those were the very means through which he brought his work to his public, making television and radio programs and writing essays for various publications. Some of these excursions into unfamiliar territories were extremely successful – as an audio documentarist, for instance, Gould is generally regarded as one of the pioneers of the field. In all, Gould

³ In his letter to his manager Walter Homburger 10/2 1958, Gould (GGA 31, 7, 12) suggests that he also take the ferry from Stockholm to Helsinki. This, however, never happened for unknown reasons.

made seven polyphonic audio documentaries⁴ on various musicians, including Leopold Stokowski, Pablo Casals, Arnold Schoenberg and Ernst Krenek. In addition, there is Gould's *Magnum Opus* in this genre, *Solitude Trilogy*,⁵ the topic of which was very dear to Gould: the impact of solitude and isolation on individual creativity. Particularly the first part of the trilogy, *The Idea of North* (1967), was a landmark work in the new musical genre which Gould called "contrapuntal radio." In an unpublished letter, Gould (GGA 31, 36, 18) comments on the prospects of this new artistic medium: "I really feel ... that the orchestration of the human voice in a contrapuntal texture offers a whole new dimension to the radio documentary as a genre."

Gould also made a number of more conventional, "linear" radio- and tv-programs on various topics for the CBC and the French media corporation ORTF. In addition Gould was also active as a composer.⁶ His best known work is an early *String Quartet* which he wrote as early as 1955. Works written after that have either remained unfinished or were as humouristic, occasional pieces, such as the funny Bach-pastiche *So You Want to Write a Fugue* (1963), originally composed for Gould's own radio program on the history of

⁴ Polyphonic audiodocumentary is a genre that crystallized in Gould's hands little by little in the 1960's. Characteristic of the genre is that speech is manipulated as musical material with voices set in counterpoint with each other. The human voice, in many parts of the audiodocumentaries, is treated like a musical instrument, and the spoken word is integrated into a variety of sophisticated contrapuntal settings. This means that the signifying textual layer becomes almost incomprehensible.

⁵ *Solitude Trilogy* is a collection of three hour-long radio documentaries – *The Idea of North* (1967), *The Latecomers* (1969) and *The Quiet in the Land* (1977) – that Gould produced for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Gould produced the documentaries as individual works between 1967 and 1977.

⁶ On the webpage (<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/glenn Gould>) of the Glenn Gould archive, there is a search engine through which one can get a complete listing of all Gould's compositions.

fugue, or the *Lieberson Madrigale* (1964), written to celebrate the birthday of Goddard Lieberson, CEO of Columbia Records. Gould also compiled music, mostly from his own recordings, for two films: *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1972) and *The Wars* (1982).

At the mature age of 50 Gould arrived at a point when he thought he had recorded the whole solo piano repertory that was of interest to him, and had plans for a career as a conductor (Friedrich 1990, 272–283; Bazzana 2003, 475–482). In 1982, he in fact made a very interesting recording of Wagner’s *Siegfried Idyll* with a pick-up chamber orchestra. This recording has not enjoyed huge success: Gunther Schuller (1997, 6), for instance, characterizes this recording as “probably the most inept, amateurish, wrong-headed rendition of a major classic ever put to vinyl.” In spite of Gould’s controversiality as a conductor – of which he himself was fully aware – he had plans to record orchestral works by Beethoven, Strauss, Brahms and Mendelssohn in the near future. These plans never materialized – Gould died of a stroke on October 2nd 1982 and the controversial Wagner-recording remained his last major performance as a conductor.

It’s been noted, albeit with sarcasm, that “dying was a brilliant career move for Gould” (Bazzana 2003, 3). This comment, of course, refers to the vast amount of literature and other food for fans that exists today in various formats and languages. Gould’s writings, letters, and interviews have been translated into at least French, German, Italian, Japanese, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Russian, Finnish and perhaps other languages. Gould has been the subject of numerous radio and television programs, and he has been the inspiration of novels, plays, compositions, poems, sculpture and paintings.

All this, of course, has meant that Gould's international renown has continually increased and his recordings have become available everywhere. In 1992, Sony Classical started its own *Glenn Gould Edition*, which today includes more than 70 CD-albums of Gould's recordings. Sony has also put out a *Glenn Gould Collection* series, which includes 16 video cassettes (today available on DVD). The German publishing house Schott has published all Gould's finished compositions. So far six scholarly conferences have been devoted to Gould's legacy (Montreal 1987, Amsterdam 1988, Toronto 1992 and 1999, Groningen 1992, and Ottawa 2007) and in addition to this, many smaller exhibitions, festivals, and other gatherings have been organized around the world to celebrate Gould's legacy. The international Glenn Gould Society (today Friends of Glenn Gould) was established in 1982 in Groningen, Netherlands. From 1995 to 2008 this organization published semiannually the *GlennGould* journal, an interesting and high-quality publication devoted to discussing Gould's musicianship. In 1983, The Glenn Gould Foundation was established. Every three years the foundation announces the recipient of the Glenn Gould Prize in Music and Communications. The past recipients have been: R.Murray Schafer (1987), Yehudi Menuhin (1990), Oscar Peterson (1993), Toru Takemitsu (1996), Yo-Yo Ma (1999), Pierre Boulez (2002), Andre Previn (2005), José Antonio Abreu (2008) and Leonard Cohen (2011).

Gould received many awards already from the end of the 1950's onwards: the Harriet Cohen Bach Medal (1959), the Honorary Doctorate from the University of Toronto (1964), the Canada Council's Molson Prize (1968), the Diplome d'honneur (1976), given

by the Canadian Conference of the Arts, and Canadian Music Council Award (1981).⁷ Since his death Gould has been awarded various prizes and awards, and he is undoubtedly regarded as one of the most important musicians and intellectuals Canada has ever produced. His unpublished writings, documents and other memorabilia are stored in the Library and Archives Canada (formerly The National Library of Canada) in Ottawa.

The Legacy of Gould

In spite of the general awareness of Gould's music, his reputation in the history of Western music is controversial. He is always remembered for the "Gould trademarks" circulated over and over again in various caricatures of him: sitting low by the piano, constant humming, often not in tune, over the music he played, and the many eccentric manners he had associated with live performance. These include bathing his hands in hot water before stepping on stage and, while there, wild gesticulating and conducting himself while playing, movements that can amount to a visual distraction for the listener.

⁷ Gould also turned down honors and awards. In a 1968 letter to Floyd Chalmers, the CEO of the MacLean-Hunter media syndicate and a member of the search committee for The Order of Canada -prize, Gould (GGA, 31, 36, 9) writes: "I am not altogether happy about the particular kind of stratification implicit in the Order of Canada. ... I can't help feeling that there is something unnecessarily divisive within that system as it is presently constituted. I do feel – and I hope that you won't think I am just being ornery or eccentric or whatever – that I would prefer not to have my name submitted to the committee." The Order of Canada is the highest non-military honour in Canada.



Picture 1. An untitled caricature of Gould by an unknown author. Note the low seat, posture, and eccentric dressup. <http://www.autismeactus.org/glenngould.php>
©The Toronto Star Syndicate

All this is known by those familiar with the vast visual and literary reception surrounding this original musician. It is not at all an exaggeration to talk about a cult around Gould. Many characteristics defining one are there: a journal (*GlennGould*), the only one I know devoted to a legacy of a Classical musician, festivals, a society with hundreds of members from all over the world, and even a music school named after him (The Glenn Gould School of Music, formerly known as Toronto Conservatory). The figure of Gould pops up as a fictional character in the most unexpected places: in youth novels, as an inspiration for poems, and even as an *alter ego* in horror films (see chapter 6 of this thesis). All these imply interesting aspects to the meaning of Gould in the popular and high culture around and after him.

Gould was unquestionably an odd figure in the history of Classical music performance. Indeed, as Edward Said (1991, 22–23) has put it, Gould “seemed never to have done anything that was not in some way purposefully eccentric,” and for this reason his career seems like a “self-conscious counter-narrative to the careers of all other musicians.” Seeing Gould apart from “all other musicians” may be an overstatement on Said’s part – what, were that the case, should we make of, say, Vladimir de Pachmann or Thelonius Monk? – but it is safe to say that Gould’s eccentricity, together with his unconventional and provocative insights about music, have been crucial in evoking the huge public fascination with his character. Referring to his cult status, the music critic Terry Teachout (2002) has written about “Gouldism”; the public character of Gould’s persona, which is almost comparable to that of pop stars, and the fascination created by it show no signs of weakening even now, almost three decades after his death.

Teachout’s “Gouldism” points to the stardom Gould enjoys in the world of musical performance – not unlike that of his counterparts in popular culture. This stardom, of course, has not come into being on its own. Teachout lists three important factors at work in the birth of the public “Gould” we know. First, Columbia Records was, from the very start of their collaboration, busy making Gould, his eccentricity and “difference” into an attractive product – a campaign which, in retrospect, was highly successful. Second, Gould gave up giving live concerts at a time (1964) when discussion of the prospects of information technology was everywhere, and when North American intellectuals in the rapidly developing new area of study, communications, were trying to come to grips with Marshall McLuhan’s prophecies for the electronic future. It is no coincidence that in those

same years the LP was, for the first time in its history, changing from a documentary medium into a creative one – Beatles’s *Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Heart’s Club Band* (1967) and Beach Boys’s *Pet Sounds* (1966) are classic examples of new, studio-produced music never meant to sound the same when performed live. Gould was following this line of progress in audio engineering with a keen eye. The third important point about Gould was that he, unlike most of his internationally successful compatriots, never left Canada for the US. He lived in Toronto all his life, in the middle of the “reserved and quiet” Canadian cultural ethos that he (1981a/1999, 351) always held dear.

Through his work, Gould touched upon themes that resonated strongly with the *Zeitgeist* of the Canada of the 1960s and 70s. One of the most significant of those was the “Idea of North,” which in various manifestations has inspired Canadian painters – Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, and other Group of Seven⁸ painters – and writers from at least the mid-19th century onwards. Gould also talked and wrote a lot about the impact of isolation and solitude on human creativity; both of these themes have occurred extensively in Canadian literature. Isolation is also a theme that has a lot to do with Marshall McLuhan’s idea of “global village,” which consists of individuals physically separate but mediated through technology; McLuhan too, of course, was a Canadian.

Over the years, I’ve been asked a number of variants of the following question: wasn’t Gould somehow a mystic, fascinating musician, who had unexplained gifts, such as the

⁸ The Group of Seven was a group of Canadian landscape painters in the 1920s, originally consisting of Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Franz Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varle. The Group of Seven is most famous for its paintings of the Canadian landscape.

ability to know his own year of death? My answer has been in the negative. Gould was not capable of supernatural prophecies, and neither is there any reason to see anything “mystic” in his character or musicianship. Stepping inside the Gould-cult, which most writings on Gould are guilty of, means setting aside many much more important issues that have a lot to do with questions relating to musical interpretation, music’s position in modern society, and music’s ownership in the age of advanced information technology. Those questions, many of which are still relevant, are the cornerstones on which I try to build my own discussion on Gould, not the “eccentricity,” “difference,” and “originality” of Gould’s music making.

The prominence of the Gould-cult in his public reception, however, proves something important. It shows us that just as in the 19th century, even today we want our geniuses to be exceptional, enigmatic and peculiar characters, who through their work are capable of transcending the border from the everyday to metaphysical. This idea of a musical genius expressing the inexpressible, capable of seeing beyond the world around us, is something that has been with us for a long time. And it shows no signs of leaving us – judging by most biographical literature, we seem to want our “Gould” as an eccentric, isolated genius, who refused to shake hands but played Bach’s music as Bach himself would have played it. Gould, according to this view, was someone who deconstructed the “normal” conceptions of what Classical music is, who owns it, and how it should be played. No rules applied to the man.

Gould's life is also often written out as a narrative of the youthful, sexy, and dynamic musician who turns into a prophet more and more detached from social interaction with the world outside. A good example of this narrative of Gould's musicianship sublimating into philosophy is John McGreevy's depiction of Gould's second, 1981 recording of the *Goldberg Variations*: "For me, it speaks volumes about where he was headed. He's going to another place. This is his farewell ... particularly the closing aria, knowing that he was saying farewell There's a man who was determined to impose, aesthetically and emotionally, his sensibility on his listeners. And he was saying, 'Good-bye'. And this was such an exquisite way of doing it." (Friedrich 1990, 314. See also Schneider 1994, 215–217.)

These kinds of comments are particularly interesting in light of the facts: Gould's second recording of the *Goldberg Variations* (1982) was not the last recording he made, and there is no sign whatsoever in the surviving documents from that time of Gould's having any idea of his approaching death. He had a number of plans for the musical future: conducting, composing, new audiodocumentaries, recording.

The idea of an artist sublimating his last times into a crystallized, late Masterpiece, is common in music history: let us, for instance, reflect for a while on the public reception of the unfinished *Contrapunctus XIV* from *Kunst der Fuge*. In a certain sense, this unfinished piece has the status of "Bach's musical will"; the myth has it that Bach died after

his having jotted down the B-A-C-H -motive.⁹ Dying while at work has been a popular myth about composers – we also cherish the one of Mozart having dictated the *Requiem* to his student Franz Xavier Süssmayr from his deathbed. This myth we come across in many of the numerous dramatizations of Mozart’s life – the famous Milos Forman film *Amadeus* comes to mind. Gould’s 1982 recording of the *Goldbergs* has obviously been heard in a similar frame, as a sublime message from a prophet dying and leaving his last musical wish to his audience.

In the numerous commentaries on Gould’s musicianship, he is often written off as an “eccentric genius.” A good example of this *topos* in Gould’s reception is Harold Schoenberg’s (1987, 477) account of Gould:

To many musicians today, Glenn Gould is a symbol, a sort of Bobby Fischer of the piano. Like the eccentric chess genius, he was an *amazing talent* who retired early and went into seclusion. Like Bobby Fischer, Glenn Gould *made his own rules, went his own way*, did not care what the world thought of him, and ended up bending the world to his will. To his generation he still represents *revolt against authority*, contempt for the Establishment. (Italics mine.)

Even this short excerpt shows the clichés of Gould’s public reception: eccentricity, rebellion, enormous talent, and deliberate isolation from the social community. The 2001 edition of the *New Grove* is quite similar in its tone:

In January 1955 Gould made his American début, with recitals in Washington, DC, and New York. His unorthodox programme (Gibbons, Sweelinck, Bach, late Beethoven, Berg, Webern), distinctive style and platform mannerisms immediately marked him as an iconoclast. His idiosyncratic interpreta-

⁹ Both David Yearsley and Christoph Wolff correct this false myth. On the real narrative concerning the genesis of *Kunst der Fuge*, see Yearsley 2002, 1–41; Wolff 2000, 431–438.

tions, published pronouncements and personal eccentricities made him a controversial figure, but he was also widely admired for his virtuosity, probing intellect, command of musical architecture, rhythmic dynamism, precise fingerwork and extreme clarity of part-playing. (Bazzana 2001b, 212.)¹⁰

The *Toronto Star*, which claimed credit for inspiring city officials to honor Gould in its *Star Weekly* magazine, paid tribute to the recipient's eccentricities in an editorial on April 20th of the year 1955:

Is man, the individual, on the way out? If you think he is and that his place is being taken by a dull automaton named "mass man" who is conditioned to absolute conformity, consider for a moment Glenn Gould, the 23-year-old Toronto pianist whom critics call a genius.

Even on the hottest day in the summer this young man may be seen wearing an overcoat, galoshes, a wool beret and two pairs of gloves. He swallows handfuls of vitamin tablets and other pills and bathes his hands in warm water before playing. At the piano he slumps over until his hair tangles with the keys. He sings and hums while playing the most intricate Bach and Beethoven compositions, or stamps his feet in time to the music.

In an age where even artists are supposed to be "normal" and as ordinary as the man on the street, Glenn Gould triumphantly affirms that man's spirit remains free. Long may he flourish and may he never conform!

These kinds of comments about Gould abound all through his career (see George 1960; Goldsmith 1974; Silverman 1983). The Finnish scholar Mikko Heiniö (1999, 65) has written about the public reception of composers and musicians, and he uses the concept of *topos* to mean a petrified, unreflective mode of an individual's public reception, which may have even turned into a cliché. This mode of reception has its own impact on how the composer's or musician's music is received. Following this idea, one could talk about

¹⁰ The author of the article, Kevin Bazzana, is perhaps the most brilliant and productive scholar of Gould's musicianship and his take on Gould is far more sophisticated than what this short article may suggest to a casual reader. His monumental biography of Gould (Bazzana 2003) is the best scholarly account of Gould's life and work, particularly in its sensitivity to the ideological and cultural contexts of Gould's thought.

the *topos* typically associated with Gould's reception which includes epithets such as "radical," "iconoclast," "eccentric," "isolated," et cetera. These conceptions of Gould have found their way to most of the reception – literary, visual, poetic, documentary – that I've come across so far. This, of course, is not to say that there is no truth to these descriptions. The challenge, however, is to define the standard against which Gould's interpretations of, say, Mozart's piano sonatas, are labelled as "eccentric" – as they have been numerous times. We arrive here at the heart of a crucial question that is one of the driving forces of this work: is evaluating the significance and value of a given musician's work something that should take place in the context of an historical performance tradition – or should it rather be based on the musician's ideas, practices and values in themselves? This is a question to which I'll return later in my work and therefore I will not elaborate further on it at this point.

Typical of clichés that make a *topos* in Heiniö's sense is that they come into being quite rapidly and that purely visual matters – such as Gould's strange antics on concert stage – are very important in them. The reception of Gould efficiently circulates these "signs" and gestures of Gould: constant humming, his low position by the piano, the intensity of his musical interpretation – so intense as to disturb the listener's experience – soaking his hands in hot water before playing, playing with gloves on, et cetera. Good examples of this process are Francois Girard's famous *32 Short Films of Glenn Gould* (1993) as well as the few photo collections done of Gould (Carroll 1995; Estate of Glenn Gould 2002). Nevertheless, we should not forget the main source for public conceptions of Gould as "eccentric iconoclast" – himself. Any Classical musician writing about egoistic pomposi-

ty as the hallmark of Beethoven's heroic style (Gould 1970/1990), and of Mozart as a composer who died rather too late than too early (1976/1990) is bound to be seen as exceptional in the public eye. Gould's denial of live performance as the primary mode of Classical music's mediation was also an exceptional view in his own time.¹¹

Musicology on Gould

In my work, Gould's musicianship and his ideas concerning making music are seen as more important than the mythical and enigmatic aspects of his public character. For instance, Gould's devotion to recording technology, which he saw as the future of music, is an aspect of Gould's musical thought that has plenty of cultural and ideological significance worthy of a critical inquiry. It is no coincidence that Gould's ideas about the future of music as a decentralized, mediated and non-performative art form are still under lively debate – many of his prophecies about the “global village,” proposed by Marshall McLuhan, in music find their actualization in our times, through technical inventions such as the Internet.

Another aspect to Gould's musicianship that interests me is his view of musical interpretation as a form of criticism: while his recordings of J.S. Bach's music are, for the most

¹¹ In popular music things were different. As suggested earlier, it is highly interesting that within the next few years, after Gould had decided to retire from giving concerts (1964) and was busy writing about the prospects of recording as the future of music, Beatles's *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band* (1967) and Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (1966) changed the ontology of the LP from a documentary format into an artwork in and of itself. With these albums, for the first time in the history of popular music, it became irrelevant whether or not the music recorded would be executable live or not.

part, generally accepted into the pantheon of interpretation of Bach's music, his recordings of Mozart's music are full of parody and carnival – even blasphemy, according to some. Gould is quite unique in his attitude to musical interpretation as a form of comment on the value and significance of its object; characteristic of his mode of interpretation is also the fact that he wrote and spoke about it constantly. We are left with not only a huge number of recordings but also an equally impressive number of radio- and television programs.

Gould's musical thinking and his public reception should be seen as parts of broader local and historical horizons. What really is unique about Gould, as I see it, is his take on certain historical aesthetic and ethical issues concerning musical interpretation. These issues can be approached through questions such as these:

- What is a given musician's relationship to the music he/she interprets?
- What kinds of rights and duties does he/she have towards the music?
- What is the role of the audience in the experience of music?
- How is a musician's cultural and ideological context manifest in his interpretation of music?
- Is there such a thing as an ethic of musical interpretation?
- On what kind of normative basis could that ethic exist?

Gould's responses to these kinds of questions, in music and word, make him a controversial and slightly misunderstood but also an important and interesting character in the his-

tory of Western music. In evaluating Gould's work, then, we should take into consideration not only what we hear but also what he *intended us to hear*. We should look beyond Gould's "eccentricity," "radicalism" and "difference" and give serious consideration to the intellectual historical contexts that justify labeling his musical interpretation as such. We should also reconsider the ontology of Classical music and the norms of its interpretation – why do we take Classical music as something given, something unquestionable in its modes of mediation in our society? Why do we regard concert halls as the *locus* of a paradigmatic musical experience? Why do we intuitively think that a musician has an ethical responsibility towards the dead composer when playing his music?

Gould never took these attitudes as a given, and this stance, more than his eccentricity, makes him exceptional in the history of musical interpretation. By looking at why we see Gould as "different" time and time again, we begin to understand the power of that history over us in our appreciation of any music or musician.

History, however, is not the only hermeneutic context in which Gould's thinking and musicianship should be looked at. Gould was first and foremost a Canadian artist, and many of his ideas concerning music can be best understood against the backdrop of Canadian cultural history. Gould's idealizing attitude towards "The North" and the creative potential that it offers for an individual is a case in point: just like the Group of Seven painters generations before him, Gould saw "The North" as an inexhaustible source of inspiration and authenticity. His whole implicit categorization of music into "northern" and "southern" on the basis of certain characteristics – more about these later – is some-

thing that sets Gould's ideas not only in a historical continuum with those of people like Friedrich Nietzsche, but also in tune with Canadian nationalism in arts, represented by R. Murray Schafer among others. Gould was also of good Torontonion stock in his moral conservatism and a certain puritanism – something which may have had something to do with his Presbyterian upbringing – as well as in his unwavering technological optimism. “Information technology built Canada,” as one of my interviewees in Ottawa told me, and Gould certainly was following the technological debate of the 1960's and 70's, mostly brought about by McLuhan's groundbreaking ideas, with a keen eye.

Gould, through his own work, also provided a viewpoint onto what Canadian arts and letters could be taken to mean in the 1960s and 70s. Canada does not have a long intellectual history as an independent nation, and the question of identity remains relevant there into the 3rd millennium. As Northrop Frye (1982, 57) has put the issue, Canadians are taught to see themselves as a nation with an uncertain identity, confusing past, and jeopardized future. It is not difficult to imagine what the emergence of a Classical music “superstar” like Gould has meant for the Canadian arts and letters of the 20th century.

I am interested in Gould not only as a musician but also as an intellectual who, through his work, engaged in a dialogue with three broad ideological, historical and cultural contexts. First of them is Canada itself: I am interested in how the Canadian national identity, “Canadian-ness,” plays itself out both in Gould's ideas of making music and in his public reception. This question of what being “Canadian” means, of course, covers much broader ground than Gould and his reception – it has been a subject of active cultural debate to

the extent that Frye (1982, 15) has provocatively argued that the country has moved from a pre-national to post-national phase without ever having become a nation. I can't lay claim to any exhaustive discussion on this matter – but it makes no sense to discuss Gould's "Northern" ideals without touching upon the national and historical backdrop for this issue in some depth.

The second context in which I look at Gould's ideas is closely connected to the first one. The information technology is something that has always been of great importance for Canadians, and Gould was no exception. As Arthur Kroker (1985, 8) puts it, "a general fascination with the questions of technology extends like a brilliant arc across the Canadian cultural imagination, from cinema and music to literature and philosophy." Intellectuals such as Marshall McLuhan and Jean Le Moyne were all active in the technological debate of the 1960s and 1970s, and Gould was well up to date on what was in the air at the time. His interest, of course, was narrower and particularly focussed on the prospects of audio technology for the future of music, but many of his writings and interviews nevertheless bear similarities to McLuhanian visions of the future of the western culture.

My third context has to do with what is most obvious in any scholarship of Classical music performance: the intellectual history and aesthetic norms of Classical music. Through his ideas and work Gould challenges many of the basic assumptions, values, norms, and conventions usually taken for granted in the world of Classical music. Gould's conception of authorship is a case in point: already in the 1960's, Gould envisions an electronic future in which the authorship of music, manifest in a composer's intentions as to how his

music should be performed, have lost their meaning. Gould practiced as he preached: for him the printed score was only the starting point for a musician's re-composing of the music, and he recognized no ethical responsibility of the performer towards the composer. Neither did he believe in the traditional contemplative ideal of a musical experience, unfolding in the confines of a concert hall. Rather, Gould saw the musical experience as something taking place in the listener's privacy – space equipped with a sophisticated sound technology – and in Gould's vision, this was to be not only a mediated but also a re-creative experience. In fact, this has become possible in our time when listening to music through all the re-creative enhancements that the Internet offers has become everyday for millions of listeners. How exactly we are living in the world Gould envisioned decades ago, I will discuss in more detail at a later point of this work.

Within Gould's thinking, some of his views were more elaborated and tenable than others. One example of a half-baked argument in Gould's thought was his extreme view of concerts as an outdated institution – a relic from a time and place long gone. Gould notoriously saw live audience as a “source of evil,” and it is no wonder that his critique of concerts has remained a curiosity. Gould was obviously wrong about concerts; even in our own times, when most of our musical experience is mediated by CDs and DVDs, concerts as an institution show no signs of waning. As Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1996) has observed, Gould was too busy predicting the prospects of new information technology to realize the communality and symbolic meaning that music, including Classical music, is able to bring about. It is simply a pleasure to dress up, drink a glass or two of sparkling

wine, and perhaps go out for dinner after the musical experience that unfolded in the concert hall. This is something that Gould was never ready to accept.

Nevertheless, Gould was right about many other things. Technology, as it has evolved over the years, has really given the listener the benefit of options: DVDs, Youtube, Napster, and various musical databases are nothing else but the actualization of what Gould saw coming already in the late 1960s. Music technology, for Gould, was what the “new philosophy” of music was all about: it brought about a new kind of relationship between the artist and the music and it has, in fact, emancipated music more and more from the real-time live performance – a process that started with the phonograph at the end of the 19th century. The potential of technology, in Gould’s vision, reached every music amateur in the armchair; his ideal was an experience of music in which the listener, through hi-fi technology, would be able to provide himself a variety of choices for editing and thus make the music reflective of his own authorial intentions (1966a/1990, 347). In Gould’s vision, this kind of “participant listener” would be able to combine different interpretations of the same music, edit the whole according to his own intentions, and thus create his/her new “interpretation” of the piece.

Today all this is reality for millions of listeners of Classical music. Music is mediated not only by recordings, but also bitstreams and sequencer files. It could be argued that even though Gould was guilty of provocative overstatements and a tendency to think and argue about things – concerts, for instance – too much in a black and white fashion, he still was able to see many new cultural patterns, regarding the listening of music, decades before

their actualization. Even if there is always an idealizing process at work in Gould's technological vision, we have to admit that many innovations that Gould prophesized about have become a reality. A case in point is DVD: as early as 1968, Gould spoke, in an interview with John McClure, about sound recording as a "future of music," but in the same breath he said that "perhaps recording combined with ... videotape cartridge is the more immediate future" of music. (2001, 49). Even though he was not clear on the exact format that this new innovation was to take in the future, these kinds of prophecies always come to my mind when browsing the DVDs of the opera section in the music store near my home. Gould would be happy to see how far we've come from his days.

Considering Gould's fame and status as a cult figure, it is noteworthy how little impact his unorthodox ideas about musical interpretation have had on the generations following him. Recording technology has not, as opposed to Gould's prophecies, penetrated the substance of musical performance – most Classical music recordings are still done with very minor studio technological editing – and neither have public concerts become obsolete. Gould's insistence on musical interpretation as actual re-creation is something that very few musicians before and after him have practiced. This, of course, is no surprise to anyone familiar with his most provocative work: at its most extreme, Gould's interpretation brackets the whole notion of a musical work, as an autonomous entity, as the object of a musician's interpretation. Some of Gould's recordings of certain musical works are indeed rather extensions of his aesthetic arguments than artworks in their own right.¹²

¹² I've adapted the idea of an interpretation of a given musical work as an artwork in its own right from Peter Kivy (1995).

Gould's significance in Canadian cultural history in the last half of the 20th century has been enormous. Poems, literature, visual art and music have sprung up from the inspiration Gould has evoked among artists.¹³ The Library and Archives Canada has its own Glenn Gould Archive, which houses almost all that Gould left us: writings, recordings, and memorabilia. Gould has become a national icon in Canada, very much to the same extent as the composer Jean Sibelius to us Finns. Gould is widely known all over the world, perhaps most in France, Germany, and even Japan.

Bazzana (2003, 11) is right in his observation that much of the interest in Gould derives from the fact that Gould was always more than a piano player. This he indeed was – a writer, composer, radio documentarist, cultural critic. This is not to say that he was always good at all his professional activities. Many of his texts, for example, are controversial, logically flawed, and poorly argued. Sometimes he was plain lazy: some of his texts he circulated repeatedly in his writings, interviews and documents. As a music historian Gould was obviously a dilettante; his views of music history are unabashedly selective and subjective. In spite of Gould's profile as a Renaissance man, he was first and foremost a musician – one of the most interesting pianists of the 20th century. In spite of this, he was always an intellectual in search of music's meaning beyond the score and composer's intentions.

Gould was always critical of the institutional separation of composition and performance – which Edward Said (1991, 2) has called the “extreme specialization of all aesthetic ac-

¹³ Bazzana (2003, 6–7) gives a relatively exhaustive list of these kinds of “Gouldian” works in literature and film.

tivity” and which has led to performances of Classical music turning into “highly concentrated, rarified, and extreme occasions.” Gould was always against this kind of specialization in all his work. For Said, separating the roles of the performer and composer, among other changes in music history, has led to performance’s turning into what Said calls “extreme occasions,” in which the performative display of a musician has become the center of the aesthetic experience. Gould called this aspect of live performance the “gladiatorial” quality of concerts: the performer’s isolation into his/her own aesthetic sphere, in which his success will be assessed in real time, with no possibility of “take two,” was in Gould’s mind the low point of Classical music tradition, a condition from which he wanted an early exit in his professional career.

Said also applies his observations of the culture of Classical music to Gould in particular. First of all, he (Ibid., 26) points out that Gould’s interpretations often were, in fact, “sounding arguments,” pianistic criticism, the meaning of which was to re-create and comment on, not only interpret, the musical work. This independence on Gould’s part of canons and conventions was, for Gould, an important aesthetic *credo* to which I return on many occasions of this work.

Second, Said (Ibid., 29) argues that Gould’s multi-faceted professional career, in particular his tireless exploration of his intellectual capacities in writing essays and making radio and television programs, functions in an interesting way as an extension of his music making. Said’s term for this dynamic is Gould’s “cultural presence” – a particular multi-modal way of engaging with the audience, which also contributes to a particular apprecia-

tion of his recordings. If I had to summarize the crux of my own work into one sentence, it is this cultural presence – the source, substance and meaning thereof – of Gould’s musicianship that I’m chasing.

Third, Said is, I think, correct in pointing out the general significance of Gould’s verbal reflection as complementary to his playing. Gould saw his music making as documenting his world-view (Bazzana 2003, 12), and Said (1991, 30) argues fittingly that Gould was always interested in the border between music and language; crossing this line and operating on both sides of it was always close to his heart. This is seen most clearly in his audiodocumentaries: as Deborah Weigel (2010, 133) observes, within that genre Gould treats the interplay and layering of words as though they were intricately composed musical notes. Gould’s drafts for the works tell as much: the whole sonic dramaturgy, entrances of voices, as well as total control over the polyphonic structure are all carefully constructed (see Weigel 2010, 135–137 for Gould’s drafts for these pieces).

Gould’s music, writings, interviews, and documentaries form one entity, the meaning of which I am analyzing in my work. Said (*Ibid.*, 31–34) sees Gould as a “contrapuntal” figure: just as in Bach’s music, so dear to Gould himself, Gould’s different “voices” – those of a musician, writer, cultural critic, media pedagogue – weave a wonderful, intricate whole in which all the voices matter equally. Sticking to this metaphor, my task, then, is to look for the tonal context of this counterpoint – the hermeneutic context of Gould’s aesthetic worldview, philosophy, and history in which his ideas and music making become meaningful.

Historical and Local Hermeneutics

How, then, is this kind of critical, contextualizing discussion of Gould possible in practice? I consider the fundamental motive behind my work to be hermeneutical – Martin Kusch (1986) has written about the “challenge of understanding” being typical of hermeneutic scholarship, and this is a goal to which I happily subscribe in my work. By hermeneutics, I mean this – even at the risk of simplifying the issue: no intellectual agent writes, thinks or makes music in an ideological vacuum, and it is this dialectical relationship between the artist and his/her contexts that should be taken into scholarly consideration. “Dialectics,” in this occasion, refers to individual activity and interaction: all creative individuals not only reflect, through their work, what is “in the air” at their time but also construct the cultural horizon of their time and place. In my work, this setup, however, is more complicated because Gould is long dead, and there is no direct link to the world that existed around him.

Solving this dilemma needs theoretical elaboration. Gary Tomlinson (1993, 33) has written about an “archaeological” point of view as useful in complementing hermeneutics. An archaeological point of view offers the possibility of situating an individual’s ideas and his world view in broader and in a sense more public contexts. Tomlinson’s archaeological¹⁴ view is concerned with a level of meaning that as an almost invisible but still

¹⁴ Archaeology, of course, refers to Michel Foucault’s “archaeology of knowledge”. Foucault (1997) is concerned with “knowledge” and “conditions of knowing” as discursive practices that in their time and place “construct” what at any given moment is considered “true.” Discourses are not only language but also epistemological frames of reference that are tied to the society and culture around them. It is this external context of language that Foucault’s concept of “discourse” is targeted to explore.

present and functioning “system of ideas” makes a given text meaningful. This abstract level of meaning makes a “signifier claim its place” – texts, pictures, artworks and other cultural artifacts gain their meaning in the wider context of ideology and culture.

Each one of us thinks and operates in this kind of a “system of ideas,” and Gould was no exception. The “archaeological” view leads me to look at Gould’s musicianship in the cultural and ideological context around him, specifically that of Canada in the 1960s and 70s. In particular the then-active discussion about the potential of communication technology for future society is a relevant backdrop against which to look at Gould’s ideas about music making. The prospects of information technology were very much discussed in those days, and Gould – Marshall McLuhan’s acquaintance – was an active participant in the technological discourse.

The research material in this dissertation is almost entirely literary – Gould’s own texts and transcripts of his interviews – and much of it is also previously published. In this sense my research is similar to literature criticism; just as a literary scholar scrutinizes the meaning of a given text in relation to its contexts, I read one pianist’s thought about the world and music around him, trying to make sense of that thought to understand the individual more in depth than have scholars before me. I leave it to my readers to decide whether or not I have succeeded in this.¹⁵

¹⁵ On the other hand, my research is very similar to a research paradigm which the Finnish historian Hanne Koivisto (2001, 272) calls “research on intellectuals.” This kind of research is historical, and the object of a scholar’s scrutiny is the intertextual network around the intellectual: letters, interviews, autobiographical texts, and other material about him. Ideally, the scholar grasps all the cultural meanings that have had an impact

What, then, is the ontological relationship between Gould and his contexts? The historian Quentin Skinner (1975, 216) makes an important distinction between a causal and a semiotic context of a literary text. The first one refers to an essentialist view in which the meanings of any given texts are seen to derive from the reality surrounding it, and the analysis of such text, then, means situating these meanings in a causal relationship with the world outside. This kind of a view, in Gould's case, would lead one to argue that Gould thought and wrote as he did because of his living in the particular intellectual climate of Canada of the 1960's and 1970's. The scholar's role in this setup would be to "reveal" the causal reason behind Gould's intellectual activity and thus reduce the creative intellectual into a part of a larger context. This kind of a view has a lot in common with certain forms of rude Marxism in which the societal superstructures are seen to reflect the material base from which they ultimately are seen to derive.

In Gould's case, however, Skinner's other analytical viewpoint makes much more sense. The semiotic context refers to a position in which a given text – literary, musical or visual – is allowed a certain autonomy and independence not reducible to any context surrounding it. The fundamental point of departure in this view is an assumption of a web of significance tying together the text and the world around it, but one without causal relationships from one to another. The web is a hermeneutical one – looking at a text, or an individual for that matter, situated in a web of cultural or ideological significance, adds to a deeper understanding of it or him, and both the intellectual and the text are seen as auto-

on the intellectual and that he himself has constructed through his work. This dialectical view of the individual and his context is very important in this work.

nomous entities. The cultural agency is regarded as interplay between the creative individual and the ideas, institutions and cultural patterns around him/her. Against this backdrop, I could summarize my goals in this thesis in a much simpler way than may have seemed the case earlier in this chapter: on the one hand, I am trying to make sense of what kind of a musician Gould was and why he was as significant to the world around him as he was. On the other hand, I am trying to weave together the historical, cultural and aesthetic web the threads of which are scattered around Gould's writings, interviews and musical interpretations.

Skinner points out that fundamentally the scholar works in a hermeneutic circle (Ibid., 227): the interpretation of the past can never be exhaustive, but through careful work, it can become all the deeper. Therefore, I am not after a "definitive" interpretation of Gould's thought and music making, but one in which the musical and aesthetic goals that he set for his activity are scrutinized against the backdrop of three broader horizons: North American technological discourse of the 1960's and 1970's, the intellectual history of music, and ideas prevalent in the cultural criticism of the 20th century, particularly those of Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Giovanni Vattimo.

Mostly I am dealing with Gould's writings. What Skinner has to say about literary texts, has a lot in common with my work as well:

Any literary work will also be bound, if only in a similarly loose-limbed way, to bear some relation to the values of its age, to its prevailing assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes, and hence to its ways of proceeding and modes of argument. ... It will be bound to include some degree of local allusion or reference to the ideas (and perhaps also to the literary works) of the age, and possibly also to some of

its personalities and events. Finally, it will be bound to employ the local meanings, idioms, and usages of its time. (Skinner 1975, 221.)

Skinner, of course, refers to actual literary works (novels, biographies, etc), while my focus is on various texts of great diversity, written by a Canadian musician-intellectual over the time span of three decades. Theoretically, however, we share the same point of departure: a hermeneutic urge to understand a creative individual within a wide cultural, historical and ideological context. As has already become obvious, I am not postulating a causal relationship between the texts and their contexts – Gould did not think, play music and write as he did *because* of his living in the post-World War Canada but because he wanted to share some of his world with his audience. Nor am I trying to grasp a certain *Zeitgeist* in Canadian cultural history. Rather, I am interested in the micro-level interaction that Gould's ideas clearly had with some prevalent thinkers and artists of the 20th century. Some of this interaction was concrete and actual; the mutual admiration between Gould and Marshall McLuhan, for instance, becomes obvious through their correspondence – if not already from the numerous references Gould made to McLuhan in many of his writings. Some of the interaction, however, is in fact not interaction at all – I am trying to see Gould as part of two larger cultural discourses. The older one of these began approximately in the mid-19th century, which is when the idea of a musical work as an autonomous and absolute entity came into existence. Gould's idea of musical interpretation as re-creation offers an interesting counterpoint to the idea of *Werktreue*, one of the consequences of the idea of absolute music. *Werktreue*, in brief, refers to a musician's ethical responsibility to display a certain "fidelity" to the composer's intentions regarding his musical work, to interpret it as the composer has intended. Gould, of course, did not want to have any of this – he often set aside a composer's wishes in his search for a new

creative interpretation of a work. The role of music technology was of great importance in all this, and a slightly younger cultural discourse in which I look at Gould's ideas is the one that circled around the problems of the mechanical reproducibility and the mediation of art to the ontology of art. Walter Benjamin was tackling this problem as late as the 1930s and Giovanni Vattimo tried to re-formulate some of his ideas to become more relevant for the age of Internet and global mediation.

Even if very broadly, we could say that Gould's texts are, in Said's (1983a, 4) sense, "worldly": through their publication they become part of a textual universe, in which they become meaningful. For Said, "worldly" texts are "events" and "part of the social world, even when they appear to deny it." Texts, for Said, are also part of the human life and the particular "historical moments" in which they are located. The "worldliness" of Gould's texts has to do with the discursive level on which they engage in a dialogue with other thematically or historically congruent texts. Through their public character, these texts are constructing Gould's public image, the "Gould" mediated through various channels which is the context for listening to his music. This is an obvious example of how "texts have consequences," as Said (Ibid.) put it. Through reading various texts, we form images and expectations of their writer, and these expectations then feed back to our experience of their additional activity. This intertextual network is the ground on which Gould becomes "Gould." It has to do with both making sense of what Gould wanted to say through his music making and writing and also with how Gould became the pianist we know from the history of Western music. The intertextual network is both the source for my own scholarship on Gould and the basis of his public reception.

Said (1983a, 224–225), in his model of textual analysis, calls for “rationally finding and understanding” the “force of statements” in texts. This “force of statements,” as far as I understand Said here, has to do with the consequences of the reception of published texts: on the one hand, texts are at work through constructing the representation of their object through the public nature of them; on the other hand, however, texts are intertextual entities irrevocably tied into a signifying relationship with history and their time and place.

This kind of reading, in my work, is something to which I refer as “criticism.” While the term will get a more thorough grounding in the coming chapters, it is sufficient to say at this point that criticism, in my view, is about *meaning* – historical, cultural, and aesthetic, in short all the meaning that Gould’s ideas about music and music making evoke in my contextually sensitive interpretation of his musicianship.

Some of the texts constructing “Gould” were in direct contact with him and his work. As becomes clear in most literature on Gould (e.g. Bazzana 2003; Friedrich 1990; McFarlane 2002), he was very familiar with the ideas and work of such well-known contemporaries as Marshall McLuhan and Jean Le Moyne and had some collaboration with both of them. This intellectual interaction clearly had its significance for the constructing of Gould’s own aesthetic and ethical world-view. In terms of a focus on Gould’s thinking, of course, McLuhan’s and Le Moyne’s work serves as a hermeneutic backdrop against which to sketch larger contemporary discourses on technology and culture.

One of the most interesting parts of this scholarly journey has been to bring some of Gould's ideas to the present – to try to elaborate on themes important for Gould but that also have relevance for us today. One of these themes is the aesthetic problem of reproduction in music. As has already become obvious, the concert institution, in Gould's mind, had already become an obsolete and useless relic that had absolutely no grounding in the modern age of information technology. For Gould, concerts were only a manifestation of a “primal instinct for gladiatorial combat,” symbolically a slaughter of a creative individual, because artists were put on display before the audience – which expected the artist to fail in his demanding task. “Live audience,” Gould once said, “is a source of evil,” and Gould preferred all through his career “the womb-like security” of a recording studio, devoid of the “non-take-two-ness” and, the public display of virtuosity required to charm the audience in live concerts. Recording is, in Gould's mind, a musical art in and of itself, and the aesthetic ideals of it are separate from those of live performance. This difference entails, for instance, the irrelevance of the means of a recording's production for its aesthetic value – it does not matter, said Gould, whether the artist has composed his recorded interpretation of a given piece from one or two hundred takes. It is only the result that matters, not whether or not the musician has recorded a document of a whole live performance (see Gould 1983/1998).

The phenomenon of the recording recording has in fact puzzled many commentators since the first half of the 20th century, which is when commercial recordings, little by little, started to gain commercial significance. Certain questions have appeared time and again in the aesthetic discourse on recordings: Does a recording have documentary value?

Is it, as Gould (1966a/1990, 332) would have us to believe, an independent art form or merely a document of a real-time performance? Is there something fishy in “cheating” through studio technology – using overdubs, re-takes, splices, and auditive enhancing of the sound? What is, after all, an “interpretation of music” – is it a sound-event unfolding in real-time in the presence of its author, the musician? Does it have to be repeatable? Or, is it rather a sounding whole, mediated to its listeners through technology, in which the technical means of its production are irrelevant?

These kinds of questions appear over and over again in Gould’s writings, and as far as the aesthetic discourse on technology goes, many of them still go unanswered. Gould had his own definitive stand on these issues: technology makes only a positive contribution to music, to the interpretation of it, and ultimately, to society as a whole. One way of expressing the crux of Gould’s technological vision would be this: he wanted to separate the interpretation, reception and composition of music from all its ties to chronological time. I will come back to this issue many times in this work.

If we look at Gould’s unreserved technological optimism on a larger scale, he was neither the first nor the last one to argue for the beneficial contribution of technology. As early as the late 1930’s, the German culture critic Walter Benjamin wrote about the “aura,” the here-and-now aspect of an artwork as something that disappears in the reproduction of art, but he also discusses the larger benefit that arises when technology democratizes art. For Benjamin, technology could mediate art everywhere and do away with the “parasitic relationship with the ritual” that art traditionally has had.

Even though the substance of Benjamin's argument deals with photographs and cinema, it is easy to extend his idea of "aura" and "rituals" to the world of music – what could be a more fitting manifestation of an art form's "parasitic" relationship with the "ritual" than music in public concerts?

Vattimo takes Benjamin's ideas a step further to argue that in a postmodern society, penetrated and ultimately constructed by electronic media, the ontology of artworks undergoes a fundamental change. The biographical and historical context of art becomes irrelevant for art's aesthetic significance since the mediation renders this information irrelevant for the aesthetic experience. Vattimo argues that the aesthetic theory of art's appreciation needs adjustment so that the postmodern experience of "homeless," mediated art can be conceived theoretically. According to Vattimo, we should not ask whether or not the mediation does justice to the original because at the end of the day, the original does not matter anymore. For the aesthetic theory of our day, Vattimo argues, the focus should be on the *experience* itself as well as on the various ways in which the audience uses art for its own purposes.

One important aspect of Gould's situatedness in "webs of culture" is his literary and visual reception, which is quite unlike that of any other Classical performer. Gould's intertextuality and multifaceted public reception are striking: "Glenn Gould" has been circulated in movies, paintings, poems, cartoons, youth novels – even an episode in "The Simpsons" mediates a representation of Gould. Even though my particular focus in this work is on Gould's thinking itself, the broader significance of his musicianship has a lot

to do with the patterns of the reception of his character. At the end of this thesis I will write about Gould's reception in popular culture, visual arts and poetry. The outcome of my scholarly effort will be a polyphonic mosaic, in which Gould's music, his aesthetic ideas, and the reception of his public character become one.

Research Material

The material through which I look at Gould and the significance of his musicianship is diverse: it consists of articles, liner notes and letters written by Gould, interviews, and manuscripts and drafts for radio and television programs Gould made. The time span covered by the material is from 1955 through 1982. The material is published either in Gould's lifetime or posthumously, and it covers relatively all of Gould's published writings and a large mass of archival material from the Glenn Gould archive. Gould's writings display the whole range of his intellectual curiosity; he wrote and spoke about the popular music, literature, technology, ethical issues, as well as Classical music around him.

As far as Gould's visual and literary reception goes, the main sources of my interpretation are three horror movies, together with the novels by Thomas Harris on which the movies are based: *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Hannibal* (2001) and *Hannibal Rising* (2007). In the domain of films on Gould, the obvious choice – mine as well – on how Gould is visually and dramatically represented is Francois Girard's *Thirty-Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* (1993). In addition, I have read with great interest three novels

and two collections of poems inspired by Gould's musicianship. The former category includes *The Loser* (1991; orig. *Der Untergeher* 1983) by Thomas Bernhard, *The Maestro* (1996) by Tim Wynne-Jones, and *The Song Beneath the Ice* (2003) by Joe Fiorito. The latter category is represented by one collection edited by J.D. Smith, *Northern Music: Poems about and inspired by Glenn Gould* (2001) and another by Kate Braid: *A Well-Mannered Storm* (2008).

Gould's status as a national icon is a highly interesting issue and well represented by a literary genre in Gould's reception previously unknown to me: children's biographies. Vladimir Konieczny's (2004) *The Story of Glenn Gould* and Lynette Roy's (1999) *Glenn Gould: The Genius and His Music 1932–1982* are good sources for getting a grasp of how significant a Canadian hero Gould has become in his own country. Besides movies, literature and poetry, I reflect a bit on Gould's reception in visual arts, mainly represented by paintings by Heidemarie Schäfer.

As far as Gould's writings are concerned, the most significant and best-known source is *The Glenn Gould Reader*, a compilation of Gould's writings edited by Tim Page in 1984. This edition includes almost all Gould's most important and substantial articles, such as the 1966 article "The Prospects of Recording," originally published in *High Fidelity* in 1966. In all, the *Reader* includes 67 Gould's writings as well as interviews with Gould by Tim Page (1981) and Bruno Monsaingeon (1976).

Another important source for Gould's writings is the collection *The Art of Glenn Gould*, edited by John P. L. Roberts in 1999. Roberts uses material almost entirely previously unpublished: manuscripts and drafts for Gould's public lectures and radio programs, program notes for Gould's public concerts, as well as transcripts of interviews for newspapers and radio. One of the most substantial essays Gould ever produced is included: "Forgery and Imitation in the Creative Process" (1963), which has been published even before Roberts's collection in the *GlennGould*-magazine in 1996. In all, *The Art of Glenn Gould* includes 45 independent pieces of writing by Gould.

With another Canadian scholar, Ghyslaine Guertin, Roberts has also edited a selection of Gould's letters for publication. This volume includes 184 of Gould's letters, written between the years 1955 and 1982. The editors emphasize Gould's professional correspondence; private letters in this collection are few. However, Roberts's and Guertin's collection is complemented by another work edited by Bruno Monsaingeon: *Journal d'une crise suivi de Correspondance de concert* (2002) makes public Gould's diaries during his life as a performing artist, as well as 60 letters not included in the aforementioned collection.

Transcripts of Gould's interviews are easily available in print. Jonathan Cott's *Conversations with Glenn Gould* (1984) is a transcription of two long interviews conducted on the phone. With Cott Gould talks freely about different themes that he touches upon in his

writings¹⁶ as well: technology and music, the damage that the competition principle does to musical life, and the future of music. Another, probably earlier interview of Gould by Elyse Mach is transcribed in *Great Contemporary pianists speak for themselves*, edited by Mach in 1991.

The most obvious source for unpublished material by and about Gould is the magazine *GlennGould*, which recently was discontinued after 13 volumes. During the almost 13 years that the magazine was active, some 30 interviews, a number of Gould's writings for various occasions, and many articles, essays and commentaries about Gould's musicianship and person were published in the journal. Time will show whether this wonderful source for scholarship on Gould will be replaced by another publication in the future.

Gould was a real "media pedagogue" of his time. Even though he never accepted a position at a musical institution, there is a clear intention on his part to enlighten his reading and listening public through his work. One example of that side of Gould's professional activity is, for instance, the 10-part radio documentary of Arnold Schoenberg, the manuscript of which is published in its entirety in the journal *GlennGould* volume 2004. Ghyslaine Guertin's commentary on that documentary in her translation of it has also been highly useful for me.

¹⁶ Gould scripted most of his interviews from the early 1970s on. For this reason, I have not made any distinctions between Gould's later interviews and his articles in my interpretation of Gould's world view; the former are often Gould's "writings" as well.

In addition to published material, my sources include ca. 350 pages of previously unpublished material, the outcome of my research period in the Glenn Gould archive at the National Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa in February 2005. This material includes Gould's correspondence with various people, drafts for articles, radio and television programs, press clippings, and transcripts on and by Gould. Even though a biographical scholarship on Gould has been all but exhausted through careful and resourceful scholarship (e.g. Bazzana 2003; Friedrich 1990; Kazdin 1989; Ostwald 1998; McGreevy 1983), some of this archival material has enabled me to get a grasp of Gould's personality and given me a view onto Gould's intellectual development over the years. For instance, Gould's correspondence with Jean Le Moyne and Marshall McLuhan offers an interesting view of the kinds of issues concerning music and technology that Gould was tackling at different points of his career. Also, the correspondence with the music critic B.H. Haggin is highly interesting because it is one of the forums where Gould brings his musical and aesthetic preferences into the open.

Research on Gould

Gould, unlike most musicians in Classical music, has already been an object of serious scholarship. The first PhD dissertation on Gould is Elizabeth Angilette's *Glenn Gould – The Philosopher at the Keyboard* (1992). Angilette's work is akin to my own in one important sense: it focuses on Gould's writings and radio and television programs and not so much on his music. However, I am critical of Angilette's work at many points of my thesis: her view of Gould's ideas as a part of larger intellectual and cultural frameworks

is to my mind superficial, lacking in depth of vision. This quality is exemplified in the setup of the work as a whole: Angilette situates Gould's ideas in twenty-some intellectual traditions, despite the fact that Gould himself had no direct encounter with most of them at any point of his life. The shortcoming of her work, however, is not this superficiality in and of itself, but rather the insurmountable problems she has in linking Gould's thought to such philosophies as Husserl's phenomenology and Marxism. In short, Angilette's problem is in producing scholarly discourse that, in my judgment, has no real connection to Gould's thought and thus is of no help to a deep understanding his ideas. Angilette uses a sample of Gould's writings to prove to the reader her own knowledge of Continental philosophy – at the cost of not helping the reader in any way to understand Gould himself.

Another PhD dissertation on Gould, *The Performer in the Work* (1997) by Kevin Bazzana focuses on Gould's recordings, and Bazzana's scholarship sheds light on Gould's aesthetic preferences as based on his choices of tempo, rhythmic and melodic phrasing and dynamics. Bazzana is not, in this work, interested in Gould as part of a cultural or historical horizon, but rather tries to abstract Gould's aesthetic world-view from his music. In a later outstanding work, the Gould biography *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould* (2003), Bazzana focuses more on Gould as person; his work situates Gould and his life as a part of the Canada of the 1960s and 70s.

Elizabeth Wood, in her dissertation on philosophy (1997), writes about Gould as an example of an artist whose work is defined by what Wood calls "aesthetic autonomy."

Wood sees Gould's re-interpretative musicianship as opposed to strict norms concerning the choice of instruments and performance style typical of the authenticity movement. Wood sees as groundbreaking what Gould himself took for granted: in Gould's oeuvre, the musician's role in performing a composer's music is that of a collaborator, not a slave to the work. Even though Wood's particular contribution is to view Gould's preferences in a philosophical context, related to Edward Cone's, Nicholas Woltersdorff's and Nelson Goodman's ideas, she nevertheless also brings up themes highly relevant to a scholarly discussion of Gould himself. These include competitiveness, counterpoint, and contemporariness in music. Wood's shortcoming is that she does not discuss Gould's *The Idea of North* and his glorification of isolation in any larger (Canadian) context.

A highly interesting doctoral thesis on Gould's audio documentaries is Ann Marie McKinnon's *The Death Drive: Cronenberg, Ondaatje, Gould* (2001). McKinnon's particular focus is on Gould's best known audiodocumentary *Idea of North* (1967), which McKinnon scrutinizes from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, as a manifestation of the "death drive," a cornerstone of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. It is, however, not only the psychodynamic sphere that interests McKinnon but also the semiotics of place, nationality and culture. Her argument is that the *Idea of North*, in Canadian context, functions semiotically as a kind of negation of culture, as an archaic backdrop for constructing a national identity. McKinnon's work is very useful for my own discussion of the "Idea of North" in Gould's thinking, but her discourse is limited to the audio documentaries.

Geoffrey Payzant's groundbreaking *Glenn Gould: Music & Mind* (1978) is an obvious work for me to start with. Payzant, like Elizabeth Wood, is interested in the philosophical aspects of Gould's musical thinking. His main focus is on music technology; more specifically, the changes that Gould's unreserved trust in the future potential of technology bring about in comparison with the attitudes of other prominent musicians and composers. While Payzant's discussion clearly benefits from his thorough knowledge of Gould's music-making and the history of aesthetic thought, he is, to my mind, too uncritical of Gould's ideas and not sufficiently familiar with Gould's published writings. In addition, Payzant leaves out the whole North American discourse on technology, an important context in which Gould's visions should be situated. In spite of the number of interesting points that Payzant makes throughout the work, it nevertheless is more a work idealizing its object than a scholarly work of the highest calibre.¹⁷

Gould has been an object of musicological inquiry in North America and Britain, but also in Germany, France, and Italy. In my work, I've read nearly all the research published in English and French. Much of the French research on Gould is structuralist and semiotic by its nature: Francois Delalande (1988; 1989), for instance, looks at Gould's musical performance as an audiovisual text and tries to formulate a "lexicon" of Gould's expres-

¹⁷ The absence of a critical view is perhaps lacking due to Payzant's personal friendly acquaintance with Gould. *Glenn Gould: Music & Mind* is the only work that I know of that was reviewed by its object. Gould (1978/1990) reviewed Payzant's book in *Piano Quarterly* in 1978. This publication was carefully prepared in advance: Gould had at his disposal early drafts of Payzant's work, and Payzant was willing to make changes to the work if needed, which becomes clear in his letter to Gould: "Also I invite you to take a look at a late draft of this work, perhaps in early December. I am not willing that any part of it should be in any way objectionable to you. Your examination of the script would prevent any unintentionally objectionable bits in the final version." (GGA 35, 12, 14.)

sive movements, his gestic, on the basis of his live performance. This kind of structuralist view is something that Delalande shares with Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1993; 1996): Nattiez looks at Gould's whole musical world-view as an entity of norms and values, separated from its contemporaneous contexts. Nattiez also situates Gould's ideas in the history of music, taking stock, for instance, of how Gould's prophecies about music in the 1960s have or have not been realized in our days. Of French research on Gould, two further examples should be mentioned: *Pluriel*, a collection of essays edited by Ghyslaine Guertin (1988), is based on papers given at the first international conference on Gould in Montreal in 1987. Denis Laborde's *De Jean-Sébastien Bach à Glenn Gould: Magie des sons et spectacle de la passion* (1997) is a wonderful example of how ethnography can add insight to the world of Classical music performance. Gould's interpretation of Bach's keyboard music is dealt with from the ethnographic viewpoint in Laborde's work.

Research on Gould in English, of course, is the main reference for my own work, and interesting scholarly commentaries abound. Just to mention a few, Alan Théberge's (1986), Edward Said's (1993, 2000), Matthew McFarlane's (2002), Kevin McNeilly's (1996), Peter Dickinson's (1996) and Paul Hjartason's (1996) articles, the last three in particular, have been of great help for my project. Théberge scrutinizes in great detail the relationship that Gould's ideas have with Marshall McLuhan's and also sees Gould as an intellectual fully up-to-date with the world around him. This same aspect of Gould is well tackled by Richard Cavell in his two writings (2004; 2005).

Edward Said (2000) looks at Gould from a different angle. He regards Gould's musical interpretation as an actual realization of T.W. Adorno's idea of criticism as an intellectual effort to make an aesthetic argument independent of canons and conventions of Classical music.

McFarlane, in his turn, looks at Gould's musical thought in relation to the French theologist Teilhard de Chardin's and the Canadian cultural critic Jean Le Moyne's ideas. These ideological connections do have a lot of explanatory power: Gould had in his home library a number of De Chardin's books, and Le Moyne was a personal acquaintance through his radio work.

McNeilly, Dickinson and Hjartason focus mostly on Gould's audio documentaries, which are not at the centre of my investigation. Some common ground with my own work, however, can be found: McNeilly, in particular, deals with Gould's idealization of solitude in great depth, and this discussion has been very helpful to my own understanding of Gould's musical world-view.

Gould has been discussed also in my own home ground, Finnish musicology. Rami Kangas (2000) has tackled Gould's musical thought from a cultural-historical viewpoint in his master's thesis, and Jukka Sarjala (1988) has compared Gould's and Jacques Attali's ideas of how music relates to society. My own work more than a decade-long on Gould (Mantere 2000b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2005b, 2006) is obviously the most important basis on which this dissertation is grounded. Parts and earlier versions of the chapters in this

thesis have been published in Finnish in the aforementioned publications. An earlier version of chapter 5 has been published in the Canadian journal *Intersections*. (Mantere 2005).

Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter lays out the theoretical framework on which my argument is constructed. Through a short excursion to the history of musicology and aesthetics, I also propose an answer to a potentially challenging question: why have musicians and musicianship been such a marginal topic in modern musicology? To answer this question, I scrutinize the concept of the autonomous musical work and the hegemony of the composer, both cornerstones of 20th-century musicology.

The second chapter takes my discourse finally to the domain of Gould himself. The title, “Who owns the musical work?” refers, of course, to some of the basic premises of Gould’s music making. Gould explicitly turns his back on the concept of the composer as someone who “owns” his work, someone to whose intentions, regarding the interpretation of the work, the performer is obligated. I tackle these issues through history; 19th-century conceptions of authenticity, tradition, and canon serve as a backdrop against which I discuss Gould’s unorthodox ideas concerning the interpretation of music. At the end of the chapter I also take up an often heard argument about Gould’s “postmodernity” in his thinking.

The third chapter is in many ways the centre of this work. It brings up the whole of Gould's technological vision of music in the future. I discuss in great detail those elements of listening and interpreting music to which Gould saw music technology contributing a new kind of potential. I also propose a new term to describe Gould's relation to technology: "technological ethics," which, in my mind, covers well the substance that Gould thought technology was all about – morality, non-competition, isolation from history and *Zeitgeist*, independence of creative work from social frameworks. I set Gould's ideas about all these in dialogue with those of Walter Benjamin, Gianni Vattimo, Jean Le Moyne and Marshall McLuhan.

The fourth chapter is a hermeneutic experiment of a kind: is it possible to gain new insights to Gould's thinking through Theodor W. Adorno's notoriously controversial and challenging philosophy? A concrete connection between the two exists but is, as far as I have learned, slight and late: the only work of Adorno's that Gould knew was the collection of essays titled *Prisms* (*Prizmen* orig.), and judging from the underlinings in the book at least, he was familiar only with a couple of the essays. There are, however, notable similarities between their ideas about music and the world outside. From Adorno's philosophy I've chosen four themes through which to look at Gould's musicianship: the idea of music as situated in the sphere of the listener's privacy; the idea of the interpretation of a musical work as *criticism*; the idea of modernity as an intellectual and ethical challenge, which the artist should face in a self-reflective way; and the idea of "culture industry" as an element that distances the listener (and the performer) from the heart of the music and reduces music to a commodity. All these ideas are common to both Adorno

and Gould, and at the end of the chapter I propose that one way to look at Gould's provocative musical interpretation is to regard it as a kind of "pianistic criticism" à l'Adorno.

The fifth chapter situates Gould's idealization of the "North" in a local and historical context. I explore Gould's idealization of the "North" as an aesthetic category, reflected on many levels of his musicianship, which has many ramifications for the Canada of his time as well as for the history of Canada. The sixth chapter takes my discussion outside Gould's thought and music making. Gould's public reception in movies, literature, poetry, and visual arts is the intriguing substance of this part of my thesis. It is my argument that through Gould's public reception in various media, "Gould" becomes the signifier for many things: Canadian-ness, eccentric genius, homosexuality. Part of my discussion in this chapter is also an attempt to understand the workings of Gould's extraordinary reception, how it is maintained and constructed, and what the impact of Gould's reception in popular culture is on the reception of his musicianship as a pianist.

The fundamental idea at the core of all my discussion of Gould is to explore the "variations" of Gould's thought. The five angles (in chapters 2–6) I have included on Gould are not arbitrarily chosen which is not, of course, to say that potential angles for discussion should be limited to the ones I have chosen. My intention is to "cross-investigate" Gould's musical thought from local, historical, and philosophical angles. Just as in musical variations, I place certain especially prominent issues in Gould's thought in different hermeneutic contexts whereby – I hope – new insights on the meanings and ramifications of the substance will be created. These prominent issues – ethics of musical interpreta-

tion, competition, counterpoint, and polyphony as metaphors for “freedom” and “creativity” along with music as a private phenomenon – are the thematic substance with which I work in my composition.

One of my scholarly ideals is the transparency of logic in argumentation. This has led me sometimes to use unfortunately long citations from Gould’s writings and interviews.

While apologizing to the reader for the inconvenience of reading this kind of discourse, I nevertheless want to emphasize the fact that the long excerpts result from an intention to give Gould himself a kind of “voice” in this thesis – a “presence,” which might not be possible were I to choose to paraphrase more of Gould’s own narrative. As to citations from French or German texts, the translations from the original are mine with the exception of Adorno’s texts, which are for the most part available in English translations.

CHAPTER ONE:

Musicology Without Musicians

This research project is not about analyzing musical works. In spite of the obvious emphasis on music analysis in recent Anglo-American cultural musicology¹⁸ (e.g. Subotnik 1991; 1996, Goehr 1992; 1998, McClary 1991; Taruskin 1995; Tomlinson 1993), I have drawn other inspiration from this scholarly paradigm. Taking root at the end of the 1980's, cultural musicology – through the work of scholars such as Rose Rosengard Subotnik and Susan McClary – questioned many of the presuppositions previously taken for granted in musicology. For instance, the idea of an autonomous, absolute musical work had to give way to a more dynamic, ideological, and discursive conception of music prevalent in the New Musicology. Music has come more and more to be seen as social and cultural activity being “made” in various places: in listening, in interpretation, and even in research. Musicology has become interested in the social, sexual,¹⁹ political, and ideo-

¹⁸ Cultural musicology could be seen as a “national” project, in which American musicology, which had started to institutionalize in the 1930s, thanks to an influx of intellectual émigrés from areas occupied by Nazi Germany, finally came into its own by shedding the European standards of musicological scholarship (see Josephson 2005 for a detailed summary of this process). This interpretation, however, is not without its problems: first of all, in terms of the actual research objects, there is no drastic change seen in the scholarly profile of the discipline. Cultural musicology has, in a way, continued in the old musicological footsteps in its focus on canonical works, from Bach to Schoenberg. American repertoire – jazz, musicals, and American Classical music – did not fully enter American musicology until the 1990s.

¹⁹ The gendered aspects of New Musicology, brought into discussion most prominently by the work of Susan McClary (e.g. 1991), do not interest me much in this work. In fact, whether or not the 19th-century conception of an autonomous musical work is in the end a

logical aspects involved in music, and musical works have more and more come to be seen as cultural texts carrying new kinds of meanings. In short, the autonomous conception of a musical work has become obsolete. Rather, music is seen as a cultural domain, within which people actively make music meaningful in their own individual ways.

Classical music, in the current research, has been relocated in its sociocultural and ideological contexts.²⁰ This shift, today a commonplace view, was something radical and new in the early 1990s, as well exemplified by an excerpt from McClary's *Feminine Endings* (1991, 19–20):

However, I am no longer sure what MUSIC is. Given that my first three sets of questions [regarding the relationship between sexuality and music, the gendered aspects of traditional music theory, and the sexuality and gendering of musical narrativity] are concerned with laying bare the kinds of gender/power relationships already inscribed in many of the presumably value-free procedures of Western music, it becomes difficult to stash that information and simply analyze MUSIC, even if it is produced by women.
... But as long as we approach questions of signification *exclusively* from a formalist point of view, we will continue to conclude that it is impossible to get from chords, pitch-class sets, or structures to any other kind of human or social meaning.

chauvinistic, elitist, or misogynist cultural construction, as McClary implies, is not at all relevant for the questions I am trying to discuss in this work.

²⁰ This process, of course, bridges some of the gap that has existed between musicology and ethnomusicology. Consider Jeff Titon's (1997, 100) definition of ethnomusicology as "the study of people making music" – where "making" is defined as "producing the sounds we call music," on the one hand, and "constructing the cultural domain that we demarcate as music" on the other. The similarity between the two disciplines is clear, at least in principle. However, some (e.g. Miles 1997) have argued that one of the methodological shortcomings in New Musicology is that music's meanings and its cultural mediation have been too much situated too much in the musical score and not in the real world outside. This has never been the case in ethnomusicology given its methodological emphasis in fieldwork.

Of course, the new focus on gender, ideology and sexual politics in musicology was theoretically associated with changes that took place in comparative literature (see Eagleton 1998, 170), post colonialist studies, cultural studies, semiotics, post structuralism, Marxism, and other new paradigms in humanities. What strikes me as really new in the New Musicology, however, is the potential breadth of the paradigm: if the meaning, pleasure, and mediation of music become, as they have become, the substance of the academic study of music, then musicology in and of itself becomes a discipline practically without theoretical boundaries. This fact explains much of the theoretical diversity and consequently the lack of any manifest theoretical “center” in New Musicology. Suffice it to mention some of the better-known scholars to whom I refer here: Lawrence Kramer (2002a), who leans on literature theory in most of his work, music theorists Fred Maus (1997) and Timothy L. Jackson (1995), Susan McClary, Suzanne Cusick (1999) and Ruth Solie (1991) who have a strong feminist or post-feminist agenda, and Rose Rosengard Subotnik, who has a strong background in intellectual history in her research. Subotnik (1991, 91) characterizes this theoretical diversity thus: “The domain of criticism...is huge, potentially encompassing all of human experience and thought.” At the same time, scholarly criticism of music is never about “explaining” away its object; its motivation is rather aesthetic. At its best, scholarly criticism could be seen as an aesthetically complementary part of music.²¹

²¹ Subotnik positions the idea of a scholarly criticism of music in Theodor W. Adorno’s music philosophy, and it is obvious that Adorno’s own critique of empirical sociology of the 1960s is, in fact, very similar to Joseph Kerman’s (1985) well-known critique of the musicology of the 1980s as too much obsessed with historical “facts” and archival material (see Subotnik 2002, 240). While New Musicology obviously brought a change to this situation, at the same time it betrayed the emancipatory potential embedded in Adorno’s own ideal of the scholarship of music (Ibid.). Subotnik (Ibid., 245) interestingly argues

Scholarly criticism of music is grounded in an ultimately hermeneutic project and therefore can not claim an “objective” or epistemologically neutral position. Scholarly criticism, as Subotnik and others have defined the term, always unfolds in a dialectical position with its object – a dialectic the aim of which is to enhance the understanding of its object and thereby the aesthetic experience of it.

In my work, I take one particularly important axiom from Cultural Musicology: musicianship is as important to musical authorship and agency as composition is. Richard Taruskin (1992), among others, has emphasized the idea that a musician’s role in the mediation process is not only to “mediate” the music from the composer to the listener but to actually take part in the real process of signification and, indeed, in the re-creation of a given piece of music. I am putting aside, then, a traditional conception of musicians as “servants” of the composer’s will, as interlocutors whose agency is defined by the historical idea of a “fidelity to the work” (*Werktreue*).

As far as Cultural Musicology goes, the principles that form my points of departure are as follows:

- 1) Musical performance and musicians are important research objects in their own right. Through research on important musicians, such as Glenn Gould, we can get

that for some of the New Musicology, deconstruction of music became more an intellectual game than de-ideologization of it. It is no wonder, then, that many scholars (e.g. Subotnik, McClary 2002, 182–185; and Kramer 2002b, 165–173) have tried to find a new ethical grounding and purpose, other than analyzing musical works, for musicology.

a dynamic perspective on music as something that is in a constant state of rebirth, of “becoming” something new with each new interpretation of it. At the same time, we should aim at a comprehensive, holistic view of music as part of a cultural and ideological fabric, as a cultural object always tied to philosophy, aesthetics, and other forms of cultural discourse around it.

- 2) Second, any interpretation of music is an intellectual undertaking, which always takes place in a cultural, social, ideological and historical context. Musicians, just like other intellectuals, always work in a dialogue with values, norms and ideas of their time, as well as with those that originated earlier in history. Through focusing on this kind of perspective, I argue, we can get a more thorough and contextualized view onto a musician’s – as opposed to a view dictated and mediated solely by conventions, traditions and canons of the music world.
- 3) Third, musicianship should become an object of musicological inquiry, in a way that appreciates the nature of musicianship as a creative, individual but at the same time cultural phenomenon. Musicians should be seen as “authors” of music in the same sense as composers are.

These three axioms reflect my intention to part ways with the conventional ideas of an autonomous musical work and of authentic interpretation embedded in traditional musicology. This intellectual journey started at the very moment when I decided to study a musician instead of a composer, musical work, or stylistic period, which would have been closer to a standard choice in musicology. In what follows, I’ll make a short historical excursion to the roots of this standard conception in order to give at least a tentative an-

swer to the following, deceptively simple question: *why has there been almost scholarship on musicians in musicology?*

Doing Ethnography to History

Theoretically my work is situated in the paradigm of cultural musicology on one hand and of ethnomusicology on the other. One could well question the neat border drawn between these two paradigms (see for instance Born 1995, 17), but I nevertheless stick to a certain distance between them for reasons that have more to do with institutional practice than theoretical presuppositions. My views regarding this matter will become clear in what follows.

From a brief perusal of some twenty volumes, beginning in the year 1985, of two well-established ethnomusicological journals, *Ethnomusicology* and *World of Music*, one can conclude that ethnomusicological research has largely focused on the following areas: non-Western music cultures, technological mediation of music, popular music, modern/urban soundscapes and various audiences for different types of music. In most studies, anthropology has been the main theoretical source for the research, and with the exception of few studies (for instance Kingsbury 1987, 1991; Nettl 1995), Classical music has not been an object of study. Some scholars (for instance Qureshi 1995), however, have extended their anthropological point of view to historiography of Classical music.

Although ethnomusicology has, for the most part, focused on everything but Classical music, an ethnomusicological type of focus on a Classical musician as an active agent constructing and maintaining his/her cultural context has become very important to me. Ever since the 1960's, through Alan Merriam's (1964; 1969) and Mantle Hood's (1971) work, we have accepted a scholar's participatory observation, musical enculturation, and bi-musicality as common practice rather than an exception. All these works are based on the idea of a scholar as a musician and the idea of making music as a means of gaining knowledge (see Titon 1997). This view is also strongly manifest in the ethnography of experience, a paradigm represented by Timothy Rice's (1994) and John Chernoff's (1979) works. Rice's work, in particular, has been a great inspiration for my own work: his view of two Bulgarian folk musicians as objects of a hermeneutic, ethnographic, and historically sensitive inquiry resonates strongly with my own work even though our research is focused on different objects. Rice's theoretical and methodological conviction that music becomes meaningful in certain social, cultural, economic, and historical contexts is also a good starting point for my own investigation of Gould's musicianship.

The theory and methods of traditional ethnomusicology as such, however, do not have much explanatory power in relation to my own work. There are two main reasons for this limitation: first, most post-Merriam ethnomusicology is based on synchronic observation: interviews, visual and auditory documentation. This kind of methodological base obviously has its limits when used in research on musicians from the past! In a research setting in which a late individual's musical thinking is viewed in relation to its historical and cultural context, ethnography is most often excluded as a potential method of study.

A second challenge, in general, is that the emphasis in ethnomusicology is on a research paradigm that focuses on a musical community and not on an individual. Ethnomusicology has not paid a great deal of attention to the unique and idiosyncratic micro-level involved in any act of musical interpretation, that is, to the world-views of musicians, or to aesthetic and ideological choices and personal styles of making music. As Jonathan Stock (1998, 7–8) has observed, ethnomusicology typically has been oriented towards musical communities and has thus more or less excluded individual musicians. This kind of orientation, according to Stock, is a heritage from the discipline's historical sources in comparative musicology at the beginning of the 20th century.

Stock (Ibid., 10) proposes, however, three important reasons for a need for a more, shall we say, biographical paradigm in ethnomusicology.

- 1) Musical communities typically value highly exceptional musical figures, and research should go hand in hand with this general tendency;
- 2) Ethnomusicological research is always about representation, and a typical view of a musical community as a "whole" is too homogenous and simplifying;
- 3) Any "Culture" is always a combination of individual decisions, evaluations, actions and interactions, and research should therefore pay more attention to cultural agency starting at the micro level.

In my own work, ethnography plays itself out more as a kind of a heuristic ideal than as a methodological practice – an ideal that points towards the very area of substance of my research: understanding an individual making music. Clifford Geertz's (1973, 27) Classical definition of ethnography, as a method in which a scholar is interested, on the one hand, in the "conceptual structures" involved in the object's actions, and, on the other had, in contextualizing those structures within larger cultural horizons, a starting point of much importance to my own work. For Geertz, ethnography is done in the present and in the field, where the scholar is irrevocably involved in the making of that field, whereas my focus is on history and on representations produced by different media. Methodologically my work is actually very simple: the only method I use is extremely close, contextually sensitive reading of my material.²²

Geertz's work uses his well-known conception of ethnography as "thick description." This conception could be seen as a point of view in which the meanings and cultural agency of the object are the center of the scholar's attention. Culture, for Geertz (Ibid., 5), refers to "webs of significance" that agents of a given culture have spun. Even though Geertz's arguments are targeted at an anthropologist about to enter his/her field – conceived as a dynamic entity full of symbolic and semiotic significance – in principle I don't see a difference between my view of a music-making individual in the midst of larger contexts

²² In my view, ethnography does not have to be ahistorical and synchronic, but can reach its scope to history as well. There is no justified reason for why ethnography should not be used to research archival material. In spite of this fact, previously pointed out by Philip Bohlman (1997) and Comaroff & Comaroff (1992), there is very little ethnography done on Classical music, and none I am familiar with (for instance Kingsbury 1988 and Nettl 1995) use historical research material. Nancy Newman's (2010) historical research of the 19th-century Germania musical society is an exception to this in recent ethnomusicology.

and Geertz's idea of ethnography as "thick description." Ethnography, in my work, refers to an effort at understanding Gould through the cultural, historical, and ideological webs in which his ideas spin their own threads. In this sense, Jean and John Comaroff's relatively loose definition of ethnography is very close to mine:

Ethnographers also read diverse sorts of texts: books, bodies, buildings, sometimes even cities. ... But they must also give texts contexts and assign values to the equations of power and meaning they express. Nor are contexts just *there*. They, too, have to be constructed analytically in light of our assumptions about the social world. ... Ethnography surely extends beyond the range of the empirical; its inquisitive spirit calls upon us to ground subjective, culturally configured action in society and history. ... In this sense, one can 'do' ethnography in the archives. (1992, 11. *Italics original.*)

Put simply, an ethnographically oriented scholar is interested in texts and actions surrounding his/her object, through which he/she is able to gain increased understanding of a person studied. The ultimate scholarly ideal in ethnography is hermeneutic, a condition that Gary Tomlinson (1993, x) associates with a thorough delving into the cultural and ideological history surrounding the object. Through this kind of scrutiny, the scholar can make sense of the object and grasp the meaningful connections between texts. In my own work, hermeneutics has to do with an interest in Gould's historical and cultural subjectivity – through reading Gould's writings, I am aiming at an increased understanding of Gould's individual thought and musical world view.

To return to my earlier question: why is the musicological research on musicians and musicianship so scarce? Why have musicians not been regarded as *authors* of music in the same sense as composers? Why is the historiography of Classical music performance only now starting to take shape – more than 200 years after historiography of composers

and works started! Lydia Goehr (1998, 135) argues that musicianship is a marginal area in musicology for three reasons: in the original 19th-century conception of musicology, the social meaning of music became secondary to its structural meaning; musical performance became regarded as secondary to the musical work itself; and the idea that instrumental music was the only “purely musical” genre of music became prevalent in music aesthetics.

The corollary to Goehr’s insightful argument is this: instead of focusing on the reproduction and mediation of music – which is what performing music actually is – musicology has emphasized the production of music, i.e. composers and their works. Another, more historically oriented paradigm in musicology has focused on the history of manuscripts, historical editions, musical instruments, historical styles of performance, the conceptual history of music, cultural history, et cetera. A third paradigm, perhaps the most recent in musicology, has put under scrutiny musical perception and cognition itself, i.e. the psychological aspects involved in any act of making music.

Musical interpretation itself has until quite recently been an object of musicological inquiry only as a style-historical problem, embedded in the ideal of an “authentic,” historically informed performance. In other words, musical performance as an object of research has been seen to matter only as far as the choice of instruments, tempo, articulation, and ornamentation are concerned. The ideas, aesthetics, and practices of the musicians have not drawn musicological attention.

The most important reason, I would argue, for the absence of musicians in musicology is the idea of the composer as the only author behind the music. This is closely related to the idea of *Werktreue*, the ethical duty that has been seen to regulate musician's act of interpreting a composer's music. *Werktreue*, the ideal of a musician's "fidelity" to the musical work and its composer's intentions, came into existence at the beginning of the 19th century. It was defined by a few axioms, many of which are still with us today. First of all, a musical work came to be seen as a unique, objectified embodiment of its composer's expression, the interpretation of which was regulated by an adherence to its composer's intentions. Second, musical works came to be seen as public and constant artifacts, ontologically not in need of performances. Third, musical performance became to be seen as transitory and as an activity conditioned by the work itself – because music, again, has not been seen as requiring performances to exist. (Goehr 1989, 55.)

Hierarchically, however, not all music was the same. Carl Dahlhaus (1989, 9) writes about the aesthetic divide that came into existence in the early decades of the 19th century. On the one hand, there was Great music, the music of musical works, for instance Beethoven's symphonies, that soon became the epitome of absolute music. Then there was performance music: Rossini's operas, for instance, were seen as aesthetically lower in that their score was merely a "recipe" for their performance. It is no coincidence that the new discipline, music theory, emerging at the late 19th century, adhered to the work-concept of music; practically all great theorists of music in the late 19th and early 20th century (A.B. Marx, Hugo Riemann, Heinrich Schenker, Rudolf Réti) took Beethoven's music in particular as the centerpiece of their analytical systems.

Werktreue and the idea of musical interpretation as a kind of *exegesis* did not, of course, appear out of nowhere. Rather, the new ideas concerning the ontology of music resulted from massive structural changes in European art-music culture: concert halls, rather than salons and private homes, became the primary venue for listening to music; composition and musicianship became separate professions; conservatories were established all over Europe since from the 1810s on; instrumental music became aesthetically more valued than vocal music; improvisation started to vanish little by little from contemporary music; music printing became a lucrative business; contemplation, devotion, and silence became the new norms of the authentic experience of music.

In all, the taken-for-granted view of Classical music as musical works that should be served through authentic interpretations has a very specific history that goes back to the beginning of the 19th century and even earlier. According to Goehr (1989, 56), during the early 19th century in particular, important structural distinctions were made between elements previously indistinguishable: composing music vs performing music; absolute vs program music; composing vs transcription; composing vs improvising music. Other important changes that have so far been not mentioned in this historical summary were legally defined ownership of music; the plagiarism's change into an impermissible enterprise; and an emerging awareness of music history along with a growing demand for biographies of genius-composers.

All of these changes, I would argue, have formed an important historical background for the musicologically invisible musician. Now, however, when the idea of “authenticity” has become questionable, we’ve become interested in the essence of a creative act of interpretation and the musician’s role in it. Richard Taruskin was one of the first scholars to argue that the idea of “authenticity” can and should not be the ultimate goal of an interesting and even historically informed musical performance. In his well-known essay “The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past” he, in fact, rejects all values and norms usually taken to be prerequisites for an “authentic” performance. According to Taruskin (1995, 93), performances claiming “authenticity” often prove nothing but a “naïve assumption that re-creating all the external conditions that obtained in the original performance of a piece will thus re-create the composer’s inner experience of the piece and allow him to ‘speak for himself’, that is, unimpeded by that base intruder, specifically, the performer’s subjectivity.”

The reconstruction of the historical past, in itself, obviously has no value for Taruskin. “Authenticity,” for him, is not about using contemporary instruments or re-creating historical conditions. Nor does he place any significance on whether or not we know the composer’s intentions regarding his music – according to Taruskin, “composers do not usually have intentions such as we would like to ascertain, and the need obliquely to gain the composer’s approval for what we do bespeaks a failure of nerve, not to say an infantile dependency. The appeal to intentions is an evasion of the performer’s obligation to understand what he is performing.” According to Taruskin, claiming to obey the compos-

er's intentions in the interpretation of his music only tells a critical listener that the musician does not understand the real substance of it. (Ibid., 98.)

It might easily seem that Taruskin's argument is a form of musicological New Criticism²³ à la Wimsatt & Beardsley, but this is not the case. In fact it is exactly the opposite that Taruskin stands for. Even if we don't have a way of knowing what a musical work "means," he argues, we don't have to content ourselves with the ideal of a musical work as something absolute, something that refers only to its sonic surface.²⁴ This kind of position, he goes on, leads only to "formalism" and to music's becoming, through theory and analysis, what Taruskin describes as a "quasi-mechanic" or "quasi-organic" entity. This radical reduction completely brackets music's potential to signify – obviously Taruskin's primary concern – to different people at different times (Ibid., 74). If music is listened to only structurally,²⁵ as "tonally moving forms" à la Eduard Hanslick, the whole contextual domain of music's meaning becomes excluded.

²³ W.K. Wimsatt's and Monroe C. Beardsley's argument in their best-known article "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946) was that since the reader has no way of knowing what the author wanted "to say" through his text, any given literary work only means what it means literally, as words and sentences. No author's biographies, letters, essays or contemporary commentaries are needed to "interpret" anything. This hypothesis became the cornerstone of what in literary studies was called "New Criticism."

²⁴ This is Igor Stravinsky's famous position on the matter. He wanted his own music to be "executed," not interpreted, and an often cited passage in his *Poetics of Music* finds the aging composer saying that any composer "runs a perilous risk every time his music is played" (2003, 123). Stravinsky's extreme position here, it could be argued, resembles Beardsley's and Wimsatt's position in its neo-objectivist take of a musical work.

²⁵ "Structural listening is discussed more thoroughly in chapter 5.

Taruskin's project is about establishing a new, "postmodern" view onto musical interpretation, one that leaves behind the ideal of "authenticity" and fidelity to the work and tries to see music's meaning located in the present – in the here and now. Only this way, Taruskin argues, is there a way of letting "the music speak for itself" – which is what the authenticity movement aimed at through historical accuracy. Instead, Taruskin speaks for a "post-authoritarian" liberty in musical interpretation in which the line between "creation" and "re-creation" becomes blurred – activities that through the 19th-century legitimization of the work-concept had become separated. This kind of attitude, which Taruskin calls "postmodern," challenges the established conception of art and the norms of "serious" music-making.

Authenticity is obviously a very important issue in my work; it for this reason that I have used so many words here in untangling its complexity. It has to do with grounding my own scholarship metatheoretically: since musicology has been busy with various issues embedded in the ideal "authenticity" – composer's intentions, musical works, and stylistic history – musicians have not been seen as a worthwhile object of study. This is a position that I wish to challenge through my work – my aim is to show through my own example that an in-depth scrutiny of an important musician's musical and aesthetic thought can establish the importance of musicians' recreative agency as a music-cultural layer in music's unfolding.²⁶

²⁶ Here – and only here – my view is close to post-structuralism. Foucault's idea of the "death of the author" and Barthes's idea of the "reader" as a "re-writer" of the text are both similar to mine in the sense that the *reception* of an artwork is emphasized. This is almost exactly why Roland Barthes chooses to speak of "texts" instead of "works" – whereas the latter, according to him, are "caught up in a process of filiation," that is, in

“Authenticity” is obviously an issue in working on Gould himself. Is Gould’s provocative musicianship, in fact, diametrically opposed to any kind of search for “authenticity”? Aren’t Gould’s recordings of Mozart’s sonatas, for example, an example of carnivalism and outrageous provocation at the cost of the elegance and grace of Mozart’s music? Gould obviously does what he wants to Mozart’s music – and most of the time it is not pleasant for anyone who takes Mozart’s music seriously – but I want to explore the idea of authenticity a bit further and offer a slightly different view on the whole notion. Isn’t the ideal of authenticity something that could be seen to relate to the musician himself and not just to tradition? Through this question I am trying to redefine a new kind of ideal of “personal authenticity,” first discussed by Peter Kivy (1995). Kivy argues that it is more the intention of an artist himself than the framework of tradition that matters in the definition of what “authenticity” might mean. This ideal of “personal authenticity” ties various threads together in my work: I regard it as crucially important to Adorno’s idea of criticism as an active, historically changing and contextually bound mode of interpretation that takes the norms and conventions of tradition not as a binding authority but rather as a backdrop against which all new signification necessarily unfolds.

the fact that its author is “reputedly the father and the owner of his work” (1977, 160), a “text” is completely free to signify “without the inscription of the Father” (Ibid., 161). The metaphor proper to Text is that of the *network*: a text can be read and reinterpreted without its “father’s” instructions – which can, however, add new insight into the artistic experience.

Music That Does Not Speak

Let's summarize a couple of points. The ideal of "authenticity" is obviously an important reason for the exclusion of musicians from musicology. The musician's role has traditionally been seen as that mediating the composer's intentions to the listener. By the same token, the meaning and substance of music have been seen to reside in the domain of the composer, not the musician. But the ideal of "authenticity" is actually dependent on another idea – the idea of a musical work as an autonomous whole defined by its score. In other words, there has to be a "Werk" before one can assume any "Treue" towards it. This is where we come to the idea of absolute music, something which also has been an important factor in the shaping of musicology as we know it.

Gary Tomlinson (2003) looks at the intellectual history of musicology from an unusual and original viewpoint in comparing it to those of historiography and ethnography. Musicology's relation to the latter two has been troublesome: on the one hand, musicology examines an art form in which performance has always had a prominent role – just as anthropology needs "cultural performances" to do research on. On the other hand, however, musicology works through writing like historiography. (Tomlinson 2003, 32.)

What makes Tomlinson's arguments particularly interesting is his broad view of musicology as a discipline that evolved in parallel with ethnography, historiography, aesthetics and the intellectual history of music. According to him, the century 1750–1850 was an important landmark in at least one particular sense: during that period, music changed from the lowest art to the epitome of all art, an art whose "transcendental and spiritual"

qualities were a cause of envy for other art forms. This change, of course, has to do with the other structural changes in music life – conservatories, public concerts, music publishing – that I discussed earlier. However, the idea of the supremacy of instrumental music in relation to vocal music also led to a new situation: the song, which until the early 18th century had provided a kind of a conceptual umbrella for music, had to step down for instrumental music, which now came to be seen as a new language “without words,” a medium providing access to the metaphysical. Vocal music was seen as aesthetically burdened by its tie to the everyday language. This irrevocable tie with the everyday in itself was a major reason for vocal music’s new position as aesthetically inferior to instrumental music. This, of course, led to the fact that the music that came to be studied in musicology was almost exclusively instrumental music.²⁷

According to Tomlinson, an important consequence of the idea of absolute music was that a new kind of dichotomy emerged between “western” and “non-western” music. Just as vocal music came to be viewed as too tied to everyday language, non-western music – and, in fact, not music not composed into scores – was now seen as aesthetically inferior. This new shift is clearly visible in many contemporary literary documents. Tomlinson’s own example is Nikolaus Forkel’s *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (1788), in which Forkel explicitly locates “progress in music” in print-mediated music and clearly implies that orally transmitted music is of less aesthetic worth. Forkel’s idea was that the status of being written makes possible the abstraction – the music’s possibility of dissociating the musical signifier from its sonic signified. Music that did not employ the sophisticated

²⁷ For a discussion on the evolution and intellectual history of the idea of “absolute music,” see Dahlhaus 1991.

means available for writing music down, Forkel argued, thereby proved its own lack of musical sophistication.

Musical stasis was in Forkel's time by definition a non-western quality, as the emerging music historiography was oriented towards seeing western music as an evolutionary narrative. The change in looking at music as a historical, evolving narrative also tells something about broader intellectual historical changes in the aesthetics. Alexander Baumgarten's *Estetica* in the 1750's was probably the first intellectual effort to establish a new science, aesthetics, whose ambition was to rationalize beauty and the contemplative experience of art – just what the idea of art as absolute and autonomous needed to justify its existence philosophically.

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790) was a landmark in justifying the rational foundation of the aesthetic experience. He made a distinction between two categories of beauty: "free" and "dependent" beauty. The first referred to a kind of beauty that was seen as independent and pure because its qualities do not depend upon predefined concepts. The second type of beauty, in Kant's thought, referred to beauty being of service for the object's external purposes. The idea of "pure," absolute beauty²⁸ was entering Classical music through instrumental music during the very time that Kant was writing about it: by the year 1790, Haydn and Mozart alone – not to speak of their less known contemporaries – had composed over 130 symphonies, more than 100 keyboard sonatas, and a large number of works for chamber trios and quartets. Instrumental music was ob-

²⁸ Kant was notoriously suspicious of music's ontology as an art form, and for this reason, his aesthetic theory must be applied to music with care.

vously growing out of its status as “innocent luxury, unnecessary to our existence” which was Charles Burney’s depiction of it in 1777 (Quoted in Weiss & Taruskin 1984, 303).

Beethoven’s symphonies in particular were seen to manifest what amounted to the new aesthetic quality of instrumental music: the *sublime*. The sublime, in general, refers to metaphysical and supralinguistic qualities that Beethoven’s music was heard to express. Kant had written about the awe and horror that a sublime aesthetic experience evokes, and these qualities come to the fore in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s 1810 critique of Beethoven’s 5th Symphony. Hoffmann writes about how Beethoven’s music “moves the levers of fear, shudder, horror, and pain and thus awakens that infinite longing that is the essence of romanticism. Therefore, he is a purely romantic composer” (cited Dahlhaus 1991, 59). In this context it is of interest to point out that Hoffmann makes a distinction between “beautiful” and “sublime” through a comparison between Haydn and Beethoven. Haydn’s symphonies, in Hoffmann’s ears,

lead us to endlessly green pastures, to a merry, colorful throng of happy people. Dancing youths and maidens are floating by; laughing children, hiding behind trees and rose bushes, throw flowers at each other. A life full of love, of bliss, like before original sin, in eternal youth; no suffering, no pain, only a sweet, melancholy longing for a figure that floats by in the distance, at dusk, and does not come nearer, does not vanish, and, as long as it is present, it does not turn into night, since it is the evening glow, itself, in which mountains and fields are steeped.” (cit. in Charlton 1989, 237–238).

Beethoven’s music was heard as transcendental, awesome, complex and thus sublime.²⁹

²⁹ The primacy of “spiritual” over entertaining as the most important quality of art entered the aesthetics of literature at about the same time. Lionel Trilling (1997, 98) writes about the “spiritual substance” that the reading public came to expect from literature at

Kant's and Hoffmann's depictions of the sublime find their crystallization in the 1850's in Eduard Hanslick's definition of music as "tonally moving forms." His definition of musical beauty as something "specifically musical, autonomous beauty," and as something the form of which "is materialized in a specifically musical way" (1986, 28) is, of course, an extension of Kant's aesthetic principles into the domain of music. Even prior to Hanslick and outside of musical works, Kant's formulation of the sublime became a central element in the Beethoven cult that arose at the early decades of the 19th century (see DeNora 1995).

In Kant's and Hanslick's formulations, the form of the musical object becomes the primary focus of the aesthetic experience. Musical formalism clearly has its roots in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, since in Kant's philosophy, the genuinely aesthetic experience becomes dependent on the observation of the form and structure of the aesthetic object. For the first time in the history of aesthetics, it is the artwork itself – and not the passing sensations and feelings of the individual – that becomes the center of the aesthetic experience. Only through the contemplation of the total form – this is the crucial impact of Kant's groundbreaking work – is the aesthetic experience possible. (Lippman 1992, 292.)

Kant's aesthetic theory had certain sociological consequences. Through the aesthetic changes I have described, music, as far as its ontology goes, lost its dependence on social frameworks. Some commentators, like Frances Ferguson (1992) have gone so far as to

the beginning of the 19th century. Writers came to be seen as expressing metaphysical truths, genius-like characters who were seen as capable of "seeing" beyond the everyday into the transcendent through their art.

suggest that Kant's whole aesthetic project boils down to one central hypothesis: aesthetic experience is by definition something that takes place in private contemplation, outside the "communities of taste," which is how Kant named the social framework of art in the 18th century. Aesthetic contemplation in itself becomes, through Kant's theory, the *raison d'être* for art. (Ferguson 1992, 82.) Artworks are now contemplated "only for themselves,"³⁰ and their lack of social function becomes a defining quality in their status as art.

The new late-18th-century musical genres (symphony, concerto, sonata) all challenged the earlier aesthetic supremacy of vocal music, in particular opera. An important aspect of these genres, sonata and chamber music in particular, is the fact that they were thoroughly print-mediated: music printing was becoming a lucrative business because of the growing interest in private music-making among the bourgeoisie. Classical music came to be seen as something defined by their scores, and this decontextualizing of music led to a view of music as something abstracted from its creation, mediation, and reception. It is no wonder, then, that the new discipline, Musikwissenschaft, took to scrutinizing music as works, not as a social process.

³⁰ It is important to point out that Kant's idea of an aesthetic experience is a domain where his theory of beauty and theory of morality converge. Just as a truly aesthetic experience, for Kant, is contemplative, disinterested, and one that brackets the outside world, truly moral acts are done just for the goodness of those acts – not in order to serve any external purposes and consequences. Disinterested-ness is a quality shared in common by moral acts and aesthetic experience. For Kant's formulation of the matter, see Kant 1785/1994, 7–17 for more detail.

Tomlinson's (2003, 39) argues that Classical music became separated from its social context at the end of the 19th century and that the centrality of the work-concept has led to the "search for the secrets of this written work [notated music]" by ignoring and concealing "the social interactions of performers and audience at the scene itself of music making."³¹ The same could be said about musicians and the audience: the exclusive focus on musical works has completely side-stepped the fact that musical interpretation and the exercise of musicians' creative agency are things that always take place in a certain historical, ideological and cultural context.

The purpose of this short intellectual historical excursion has been to find background for the taken-for-granted assumptions of autonomous musical works and genius composers as the objects of musicological inquiry. The "making" of music in other ways, such as playing and listening, have been seen as contingent parameters and thus not of scholarly interest. As I've tried to show, Kant's, Hanslick's and other early 19th century aestheticians' work located the aesthetic worth of music in the "music itself" – the musical works and their composers. This is why musicians and their music-making were excluded from musicology from the start – the significance of music was seen as transitory and aesthetically autonomous.

The Kantian definition of an aesthetic experience as disinterested and pure – like a moral act – has been an important ground on which ideals of authenticity, *Werktreue*, and ethics

³¹ One could well argue, however, that Tomlinson has only half of the truth here. Excluding formal analysis of the musical works, music has throughout the 19th century been seen as something connected to its social context – why else would we have a massive number of biographies of composers?

of musical interpretation have been constructed. All these I will discuss in more detail at a later point; they have to do not only with the history of musicology but also with the historical backdrop against which I look at Gould's ideas concerning musical interpretation.

Musicians Considered Musicologically

The focus on music as a culturally and socially situated activity leads one to reconsider the significance of musicianship as the locus of music's mediation. If music is seen as something that gets realized time and time again as new, fresh, and capable of evoking different significations, then musicians should be seen as active agents of music, not just as mediators of the composer's message. This is a view to which I subscribe throughout this work.

In the historiography of music all this is familiar. The structural history of music, represented by Carl Dahlhaus (1989; 1991), is just one example of a scholarly paradigm in which music and musical works are seen as culturally, socially, and historically contingent – not as timeless entities in a quasi-platonic world of ideals. Dahlhaus explicitly abandons the view that musical works are “always already” expressive of meanings; rather, meanings emerge in a cultural horizon, through social, cultural, institutional, ideological, and economic interactions.³²

³² The Anglo-American cultural musicology is, in my view, very much in debt to these structural historical basic axioms – it could be argued that the New Musicology has only

José A. Bowen (1993, 166–167) has argued that the whole idea of an autonomous musical work is an illusion since its entire ontology is based on contingent qualities. The score, according to Bowen, cannot be regarded as “the work”; only together with performances – which, of course, are always different – does the work claim its existence. Bowen’s explanation for the traditional emphasis on works in musicology is that print-mediated musical works have been seen as “timeless,” “eternal” and “perfect” entities handed down to the following generations by the composer genius. Bowen argues that there is an obvious overlap between the incipient disappearance of improvisation from Classical music and the cult of Beethoven, which was one important factor in the emergence of the *letzter Hand* -ideology, which in Bowen’s mind concerns the idea of composer creating “perfect” artworks defined by the score.³³

Bowen states that music should be studied “in and as performance” because the score never contains the work itself but rather the intention to ensure the continuity of it as a historical fact. Why, however, is there an obvious similarity between randomly selected interpretations of a given work? Bowen’s view on this issue is that each and every performance necessarily takes place within a certain performance tradition, which could be

taken one step forward: music has come to be seen not only as socially but also as racially, sexually, and ideologically constructed. See Hepokoski (1991) for another view regarding this matter.

³³ According to Dahlhaus (1989, 81), Beethoven’s wish to be called “Tondichter” at the beginning of the 19th century was not as much an expression of a new aesthetic manifesto as of a broader belief in the potential of music to rise aesthetically to the standards of literature. Against this background, it is interesting to note that the growing complexification of musical structures with Beethoven coincides with the flourishing of the *Bildungsroman*. Like literature, music came to be seen as something capable of “elevating” and “cultivating” the human character.

seen as a huge collective “memory” that, through its historical norms and conventions, sets certain limits to an accepted performance. Every interpretative act is, then, about an effort to find a balance between individual innovation and tradition (Bowen 1999, 425).³⁴ New innovations, when successful, become part of tradition, which is thus in a constant aesthetic flux.

According to Bowen (1999, 429), musicology has always been in trouble with musical genres whose ontology is based on performance rather than a definitive score. Jazz and folk music are such genres, and according to Bowen, there are also plenty of examples of older Classical music in which the work concept is not at all the primary element of the music’s existence. Bowen’s own example is Arcangelo Corelli, an important composer from the early Baroque. Were Corelli alive to witness a performance of his music, Bowen argues, he would certainly be more concerned with the acoustics of the performance space, the skill of the musicians, audience reactions, the instruments used in the performance, and ultimately the performance as a whole –than with whether or not the musicians use the *Urtext*-edition, an anachronism in the music of the early 18th century.³⁵

³⁴ The particular performances of musical works, of course, can become aesthetic attributes of music. Think, for instance, of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*: we could regard the work’s stormy first performance as something that has become a proof of the work’s aesthetic value as a landmark in the history of modern music. Within the theoretical framework of structural history, we could say that *Rite of Spring* has, in a certain sense, “become” what it is through its performance, a historical mediation. (See Sarjala 2002 for a more elaborated discussion on this argument.)

³⁵ Lydia Goehr (1994) calls this kind of anachronism and the overall extension of the work concept to musical genres to which it does not belong (e.g. jazz, popular music), by the term “conceptual imperialism.”

Bowen thinks musicology should focus more on the fact that music is heard, analyzed, and grasped within the patterns and norms bound to a particular time and place. Moreover, individual and particularly innovative performances have a deciding role in defining how we ascribe signification to the music we hear (Ibid., 451). Any musical style is historically constructed, and potential aspects of interest for musicology are, for instance, repertory, genre, instrument, institution, time period, and geographical area. All of these should be studied as historical entities, everything in the performance tradition should be taken not as “given” but rather as contextually contingent. A detailed inquiry into the performance history of a given musical work can shed light on the ontology of a musical work in general – what, if anything, is there permanent in, for instance, a Beethoven symphony? It is within musicology’s potential to deal with this question. (Ibid., 443–444.)

What puzzles me in Bowen’s otherwise pioneering agenda for a musicology focused on musical performance is that he does not really extend his focus far enough – namely to musicians, who ultimately are agents of the music we hear on recordings, which are the main research material of Bowen’s work. As Rothstein (1995, 217) observes, the recent interest in musical performance is in line with a broader poststructural tendency to focus on the “receiver” of an artwork – be it a musician, listener, or composer. In any case, musical performance should not be seen as a “text” in and of itself, but rather as an active process in which the musician is seen as an active cultural agent, whose intentions in the creative act are indeed of scholarly interest in and of itself – and not just as transcriptions, tempo graphs, or measured activity of the brain. It is the task of the following chapters to

show how an argument based on this point of departure unfolds in the case of Glenn Gould.

CHAPTER TWO:

Who Owns the Music? Glenn Gould's Idea of the Interpretation of Music as Re-Creation

The 19th- century ideas and conceptions of music described in the previous chapter have had significant ideological consequences: the substance of music has been located in musical works, regarded as ontologically independent from their interpretation and reception. The agency of music, therefore, has been that of the composer, and the interpretation of musical works has been seen as mediation of the composer's intentions. The aesthetic value of a given interpretation has been regarded as dependent on how the musician succeeds in this.

One important philosophical and intellectual historical source for such a conception is Immanuel Kant's theory of the *genius*. The word originally refers to an exceptional creative individual who gives "art its rules" (1790/2000, 188).³⁶ Even though Kant wrote very little on music in particular – and when he did, he described it as an art form inferior

³⁶ Kant (Ibid., 189–190) elaborates on the particular qualities of *genius* as follows: "(1) [T]alent for producing that for which no definite rules can be given; it is not a mere aptitude for what can be learnt by a rule. Hence *originality* must be its first property. (2) [I]ts products must be models, i.e. *exemplary*; and they consequently ought not to spring from imitation, but must serve as a standard or rule of judgment for others. (3) It cannot describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its products, but it gives the rule just as nature does. ... (4) Nature by the medium of genius does not prescribe rules to Science, but to Art; and to it only so far as it is to be beautiful Art." It is noteworthy that Kant's views anticipate the romantic ideals of the work of genius as intuitive and inexplicable. Art became to be seen as functioning as mediator between reality and the metaphysical sphere.

to almost all others (e.g. 1790/2000, 217–219) – the whole 19th-century idea of Classical music as revolving around the conceptions of genius and autonomous works is basically post-Kantian.³⁷ The works created by the genius have been seen as defined by the score and as infallible wholes the authentic interpretation of which is bound by the musician’s ethical duty, *Werktreue*. A musician should aim at a disinterested interpretation, whose norms are dictated only by the “work itself,” not by the audience or the musician’s intentions.

This chapter deals with Gould’s exceptional ideas concerning authenticity and fidelity to the work against the historical backdrop described above. The aesthetics of genius and work (see Goehr 1994, 243–286) serve here as the historical background against which Gould’s unorthodox views become clear. Gould questions explicitly and provocatively the exclusion of musicianship from music’s creative process implied by this conception; being a musician, for Gould, was never about mediating a composer’s intentions or appealing to historical performance traditions. This kind of view, in Gould’s mind, completely brackets out what is most worthy in making music: re-creation and re-signification of music outside of traditions and conventions. At the end of the chapter, I discuss Gould’s options for the composer’s unquestioned authority. I also discuss the

³⁷ This becomes obvious in reading Eduard Hanslick’s aesthetic tractate *On the Musically Beautiful*. The Kantian idea of aesthetic contemplation as an active mental state comes to the fore on many occasions – “Without mental activity, there can be no aesthetical pleasure whatever” (Hanslick 1986, 64) – and all Hanslick’s argumentation against the “aesthetics of feeling” bears traces of Kant’s distinction between disinterested contemplation and a mode of listening in which passing sentiments and musical sensations are the focus of the experience.

issue of the “postmodernity” of Gould’s thought which was taken up in the earlier literature on Gould (e.g. Bazzana 1997, Nattiez 1996).

Gould’s Rejection of Tradition

To understand authenticity, the idea of a *tradition* is of key importance. Tradition, it has been claimed (Heiniö 1984, 197), could be seen as a historical framework consisting of four distinct elements: First, tradition is a certain inherited aesthetic content – the canon of Western art music, for instance – that earlier generations pass on to the following ones. Second, tradition involves learning the codes for appreciation and patterns of reception that go together with the aesthetic content. Third, tradition is an aesthetic and stylistic frame of reference on which a young composer can – or decides not to – lean on in his/her work. Fourth, tradition could also be seen as an authority, which often serves as a source for the norms and values of a music culture.

Tradition is always there – a musician is never completely “free” in his/her interpretation of a given musical work. The values, norms, and conventions of tradition always work as a backdrop against which the performance becomes evaluated. This becomes obvious in most mundane situations: music criticisms in newspapers and statements of the jury in violin competitions are all examples of tradition at work. These kinds of venues are also an important medium for maintaining and renewing tradition – were one to imagine a random guest from Mars seeking to find out what Classical music on earth is like, what better source would there be for our guest than music criticisms or violin competitions in

order to get to know the domain of Classical music! Much of what passes for expertise in Classical music could be seen as “tacit knowledge”³⁸ of the historical tradition passed on in various ways from one generation to the next.

Close to the concept of tradition is the idea of a *canon*. This idea entails a certain aesthetic hierarchy of composers and works. Canon is always limited – it is a way for a music culture to “invent” its own past, to build up a master narrative of its own musical progress over centuries. As Kurkela and Väkevä (2009, vii) put it,

Whenever music is examined under a critical gaze, it is disciplined, ordered, and corrected; the canon functions as a basic tool in defining the scope of this disciplining. On the one hand, the canon determines what music is worthy of study. On the other hand, it operates as a measure of the competence of the scholars. The canonized music is discussed and argued over; in this process, alternative conceptions of music may become secondary and marginal. It may even become the expert herself who is marginalized—unless she is strong enough to build a new canon.

Canon is always retrospectively and historically constructed: who, for instance, recognizes Christian Cannabich’s symphonies today, in spite of the fact that he was one of the best known composers of 18th-century Vienna, a cherished composer whom Mozart himself admired greatly? Canon construction leaves out certain composers while legitimizing others – Cannabich today is a historical curiosity whereas Mozart and his music need no introduction. Canonizing is thus always about power relations: legitimizing historical narratives that, it turns out, always have to do with gender, class and social status.

³⁸ Tradition is not always even visible. It could be argued (see Kurkela 1991, 98–99) that a major part of the aesthetic tradition in music performance is actually mediated as an oral tradition – through teacher-student relationships, concerts, interviews etc.

Carl Dahlhaus (1989, 22) shows that canonizing in historiography came into existence in the first decades of the 19th century. His focus in canonizing is on the aesthetic hierarchy of musical genres. Canon, Dahlhaus argues, ultimately consists of musical genres, which then have their own “masters” and “geniuses” in music history. For example, Giovanni Palestrina has come to be seen as a “saviour” of Catholic Church music whereas J.S. Bach later became the “fifth evangelist” of Protestant church music. In the same vein, Handel has often been depicted as the master of oratorio and Gluck that of the ancient musical tragedy. Mozart, in his turn, has become the *Wunderkind* of western music history who later re-formulated the Opera buffa from Italian hands through his own stroke of genius. His teacher Joseph Haydn took string quartet into its full flourish, while Beethoven excelled in piano music and symphonies. Schubert transformed the Lied from a petty-bourgeois entertainment into a full-fledged art form. (Ibid.)

Various musical genres are by no means of equal aesthetic value. While a canon can be seen as a “grand narrative” of western music history, its elements are in a hierarchy with each other. Gluck and Beethoven are not seen as equally significant characters in this grand narrative, and neither are operas and symphonies considered of equal value with small piano miniatures. In spite of this inequality and hierarchy, canons and tradition change. Throughout the modern conception of music history as a whole, the conception of historical music is always on the move. This, in fact, is the whole *raison d’être* for historical musicology: taking older conceptions of the past, canons, and conventions under critical scrutiny and re-creating the musical past. These kinds of dialectics are also at the heart of how a tradition works: it is always a starting point for change, a change

through which the old also comes to be seen in a new light. Constructing – or inventing – the past always takes place in a dialectic between the scholar and his/her object, and “the past” as well as the scholar’s conception of it are constantly changing and dynamic (Dahlhaus 1997, 63).

This over-simplifying and crude picture is, of course, just a rough sketch of how canonizing in music historiography works. However, Dahlhaus is, I think, right in emphasizing the significance of musical genres in his discussion of canons. Different musical genres have their own histories and cultural statuses, and these are of key importance in the formations of canons. The performance tradition, in turn, is a certain historically constructed frame of reference, which could be seen as a collective and cumulative cultural “memory” of acceptable interpretations of a given group of musical compositions – Beethoven’s symphonies, for instance. Any performance tradition is subject to change over time: new, innovative interpretations become accepted into a part of performance tradition, thus stretching the boundaries of the tradition. Jose Bowen (1993, 164) aptly calls performance tradition a “history of remembered innovation.” Any musical interpretation, Bowen argues, takes place in a dialectical relationship between innovation – taking distance from existing models for an interpretation – and tradition. Sticking to tradition also involves communication: the enlightened musical community recognizes the quality of a given performance by measuring its elements against the backdrop of what it knows as a performance tradition. If a performance is too innovative, it risks getting rejected – as was the case with Gould’s recordings of Mozart’s piano sonatas. If a performance is too orthodox and conventional, however, it risks being too indistinguishable and just plain

boring. A successful interpretation has a sufficient measure of tradition and conventions, along with a sufficient amount of innovation to be interesting.

What then is authenticity? In the *New Grove of Music and Musicians*, the term is defined as follows:

Authentic performance may refer to one or any combination of the following approaches: use of instruments from the *composer's own era*; use of performing techniques documented in the composer's era; performance based on the implications of the *original sources* for a particular work; *fidelity to the composer's intentions* for performance or to the type of *performance a composer desired or achieved*; an attempt to *re-create the context* of the original performance; and an attempt to *re-create the musical experience* of the original audience. (Butt 2001, 241. Italics mine.)

This definition has a number of interesting aspects, which I have highlighted by italics.

First of all, “authenticity” and “authentic interpretation” refer to a position, in which “originality” and “composer’s intentions” have a central role. In the same vein, “authenticity” points to the original, contemporary cultural context of music: its aesthetic *Zeitgeist*, historical instruments, as well as the values and norms influencing the composer when creating his music, and its reception at the time. “Authenticity,” as it were, appears through awareness of the historical circumstances and the biographical context of the composer made manifest through contextualizing the interpretational act historically and culturally.

Thus defined, “authenticity” plays itself out as a norm valuable in itself, a norm towards which a musician should strive. Only in this way is it possible to gain access to music’s historical truth, its “authentic” interpretation. What puzzles me, though, in this kind of a

definition is that it includes no mention of the creativity and spontaneity in a musician's interpretational act. This puzzlement leads me to ask: is it possible for a musician to be unhistorically authentic? In other words, are there any aspects to authenticity other than historical awareness of the material and the ideological context in which the composer created his music? Peter Kivy's (1995, 6–7) definition of the term would also seem to include the musician's authenticity to his/her own artistic self as one important element of the term. Kivy argues that "authenticity" means essentially four things: the first three are fidelity to the composer's intentions, awareness of the historical performance practice, and fidelity to the actual sonorous reality of the music performed in its historical context. However, Kivy's fourth aspect of authenticity is the most important one for my own discussion: the musician's fidelity to his or her own original, unique, and personal artistic intentions.

It is obvious that the first three aspects of authenticity here have more to do with tradition as something that limits – and, of course, also supports – an artist's horizons in his/her interpretation. The fourth aspect, however, has more to do with the artist's being original and innovative. I will return to this aspect of authenticity later in this chapter, but next I will tackle an important issue about Gould, previously raised in the scholarly literature (c.f. Bazzana 1997; Wood 1997): how should we conceptualize Gould's position against the backdrop of a tradition-centered conception of authenticity?

Authenticity in Gould's Interpretation of Music

As has become clear, a textbook definition of authenticity emphasizes the composer's intentions, historical ideological context, and historical performance practice at the cost of much else. This definition sees musical works as autonomous, ontologically independent of sonic realizations. The composer's intentions are inscribed, as it were, in the work itself and its score. Gould's musicianship was based on totally opposite ideas about making music. In his 1978 commentary on his colleague Sviatoslav Richter Gould expressed his position as follows:

it's obviously never possible for a performer to re-create Beethoven's Beethoven or Mozart's Mozart and, in fact, musical life would be rather boring if one could do that: it would mean that there would be one optimum performance which would be duplicated again and again. (1978/1999, 53.)

Already years earlier, in another interview conducted by Bernard Asbell for *Horizon*-journal, Gould puts the matter even more bluntly:

But sometimes I wonder why we fuss so much about fidelity to a tradition of the composer's generation, and not the performer's – for instance, trying to play Beethoven as Beethoven is supposed to have played it. ... The performer has to have faith that he is doing, even blindly, the right thing, that he may be finding interpretive possibilities not wholly realized even by the composer. ... There are examples today of contemporary composers ... who are the world's worst interpreters of their own music. (1962/1999, 194.)

For Gould, the musician's re-creative position was something that he took for granted. His unwavering conviction about this sometimes led to confrontations with composers: Gould's performance of his compatriot Oscar Morawetz's *Fantasia* (1948) was in a much faster tempo and articulated themes very differently than what the composer had wished. Gould's reason for neglecting the composer's wishes was that Morawetz, in Gould's

mind, “did not understand his own music” (quoted in Ostwald 1998, 95). The interpretation of music, for Gould, was “a creative act” (Gould 1980/1999, 272), in which the composer’s intentions do not have any priority over the musician’s interpretative freedom. It comes as no surprise, then, that some composers were offended by Gould’s belief in his own freedom as an artist. Jacques Hétu (1995, 24), a Canadian composer whose work *Variations* Gould recorded in 1967, regards the recording as a photographic negative of the real picture, an interpretation in which everything is, as it were, opposite to how it should.³⁹

Composers’ intentions, even when explicitly expressed, have no bearing on Gould’s interpretation of any music. Neither did issues of historical performance practice have any role in his playing – a fact which becomes obvious in all Gould’s recordings of Bach’s, Orlando Gibbons’s and Mozart’s music.⁴⁰ In his 1968 review of Walter Carlos’s record-

³⁹ Hétu (1995, 24) thinks that Gould’s radicalism as a performer derives from his frustration as a composer – from a need to re-create something that was already created. Considering the number of interviews in which Gould talked about his wish to be a composer, Hétu’s argument does seem plausible. In a 1962 interview, for instance, Gould (1962/1999, 195) says this: “I think quite frankly that part of my rejection of concerts is that I want to consider myself a composer. See also Gould’s letter to Yousuf Karsh (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 14).

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Wood (1997, 225–230) discusses this issue at length in her effort to map out what kind of an instrument Gould seems to have favoured in different kinds of music. Wood’s focus in the sonorous quality of Gould’s different instruments is, I think, not relevant because the choice of instrument, for Gould, seems to have been purely a tactile, not sonic, consideration (c.f. Gould 1990, 6–7; GGA 32, 30, 6).

ing of Bach's keyboard pieces on a Moog-synthesizer, Gould described the recording as one of the "highlights" in the history of keyboard music (1968/1990, 430).⁴¹

Gould never cared much about details in the performance of historical music: ornamentation, articulation, and choice of tempo were always something that Gould did intuitively, not according to authoritative scholarly sources. The first impression of Gould's playing is often that the ornamentations sound improvised, even though Bazzana (1997, 228–237) has actually shown that many of Gould's most idiosyncratic choices in ornamentations were analytically motivated. Ornaments, for Gould, were an important structural aspect of music. Through ornamentation Gould created structural connections between, e.g., different movements of the same piece. For instance, in Gould's transcription of Handel's *Prelude*, it is obvious that Gould actually completes – re-creates – the piece through extensive ornamentation (see Bazzana 1996, 17–23 for more detailed discussion of this).

Gould's choices of tempo are an issue in themselves. He often played music often in extreme tempos – some good examples are his famous 1962 recording of the Brahms iano concerto in d-minor with Leonard Bernstein and the NY Philharmonic,⁴² and many of his

⁴¹ Bazzana (1997, 63–64), however, also see issues in common with Gould's ideas and those of the authenticity movement: both seek an alternative to the prevailing "romanticizing" way of interpreting Baroque music; both aim at a "fresh," new angle on older music (Gould's basis for "freshness" was in his own ideas, whereas the authenticity movement is based on historical documents); both seek a departure from the established performance tradition.

⁴² Bernstein did not share Gould's view of the piece, which he openly announced in a "small disclaimer" before the performance. Bernstein praised Gould as a "thinking performer" and said that Gould's version had "moments ... that emerge with astonishing freshness and conviction." However, Bernstein also declared the version to be "a rather – shall we say – unorthodox performance" and took part in the interpretation because

recordings of Mozart piano sonatas. The Brahms example is notoriously slow, the first movement taking almost 5 minutes more time than an average performance of the piece. Gould's motivation in his version was to show a thematic continuity between the first and second themes of the movement. Conventionally the second theme is played in slightly slower tempo to create dramatic contrast to the whole. Gould played both themes in the same tempo, which resulted in a strange interpretation that at times sounds like music played in slow motion. The same intention to create structural unity through the choice of tempo is seen in Gould's 1981 recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, in which Gould's tempos for variations were in a particular ratio with each other (see Bazzana 1997, 188–203 for more detail). Mozart's sonatas, by contrast, Gould often played too fast to make an aesthetic comment on the music which he despised; any music, let alone Mozart's, sounds ridiculous and superficial when played too fast. This is often the case with Gould's recordings of Mozart's music.

Returning to Kivy's definition of authenticity, one could conclude that the three aspects of the term having to do with tradition do not have any role in Gould's thinking. However, the fourth aspect, personal authenticity, does seem to have been an important motivation for Gould's aesthetic choices. In his discussion regarding the ontological status of performances of music, Kivy avoids the old philosophical dilemma of whether performances that depart considerably from the imperatives of the score are instances of the work. He proposes that interpretations of a given work could be given the status of art-

Gould was "so valid and serious an artist" and because there is in music a "sportive element," the factor of "curiosity, adventure and experiment." (Quoted in Friedrich 1990, 103–104.)

works in themselves, whose aesthetic value could be in the “personal style” and “originality” that they display. This means that interpreting a musical work could be seen philosophically as analogous with re-arranging, or even re-composing it (Kivy 1995, 123, 138).

Even though composer’s intentions and performer’s authenticity would seem to be mutually exclusive, the performer’s personal authenticity can actually be included in the concept of the musical work. This paradox is explained by the fact that no musical score ever dictates its performance in its entirety. There is always space between the performer’s possibilities and the musical properties strictly defined by the score, and this setup is the source for the particular originality we hear in the performances of musicians.

There is always some freedom in musical scores although the type and amount of freedom is at bottom probably more or less defined by the composer.

In fact, the historical ideal of an autonomous musical work defined by the score does not completely stand critical scrutiny.⁴³ In some kinds of music, this goes without saying – how could works by John Cage or Witold Lutoslawski ever be defined by a musical score? Through these examples I want to emphasize a point to which I’ll return later: the

⁴³ Stan Godlovitch (1998, 82) calls this the “under-determination” of a musical performance in its relation to the score. He sees the musician’s role as more involved in the re-creation of a work than do those philosophers who take the score as their point of departure in trying to map out music’s ontological character. “Better yet to conceive notated works as being frameworks, like story lines, scenarios, or scripts awaiting completion through collaboration by players and the receptive approval of the musical community and its audiences. As such, notated works are neither like types nor archetypes, but more closely resemble templates, sketches, outlines, or guides which, when consulted within the bounds of conventional approval, hold promise for workable and working music. If music is that which is made, works are that which is musically workable.”

idea of a musical work as a “perfect” entity defined by the score and authorized by the composer’s intentions is more a historically constructed aesthetic idea than a fact of real musical practice.

Kivy’s argument is, as we have seen, that any musical interpretation can mean an “execution” of a musical work, as well as a re-creation of it. This kind of position brings about a necessity to re-evaluate the significance of the concept of authenticity and the ethical element involved in it. As far as the latter is concerned, to whom should a musician bear ethical responsibility, if an interpretation is more about “personal authenticity” than following the composer’s intentions? Some have thought that this kind of a question is actually devoid of any real significance: J.O. Urmson (1993, 58), among others, abandons the whole idea of a performer’s responsibility to him/herself as too vague, something the substance of which is impossible to grasp. It is, of course, possible to think that a given artist would have “promised” him/herself – or the tradition of which he/she is a part – to interpret music in a certain way, for instance, through music analysis preceding the actual rehearsal process of the piece, but this idea is not tenable. If a more important reason for playing the music in an altogether different fashion appears, the musician can always forget the “promises” he/she has previously made, and still there is no one to hold him/her accountable for abandoning the initial concept. In fact Urmson is right to this extent: it is absolutely impossible to associate conventional ethical responsibility with

this kind of a concept of authenticity, which has its only grounding in the musician himself.⁴⁴

None of Gould's recordings, of any music, has ever been received as "authentic" – even though it is obvious that his music making is personally authentic in Kivy's sense of the term. It is not, however, my main intent to assert that Gould's authenticity is grounded not in tradition, composer's intentions, or historical norms and conventions but in his artistic self. More interesting, I think, is to ponder what Gould substituted for the traditional conception of authenticity – what, in Gould's thought, is the actual source for his often unorthodox interpretations?

Gould's type of authenticity, it could be argued, is associated with his preference for artistic independence, the expression of his own ideals, and a complete ignorance of historical conventions. Gould (1964a/1990, 3–7) explicitly defined creativity as non-social, something that by definition unfolds outside tradition and conventions, in the sphere of what he called "negativity." Trilling (1997, 127–128), too, has written about a broader conception of authenticity, grounded on an artist's individual existence and possibilities for realizing his/her artistic potential in society.

⁴⁴ In spite of this limitation, a musician's "ethical responsibility" to him/herself is in other respects clearly a culturally constructed aesthetic norm very much at work in not only Classical music but popular music as well. A musician should bear ethical responsibility to his "inner calling" in order to be credible as a musician. What would happen to, for instance, Bruce Springsteen's status as the voice of blue-collar America if he started making disco music? The same applies to Classical music: imagine Milton Babbitt writing music for car commercials!

Authenticity as a kind of potential for a creative individual is something that Gould always held dear and also something through which Gould actually defines art itself. For Gould (c.f. 1974/1990, 324) art as an institution was totally detrimental for true creativity, something that by definition is mutually exclusive with authenticity – defined as artistic independence from conventions and tradition. Richard Taruskin has referred to this kind of authenticity as “postmodern authenticity,” by which he means “knowing oneself and acting accordingly” – making music that is independent of the values, opinions, and requirements of the others (Taruskin 1995, 67, 90; see also Bazzana 1997, 62). As we’ll see, this kind independence, in Gould’s thinking, can be the only “ethical” grounding for authenticity.

Personal – or in Taruskin’s term “postmodern” – authenticity is indeed ultimately an ethical imperative for Gould. In other words, even though his emphasis on the re-creation of music, instead of reliance on composer’s intentions, would seem to sidestep ethical considerations, this emphasis by itself generates a re-creation that involves an ethical imperative in which technology, solitude, and isolation all play an important role. In this sense, it could be argued, Gould does not completely abandon but rather relocates the ethical responsibility of making music, from a conception of authenticity based on tradition to one based on personal conviction. A musician has not only a right but also a duty to be original and artistically independent. Too much reliance on tradition is only a hindrance to this duty – a subscription to the continuity and “legacy” of tradition means, for Gould, bracketing precisely the kind of artistic existence that makes each musician original and unique. According to Gould,

listening to your peers before you've formulated your own concept, or *instead* of formulating it, seems to determine a lot of what passes for continuity in the piano-playing tradition, and I think that that kind of listening is an exercise guaranteed to make it very difficult for performers to assert whatever it is that makes them valuable as individuals (Gould 980/1999, 272.)

If I had to pin down one key idea of Gould's musical thought, seeking one's creative resources outside tradition and conventions would not be a bad choice. The fact that, in Gould's thought, technology and isolation from the social collective offered the particular means for finding such resources is not the main point here. The key issue in all this is that a creative individual searches for his/her own way and questions the tradition surrounding his work. Bazzana (1997, 36–51) tellingly compares Gould's axioms for making music with those of theatre, an art form in which "works" are only the starting point for a creative process unbound by a preceding tradition. Edward Said (2000, 15–16) has paid particular attention to how Gould's musicianship, as it were, reconstructs music on a wholly new base; while listening to Bach or Beethoven played by Gould, we actually get to hear not Bach or Beethoven played by a Canadian pianist, but rather music reborn, "Gould's Bach" or "Gould's Beethoven," in a process in which composing and playing merge for a moment.

The Priority of Structure in Music

The starting point for Gould's musical interpretation is the structure of music. As Kevin Bazzana (1997, 11, 36) has put it, music in Gould's worldview is primarily mental, non-material and only secondarily material and idiomatic. The structure of a musical work, in its turn, is a kind of abstraction from the score, in which only pitches and rhythms are

normative and authoritative, whereas tempo markings, dynamics, and instrumentation serve only as recommendations for a musician to give and take. In Gould's mind, these more optional elements serve as interesting additional material but are not constitutive factors as far as the work itself is concerned. Since music for Gould is mental, the ontological status of music is also abstract: the structure of music is a kind of a platonic ideal which then gets actualized as a sonorous whole – always differently because of the lack of defining and normative factors. Ideally music, for Gould, is about something that transcends emotions, passion, and virtuosity. As Bazzana (1997, 33) has observed, innovative counterpoint, complexity in the structure and development of musical motives are elements that are found in virtually all the music Gould appreciated. As early as 1956, in an interview conducted by Eric McLean, Gould (1956/2003, 49) says that all the music that interests him the most has a sufficient amount of “linear developmental intrigue.” In a 1981 interview in German journal *FonoForum*, Gould (1981/1995, 17) says that he has always been interested in contrapuntal music, music that is a manifestation of multiple simultaneous ideas, which is what counterpoint, in Gould's mind, is at its best. Counterpoint is for Gould a sounding metaphor for *control* – as Edward Said (1983b, 48) puts it, counterpoint “is the total ordering of sound, the complete management of time, the minute subdivision of musical space, and absolute absorption for the intellect.” There is no doubt that the “abstract,” non-idiomatic quality of contrapuntal music, such as Bach's fugues, was for Gould not only a measure of the music's aesthetic worth but also the very quality that triggered his intellectual, critical and re-creative intentions in all music that fascinated him.

Elizabeth Wood (1997, 209–212) has also discussed Gould’s conception of a musical interpretation oriented towards musical structure. According to Wood, Gould’s view of Bach as an “abstract” composer (I will return to this at a later point) was associated with the idea that an interpretation of such music is always an outcome of a personal and original process. In Gould’s own words, Bach’s music encourages the performer to “invest it with aspects of one’s own personality” (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 183).⁴⁵

Gould’s musical idealism, in all its emphasis on the anti-materialistic qualities of music, is crystallized in his conception of a musical work. The score meant only a point of departure, not at all an approximation of the outcome of the interpretation. For this reason, music’s sonorous reality, the music that actually sounds, is only a function of a particular act of interpretation, not a part of the music ontologically. This fundamental aesthetic conviction is at the root of all Gould’s most innovative – as well as his most shocking – interpretations. In a way, Gould was from start to finish true to this conviction of his – his uncompromising manner of taking this aesthetic axiom into practice is one of the most interesting facets of his musical thinking (Bazzana 1997, 11). To exaggerate just slightly, Gould’s pianism was more about the analysis and argumentation in sound of its object than about playing to please a listener. This is seen in many of Gould’s writings and interviews, for instance, in an interview from 1980: “I suppose premise number one is to try to forget that I’m playing the piano. I don’t want to be aware that anything specifical-

⁴⁵ Wood (1997, 211) points out an interesting contradiction in Gould’s thinking regarding this matter. In Gould’s own commentary on his 1973 Wagner-recording, he justifies his exceptionally slow tempo by his argument about Wagner’s musical intention, supposedly obvious in the score. What is paradoxical here, of course, is that Gould adheres rhetorically to the composer’s intentions – to ground his own re-creation of the music!

ly pianistic is being done in order to bring out whatever structural design I have in mind.”
(1980/1999, 260.)

Gould explicitly stated that in order to get an analytically satisfying view of music, it is necessary to stay away from the piano – the minute this distance disappears, “you’re going to diminish that completeness by tactile compromise” (Cott 1984, 40). The same idea is shown in an early letter of Gould’s, addressed to a fan:

In my opinion, the only really successful way of learning a work, regardless of its period, is to do so quite away from the instrument – in other words, to study it in purely analytical terms first. ... [A] work learned in analytical terms and only secondly at the instrument will leave you permanently a stronger sense of its structure and its internal workings. (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 52.)

Structural analysis was a method Gould favored in all the music he played. This approach clearly excluded some music from his repertory – his discography includes hardly any music from French Impressionists such as Debussy or Ravel, both composers whose music Gould did not regard as intellectually – as an abstract structure – challenging. Their music, Gould thought, was too much dominated by sheer sonority, whereas music at its best was music that, like Bach’s, works independent of any particular sonority (Gould 1982/2001, 26; see also Bazzana 1997, 19).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ In a television documentary series *Music in Our Time* (1973–1977), Gould, however, did play Debussy’s *Rhapsody* for clarinet and piano and his own transcription of Ravel’s *La Valse*, as well as Francis Poulenc’s *Aubade*. All these have become posthumously available on cd.

The absence of French music, due to his professed “general francophobia” (see Roberts & Guertin 1992, 216) from Gould’s discography underscores a surprisingly “traditional” repertory – considering what Gould did with it aesthetically. The Austro-German canon from Bach to Schoenberg was what he played; about most other music he was, at best, suspicious, and at worst full of unjustified prejudice. Gould disliked whole genres of music, often those in which a certain degree of individualism, liveliness and virtuoso display are at work: opera (particularly Italian opera, Romantic piano concertos, improvisation, chance-music⁴⁷ and jazz. The latter Gould regarded as an “offshoot of the Romantic tradition” (cited in Bazzana 2003, 88), which he “tolerated” only in “small doses” (1959/1999, 43; 1960/1999, 86). Gould’s arguments and prejudice against jazz derived for the most part from his complete ignorance of and about the genre. As Shell (1999) writes, Gould’s conceptions of harmonic simplicity, homophony, lack of counterpoint, and improvisatory emphasis in jazz are not at all the defining qualities of the genre, and Gould simply knew too little to notice artistic similarities between himself and jazz stars such as Bill Evans or Keith Jarrett.

Gould’s emphasis on music’s structure in the listening to and playing of it, as well as his idea that music’s real substance and fundamental meaning are completely independent from its sonority are positions that connect him to a particular 19th-century aesthetic tradition, along with Eduard Hanslick, Theodor W. Adorno, Heinrich Schenker, and Arnold

⁴⁷ In Gould’s correspondence (GGA 35, 26, 12), I came across a letter from a record producer, Heiner Stadler, who was asking Gould to record John Cage’s works for piano – obviously with no hunch about Gould’s musical world view since he also suggests that Gould record Franz Liszt’s music. (See, however, Rivest 1996 for surprising similarities between Gould and John Cage.) Nothing came out of either of these projects.

Schoenberg. Schenker, for instance, has written that a performance of a given musical work is irrelevant for its ontological existence; just as an imagined voice may seem more real than one heard, reading the musical score with the “inner ear” activated may provide a better performance than a real one. “Mechanical realization” of a musical work, Schenker concludes, can thus be regarded as superfluous for the work’s ontology. (Schenker 2000, 3.)

As I’ve already pointed out, this kind of emphasis on music’s structure and non-materiality has a long history in the aesthetics of music. Even though it would be an anachronism to argue that Immanuel Kant was a strict formalist in his aesthetics, he nevertheless was a major influence on the 19th-century music aesthetics in his emphasis of the contemplation of the structure of an artwork instead of the emotions that this contemplation brings about. Kant (1790/2000, 214) wrote in his *Critique of Judgment* that in all truly beautiful art, the structure, not the passing sensation that it brings about, is what really matters as far as aesthetic judgment goes. Sensations, feelings and emotions were at best “pleasure” of art, while the universal communication of art unfolds through its structure. In all beautiful art, Kant continues, “the essential thing is the form, which is purposive as regards our observation and judgment, where the pleasure is at the same time cultivation and disposes the spirit to Ideas, and consequently makes it susceptible of still more of such pleasure and entertainment.” (Ibid.) Kant was, in his own time, breaking ground with this view, which then became an aesthetic cornerstone for Hanslick’s formalism. According to Hanslick (1854/1986, 58–67), those seeking emotional fulfillment from music are “pathologic listeners,” who lessen the sublime art of music into the

level of other enjoyments of life, such as a good cigar or warm bath, while an aesthetic and contemplative listening is geared towards music's structure. While Hanslick did not deny the expressive qualities of music *per se*, he consistently emphasized their origin in the formal aspects of music. Hanslick, of course, was not alone in his view: E.T.A. Hoffmann and Friedrich Schlegel, two leading aestheticians of music of the 19th century, saw the substance of the understanding of music in the comprehending of its structure, as well as in the thematic and harmonic logic of music – all parameters that go unnoticed by a mere enthusiast (Dahlhaus 1989, 91).

All this is 19th-century *Werktreue* at work. Hoffmann, Schlegel and Hanslick all subscribe to a mode of listening in which a musical work is approached as a signifying structure by someone in the mental state of disinterested, aesthetic contemplation. This mode of listening entails delving into the internal workings of a given musical work as if “nothing else in the world existed” (Ibid., 95).⁴⁸

In Gould's thinking, musical idealism is associated with sheer anti-pianism. In addition to his emphasis on analysis and the irrelevance of the tactile aspect of playing, he talks of an outright transcendence of the whole physical aspect of music-making:

Part of the secret in playing the piano is to separate yourself from the instrument in every possible way. When I'm conducting [Gould often "conducted" himself while playing], very often what I'm doing is creating some sort of imaginary picture in my own mind of a reluctant cello player who needs cajoling to phrase better or try harder, I need to feel that these are really not my fingers, that they are somehow independent extensions which I simply happen to be in contact with at that moment. I have to find a way of standing outside

⁴⁸ On aesthetic contemplation in more detail, see Dahlhaus 1991, particularly chapter 5.

myself while at the same time being totally committed to what I'm doing.
(1981b/1999, 333.)

This anti-pianist discourse – bracketing the physical, technical, and idiomatic aspect of playing the piano – is often striking in Gould's writings and interviews. In a 1980 interview, Gould says something I've heard no other pianist say: he plays best after weeks of not touching the piano. Practicing to achieve a particular interpretation was, in Gould's mind, not the way to work with music. (Gould 1980/1999, 269.)⁴⁹

In Gould's case, his musical idealism led to controversial consequences: the pianist, who thought that the real advantage of the recording studio lay in the possibility of creating finished interpretations, fully devoid of the hazards of a live situation, regarded his own fingers as a “source of nauseating musical ideas,” since, on account of their impulsive and instant nature, they were not based on “hard facts” of music (Gould 1960/1999, 82). The physical aspect of playing the piano, in spite of Gould's own dazzling dexterity and skill, plays itself out as an obstacle, only the transcending of which alone enables the musician to approach the ideal state of musical interpretation, creative “ecstasy.”⁵⁰ This

⁴⁹ Bazzana (2003, 420–430) suggests an interesting hypothesis for Gould's anti-pianistic stance. According to Bazzana, Gould's hands were not physically at home in virtuoso repertory, such as Liszt and Brahms, which he played very little. When he tried his hands on that kind of texture – in his interpretation of Brahms's d-minor concerto, for instance – he often invented artificial aesthetic reasons for his extremely slow tempos, many having to do with the music's structural qualities. It is fascinating to ponder the degree to which Gould's aesthetic thought had its background in the actual physical qualities of his body. Aesthetic rationalizing may have had, at times, a defensive function in Gould's psychodynamic economy.

⁵⁰ However, Gould was only human in this respect – he needed practice just like any other pianist. In Gould's recordings, it is often obvious that his indifference to physical aspects of pianism was more an aesthetic *credo* than a way of life. For instance, in a 1957 live recording (Harmonia mundi 1987, Le Chant du Monde LDC 278799) of Webern's

“ecstasy” does not find its inspiration in historical documents, composer’s intentions,⁵¹ tactile mastery or even the sonic reality of music, but is rather abstract and contemplative. It is in effect the analytic “flow” of music making.

It is no coincidence that Gould favored Baroque music. In Bach’s music, Gould saw a kind of abstract and ahistorical ideal epitomized, which he then applied to all music. Bach’s Preludes and Fugues were, in Gould’s eyes, music devoid of tempo markings, dynamics, and even specified instrumentation – fugues, for example, can be played by piano, string quartet, organ, and guitar, among other instruments. According to Bazzana (1997, 15–16), Gould made distinctions between Baroque genres of music on the basis of how much their performance was traditionally associated with one particular instrument. Toccatas, organ preludes, fantasias, and concertos were some of the genres Gould looked very much down on, while “abstract” pieces, such as *Kunst der Fuge*, were music at its best. Gould’s comments on this work are telling: in his liner notes for his recording, Gould (1972/1990, 17) writes about Bach “withdrawing from the pragmatic concerns of music making into an idealized world of uncompromising invention,” and about the work’s “magnificent indifference to specific sonority” as being “not the least among those attractions which emphasize the universality of Bach” (Ibid., 21). It is surprising, to

Variations, Gould gives a very sloppy performance of the piece, because of a lack of practice that he himself professes in his announcement before playing.

⁵¹ It is interesting that Gould’s great inspiration, Rosalyn Tureck, was the complete opposite of Gould as far as composer’s intentions are concerned. She says this: “I do what Bach tells me to do, I never make the decision; it – the music – makes the decision. But you have to go very deep into the score. You can’t just use your eyes; you have to use many more faculties. And you must be a total scholar, as comprehensive as possible.” (Mach 1980/1991, 169.) On Gould’s praise of Tureck’s “upright” and “moral” playing of Bach’s music, see Cott 1984, 62–65; also Bazzana 1997, 21.

say the least, that one of the greatest pianists of Bach's music of all time seems to buy into the anachronistic cliché that would have Bach's music devoid of concerns as worldly as the tactile and the idiomatic. Christoph Wolff (2000, 307–308) writes that Bach was, in fact, fully up-to-date about, and highly interested in the instrumental technology of his time, as well as in the physics, logics, and rhetoric of his day. When we underline the “abstract” nature of his music, much of its aesthetic value gets lost.

Gould's narrow conception of Bach's music is probably best explained by the anti-idiomatic and abstract nature of “ecstasy.” For Gould, all music-making – be it playing or listening – aims at a contemplative state of mind where a musician is in a direct and fully focused relation to the music. Gould never defines “ecstasy” in any clear way,⁵² and the term seems to change its meanings from one text to another, but as far as playing the piano is concerned, “ecstasy” is about a complete indifference to the keyboard and to tactile aspects of music-making. “Ecstasy” is also about the transcendence of technology, along with possibility of transcending musical interpretation tied to real time environments (such as concerts), particular places (such as concert-halls), and printed, authoritative scores. Gould (1977–78/1990, 264) pointed towards this kind of transcendence in his calling the conductor Leopold Stokowski “an ecstatic.” Stokowski, in Gould's mind, was an “ecstatic” because he believed in recording as the future of music and also took similar kinds of (non-conventional) liberties with the musical score as Gould did. Gould compares Stokowski's approach to conducting to directing a film:

⁵² Payzant (1997, 155–157) makes a distinction between “genuine” and “apparent” ecstasy in Gould's thought. I have, however, found no support for this distinction in Gould's texts.

Stokowski was, for want of a better word, an ecstatic. He was involved with the notes, the tempo marks, the dynamics in a score, to the same extent that a filmmaker is involved with the original book or source which supplies the impetus, the idea, for his film. (Gould 1977–78/1990, 264.)

Among musicians, Gould's idealism is rare but not unprecedented. Arthur Schnabel, for instance, wrote of the impossibility of "serving music with fingers," noting that "music does not care for fingers" (1988, 126). With Gould, Schnabel essentially subscribes to Hanslick's view of music as "tonally moving forms," the content and meaning of which lie outside the musician's performance or the listener's experience.⁵³ Just like Gould, Schnabel subscribes to a view of the musical experience as a mentally active, contemplative experience, from which the outside world is excluded. As already suggested, Gould's "ecstasy" is very much like this ideal of aesthetic contemplation. What is also interesting is that contemplation in Gould, Hanslick and Schnabel's thought is focused on the musical work itself as a meaningful structure, and that nothing outside of it has any role in the contemplative act. Hanslick (1986, 48) says this in his tractate regarding the connection between a musical work and the biography of its composer: "Were this connection established, however interesting it may be, it would be first and foremost an exclusively historical or biographical fact. Aesthetical contemplation cannot be based upon any features which are outside the artwork itself."

⁵³ Gould acknowledges the importance of Schnabel in many interviews, for instance, in the following one from 1980: "At a certain stage, of course, we all have idols; and pianistically, or perhaps anti-pianistically, mine was Schnabel" (1980/1999, 272). For Gould, Schnabel was an epitome of analytic and critical musicianship: "Schnabel seemed to be a person who didn't really care very much about the piano as an instrument" (Ibid., 70). On ideological similarities between Gould and Schnabel, see Bazzana 1997; Bazzana 2001c, 75–76; Payzant 1997, 77–80.

“Ecstasy,”⁵⁴ in Gould’s mind, is mostly about the re-creation of music. Leopold Stokowski was, as Gould (1977–78/1990, 264) saw him, an “ecstatic,” because he took the score as a film director takes the novel on which his film is based, strictly as the starting point for a new artwork. It is easy to see Gould’s point here: there is no aesthetic norm which would somehow dictate how a novel should be adapted into a film – authenticity is clearly not an issue here. It is particularly this kind of an independence of conventions that Gould worshipped in Stokowski’s music-making. Ecstasy is a nonphysical, contemplative undertaking, in which playing itself is only a function of the re-creative act of interpretation. In Gould’s thinking, these issues are associated with things discussed in more detail in the next chapter: music and morality, technology, ahistoricity and the anonymity of music. For Gould, giving live concerts is only a manifestation of the “primeval need” for showing off, and also amoral in one important sense: in live concerts musicians are “tested” under circumstances in which no one should be tested, because there is absolutely no rational grounding for the existence of such circumstances (c.f. 1981/1990, 452). For Gould, concerts and the physical aspects of music-making embedded in them – virtuosity and the irreversibility of a live performance – are fascinating for audience for the same reason as are gladiatorial combats and bull fights. It is the “lust for blood,” Gould thinks, that draws the audience to the concert hall – the unconscious wish to see a

⁵⁴ Gould’s “ecstasy,” of course, brings to mind the most well-known “ecstatic” in the 20th-century Western music: Alexander Scriabin. In Scriabin’s thinking, “ecstasy” is part of a larger metaphysical doctrine, the substance of which is about the community between the creative self and the surrounding reality. For Scriabin, “ecstasy” is the most sublime form of all artistic activity, mentally the highest synthesis and emotionally most rewarding condition for the artist (Scriabin, cited in De Schloezer 1987, 149). Gould shares Scriabin’s emphasis on setting aside the physical reality, in which the ecstatic transcendence of the creative act is experienced as part of a larger whole. In Scriabin, “ecstasy” is a quasi-religious phenomenon, whereas for Gould the agnostic, “ecstasy” is about exploiting the creative potential in oneself.

musician “fail” in an unnaturally demanding situation. In a 1975 interview with Robert Hurwitz in the *New York Times*, Gould goes on record with this astonishing commentary on live arts: “I happen to find all the live arts immoral,” says Gould, “because one should not voyeuristically watch one’s fellow human beings in testing situations that do not pragmatically need to be tested.” (Hurwitz 1975.)

The Ahistorical Aesthetics of Works of Music

Our judgments, taste and knowledge of music are all ultimately historically constructed. Most of us have grown accustomed to seeing Western music, both popular and Classical, as a developing story in which the narrative unfolds through the works of Great Men. In Classical music the substance of this narrative, thanks to the history of the historiography of music itself, has been located in 19th-century Austro-German music culture, in which work of such composers as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and a few others, took the development of music to its peak, as crystallized by the development of the 19th-century musical genre *par excellence*, the symphony. (c.f. Dahlhaus 1989, Goehr 1994, Sarjala 2002.)

The historical construction of the canon has important consequences in the fact that our aesthetic judgments have a lot to do with the historical “aura” of artworks. Namely, the great works of music have been legitimated in the historical, social, and institutional discourse which has, in a way, “constructed” the canon through writing about it, teaching about it (thus passing the tradition from one generation to the next), and, of course, per-

forming it in institutionalized settings such as public concerts. Aesthetic value, in turn, has been seen to reside in the innovative quality of music, in the originality, the personality, and the unique “voice” that great composers have been seen to display in their music. The innovative quality in music is always contextual – Beethoven’s late sonatas, for instance, would be no news were they composed today, whereas in their own time their formal, harmonic, and idiomatic qualities made them groundbreaking.

Works of music, as it were, “become themselves” in the historical and cultural horizon. This fundamental idea comes through in Carl Dahlhaus’s structural history of music (see the discussion in chapter 1), in which music is taken to be a historical, social, and institutional fact. It is from this point of departure that Dahlhaus (1989, 7) criticizes the conventional distinction between “aesthetic” and “historical” problem areas in the research and historiography of music. According to Dahlhaus, the basis on which we see things as “aesthetic” is necessarily historically mediated, just as “historical” aspects of music are always intertwined with qualities we call “aesthetic.”

In Dahlhaus’s (Ibid.) view, musical works, in a way, embed their own history. This means that to exist as “works,” music has to be located in a kind of a cultural and historical web of discourse, and its status as “works” is achieved through the public reception and mediation of music. One interesting aspect of Dahlhaus’s historiography is the assumption of a kind of “double ontology” as far as works are concerned: on the one hand, a given musical work is a historically unfolding entity that always carries with it the aesthetic attributes assigned to it in its own time; on the other hand, however, musical works

become “up-to-date” and “modern” over and over again as they get performed. The “structure” in Dahlhaus’s structural history refers to the aesthetic norms, ethical ideals, and social institutions, as well as to the performance and listening conventions of music. The fundamental unit in Dahlhaus’s historiography is “the work,” which itself includes both the authentic (ideological and aesthetic) context of its coming into existence, and the potential for its historical unfolding time and time again, through various mediations.

The historical “aura” actualized in our experience of music, does not boil down to music as sound. Take Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*: what we hear in a concert hall is not only sound but also our knowledge of the work as “the work that started modern music” – which is how we learn to conceive the work in every music history textbook. Our knowledge of Stravinsky as a person, and perhaps the many stories about the work’s stormy premiere in Paris in 1913, become part of the aesthetic experience. More generally, our experience of the music is historically conditioned from the very start: our experience takes place within conventional settings (concert halls); it is sanctioned by certain aesthetic norms; and the music we hear is most likely performed by a carefully selected group of people, professional musicians. All this has been with us from the 19th century, and concert halls, one could argue, are a visible manifestation of the norm of aesthetic contemplation, which made a devoted and dedicated mode of listening music a virtue and a necessary condition for “true” musical understanding. (See Small 1998, 19–29; Goehr 1989; Dahlhaus 1989, 44, 394.)

Gould explicitly abandons the idea that history plays any part in the musical experience. He replaces it with an idea of a “supra-historical” aesthetic judgment that focuses only on the music itself, not on the cultural context around it. It is particularly this kind of abandonment of the “tyranny of the *Zeitgeist*” that is at the heart of many of Gould’s writings (c.f. Gould 1962a/1990, 84–92; 1966a/1990, 340–344; 1980/1999, 261.) As Gould himself puts the matter in a 1972 letter, “The tyranny of the stylistic collectivity in the arts and, more generally, in life styles, per se, has been ... the primary theme in most of the works I have attempted and ... in many of the articles which I have written ... about the musical situation.” (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 176.)

In this respect, Gould’s most interesting and philosophically ambitious writing on the subject are clear in “Forgery and Imitation in the Creative Process,” a posthumously published essay (in French 1985, English 1995) dating from the early 1960s.⁵⁵ The essay shows Gould at his best as a writer: a knowledgeable, provocative, and probing intellectual, who forcefully questions the conventional virtues of “originality” and the “new” in music. What follows is a short excursion into Gould’s basic ideas in this highly interesting piece of writing.

Gould (1996,4) starts his essay with an excursion into his own paraphrase of the famous case of the forger Hans van Meegeren, which, according to Gould, sheds light on the

⁵⁵ The essay originated as a public lecture. In an unpublished letter from 1963 to Arthur Darack, the editor of *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, Gould (GGA 31, 24, 21) writes: “the piece on forgery, etc. which we discussed when I was in Cincinnati has now grown into a ten thousand word lecture which is having its debut next month at the University of Toronto[.]” No other information survives regarding this lecture.

most blatant “aesthetic misunderstanding” of the 20th century. Van Meegeren (1889–1947), as we know, was a Dutch painter who, during the World War II, painted a number of works that he claimed were painted by the famous Renaissance artist Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675). These “treasures” van Meegeren then sold at a high price to the Nazi administration, particularly to Hermann Göring’s private collections. After the war van Meegeren was accused of betraying his own country by selling national treasures to the Nazis and came close to being labeled a war criminal. At this point van Meegeren revealed that the paintings sold were in fact forgeries, and during the trial itself his craft as a forgery artist was proved before a special jury. In the end, the charges for the betrayal of the country were dropped, and he was found guilty only of the act of forgery itself. Van Meegeren was sentenced to one year in prison, but because of his bad health he died in December 1947 before his prison time was supposed to begin.

For Gould, the significance of van Meegeren – his “personal hero” (Gould 1966a/1990) – in the history of music lies in the fact that the aesthetic status of literally the same work changed with the new knowledge of its actual origin. For Gould, an aesthetic judgment dependent upon the knowledge available about its object is the most “delinquent form of aesthetic appraisal” (Ibid.). Gould makes an important distinction between the musical work and the knowledge available about its origin and its historical context. In historiographical terms, Gould abandons the Hegelian concept of history, one in which the history, envisioned as peaks of artistic innovations, comes to be seen as a progressive narrative (Gould 1996, 5). The idea of artistic “originality” has no meaning to Gould – according to him, originality is completely irrelevant for a creative artist (Ibid., 6). The actual poten-

tial, Gould argues, to be truly creative is smaller in musical domains where “originality” as such is emphasized.

Gould’s rejection of authorship and the idea of “originality” fuels Gould’s (Ibid., 8) provoking argument that the very concept of forgery is solely a “protective mechanism of snobbery.” According to Gould (Ibid., 5), the concept as such was of no significance whatsoever in the medieval world when the “unique” unfolding of art was not given a similar value than in the modern era.⁵⁶ In another writing Gould (1966a/1990, 343) argues that “forgery is emblematic” of our own age of electronic communication, and that only when crafts such as forgery are given the value they deserve has art become a part of our civilization.⁵⁷ All this, in Gould’s mind, points to a future world in which “duplication is everywhere and where identity in the sense of information about author means less and less” because listeners “will be forced to come to decisions about the work of art because of the reaction which they themselves receive from it, and for no other reasons.” (Gould 1996, 8.)

What, in Gould’s mind, is artistic creation all about? Here is Gould’s answer: “Simply processes of re-ordering and re-distributing, of focusing anew on a combination of details

⁵⁶ This claim gets support from a quick glance of *Oxford English Dictionary* – the word ‘forgery’ appears in English only at the end of the 16th century.

⁵⁷ From the very start of my research project, I’ve been puzzled by the frequency in which the issue of forgery appears in Gould’s writings – the phenomenon is almost non-existent in Gould’s own field, music. One potential source for Gould’s arguments on forgery is Leonard B. Meyer’s essay “Forgery and the Anthropology of Art” – which came out in the same issue of *Yale Review* as B.H. Haggin’s review of Gould’s recording (Haggin 1962a). Meyer’s article is so similar, in both title and content, to Gould’s “Forgery and Imitation” essay that Gould could almost be accused of plagiarism.

not previously presented in context together, of re-examining and ornamenting some long quiescent trait of the culture” (Gould 1996, 6). Creation, Gould continues, necessarily takes place in dialectics between “imitation” and “invention.” Without continuous imitation, there is no possibility for art to exist: “To make art work every artist must be engaged in imitation most of the time” (Ibid.). Invention, in turn, refers to an urge by the artist to “complete and develop” cultural material at hand, and to an aim to contribute through a creative act in which it is particularly imitation that brings about the coherence of the outcome. (Ibid.) According to Gould, it is a leftover from the scientific world view to assume that the development of music would follow a path similar to science, that there would exist a *Zeitgeist* demanding an artist to be up-to-date in his/her art.⁵⁸

But why should we give up all the traditional frameworks of art: “originality,” uniqueness, and a belief in “Great men”? Why should we see the artistic process solely as “elaboration,” “completion,” and “reordering” cultural material already in existence? One larger backdrop against which Gould’s ideas could be understood is his vision of the future as mediated and penetrated by electronic media, and as the kind of future in which traditional conventions, values, and norms of the experience of art have lost their meaning. Gould, as we recall, writes about a society in which the reproducibility of art is eve-

⁵⁸ Dahlhaus (1989, 324) discusses the same issue in his discussion on the norms and values of historiography. According to him, an aesthetic turn took place sometime around the end of the 18th century, one in which the idea of *imitatio* was replaced by *aemulatio*. This meant that the value of a certain stylistic competence and knowledge about tradition was replaced by the emphasis on “originality” and “uniqueness.” Beethoven’s works were seen as epitomizing the new conception – they were seen as inimitable and original works of a genius – a concept that would be protected by the copyright by the middle of the 19th century. For Gould, “originality” is a negative epithet – Beethoven, for instance, was on a musical ego-trip while “concentrating too much on being Beethoven” in his middle period” (1970/1990, 52–53).

rywhere and where the identity of art, conceived as information about its author, means less and less (Ibid., 8). The future listener of music, in Gould's vision, is no longer a passive consumer since the borders between the author and the audience have begun to dissolve. This leads to music's increasing penetration of the private sphere, electronically mediated, where a public display of music (concert etc) is no longer necessary. At the same time, the whole nature of aesthetic judgment changes: the audience has to make music significant as individuals, not collectively. In the future, Gould imagines, people will have to make judgments about the music they hear solely on the basis of the music itself, with no backup of institutions (such as music criticism) or the social collective. All this has to do with music losing its "authenticity" – its ties to history and authorship – through its electronic mediation and reproducibility. The identity of a musical work, conceived as knowledge of its author and historical circumstances has no place in the aesthetic experience of the future listener.

Gould the Postmodern?

The ahistorical nature of a musical work (and the experience thereof), the mental emphasis embedded in the interpretation, and the questioning of the significance of musical authorship are all characteristics associated with postmodern conceptions of art and culture. In his famous tractate *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1988) writes about the postmodern era as one in which the epistemological belief in "metanarratives" has been lost (Ibid., xxiv). It is not easy to grasp what exactly Lyotard means by "metanarratives," but obviously one important aspect of the concept is an idea of history as an

ongoing evolutionary process, a grand Hegelian narrative that is seen to unfold through exceptional individuals. This same kind of metanarrative is seen in western art and science – the history of both of these domains is seen as an evolving progress against the backdrop of the past.

Lyotard also writes about art in the postmodern condition. A postmodern artist and writer are in the same kind of autonomous position as philosophers:

[T]he text he [artist or writer] writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. ... The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of *what will have been done*. Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an *event*. (1988, 81. Italics original.)

A postmodern artist, Lyotard argues, is free in his relationship to history: his creative process is not to be evaluated on the basis of the traditional aesthetic norms, rules, and categories. For this reason, “works” and “texts” become “events” – they no longer have a permanent and stable ontological status, but rather, they are something that changes in each and every act of interpretation through meanings that their interlocutor attaches to them. This epistemological shift is something that the culture critic Roland Barthes referred to by the metaphor “death of the author.” Barthes (1977, 146) sees the “text” as a kind of intertext, a “web of quotations” spun together from various “centres of culture.” Thus defined, a “text” – be it a book, composition, or a painting – has nothing transcendent in it, no “authentic” meanings attached to it by its author, no meanings that the artist should disclose in the act of interpretation.

Against this ideological backdrop, it is no wonder that Gould's thinking about music has been characterized as "postmodern" – after all, the most radical element in Barthes's definition of a "text" was giving up the ideal of an "original" work of art, a "perfect" entity defined by its author. For Barthes, instead, a text is "a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (1977, 146). This definition comes blatantly close to Gould's own argumentation concerning the dialectics between "invention" and "imitation." Barthes and Gould, as we see, explicitly abandon the traditional norms and values conventionally attached to creative work; the "author," for both, is irrevocably dead.⁵⁹

Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1996) has drawn attention to Gould's interpretation of music as a communicative action. While musical communication is conventionally seen as decoding the composer's message to the listener as authentically as possible, for Gould both the artist and the listener become new links in the communicative chain.

According to Nattiez, Gould's musical thought is based on a belief in music technology as a cultural force that has made concerts obsolete and brought the listener into the heart of the creative process. As a consequence of this, a musical work unfolds through transcendent – in Gould's own words "ecstatic" – interpretation as a signifying structure.

⁵⁹ One interesting little anecdote should be shared. In his autobiographical book *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (cited in *Glenn Gould* Vol. 3/2 – Fall 1997, 69), Barthes gives two lists: "J'aime" and "Je n'aime pas." In the latter category, he lists afternoons, Bela Bartok's music, celebrating with strangers, and Chopin's concertos; in the first, Havana cigars, Bertolt Brecht, cheese, piano, money, Eisenstein, novels, cold beer, romantic music, brothers Marx, freshly mowed lawn, and finally – Glenn Gould. It is obvious, then, that Barthes knew Gould's work. Gould, however, mentions Barthes in none of his writings.

Gould's conception of music history, Nattiez argues, is anti-theleological and anti-Hegelian: musical development is about re-ordering and mixing existing musical styles and elements; all these are associated with the great significance of studio technology for Gould's musical interpretation. (1996, 30.)

A traditional conception of musical communication consists, according to Nattiez, of four stages: the composer's creative work, documentation of this work into notes and performance instructions in the score; a performer's decoding of all this in the act of interpretation; and the listener's aesthetic experience of the music (Ibid., 28). A postmodern theory of the interpretation of music differs from this traditional conception in two important respects: the musical work is not conceived as "perfectly" defined by its score, and therefore, there is no performer's responsibility involved in "decoding" the composer's message to the listener. Rather the performer's responsibility is in the activity that the artist's creative work brings about in the listener. An artwork, then, is seen more than anything else as an impulse for the listener's own "rewriting" of the music.

According to Nattiez, all this relates to Gould in one important sense: the interpretation of music is not about communication and mediation of the composer's "message," but rather about reconstruction of the musical work (Nattiez 1996, 29). This kind of a view brings about a possibility for a multi-authored musical work, always in a state of "becoming" something new.

Gould's conceptions regarding music history, authorship, interpretation, and ultimately the whole ontology of music share a lot with the postmodern conception of art and history, at least in the sense that Lyotard, Barthes and Nattiez conceive of the term. Gould never regarded the social, historical, and institutional framework surrounding art as something to which the artist should bear ethical responsibility but rather as an artificial, man-made "system" that deserves no attention from a truly creative artist. Gould's favourite example of a musicianship completely independent of *Zeitgeist* and an evolutionary conception of music history was Richard Strauss, one of the greatest composers who, according to Gould, "made his own time richer by not being part of it," a composer who speaks to all generations while belonging to none of them (1962a/1990, 85, 92). (Interestingly, Gould uses the very same arguments to praise J.S. Bach's music (Gould 1961; see also 1962/1999, 96).⁶⁰ Gould's reception of Strauss displays the ideal of "ahistorically aesthetic" music because Strauss's neo-Romantic musical idiom, in the middle of an era of atonality and dodecaphony, represented for Gould "an ultimate argument of indivi-

⁶⁰ Gould circulated textblocks between his articles. Here's what he says about Strauss: "The great thing about the music of Richard Strauss is that it presents and substantiates an argument which transcends all the dogmatisms of art – all questions of style and taste and idiom – all the frivolous, effete preoccupations of the chronologist. It presents to us an example of the man who makes richer his own time by not being of it; who speaks for all generations by being of none. It is an ultimate argument of individuality – an argument that man can create his own synthesis of time without being bound by the conformities that time imposes." (Gould 1962a/1990, 92.) And here's an excerpt from his draft on J.S. Bach: "The great thing about the music of Sebastian Bach is that it presents and substantiates the argument which transcends all of the dogmatic adherences of art – all questions of style and taste and idiom – all of the frivolous effete preoccupations of aesthetics. It presents to us an example of the man who makes richer his own time by not being of it, who speaks of all generations by being at the same time none. It is an ultimate argument of individuality – an argument of the inateness [sic] of individual effort, be it self-willed or predetermined, be it logical or be it mystic – an argument that man can create his own synthesis of time without being bound by the conformities that time imposes" (Gould 1961).

duality – an argument that man can create his own synthesis of time without being bound by the conformities that time imposes” (1962a/1990, 92). Gould’s view questions the linearity of history, and it is in this sense that he shares Lyotard’s argument of replacing the “metanarrative” with more local frameworks of constructing knowledge of the world outside. So a certain aspect of postmodern thought/ideology is inevitably present in Gould’s thinking. While modernism traditionally lays emphasis on historical progress and teleology, and on the idea of new music as something that necessarily builds on tradition (see Born 1995, 31–34), Gould seems to favor composers somehow “out of sync” with their times: Richard Strauss, Orlando Gibbons, Jean Sibelius, even J.S. Bach. Gould’s emphasis on this kind of “historical isolation” is clearly an anti-modernist manifesto.

Gould also subscribes to postmodern thought in his emphasis on the reception of art as an active and re-creative process. His vision concerning the future prospects of music technology is all about the potential of the listener to actually become a co-creator of music, someone constructing new layers of meaning in listening to as well as in the interpretation of music. This conception of an active and re-creative reception of art is not confined to any social rituals – since twisting the dial of a phone is, for Gould, already a “creative act” (Gould 1966a/1990, 347), it is obvious that this kind of creative agency is located in the private sphere, not concert halls.

The media provided Gould a kind of a “stage,” on which he also reflected a certain “postmodern sensibility.” In the domain of writing, Gould’s many self-interviews (see for

instance Gould 1974/1990, 315–328) and the essays he wrote under pseudonyms were exceptional in his own time. Gould clearly enjoyed playing various roles based on cultural stereotypes: his articles (c.f. 1965/1990) under the name “Herbert von Hochmeister” – an obvious parody of Herbert von Karajan – and use of other caricatures display his absurd sense of humour. “Nigel Twitt-Thornwaite,” one of these hilarious characters, the “eminent dean of British conductors” is an oft-seen guest in many of the television and radio programs Gould made. There are several others: “Douglas Haug-Guinness,” a dull-witted Scottish recording engineer, “Theodore Slutz,” a taxi-driver from New York, “Myron Chianti,” a take-off from Marlon Brando, and so on. (Samples can be found easily on YouTube.)

Gould made a postmodern parody of his media presence, showing simultaneously the artificiality of identity constructed solely through mediation. The same kind of parody in which Gould treated, say, Mozart’s piano sonatas, trying to demonstrate their emptiness, their lack of substance, and a musical language that amounted into a cliché, functions to alienate the listener from the “real” message of the mediated content and thus blurs the border between the author and audience. These very same qualities are those that Calinescu (1996, 302–303) regards as typical of postmodern literature. Collage – putting together incongruent elements – and an ironic relation to tradition are the postmodern characteristics at issue here – characteristics that Gould’s ideas and work often show.

Should we conclude, then, that Gould indeed was a postmodern music artist *par excellence*? On the one hand, this is feasible. Gould’s ideas, particularly those relating to the

prospects of technology, do relate to still contemporary issues in postmodern cultural theory: agency, authorship, relation to history, and others. On the other hand, however, Gould's ethos as a creative artist is at times far from the ethos of postmodernism, particularly when it comes to epistemological and moral relativism (c.f. Norris 2000, 25–47). Even though Gould rejected traditional conceptions and interpretations of art, and ultimately the traditional grounding of musical historiography on evolution and progress, he was never a relativist. Rather Gould was, as he himself put it, the “last puritan,” who never got tired of searching for ethical and moral maxims for – and through – his music-making. Just one example of these ethical maxims, for Gould, entailed avoiding of all kinds of competitions and displays of virtuosity, which he regarded as unethical. “Competition, rather than money,” Gould famously said, “is the root of all evil” (Gould 1990, 41).

At this point it is finally possible to attempt a satisfying answer to the question with which I started this chapter: who owns the musical work? In Gould's mind, not the composer or the tradition – these instead play out as a hindrance to a creative interpretation. The musical work exists rather in the domain of the listener and performer. According to Gould, it unfolds time and time again through the personal, unique and individual re-creative process enabled by technology. This idea, I think, is at the heart of Gould's whole musical world view, and something that needs to be taken into account when evaluating Gould's exceptional musicianship. In Lydia Goehr's (1998, 149) terms, Gould never got tired of looking for the “perfect musical performance,” as opposed to aiming at the “perfect performance of music” dictated by *Werktreue*. These two, “perfect musical

performance” and “perfect performance of music,” are total opposites with each another. The latter refers to a musicianship guided by the autonomous work, the composer, and the tradition and culture surrounding these two; the first to a conception of the interpretation of music in which the musician, rather than the work, is seen as the source and substance of making music.

Competition, virtuosity, stylistic collectivism, and conformism in composing and performing music are all associated with institutional, traditional, and conventional aspects of the music world – the historical, social, and institutional framework that Gould called the “system.” Gould regarded technology as the only way out of this kind of a system. I will next move on to discuss the meaning of technology in Gould’s musical thinking.

CHAPTER THREE:

High Fidelity – To What? Technology at the Service of Making Music

I begin this chapter with three citations from Gould's writings:

Technology exercises a great charity on our lives.... It's not there to hurt people, to hinder them, to impede them, to get in the way of human contact. It is there to speed it, to make it more direct and more immediate, and to remove people from the very things – the self-conscious things, the competitive things – that are detrimental to society in fact. (Gould 1971a/1990, 290.)

[T]echnology has the capability to create a climate of anonymity and to allow the artist the time and the freedom to prepare his conception of a work to the best of his ability, to perfect a statement without having to worry about trivia like nerves and finger slips. It has the capability of replacing those awful and degrading and humanly damaging uncertainties which the concert brings with it; it takes the specific personal performance information out of the musical experience. (Gould 1981/1990, 452.)

I think that to have technology's capability and not to take advantage of it and create a contemplative climate if you can – *that* is immoral! (Gould 1981/1990, 452.)

These three citations are related to the main argument of this chapter: technology has a significant role in Gould's musical, as well as ethical, thinking. Not only did he exploit the potential of recording technology in almost everything he did professionally after his retirement from live concerts in 1964 but also his whole musical and ethical thinking is based on an unwavering – and often idealistic and uncritical – belief in the beneficial impact that technology has on making music, as well as on mankind in general.

Technology in Gould's thought is a much discussed issue in literature about him, and for a good reason: Gould wrote and talked about it in almost all his writings and interviews. Geoffrey Payzant (1997) emphasizes the "distance" that technology allowed Gould to maintain from his professional and personal contacts, but technologically created "distance" was also there between Gould and his audience, given his preference for recording as his medium of musical communication. Payzant is one of the first commentators on the close relationship between technology and morality in Gould's thought, which is something that I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. Payzant accurately summarizes Gould's thought regarding technology as follows: it is a domain of possibilities situated between man and his beastliness, and it takes away the need to live in a competitive and comparing relationship with the world outside. (Payzant 1997, 51.)

Bazzana (1997, 239) emphasizes the "control" that technology allowed Gould to maintain in many areas of his life. Technology, Bazzana argues, provided Gould with maximal control in all aspects of his musical interpretation, permitting him "to present his conception of a work as fully, clearly, and definitively as possible" (Ibid.). It is particularly this aspect of *control* that is associated with Gould's technological optimism in most accounts of him. Gould had a lot of reservations about all manifestations of musical spontaneity, for instance the impulsivity⁶¹ of live performance and improvisation.⁶² Gould's aim at the

⁶¹ At this point it is possible to see the difference between Gould and his great contemporary Vladimir Horowitz. Horowitz, who was like a fish in water on the concert stage, crystallized his view of musical interpretation in one of his interviews: "I can say that a work should never be played the same way. I never do. I may play the same program from one recital to the next, but I will play it differently, and because it is always different, it is always new." (Horowitz 1991, 119.) Horowitz seems to have been the only colleague of whom Gould's comments were always negative. He even went as far as to cre-

control enabled by technology is also associated, in many accounts (see Kazdin 1989) of him, with the various compulsions and eccentricities of his complex personality and with the psychological makeup which almost amounted to sociopathy. This becomes obvious in a short excerpt from Otto Friedrich's biography of Gould:

He had always wanted to control all the circumstances of his life, and over the years it became a passion, an obsession. It was the need to be in control, really, that drove him from the concert stage to the recording studio. And in the recording studio, he had to control all the engineering, where the mikes were placed and how they were used, to make the recording companies come to his native city, to his own studio, where his own equipment would be the only equipment, with everything under his control. (Friedrich 1990, 296.)

Gould's obsessive passion for "control" in and out the recording studio is a prevalent *topos* in Gould's public reception as a creative musician. The picture, however, is not uniform: Gould's long-time producer Andrew Kazdin's (1989) bitter account of Gould as a sociopath, an individual shamelessly exploiting the people around him, is very different from Bazzana's (2003, 30–34, 317–337), which, in my opinion, is a much more credible depiction of Gould's personality. According to Bazzana, Gould's need for control had most to do with his childhood experiences and cultural background: Gould's well-to-do, upper middle-class parents were devout Presbyterians, who tried to foster in their child an

ate a malicious parody of Horowitz's "Historic return" concert in Carnegie Hall in 1965, which took place after Horowitz's almost decade-long retirement from live concerts. Gould's parody of this is titled "Hysteric return," which he recorded on his *Glenn Gould Fantasy* album. (On Gould's plans regarding this parody, see his 1966 letter to his producer John McClure, Roberts & Guertin 1992, 92–93). It may, however, come as a surprise that there are also significant similarities between the two pianists: the status of the printed score as only a starting point for the re-creative effort, eccentricity, insistence on using only the personal, particularly tuned instrument. The main difference between them was that for Horowitz, the primary venue of making music was live concerts and not studio.

⁶² On Gould's reservations towards the musical value of improvisation, see the essay "The Psychology of Improvisation," *Glenn Gould* Vol. 8/2 (Fall 2002), 47–52.

appreciation of control of life, moderation in behaviour, and an avoidance of overflowing emotions and passion.

All the pondering about Gould's personality, however, brackets the most important questions relating to issues of technology and control. Has the institution of the concert become obsolete in our times of electronic communication and music technology? And do we need live music any more when electronic communication pervades the whole of our lives?

These kinds of questions are useful in making sense of Gould's thoughts regarding the potential of technology for music. In other words, I am not interested in Gould's technological vision and need for control as they relate to his eccentricity, circumstances of his personal life, or family background. Rather, these questions offer a good angle from which to see Gould in a larger context, for instance, that of the Canadian technological discourse of the 1960's and 1970's, in which Gould was an active participant. It is too often forgotten that Gould published his writings on the topic in prominent journals and newspapers (e.g. *High Fidelity*, *New Republic*, *Piano Quarterly*, *New York Times*, *Toronto Globe and Mail*) in North America, did a number of television and radio programs on the topic, and gave public lectures in various places. To get the most out of Gould's ideas, he has to be viewed against a larger cultural and ideological backdrop.

In Canada, information technology has been an important issue ever since the 1950s. As Robert Babe (2000, 3–38) has observed, there has since the latter half of the 20th century

been a vivid and rich cultural debate at work concerning the potential of technology for the future of this country – a debate through which Canada has been constructing its identity, its intellectual history, and its own position in relation to other countries, the United States in particular. The prominent names in this debate are, to mention just a few, Graham Spry, Harold Innis, George Grant, Northrop Frye, John Grierson, Dallas W. Smythe, and, of course, Marshall McLuhan. Of all these names, I will mainly focus on McLuhan – for the simple reason that he was the only one with whom Gould was in contact and whose work he knew thoroughly. In addition to McLuhan, I will discuss Gould’s intellectual debt to Jean Le Moyne, a theologian and culture critic from Montreal, whose writings on technology and ethics had a profound influence on Gould’s thought.

Canada, however, is not the only cultural and ideological context in which Gould’s technological thought should be studied. In what follows, I will discuss Gould’s ideas regarding technology and the reproduction of music in relation to a particular philosophical and aesthetic discourse that has been active throughout the 20th century. Reproduction of art has been a problem for philosophers such as Walter Benjamin and Gianni Vattimo since the 1930’s, and some of the questions that have been raised in this discourse are still acute. The “aura” of the artwork, famously elaborated by Walter Benjamin, is in our age of the digital transmission and mediation of music perhaps a more important issue than ever. It is also the center around which my discussion on Gould’s thought on technology will unfold.

Benjamin's (1936/1989) well-known article "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierarbeit" (I am using the Finnish translation) raises a number of questions outside its own subject area, film. Some relevant questions regarding music are the following: what elements in music ultimately make up the "aura," the particular aspect with which we associate qualities such as authenticity and sincerity? What are the historical aspects that tie the "aura" of music into a particular time and place? Are these kinds of qualities worth aiming for in the postmodern mode of experiencing music? Should we rather rethink the change that technology has brought about to the domain of Classical music, which is what Gould suggested? Was he ultimately right in his provocative statements regarding the obsolescence of live concerts?

In addition to these two already vast areas of inquiry – contextualizing Gould's ideas in their time and place and trying to scrutinize their philosophical significance – there is an even broader domain of research into which I am going to delve in this chapter. This domain of inquiry has to do with the relationship between technical reproduction, musical experience and history, that is, with the role that the ideal of authenticity plays in the experience of technologically reproduced music. My focus in this challenging area of inquiry is on Gould's ideal of a "suprahistorical," technologically mediated experience of music, but I will also touch upon this issue on a more general level.

In short, my focus is on these deceptively simple questions familiar to us from earlier chapters: With what in particular are we face-to-face while listening to recorded music? Is it the composer's "work" which the musician has, with the help of technology, been

able to re-create as perfectly as possible, without the pitfalls of real-time performance? Or is it rather a forgery that we are listening to – in the sense that most likely what we hear is a combination from various takes, and thus the recording does not match ontologically the concept of a musical work as an authentic expression of the composer? Are auditory forgeries, after all, possible? Or is it rather the musician who draws the main attention in our experience? Is the work actually irrelevant in all this?

These kinds of questions, highly relevant to a critical discussion of Gould's ideas, have been fruitfully discussed by the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. Vattimo's point of departure in his theory of mediation is Walter Benjamin's critical theory, particularly as it relates to his concept of the "aura." Vattimo is interested in the impact that various media have had on the ontology of the postmodern experience of art. Vattimo argues that the change brought about by electronic communication and digital reproducibility has been profound: the whole ontology of art has gone through a change through being penetrated by mediation. There is no outside, Vattimo argues, to mediated music. And mediation, as an aesthetic problem, has been with us for a long time. It was already as early as 1938 Theodor W. Adorno wrote in his essay "Über den Fetischcharakter in der Musik" about how musical works become fetishes through mechanical reproduction. This way, Adorno thought, music becomes a servant of "culture industry" (more about this later). Vattimo, however, turns his back on Adorno's pessimism by arguing that it is in the "chaos" brought about by all-pervading mediation that the hope of music's emancipation is situated. While television, radio, journals, and concerts, for Adorno, seemed irreversibly penetrated by culture industry (e.g. Adorno 1998, 59–70; Adorno 2002a; 2002b) and hu-

miliating to individual autonomy, Vattimo sees mass mediation and “media society” as ultimately positive and full of emancipatory potential.

The shortcoming of traditional aesthetic theories, Vattimo (1992, 66) argues, is that they don’t do justice to media and its potential. That is, aesthetics has traditionally gone up the tree with the wrong end up in its effort to save art from the threat that media poses. In other words, there is an ontological fallacy at work in aesthetics: in the postmodern era, Vattimo argues, we don’t focus on “works” in our experience of art but rather on encounters with art conceived as a social phenomenon. The traditional conception of artworks as stable and permanent has become obsolete in our time; instead, works have become the domain of constant resignification and re-creation, which is what Vattimo means by his metaphor of artworks as “bottomless.”

Gould’s thought concerning the potential of music technology has a lot in common with Vattimo’s. Moreover, it is my argument that Gould’s ideas could be seen as an effort to do away with the particular aspects of art to which Benjamin referred by his concept of the “aura” – agency, authenticity, and history.

In a certain way, Gould’s thought in the 1960’s anticipates the postmodern discourse on media society – a discourse that has been active throughout the past two decades. As far as Vattimo is concerned, Gould’s technological vision, particularly his idea about the “participant listener,” anticipates Vattimo’s idea about the “homelessness” of the mediated artworks. One could even argue that Gould’s ideas concerning the potential of new

technology are fully compatible with Vattimo's, and it is in this sense that Gould can be seen as a precursor to the fragmented, globalized, eclectic, and dynamic music culture in which we now live. Indeed, through looking at Gould's ideas, we will also gain new perspective on the world around us.

My discussion below proceeds in a reverse order. That is, before getting onto the "micro level" of Canada in the 1960s and 1970s, I will first discuss the relationship between reproduction and music on a more philosophical level. I aim at answering two simple questions: *what* do we listen to when we are listening to recordings? What is the character of the musicianship that we are hearing in action on recordings? After attempting an answer to these questions, I will move on to Gould's technological thought and its local and philosophical contexts.

Agency in Recordings

Technological reproduction of music has typically been regarded as problematic. Mark Katz (2004) is a breath of fresh air in his account of music aesthetics and conceptions of music as something that always evolve in a dialectical relationship with new technology. For instance, he uses the term "phonograph effect" (2004, 3) to describe the many changes that have taken place in 20th-century Classical music. These changes include the increase of vibrato in string playing, resulting from an effort to make up for the lost live "presence" in recorded music. Also, technology has brought about whole new genres of music, as demonstrated brilliantly by Katz's discussion about certain compositions by

Ernst Toch and Paul Hindemith's certain compositions that were specifically meant to be recorded.

Another brilliant scholar on recording as an aesthetic phenomenon is Arved Ashby. In a recent work, Ashby (2010) has written about audio technology as a factor of crucial importance for music's ontology. Ashby aptly summarizes the century-long discussion regarding the "mechanical reproduction" of music as one in which the ethics of documentation has played a prominent role. In other words, recording has – falsely – come to be seen as a sonic photograph of a sound event, not as a creative medium in itself. Producers and musicians, Ashby (2010, 198) argues, have seen Classical recording as "(1) a photolike documentation of an object or event" and "as (2) a point (not a span) in time." This has had consequences for the ethics part in all this: technology -- microphones, loudspeakers, amplifying, magnetic tape, techniques of recording, transmission and reproduction – have all been seen as in the service of "high fidelity" to the musical work and its composer's intentions (Ashby 2010, 200).

Ashby's dialectical and contextual view of music is in direct conflict with a view of music as autonomous, unchanging, stable and non-physical. The 19th-century conception of a musical work (see Solie 1980 for more on this) does not go well together with the potential of technology – embedded in that older conception is the idea that musical interpretation is always a kind of one-time event, proceeding in real-time from the beginning to the end, and the best the technology can do is to document this process. The autonomous structures of musical works, as it were, embed the idea that performing – and docu-

menting – these works should be a process bound to the temporal unfolding of the musical content within those structure. Katz’s (2004, 1–2) name for this kind of conception is “realism discourse,” and there is no denying the fact that it has been the prevalent paradigm in the history of recordings. We do speak about “high fidelity” audio equipment without acknowledging the fact that the real “fidelity,” to an authentic, real-time performance of music, is an ideal reached very seldom in listening to recorded music. Those of us who remember the 1980’s can well recall the ad for c-cassettes: “Is it live or is it Memorex?” These kinds of examples suffice to show that the task of recording of music has for the most part been at *documenting*, not creating music. In other words, technology should not get in the way of “real” music-making but only document it as accurately as possible. Aesthetically, then, a recording is always secondary to live performances – only something that “results” from an authentic act of interpretation.

Yet reproduction also threatens the aesthetic tradition and the norms and values embedded in it. A recording, for instance, poses a threat to the stability of authorship, meaning and unity of a musical work since both the composer and performer lose control to the primacy of the “document” after its release. The work loses its ties to any particular time and place, and its composer and performer have no authority in its mediation. In this kind of a process, the listener can’t really be sure *whose* work his/her aesthetic contemplation adheres. There is no way of knowing how exactly the sounds heard on a recording are produced, and it is this issue in particular – the inability of reproduction technology to guarantee its own authenticity – that has been the source of some scandals in the history

of recording. One of the more famous ones was Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's "punch" of a high c to an aging Kirsten Flagstad's 1953 recording of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.⁶³

It is obvious that studio technology has, over the years, brought only more and more possibilities for a recording artist: as Frith (1998, 244) observes, through digital sampling, *any* music in the world can be broken into parts and then recomposed by modifying any of its parameters. In this sense, considering all the creative possibilities that technology has to offer, the idea of a recording as a "document" of a performance has really become absurd – even though, as Ashby (2010) observes, that paradigm has never really lost its dominance in the domain of Classical music.

The issue of debate in music technology is authorship. A recording by definition detaches the music from the framework that Benjamin called "aura – from the "here and now" element of authenticity present in live performance. In recordings, the listener has no way of knowing whether the musician has really played the music as the cover claims has happened – with a reproduction there is no way to know. Neither do we have any way of knowing whether or not there is splicing, patching, or a number of re-takes involved.

I would argue that we still tend to value a certain degree of authenticity even in recordings. Our aesthetic experience is tilted towards an "honesty" of musical interpretation, that is, towards regarding recordings as documents of the skill and mastery of a given

⁶³ This incident created a huge fuss concerning the ethics of this manoeuvre – on which Gould (1966a/1990, 340) commented as follows: "Elisabeth Schwarzkopf appends a missing high C to a tape of *Tristan* otherwise featuring Kirsten Flagstad, and indignant purists, for whom music is the last blood sport, howl her down, furious at being deprived a kill."

musician. If we don't find evidence of these kinds of qualities, there is a risk of suspicion concerning the ethics of the alleged musical interpretation.

The idea of a recording as a document, a sonorous "photograph" of a certain event – an artifact as coherent and organic as possible – is dominant among recording artists. This is, for instance, the conductor Christopher Hogwood's stance on the issue – he regards the value of a recording dependent on how accurately it documents a given performance of music. According to Hogwood, a recording can also be a "dishonest" document of a given performance, in cases when there is a high degree of technological modification and/or editing involved in the production. In his mind, a recording ideally represents an authentic performance of which it is a document. According to Hogwood, a good part of a musician's mastery is the ability to create a good document of an errorless performance, a document that will only be polished in the studio, after the real effort of a musical interpretation has taken place. (Cited in Badal 1996, 91.)

This kind of honesty has, of course, a lot to do with the historical ideal of "authenticity," which I have already discussed.⁶⁴ However, it also has to do with the *agency* of music. What do we mean by that tricky concept? Stan Godlovitch (1998, 15–30) defines the necessary conditions for a musical agency to manifest in musical performances as follows:

⁶⁴ "Honesty" is important for the marketing of Classical music as well. As Brown (2000, 361) has observed, one of the most prominent aesthetic ideals in the recording industry is a certain "transparency" of musical interpretation. The recording, as it were, functions as a "window" onto an act of interpretation – which the technology has made as clear as possible.

- 1) Causal condition: the “cause” of the performance heard is the musician;
- 2) Intention of the musician: the musician intends to bring about the particular musical work that is the object of the interpretative act;
- 3) Musician’s skill: the musician has the skill and qualities needed to produce a ceaseless, real-time interpretation of a given musical work – a recording compiled of, say, two-bars-long stretches of music clearly does not meet this condition.
This kind of skill enables the musician to repeat the performance if needed;
- 4) Public status of the performance: the interpretation heard is meant to be heard by at least one person. A performance of music is thus by definition a *relational* concept – it necessitates a certain kind of connection between the musician and audience.

It is Godlovitch’s “causal condition” and “musician’s skill” that interest me the most in this context. “Causal immediacy” relates directly to the problem of authenticity: the listener has no way of knowing whether or not the performance he/she hears is executed by the musician whose name stands on the cd-cover. “Causal immediacy” thus refers to the norm taken for granted in our everyday experience of music: that the musician’s skill, manifest in real-time performance, is really the “causal reason” for the music we hear. Viewed from this angle, an interpretation of, for instance, the *Moonlight Sonata* made with a sequencer on a computer is aesthetically worthless.

“Musician’s skill,” one of Godlovitch’s conditions, is one aspect of this “causal immediacy” which also relates to the re-creative potential of studio technology. According to

Godlovitch's view, an interpretation compiled of 200 splices of *Moonlight Sonata*, even if played by the same musician, does not satisfy this particular condition for musical agency to take place. Musician's skill manifests in conditions of real-time performance, where the performance is always about mastering a demanding task successfully. It is of great importance for the aesthetic enjoyment drawn from this experience that the listener have at least some kind of intuition⁶⁵ of how demanding a task the musician is about to conquer.⁶⁶

It is clearly obvious that our evaluation of recording and other technological reproduction necessarily unfolds in one of two conflicting paradigms: the *documentary* paradigm, which holds that a recording always documents something – if not a real-time performance of a musical work, then at least the musician's skill, which relates to the aesthetic experience we get from the music. The *phonographic* paradigm, however, regards a recording in itself as an aesthetic object in its own right, and one whose evaluation has nothing to do with the live performance of music. I argue that in different circumstances of our everyday musical life we appeal to one or the other of these two mutually exclu-

⁶⁵ Often this intuition is based on an experience of the body. For instance, my own enjoyment of skillful piano performances draws from my own bodily experience as a pianist, from the knowledge I have gained through my studies to appreciate the work that goes into developing such a high-skill musicianship. Jaana Parviainen (2002) calls this kind of experience by the term "kinaesthetic empathy." On using the body as an instrument of musical knowledge, see Titon 1997, Tarvainen 2006, Riikonen 2005, Aho 2005.

⁶⁶ It is this particular aspect that bothered Gould in particular about live concerts. In one of his last interviews, he writes that "the whole business about asking people to test themselves in situations which have no need of their particular exertions is wrong – as well as pointless and cruel" (1981/1990, 452).

sive paradigms – often without fully acknowledging it. Gould, however, was of one mind about this issue throughout his life.

Gould's Phonographic Ideal of Musical Interpretation

Many of Gould's arguments concerning music technology could be seen as arguments *pro* phonographic paradigm *contra* documentary paradigm. In other words, he never accepted the idea of a musical interpretation as a manifestation of skill. Neither can we read him as writing anything appealing to Godlovitch's "causal immediacy" as a condition for a musician's presence in the listener's aesthetic experience. Gould regarded as utterly irrelevant questions as to whether or not a given interpretation heard on recording can be reproduced in live performances, whether it is produced by one or more authors, and whether it is compiled from one or more splices of music. Gould clearly agrees with Evan Eisenberg's (1988, 109) definition of phonography: "The word 'record' is misleading. Only live recordings record an event; studio recordings, which are the great majority, record nothing. Pieced together from bits of actual events, they construct an ideal event."

From the standpoint of phonography, it is only the sounding artifact that matters, and in Gould's mind, none of the technological means of producing it can, in principle, be dismissed. This becomes obvious in his 1983 interview "Glenn Gould on Recording," published in *High Fidelity*, where he argues for recording as an art form in its own right, not only an extension of live concerts.

a recording represents something special – that it isn't a replica of a concert experience, that it isn't a memento of some hallowed public occasion, that it is, inherently, an art form with its own laws and its own liberties, its quite unique problems, and its quite extraordinary possibilities. ... [A recording studio is] a place where one can properly feel that the most horrendously constricting force of nature – the inexorable linearity of time – has been, to a remarkable extent, circumvented. (Gould 1983/1998, 4.)

In another interview two years earlier Gould emphasizes the possibility of compiling interpretations out of shorter splices of music.

The true recording artist, who really understands the values and implications of recording, is someone who is looking at the totality; seeing it so clearly that it doesn't matter if you start with the middle note in the middle movement and work in either direction like a crab going back and forth. (1981a/1999, 346.)

One of the key questions for most listeners interested in the “ethics” of musical interpretation in recordings is, of course, whether or not a given recording is essentially “live,” that is, compiled from one master take, which then may or may not be patched by a few shorter takes in order to get rid of finger slips or wrong notes. This suspicion here, of course, concerns Godlovitch's condition of “musician's skill” – we want to be sure about the agency manifest in the interpretation in order to draw full aesthetic appreciation out of it.

For Gould, however, all this holds no value. He argues that “good splices build good lines, and it shouldn't matter if one uses a splice every two seconds or none for an hour so long as the result *appears* to be a coherent whole” (1974–75/1990, 356. Italics original.) In another one of his writings, an interview he did with Arthur Rubinstein, Gould professes to his clearly confused senior colleague that he “believes in editing” and sees no reason why an artist should not compile his recording out of 162 takes. (Gould

1971a/1990, 287). It is only the auditory outcome that matters, not the means by which it is achieved.⁶⁷

Recording, for Gould, is about the technological re-creation of music. Recording, and the “archival responsibility” that it involves, enables the musician to get a relationship with the music that is very much like the composer’s (Gould 1966a/1990, 336). As early as 1960, at the height of his career as a concert pianist, Gould said that recording is “the closest thing to re-creation that we have” (1960/1999, 80).

Gould argued that recording enables the artist to “analyze and dissect” the music in a short and intensive process, which Gould seems to have held as ideal for his own work in recording studio. Again, technology, Gould thought, enables the artist

to establish a contact with a work which is very much like that of the composer’s own relation to it. It permits him to encounter a particular piece of music and to analyze and dissect it in a most thorough way, to make it a vital part of his life for a relatively brief period, and then to pass on to some other challenge and to the satisfaction of some other curiosity. Such a work will no longer confront him with a daily challenge. (1966a/1990, 336.)

Arved Ashby (2010, 108) sees certain characteristics of philosophical pragmatism in Gould’s insistence on treating musical works as *texts* rather than self-contained unities of which it is meaningful to seek for an “authentic,” “true” interpretation. Rather than looking at the *Urtext* and composer’s intentions as a source for truth – and this is where Ashby juxtaposes Gould with Arthur Schnabel – Gould looked at recording music as “read-

⁶⁷ In light of these kinds of statements it may come as a surprise that Gould, in fact, used splicing in his recordings very seldom. At their most typical, Gould’s recordings are based on one basic take, which then is patched with a few shorter takes. Even this patching was not always needed. On Gould’s work in studio, see Kazdin 1989.

ing them [that is, compositions] in the light of other texts, people, obsessions, bits of information ... *and then seeing what happens.*” This is exactly what Gould thought recordings were at their very best: a medium of experimenting with new possibilities of music interpretation through audio technology. Recorded interpretations were by no means “documents” of a given real-time performance because in the final product, the first take may well be preceded by the sixteenth, and both may be linked by inserts recorded years later (Gould 1998, 4).

Another good thing about the studio in Gould’s mind was that there is no temptation “to show off” for the audience through an overinterpretation of the music at hand. ”His [the artist’s] analysis of the composition will not become distorted by overexposure, and his performance top-heavy with interpretative ‘niceties’ intended to woo the upper balcony, as is almost inevitably the case with the overplayed piece of concert repertoire.”

(1966a/1990, 336.)⁶⁸ Associated with this idea, Gould sometimes spoke about his 1957 recording of Bach’s G-major *Partita* as an interpretation “polluted” by concert mannerisms, which bothered him so much that he wanted to buy the whole print run of the recording back! In Gould’s mind, this recording reflects all the “filthy little devices” by which to reach the upper balcony of the concert hall” (Gould 1978/1996, 15). Instead, a recording should be as “intimate” and “clinical” as possible and offer all “data” of the

⁶⁸ It seems that the opposite has been the case in the history of recording. As Katz (2004, 93, 96) observes, the spread of vibrato in violin playing in the 1910s and 1920s took place through early recordings. Recording musicians, Katz argues, wanted to create a lively, expressive concert-like presence in the recording. (See also Philip 2004, 231–252.)

music at hand. According to Gould, a recording should ideally function as an almost clinically accurate analysis of the music. (Ibid.)

One of the devices Gould developed to “analyze” and “dissect” music he played was the recording technique he called “acoustic choreography.”⁶⁹ This was a specific technological studio innovation, first used in Gould’s recording of Sibelius’s piano music, in which the music was recorded from four different audio perspectives with four pairs of microphones. In making the master tape, then, the recording engineer had at his disposal for different audio perspectives of the music of which to compile the recording. In Gould’s mind, the ultimate contribution of this innovation was that it enabled the structure of the music to be projected in the recording. As far as Gould’s intellectual biography goes, it is an interesting question to ponder when and how this innovation occurred to him. The previous literature on Gould does not take a stand on this matter, even though Andrew Kazdin’s book gives a detailed account of its technological studio aspects.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ On Gould’s own comments regarding this innovation, see Cott 1984, 90–92; Gould 1980/1999, 276–277; Gould 1978/1996, 10–16.

⁷⁰ In Gould’s correspondence, I was able to locate two letters of interest as far as acoustic choreography is concerned. Both of these letters are addressed to Helen Whitney, the producer of NBC News. In the first, dated September 3 1971, Gould enthusiastically describes a documentary of Herbert von Karajan’s performance with the Berlin Philharmonics: “On a more profound level ... these films convey the notion of what goes on in the score, of the instrumental balances and modulatory shifts implicit in that score, more effectively than any other musical-visual demonstration I know” (GGA 32, 9, 15). A couple of months later Gould (32, 9, 15) suggests co-operation to Whitney in a documentary on the history of concertos. “The project should be accomplished with film cameras, if possible, so that we can have maximum flexibility in terms of the shooting techniques involved. These techniques should be allowed to make their own comments about the nature of the music at hand.” In practice, Gould employed this technique as early as 1968 in his recording of two pieces by Scriabin (but no master tape was made, see Gould 1978/1996, 10), but the letters give a sense that the inspiration for acoustic choreography

Paul Théberge (1986, 123–124) sees acoustical choreography as associated with McLuhan's ideas: Gould's idea of using acoustic space as a parameter of musical interpretation is something that, according to Théberge, Gould shares with McLuhan, particularly the latter's idea of human cognition as a multi-dimensional "labyrinth," of which McLuhan wrote already in the 1960's. Also, Théberge argues, the spatiality of acoustic choreography is very much akin to a kind of "cubistic experience," a concept that McLuhan establishes in *Understanding Media*. This kind of "cubistic experience" in McLuhan's discourse, Théberge argues, is associated with the kind of position that holds that *all* sensory experience unfolds on various levels – that is, in any sensory experiences we have, various sensory organs are stimulated. One could, in fact, argue that every sensory experience takes place in a kind of a trans-sensory space.

Through a comparison of Gould's and McLuhan's ideas we can get a relatively specific picture of the vivid cultural debate that was ongoing in Gould's time, a debate in which Gould was an active participant. Gould's and McLuhan's ideas concerning technology also have similarities other than Théberge points out, some of which I will discuss later in this chapter.

was clearly visual. This conclusion gets support from Gould's (Ibid., 12) own comments on acoustic choreography as analogous to film-making. Elsewhere, in a 1970 letter to Augustus Perry, Gould (GGA 31, 43, 12) interestingly writes about Bach's fugues as a spatial phenomenon: "in that music, the intellectual aspiration ... and the tactile considerations demanded for the realization of [Bach's music is] if not one and the same, are at least intimately linked, and that consequently the strand-by-strand dissection of a Bach fugue ... is not merely rewarding for its tactile efficacy, but is ... indicative of the real nature of that music which is, of course, a multi-linear experience."

The Anonymity and Ahistoricity of Technology

There is a temptation to assume that the fascination of technology for Gould was that it enabled the best of all possible interpretations, a way to create the best of all interpretations outside the concert situation. Gould (1964a/1999, 202) hints at this kind of interpretation in an interview conducted by Patricia Moore in 1964, in his argument that recording by definition aims at a certain ideal of perfection, not only in terms of interpretational intentions but also in terms of the recorded sound itself – the relationship between the instrument, musician, and the microphone. Most often, however, Gould associates technology with *anonymity*. In his 1974 "self-interview" Gould writes that the particular advantage of a recording artist is that he/she achieves a kind of anonymity and that his public duties as a performing artist cease to exist:

I simply feel that the artist should be granted ... anonymity. He should be permitted to to operate in secret, as it were, unconcerned with – or, better still, unaware of – the presumed demands of the marketplace – which demands, given sufficient indifference on the part of a sufficient number of artists, will simply disappear. And given their disappearance, the artist will then abandon his false sense of 'public' responsibility, and his 'public' will relinquish its role of servile dependency. (Gould 1974/1990, 318.)⁷¹

⁷¹ One slightly amusing text by Gould cherishing anonymity is the honorary address for the opening of the Cincinnati Concert Hall in 1967. Gould (GGA 4, 8,6) chose this occasion to idealize background music as the music of future. This speech merits quotation of some length (I hope you can imagine the honorary guests squirming in their chairs...): "Not least among the reasons for the success of background music is the anonymity in which its makers are content to work. There is in this no vestige of anti-professionalism – simply evidence of that participational overlap which derives from a disinterest in author-identity. Its making celebrates, in fact, that uninhibited initiative which the absence of author-identity occasions and which, in turn, permits an altruism and concern for the situation of music itself not available to the identity-conscious author. ... The release from author-identity enables the creative participants to explore a relation to the product only minimally jeopardized by ego and by the crippling concern for innovation per se. And, paradoxically, the banishment of this concern stimulates a careful, sober, realistic examination of the actual, as opposed to the exploitable properties of art and encourages a crea-

This statement refers to the same ideal of isolation that I already discussed in the previous chapter – Gould’s ideal of creativity and self-expression as by definition noncollective phenomena.⁷² The statement also refers to Gould’s aversion towards art as an institution, an issue which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, particularly as it relates to Theodor W. Adorno.

Gould’s ideal of technologically enhanced isolation is obviously inspired by McLuhan’s vision of a technologically mediated “global village” (e.g. McLuhan 1962, 32). In one of his last interviews, Gould says that he dreams of a world in which “nobody cares about what anybody else is doing” (1981/1990, 460). In his article “Stokowski in Six Scenes,” Gould says that “Artists ... work best in isolation – in an environment where their knowledge of the world outside is always under editorial control and never permitted to intrude upon the indivisibility of the unit formed by the artist’s idea and its execution.” (1977–78/1990, 259.)

This type of isolation, a musician’s creative individual ecstasy, is technologically mediated. According to Gould, the real contribution of technology is that it provides a possi-

tive climate unencumbered by that idle and essentially futile-quest for novelty. As music disentangles itself from the residue of those intra-craft rituals which have hampered its development for so long, and as it regains its proper estate as a medium of information, the creative alliance between the composer, performer and audience undergoes a most significant transformation.”

⁷² As has become obvious earlier, Gould’s ideal of creativity has a number of unresolved paradoxes. On the one hand, he views creativity as something not limited by institutions or by the conventions of the *Zeitgeist*; on the other hand, however, he seems to shun away from a forcefully individual idea of artistic expression (ego, vanity, showing-off of a virtuoso). One could argue that he seeks distance both from society and individual psyche. I thank Rose Rosengard Subotnik for this brilliant observation.

bility of focusing on the music, not the composer, historical period, or other contextual factors, since the “determination of the value of a work of art according to the information available about it is a most delinquent form of aesthetic appraisal” (1966a/1990, 341).

The value of a recording, in Gould’s mind, is its ability to “cover” any possible traces of agency in musical interpretation. Recording, Gould (1998, 4) argues, has “the unique ability to involve the listener in the music or in whatever the substance of the recording happens to be, while at the same time separating that listener from all extraneous biographical data – from all concern with its documentation, its preparations, its performances, its post-production processes, and so on.” Gould even goes so far as argue that “the finest compliment one can pay to a recording is to acknowledge that it was made in such a way as to erase all signs, all traces, of its making and its maker.” (Gould 1983/1998, 3). The anonymity, the setting aside of cultural and biographical context⁷³ was obviously one of the greatest contributions of technology. Gould saw technology as potentially bringing about a possibility for a virtual “community of ecstasy” (Guertin 1988), which in Gould’s mind meant that music in general would become circulatory material for artist and listener alike, mostly because of the technical equipment available

⁷³ A funny anecdote concerning this issue occurs in Gould’s 1962 interview with Bernard Asbell, when he tells Asbell of having listened to his own recording of Bach’s d-minor concerto on a car radio – without recognizing it! The reason for this was that he had gotten used to listening to his own record on a record player that was winding too fast and consequently transposing the music to the key of e-flat minor instead of the original. When Gould heard his recording finally in the right key through the car radio, he did not recognize it at first.

for the post-production re-creation.⁷⁴ This particular issue is obviously related to a certain idealisation of anonymity in Gould's thought. After all, it was Gould's conviction that the listener's ability to retain his/her judgment of an aesthetic experience necessitates excluding historical and cultural "processes of identification" – basically knowledge of the performer, composer and the context of music at hand.

It is obvious that Gould invests a number of expectations for technology to satisfy. In the "Forgery and Imitation" essay, cited in the previous chapter, Gould expresses a thought often visible in his other writings as well: the post-Renaissance Western world has elevated individualism and originality to such prominent and unquestioned positions that our aesthetic judgment in fact takes place within the context of the historical framework rather than through a focus on an aesthetic object.

Far from appreciating the repetitive values of early culture, this existential concept [that emerged in Renaissance] has led to the view that history is a series of man-made climaxes, of high points of social and artistic achievement and that by constructing a theory of these high points we can predict the trends of our cultural evolution. (1996, 5.)

In his 1964 honorary doctorate address at the University of Toronto Gould is at his most explicit on his view regarding the role of technology in setting this kind of "historical progressivism" – evolutionary concept of history – aside. In making art and independent creation available to all, technology changes the nature of the aesthetic experience, since the need to attach the art to its author naturally disappears and the whole idea of originality must thereby be re-evaluated.

⁷⁴ In a 1968 interview Gould (1968/2001, 59) tells his interviewer John McClure that he is planning a recording in which the listener is offered various versions of the same work – of which he/she has the possibility to make a personal remix.

The more participants you permit into the creative act, the more anonymity is automatically ceded to the individual participant, and the more unlikely we will find the need for those specific forms of information and biography which tended to determine to such a large extent our rather snobbish notions of historic progressivism. And because of this, we can expect an attachment to the work of art which restores something of that instantaneous spiritual involvement which in many ways the ascent of the Renaissance short-circuited. I believe that the ultimate gift of electronic culture to art will be a total rethinking of the nature of individuality. (1964b/1999, 231.)

In this short citation we can see Gould's technological optimism crystallized: technology brings about the possibility of an "altruistic" relationship to music, a relationship in which the historical framework, the ideal of originality and the biographical context of the author do not function as a basis for the aesthetic judgment. The listener and the artist alike are in a direct relation with the music itself, which is seen to unfold outside tradition, canons, and indeed any historical and institutional frameworks.

To conclude this section of the chapter: in Gould's mind, a musical work is ideally an anonymous object ontologically in a state of constant re-creation which, through audio and recording technology, has potentially many authors in various stages of the creative process. It could be said that anonymity⁷⁵ really is the ultimate issue here – in many of his writings Gould, for instance, wrote of his wish to make recordings in which neither the composers nor the performers would be mentioned. His whole idea of the "creative listener" is based on the prospect of the listener's being able to combine various recordings of the same music at his/her will – to create one's own "personal version" of the music at

⁷⁵ In his 1971 letter to John Roberts, Gould (GGA 32, 6, 13) writes that authorship, identification of a musical work, and interpretation are "an important and necessary step towards that state of anonymity, which is ... what technology is all about."

hand. The most interesting aspect of all this is that Gould thought all these technical resources should be available to the musician as well as to the listener.

Re-creative Listener

The impact of technology, in Gould's mind, extends to the actual experience of music in everyday life. In the technologically mediated act of listening to music, the listener is able to focus on the music more deeply and analytically than in concerts. Music itself, in this process, becomes analytically clear, immediate, and almost tactile in its intimacy to the listener (Gould 1966a/1990, 333). Technology also changes the whole traditional setting in which music is listened to:

the performance of music has ceased to be an occasion, requiring an excuse and a tuxedo, and accorded, when encountered, an almost religious devotion; music has become a pervasive influence in our lives, and as our dependence upon it has increased, our reverence for it has, in a certain sense, declined. ... The more intimate terms of our experience with recordings have since suggested to us an acoustic with a direct and impartial presence, one with which we can live in our homes on rather casual terms. (Ibid.)

Technology has the potential to question the whole traditional division of labor between composer, performer and listener – “the listener can become his own composer,” as Gould (1966a/1990, 347) put it. The concept that Gould often uses is the “kit-concept of music,” which basically refers to the technical means by which the listener can combine various kinds of music as well as edit the tempo, timbre, and even instrumentation of music. All this, in Gould's mind, boils down to one ideal: the technological recomposing of music. In some of his future visions Gould was truly ahead of his time – for instance,

his idea (Ibid., 348) that the tempo and pitch of music should become separate parameters of music in a technologically enhanced experience of music has become reality for listeners only recently, through the digital mediation of music. The listener, Gould thought, should become more an associate to the composer, not just passively but actively, as an analytical creator of music, whose aesthetic preferences become the center of the reproduction of music.

Gould clearly acknowledges the threat that his ideas pose to the traditional social and institutional frameworks of music. The concert institution, for instance, functions on two premises: music is by definition a social and collective phenomenon, and there is nothing wrong with trying to make economic profit out of it. It is important to notice that Gould's ideas concerning the future potential of technology, in fact, relocate music to the private domain and make music into an "environmental"⁷⁶ experience.⁷⁷

Those experiences through which the listener encounters music electronically transmitted are not within the public domain. ... [In this kind of music] the listener is able to indulge preferences and, through the electronic modifications with which he endows the listening experience, impose his own personality upon the work. As he does so, he transforms that work, and his relation to it, from an artistic to an environmental experience. (Ibid., 347.)

⁷⁶ Gould's choice of term (environmental) reminds of McLuhan's influence on Gould, a theme I will discuss later in this chapter. As Richard Cavell (2003, 170) puts it, McLuhan's "environment" was the "domain of interfaces and had an orientation towards the material, embodied context of artistic (including media) production." Gould seems to use the term in exactly the same meaning – he refers by it to a particular kind of aesthetic experience, technologically immediate to the listener, which in a sense becomes his/her "environment."

⁷⁷ It is interesting that Gould, who favored formally cohesive works, also favors a notion of music as ambience – so much more suitable to the non-analytical music such as Debussy or Satie's "music as furniture." I thank Rose Rosengard Subotnik for this observation.

In his interview with Elyse Mach (1991, 102), Gould expresses his idea of the "isolated listener" even more categorically:

Music is something that ought to be listened to in private. I do not believe that it should be treated as group therapy or any other kind of communal experience. I think that music ought to lead the listener – and, indeed, the performer – to a state of contemplation, and I don't think it's really possible to attain *that* condition with 2,999 other souls sitting all around. So my strongest objections to the concert are primarily moral rather than musical.

How about music's spatiality, its nature as an art form unfolding in a particularly designed acoustic space? Isn't symphonic music, for instance, out of place on recordings, when compared to the more historical medium of live concerts? Can one do justice to orchestral music by listening to it through earphones – isn't something essential for its very medium necessarily excluded? Gould partly responds to these questions by arguing that the whole idea of historical authenticity is misleading:

There is no such thing as true fidelity in the listening experience. We do not listen to music of any earlier period with the same sense of reaction, shock or pleasure, as did those who were contemporary with it, and there is no question whatever that the nature of electronic transmission is having a most fantastically profound effect upon the way in which we prefer to encounter music, not only of our time but indeed of all earlier periods. (1964b/1999, 227–228.)

The listener, Gould argues, has lost the "innocence" in listening historical music. Technology also changes the mode in which we listen to music. Gould's ideal listener obviously does not need the acoustic space nor the sonorous surface of live music – the uncompromised privacy of a technologically mediated music experience is in itself a step forward in the right direction in the future of music. In Gould's writings, technology has only positive contributions for music, particularly since technology allows a more significant participation in the creative act:

This degree of participation is already greatly in excess of anything that was within the province of the concert patron. But this is only a slow beginning of a process by which the listener is becoming integrally involved in the realization of the performance and may well yet become involved in the realization of the composition itself. (Ibid., 230.)

Gould's vision of the future of music emphasizes the privacy of musical experience, within which technology enables the listener to become part of music's re-creative process. This kind of listener, as has become obvious, does not listen to music hermeneutically in a historical context, but is rather concerned only with its sonic reality, its existence as pleasurable sound here and now.

At the beginning of this chapter I presented my arguments that Gould's technological vision, philosophically viewed, has to do with bracketing the very aspect of music which Walter Benjamin called "aura," and that through looking at Benjamin's arguments regarding the reproduction of art we would also gain more understanding of Gould's thought. The following section in this chapter I will devote to these questions.

Benjamin's Technological Democracy

The crux of Walter Benjamin's classic article "Artwork in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936/1989)⁷⁸ is in one central idea: the ontology of art, our mode of artistic experience, and technological progress in the production of art are all in a relationship with each other. Through reproduction, Benjamin argues, "originality" and "authenticity" as aesthetic attributes gradually lose their significance in our evaluation of art. Also, the

⁷⁸ I am using the Finnish translation as a source for my summary of Benjamin's ideas.

quality in artworks that Benjamin calls “cult value” will be replaced by their “use value.” This, however, is the point where Benjamin parts ways with the rest of the Frankfurt School – in his mind, reproduction does not lead to the vulgarization of art but rather allows the possibility of resignification and new horizons of meaning through new channels of mediation.

In his article, Benjamin regards the reproduction in itself of art as something that has been in existence for centuries. In visual arts disciples have reproduced the works of their teachers in order to become professionals, and teachers have made reproductions of their own work in their pursuit of economic profit. As the reproduction process became technological with the innovation of print technology, lithography, and later photography, a qualitative change came about. For instance, in photography the painter’s manual skill and craft have been replaced by mechanics in the reproduction process – the actual artwork is, in the case of photography, seen through the lense by the photographer’s eye, and thus visual expression becomes much more immediate than before.

The reproduction of art has certain aesthetic consequences. For Benjamin, the “here and now” aspect, art’s unique mode of existence as a physical and tangible object, disappears in the reproduction. It is this “here and now,” the artwork’s “aura,” which has been the basis for the “authenticity” of music, but now, through technological reproduction, the aesthetic qualities of the music begin to have nothing to do with such terms, or with the associated term “originality.” By “originality,” Benjamin conceives everything that art includes both as a historical and material artifact.

The artwork loses its “authenticity” in reproduction. It is the “mechanical” nature of reproduction that causes this loss – the “original” retains its authority in relation to the replicas – or are they forgeries? – when they are done manually. This is no longer the case when reproduction takes place by print or other mechanical means of reproduction – the “original” holds no value anymore. Benjamin surprises his reader by questioning the value of the “original” in the first place – it is the reproduction that “emancipates” the work and relocates it in new contexts of reception. A mediated artwork, in Benjamin’s mind, meets its audience halfway, in the middle of its creation and reception. (Ibid., 143–144.)

Benjamin argues that reproduction technology detaches art from its traditional context of reception, and thus its “aura,” its position in a certain time and place, goes through a radical change. Traditionally, according to Benjamin, the function of an artwork as an autonomous object is related to its function within a “ritual”; its use value is constructed in this context. The “aura” aspect of an artwork is something that always ties it to a ritual. Technology, however, is capable of bringing about a change to all this: reproduction, without reproduction of the aura, emancipates art from the ritual. In some art forms the reproducibility has an essential status: in photography, for instance, it is possible to make a limitless number of copies from the negative, all of which are equal in quality to the “original” (Ibid., 145–147).

Technology also has an impact on the substance of the artwork. Film, a descendant of painting and photography, takes close shots of the world around, reveals previously hidden details of familiar objects and explores the everyday surroundings of our environ-

ment as has no other medium before. Film and photography can both also go beyond the perceptual abilities of human beings: technical reproduction can thus bring to the fore certain qualities in its content that are only visible to camera, not the human eye. (Ibid., 143–144.)

According to Benjamin, the camera penetrates our life and world in a way that is not possible for other forms of visual art such as painting. The world of film changes our modes of optic and indeed acoustic cognition, and ultimately the ways in which we experience the world outside (Ibid., 159). At the same time, we abandon the “document” status of film: since it necessarily is made of bits and pieces, smaller fragments combined in the film do not need to have a causal and linear connection in the real world. Benjamin’s own example is of an actor who, according to the script, takes fright by the slam of a door. To achieve the actual effect, however, the director fires a gun behind the back of the poor actor and proceeds to shoot the scene, which in the film becomes the character’s reaction to the slam of the door (Ibid., 154).

At the end of his essay, Benjamin argues that the relationship between technology and art also changes the hierarchy between the author and the audience since through technology, “the reader at any time can become the writer.” The audience, Benjamin argues, is entitled to the “role of the writer,” because, in a way, it has assumed the role of a specialist, no matter how modest a position that may be. (Ibid., 155–156.) Technology brings about a new kind of commitment to and engagement with art, which for Benjamin is exemplified by film, the “mass art.” In Benjamin’s thesis, the traditional conception of art

as something to contemplate from a distance is replaced by a conception of art as embedded in the everyday life.

The Aura of a Musical Work

The notion of aura, when applied to music, has two separate aspects embedded in it. First, aura is clearly related to the particular ways in which a given musical work is actualized as a “live” and unified real-time performance in concerts and other contexts in which music is realized both as a sonic and visual phenomenon. In such a setting, the whole discursive web of the work gets actualized before the listener: the sonic realization, as faithful as possible to the printed score; the performer’s aim at stylistic authenticity; and the manifestation of what Godlovitch, as we remember, called “causal immediacy” – the performer’s skill with which out of our aesthetic experience we empathize. For instance, in a live concert we listen to both Beethoven’s *Pastoral Sonata* and Murray Perahia’s interpretation of the work. In a sense, then, a kind of “double agency” is actualized in this hypothetical concert situation – we “hear” both Beethoven and Perahia, projected into our ears in the sonorous realization of the score. Our definition of aura, I think, has a lot to do with this. The concept of aura covers this potential of music for the kind of dual agency at issue here – the potential of a work to become existent as an aural aesthetic object.

Second, “aura” could be seen as a kind of historical immediacy – as something that defines a musical work as a thoroughly historical construction. By this I mean the particular ontological conception of the work as something that becomes constructed in its various

contexts over and over again. In Dahlhaus's structural history and Adorno's music sociology, a musical work is regarded as a historical, social, and institutional fact, situated ontologically in cultural and historical webs around it. Viewed in this sense, the work "becomes itself" in the cultural horizon through the discourses of its own reception and criticism.

In general, history has a lot to do with the "aura" of a work. In our listening to any music, our experience is surely not – contrary to what Gould thought – exhausted by auditory cognition; in addition, other webs of significance are actualized. Our knowledge of the position of the music within the master narrative of Western Music history, our images of the composer as a character in that narrative, and other information related to the music we hear – all this information penetrates our (supposedly) contemplative experience of music. Our patterns of listening to music are already historically constructed: we tend to pay attention to certain qualities of music (form, instrumentation, virtuosity of the musicians, etc.) while bracketing others (the performing body of the musicians, clothing, gesture, etc.)

The space of music, one aspect of the "here and now" element in the aura, is also historically constructed. Namely, music is conventionally listened to in a particular space, the concert hall, which is a manifestation of the 19th-century norm of aesthetic contemplation – a norm that made a contemplative mode of listening a virtue and a precondition for true musical understanding. When we step inside a symphony hall on Friday night, scowling at the man sitting next to us because of the noise he makes, history and our longing for

aura speak in us. And this is the particular issue that, I think, comes so powerfully through in Adorno's work: the particular, historically, socially and institutionally sanctified way of listening to music is there to construct "Classical music," the aesthetic object that we think we hear in concerts.

What, then, does it mean that the "aura" disappears in reproduction? And further: what do I mean by my argument that Gould's idea of the use of music technology proposes an alternative to the aesthetic consequences of Benjamin's aura in music – the primacy of historical context, the prominence of agency, and the situated-ness of music in historical rituals such as public concerts?

According to Gould, technology allows the audience to look for "the suprahistorical aesthetic value" of the music. This value has nothing to do with who has originally recorded the music, not even with who the composer of the music is (Gould 1996, 8). With technology, it is possible to bring about an environment which in turn makes possible the privacy and immediacy of an aesthetic judgment (Ibid., 9). Such possibilities emerge as the identity and historical context of music become less important for the experience of music.

Technology, as it were, detaches music from its historical contexts, which is what Gould refers to in his metaphor of "historically isolated" music. Technology brings about an environment in which biographical knowledge and chronology can no longer function as the cornerstone of our aesthetic judgment (Gould 1966a/1990, 352). This Gould sees as a

step forward, believing that in all our considerations of music and its contexts, the latter take much too important a role, with the result that most of our judgments can be reduced to the influence of the contextual factors, not the work of art itself. In all, Gould is highly critical of the fact that

we associate, to as large an extent as we can, the predominantly identifiable historical traits with the significant works of art of their time and we build into our interpretation of these works processes of identification which, because of this, are mixed up with all sorts of extraneous ideas and themes which have extraordinarily little to do with the way the works themselves may have been formulated. (1996, 7.)

One of Gould's basic aesthetic premises was that the historical position and status of a musical work has nothing to do with its aesthetic value. Gould pointed out that the historiography of music works differently: his favorite example of this was a hypothetical experiment of improvising a piano piece in Viennese Classical style, to which the listeners' reactions would have been different depending on whether the composer of the music was supposed to be Mendelssohn, Brahms or Vivaldi. If the listeners had been brought to believe that Vivaldi was the composer of the music, the music's aesthetic substance would have been reduced to being a proof of how "visionary" Vivaldi was in his time – how accurately he could anticipate the directions music was to take half a century after him. If Mendelssohn or Brahms was implicated, the music would be seen, in Gould's hypothetical setting, only as a proof of "immaturity" exemplified by this "early work" miraculously newly found.

For Gould, this kind of a change in aesthetic status, depending on contextual information, the composer, and historical period, is problematic. He clearly does not accept the evolu-

tionary conception of history, within which the aesthetic value of music depends on its “originality” and novelty. A historically “isolated” music, somehow “out of sync” with the “tyranny of the *Zeitgeist*,” was, for Gould, the most valuable of all. A stylistic non-conformity, an indifference to what is “in the air” in composition, which Gould saw manifest in the music of Richard Strauss and J.S. Bach, was a necessary precondition to musical universality. Gould also questions the more general hypothesis that an artwork somehow manages to create a connection between us and its historical context, and that creative agency, in general, tells anything about the world around it. (Gould 1996, 5.)

Gould explicitly abandons the kind of conception in which music history is seen as a developing narrative, a chain of “Great Men” and their aesthetic inventions – a narrative in which novelty and originality are in a key position. An aesthetic judgment that works on the basis of such a conception of history is, for Gould, a proof that we have lost the ability to evaluate music *as* music, that our entire aesthetic judgment is dominated by an awareness of the music’s position in the historical narrative (Ibid., 7).

According to Gould, all existing art is in fact a variation of another art (1996), and a musical work’s historical context and composer should not be of any significance. Music is also, for Gould, by definition located in the private sphere. For these reasons, I think it is justified to argue that in Gould’s mind the basis of aesthetic experience should be seen outside the “aura”: in the listener’s spontaneous, personal, and re-creative act of listening and thus as an independent aesthetic judgment. Technology, for both Gould and Benjamin, is a means to bring art to meet its audience “halfway,” and also a means to detach art

from time, place and agency. Through technology, art transcends the limits of the aura and becomes, ideally, available for all. Gould's whole vision concerns both listeners and musicians alike: through technology, Gould thought, the new potential of technology becomes available for all. In fact, technology brings about a disappearance of all different "roles" in music: listener, composer, performer (e.g. Gould 1966a/1990, 347).

Technology also offers artists a possibility for a "supra-historical" relationship with music. In Gould's mind, a recording studio was a place in which "time turns in upon itself," a place where it is possible to withstand the "frantic pursuit of the transient, of the moment-to-moment, day-by-day succession of events" (Gould 1983, 1998, 4). For Gould, a studio was literally a "vacuum," in which an artist can really feel that he has circumvented "the most horrendously constricting force of nature – the inexorable linearity of time" (Ibid.).

Both Gould and Benjamin regarded technology as something that by its nature has an impact on how we experience, through our senses, the art around us. While Benjamin was fascinated by the camera's ability to submerge beneath the surface of things, to bring out "hidden details" in the objects around us, Gould praised audio technology for making it possible to "dissect and analyze" (1974–75/1990, 355) music, to "x-ray"⁷⁹ the music performed or listened to – a process that was Gould's performance ideal. Gould often analogized the relationship between concerts and recordings, on the one hand, and theater

⁷⁹ Gould used the "x-ray" metaphor for the interpretation of music in many instances. Where did he pick up that metaphor? One possible source is Adorno's writings: in his Bach-essay in *Prisms*, Adorno (1983, 144) argues that "True interpretation is an x-ray of the work," a passage which Gould had highlighted in his copy of *Prisms*.

and film on the other. While concerts and theatre are both akin to spontaneous changes and surprises in the way the whole turns out, recording and film allow better changes in postproduction editorial work. Perhaps for this reason Gould called recording “creative cheating,” “creative lying” and “creative dishonesty.”

Gould also shared Benjamin’s idea of the democratizing potential of technology in his ideal of a “participant listener,” who, through technology, would cease to be “passively analytical” and would participate more as a collaborator in the music’s creation process (Gould 1966a/1990, 347).

We could further conclude that both Gould and Benjamin share a broader point of departure: that the technology of reproduction of art is in itself an *aesthetic* tool. The reproducibility of art is, for both of them, not a threat to the authenticity of an artwork but rather a possibility for new kinds of signification outside its original time and place, its “aura.” Both Gould and Benjamin are looking for a new kind of an aesthetic theory for *mediated* art – in spite of the three decade that separates the two men. Both of them want to set the “aura” of art in brackets, and the fact that they wrote in response to different situations – Benjamin’s era posed very different questions than Gould’s – does not take away from the general similarity of their arguments. This similarity has, to my surprise, never been discussed critically in literature on Gould (though see Bazzana 1997, 239).

Gould’s thoughts on the immediacy of a technologically mediated experience of art and on the anonymity of mediated art, along with his emphasis on the idea of an active, re-

creative listener make me want to search for ideological kinships with media philosophers closer to our times than Benjamin. Many of Gould's ideas have become more cogent since the emergence starting in the 1990s, of Napster, the Internet and the whole variety of virtual music-making now available. These resources, one could argue, have brought about a fundamental change in our conception of the ontology of music. In the following discussion I bring Gould's ideas into dialogue with those of Gianni Vattimo, a postmodern philosopher, who has brought up very relevant points regarding the media-tized music culture around us.

Vattimo and "Homeless Artworks"

According to Vattimo (1992, 17), media that render information in real-time represent a kind of a realization of "Hegel's Absolute Spirit" in the sense that these media bring about a total fusion between human cognition, history, and, indeed, "everything that happens." In what we call mediated society, by contrast, we end up, Vattimo argues, accepting a new kind of "ideal of freedom," which is based on "oscillation, plurality, and ultimately, on the erosion of the 'principle of reality'" (Ibid., 18).

This kind of technological emancipation, in Vattimo's thought, is associated with the idea of "homelessness." With this term, Vattimo seems to refer to "releasing differences and local elements" (Ibid., 19), and it is obvious that as far as art is concerned, we are back in the problem of technological reproduction: does a given artwork, for instance, a symphony, have a particular mode of existence that is somehow out of reach of technological

reproduction? Do we still need “aura” in the postmodern experience of art? Does mediated “homelessness” take something away from the experience of art? Vattimo’s unwavering answer to these questions is in the negative. His theory relocates the focal point of an aesthetic experience from the work and its historical and biographic frameworks to the listener’s subjective and private realm.

What, in fact, does Vattimo mean by “homelessness”? In his words, it has to do with abandoning the traditional conceptions of truth – conceived as a correspondence between language and the “real world” – and reality. This process also entails an emancipation of differences and “local elements” – cultural and social dialects. When the legitimized “center” of society has become questionable, the world of arts and communication will “explode” into a multiplicity of ethnic, sexual, religious, and cultural minorities. These minorities then claim a right to self-expression and cease to be silenced and oppressed by the idea of “one” accepted mode of living in a society. All this results in a cultural mosaic in which a multiplicity of identities and discourses prevails. (1992, 19–20.)

What, then, does this kind of “homelessness,” or lack of center, have to do with Gould’s thought? Very seldom did Gould have anything to say about multi-ethnic pluralism or multi-culturalism. Instead of these, Gould pointed in the direction of an ordinary music listener, encouraging him/her to a new kind of technologically enabled creativity via personal audio equipment.

Vattimo also discusses the metaphor of “homelessness” in the context of reproduction and the postmodern experience of art. His point of departure is Benjamin’s essay, particularly Benjamin’s notion that art’s new modes of production and reception have an impact on the very ontology of art itself. According to Vattimo (Ibid., 57), Benjamin understood as early as the 1930s the epistemological grounds on which to build a theory of art in a postindustrial society. A crucial concept in Benjamin’s essay for Vattimo is “shock,” which is brought about when an artwork is “thrown” towards its audience in a way that goes against all the audience’s expectations – as in a movie in which any familiarity with a scene is denied by constantly replacing one image with another (Ibid., 59). Vattimo also introduces another concept, Heidegger’s “Stoss,” which in Vattimo’s mind also depicts the idea of homelessness by questioning the very basis of reality and maintaining “wonder and sorrow” about the existence of the world outside of the artwork (Ibid., 61). What both Heidegger and Benjamin share, Vattimo argues, is a denial of the artwork’s ontological stability, of its authenticity, and of the relevance of “aura” in its mediation (Ibid., 62).

Vattimo is motivated, with theoretical help from Benjamin and Heidegger, to question the traditional aesthetic premise concerning the ontology of an artwork – the idea that an artwork has a very particular ontology, which reproduction then serves or does not serve. Vattimo, instead, wants to take the very process of mediation to the center of the work’s ontological status. This is because our aesthetic terminology, Vattimo argues, seems traditionally oriented towards “saving” art – its authenticity, creativity, and structure – from threats posed by electronic mediation. (Ibid., 66).

The whole ontology of art, however, has changed in the postmodern era: artworks have lost their stability and have become, so to speak, “floating signifiers,” whose signification changes with every new context of reception. Historical authenticity, in Vattimo’s mind, has no role in the postmodern experience of art, and for him the “shock” is all that remains of the traditional concept of the authenticity of art. We should focus more on the *experience* of art, rather than the meaning of a work, in our efforts of formulating the new aesthetic theory. There is no going back to the old ideals of the reception of art as an “exegetic” activity, as a contemplative effort focussed on the artwork as an organic whole. Accusations that label this kind of postmodern vision as nothing more than an “apology for mass culture” are based, according to Vattimo, on a premise that art somehow has certain “eternal” values and a certain ontology, which by definition is seen as incompatible with mediation (Ibid., 68). Vattimo, instead, argues for a postmodern conception of art in which the experience of art is seen as “flexible,” contextual, itself a locus of “oscillation, homeless-ness, and play” (Ibid.). Experienced in this way, art can ultimately, in a world pervaded by information technology, become the domain of “creativity and freedom” (Ibid., 69).

What do Gould’s ideas concerning the interpretation of music and the potential of technology reflect if not an anticipation of Vattimo’s idea of mediated, “homeless artworks”? All Vattimo’s points about “homelessness” are present in Gould’s arguments: the prominence of experience for art’s ontology, the crucial importance of mediation and a questioning the stability of “work” and “authorship,” along with an emphasis on re-creation and re-signification. There is also a hint of pragmatism in the ideas of both men: while

Vattimo clearly argues for a conception of art in which the audience can “use” the art in ways and for purposes of their own choice, Gould also famously said that art, conceived here as an institution, “should be given the chance to phase itself out.” Technology, Gould thought, was there to enable every creative individual to have his/her own project at hand, a project that somehow relates to his/her lifestyle. (Gould 1974/1990, 320, 324.) Also Gould’s wish to see a technologically mediated world, in which “nobody cares what anybody else is doing” (1981/1990, 460), crystallizes his ideal of the future in very clear terms: there should be no need for aesthetic judgments in the social sphere, and any manifestation of competition should have no place in the experience of art (Gould 1974/1990, 321).

These kinds of visions, which both Gould and Vattimo share, have a lot in common with the ideas of another visionary of the 1960’s: Marshall McLuhan. While Vattimo (1992, 13) writes of “postmodern society, in which all-pervading communication and media-tion” are reality, both Gould and McLuhan questioned many of the modern axioms of “originality” and “authenticity” as early as the 1960’s. It is McLuhan’s ideas concerning the potential of technology to which I now turn.

Gould and McLuhan

In light of the existing documents, Gould and McLuhan seem to have had a fruitful intellectual relationship. In all, 15 letters (and one Christmas card), written between the years 1965 and 1975, survive. Gould and McLuhan were friendly, though not close, with each

other; for a brief while they even lived within the same apartment building. It seems that correspondence between these prominent Canadian intellectuals began in 1965, which is when Gould interviewed McLuhan for his radio program “Prospects of Recording.” A version of this interview was published as an article a year later in *High Fidelity*. Gould also adapted⁸⁰ some of McLuhan’s terms, such as “tactile” and “linear,” into his own vocabulary:

Today’s listeners have come to associate musical performance with sounds possessed of characteristics which two generations ago were neither available to the profession nor wanted by the public – characteristics such as analytic clarity, immediacy, and indeed almost tactile proximity. (1966a/1990, 333.)

Compare this with McLuhan:

For the sensation of having the performing instruments ‘right in the room with you’ is a striving toward the union of the audile and tactile in a finesse of fiddles that is in large the sculptural experience. To be in the presence of performing musicians is to experience their touch and handling of instruments as tactile and kinetic, not just as resonant. ... With hi-fi, the phonograph meets the TV tactile challenge. (McLuhan 1964, 282.)

In John Jessop’s 1971 interview Gould describes his first experiments in radio documentaries as follows:

⁸⁰ Gould did not, however, accept all of McLuhan’s premises concerning the electronic future. In his “Prospects of Recording” article, Gould expresses some of his reservations about McLuhan’s idea of a “global village”: “With simultaneous transmission we set aside our touristlike fascination with distant and exotic places and give vent to impatience at the chronological tardiness the natives display. To this extent, Professor McLuhan’s concept of the ‘global village’ ... is alarming” (1966a/1990, 349). In his 1966 letter to Goddard Lieberman, the executive of Columbia Records, Gould describes McLuhan’s person as both “fascinating and frustrating” and his work as an “extraordinary mixture of wackiness with brilliant perceptions.” In Gould’s mind, McLuhan has touched upon some of the “central issues of his time,” and notwithstanding the “cafe society cult” that his work has raised, McLuhan is an “intriguing and important figure.” (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 90.)

They very often came out sounding – not square, because that’s not necessarily a pejorative word in my vocabulary, but they came out sounding – okay, I’ll borrow Mr. McLuhan’s term – linear. (1971b/1990, 374.)

There are many more examples of McLuhan’s impact on Gould’s thought. In addition to “tactile” and “linear,” Gould also talks about “aesthetic narcissism,” a term by which both Gould (1962/1990, 246) and McLuhan (1968, 63, 68) refer to various possibilities whereby a creative individual can satisfy his/her creative intentions through technology.

McLuhan, for his part, makes direct reference to Gould in only three instances: in *Counterblast* (1969, 45) where he “blesses Glenn Gould for throwing the concert audience into the junkyard”; in the book *Through the Vanishing Point*, co-written with Harley Parker; and in an unpublished manuscript for an article,⁸¹ in which he paraphrases Gould’s “Prospects of Recording” article at length.

Both Gould’s and McLuhan’s writings reflect what was very much in the air in the world around them. In particular, the impact of technology on human perception and thought was a hot topic. In this connection, Richard Cavell (2003) makes an interesting, shall we say “McLuhanesque” reading of Gould’s aesthetic thought. First of all, Cavell (2003, 157) sees Gould’s 1964 retirement from public concerts as symptomatic of a fundamental epistemological change in the Western world: the replacing of “visual space” – space in which perception is linear and based on one sense at a time – with “tactile space,” technologically produced space, in which multi-modal perception, noncausality and nonlinearity prevail. Cavell’s interpretation has a lot of explanatory force: the “processes of

⁸¹ My heartfelt thanks to Dr. Richard Cavell for making me aware of this article.

identification,” by which Gould refers to the authenticity of the performance and performer,⁸² clearly operate, when viewed in McLuhan’s terms, in “visual space.” By the same token, Gould’s idea of music as an “environmental” phenomenon is very much similar to McLuhan’s more tactile take on what stereo sound meant for auditory culture: “Stereo sound, a further development, is ‘all-around’ or ‘wrap-around’ sound. Previously sound has emanated from a single point in accordance with the bias of visual culture with its fixed point of view. The hi-fi changeover was really for music what cubism had been for painting, and what symbolism had been for literature; namely, the acceptance of multiple facets and planes in a single experience.” (McLuhan 1964, 282.)

According to Cavell (2003, 166), Gould’s sticking to ideals of counterpoint and polyphony could be seen, in McLuhan’s terms, as a shift from a traditional, geometrically constructed conception of space into a conception of space as “auditory,” nonlinear and technologically mediated. In his interview with John Jessop, Gould (1971b/1990, 380) tells Jessop that his ideal listener is one, who “will not think in terms of precedence, in terms of priority” but rather listens nonhierarchically and in a nonlinear mode. In his convocation address for an honorary doctorate in 1964, Gould also speaks in favor of background and commercial music. In Gould’s mind, those who see these as empty noise “greatly underestimate the nature of the transformation that is taking place in the world of music today and fail to see the profound and, in my view at any rate, beneficial influences of electronic technology upon music.” (1964b/1999, 223). In his “Prospects of Recording” essay, it is background music, Muzak, in particular, that epitomizes Gould’s personal

⁸² I am referring to Kivy’s 4th definition of the term, see chapter 2.

aesthetics most accurately: it is anonymous, technologically produced and mediated, and completely ignorant of ideals of “historical progress” in music. In addition to this, through Muzak the listener can get to know the whole post-Renaissance tonal language of music:

[T]he most important of the missing links in the evolution of the listener-consumer-participant, as well as the most persuasive argument for the stylistic mix, is to be found in that most abused of electronic manifestations – background sound. [It] is the most productive method through which contemporary music can confide its objectives to a listening, consuming, Muzak-absorbing society. Cunningly disguised within the bland formulae from which background sounds are seemingly concocted is an encyclopedia of experience, an exhaustive compilation of clichés of Post-Renaissance music. Moreover, this catalogue provides a cross-referenced index which permits connections between stylistic manifestations with fine disregard for chronological distinction. (1966a/1990, 350.)

According to Cavell (2003, 159–160) Gould’s conception (1964b/1990, 109) of Arnold Schoenberg as a transitory figure in the shift from Romanticism to Modernism also corresponds with McLuhan’s conception of the shift from the “literary” culture to “electronically retrieved orality.” Schoenberg felt himself, Cavell argues, to be part of this fundamental change in the patterns of human condition: this perception is indicated by his constant talk of his music as “acoustic space.” McLuhan, for his part, wrote about Schoenberg’s new tonal language as one in which “the visual structures of tonality in composition” are abandoned “for the ‘multi-locationalism’ of atonality.” Atonality, according to McLuhan as articulated by Cavell, “represents the abandonment of the ‘central key’, that is, of a single perspective of organizing frame to which all elements of a composition are related.” (Cavell 2003, 160.)

Of high interest for my own take on Gould's musical interpretation is Cavell's (2003, 162–163) association of certain features – such as slow tempi – prevalent in many of Gould's recordings with the McLuhanesque search for “acoustic space.” According to Cavell, the conventional musical rhetoric based, very roughly, on the changing relations between *piano* and *forte* constructs a certain linear “perspective” in music, a perspective which Gould often abandons in his interpretations. Also, according to Cavell (Ibid.), “Gould's renunciation of the concert hall, then, was part of a much larger investigation into spatial dynamics within an acoustical field and the status of the performer.”

Cavell's “McLuhanesque” take on Gould's ideas sheds light on the contemporary local and ideological frame within which Gould operated. It is not necessary, however, to scrutinize if and to what extent certain of Gould's ideas were consequents of Gould's reading of McLuhan's writings – emphasizing such an approach, indeed, might trivialize their significance in their own right. Instead, it is fascinating to realize that both men argue for an ideal in common: the emancipation of art into a technologically mediated – and yet direct – contact with the world. There are certain differences involved, however. While McLuhan has certain reservations about the impact of technology on human life, Gould sees technology as “charity” for mankind, which has only a positive outcome. McLuhan's ambivalence about the double impact of technology – on the one hand, the focus on increasingly narrower spheres of human cognition, and on the other hand, a growing “numbness” to information received that way (Kroker 1985, 72) – entails a certain media-critical attitude that Gould totally lacks. For McLuhan, technology was simultaneously “an extension of man” and an “auto-amputation” of human cognition (Kroker 1985,

75).⁸³ For Gould, however, technological progress seems to have an unequivocal value of its own and when used, makes a positive moral contribution.⁸⁴ McLuhan's ideas seem to have provided Gould with an ideological and philosophical platform, out of which he picked up aspects of – and inspiration for – his own technological philosophy. One example of this process shows up in Gould's (GGA, 2, 63) interview with McLuhan, where the latter argues that one aspect of the electronic age is that we end up taking part in each other's life through information technology – we all become “participants.”⁸⁵ Gould however, transforms this McLuhan's essentially pessimistic idea into a prophecy, a

⁸³ McLuhan was, in fact, relatively pessimistic about the idea of the “Global Village.” This becomes obvious in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*: “Instead of tending towards a vast Alexandrian library the world has become a computer, an electronic brain, exactly as an infantile piece of science fiction. And as our senses have gone outside us, Big Brother goes inside. So, unless aware of this dynamic, we shall at once move into a phase of panic terrors, exactly befitting a small world of tribal drums, total interdependence, and superimposed co-existence. ... Terror is the normal state of any oral society, for in it everything affects everything all the time. ... In our long striving to recover for the Western world a unity of sensibility and of thought and feeling we have no more been prepared to accept the tribal consequences of such unity than we were ready for the fragmentation of the human psyche by print culture.” (McLuhan 1962, 32.)

⁸⁴ Thus Gould would never embrace the negativism of this McLuhan's excerpt from *Gutenberg Galaxy*: “Is it not obvious that there are always enough moral problems without also taking a moral stand on technological grounds? ... Print is the extreme phase of alphabet culture that detribalizes or decollectivizes man in the first instance. Print raises the visual features of alphabet to highest intensity of definition. Thus print carries the individuating power of the phonetic alphabet much further than manuscript culture could ever do. Print is the technology of individualism. If men decided to modify this visual technology by an electric technology, individualism would also be modified. To raise a moral complaint about this is like cussing a buzz-saw for lopping off fingers. ‘But’, someone says, we didn't know it would happen.’ Yet even witlessness is not a moral issue. It is a problem, but not a moral problem; and it would be nice to clear away some of the moral fogs that surround our technologies. It would be good for morality.” (McLuhan 1962, 158.)

⁸⁵ How right McLuhan was here – think of the huge popularity of reality television!

dream of self-imposed isolation, a technologically mediated world in which “nobody would care what anybody else was doing” (Gould 1981/1990, 460).

Gould’s Technological Ethics

Technology has an emancipatory function in Gould’s thought. It emancipates the musician, as well as the listener, from all the contextual ties that musical works are seen to have, that is, the idea of music as something that gains its meaning as part of a historical tradition and canon. Technology, Gould argues, detaches a given musical work from its temporal and local contexts and its author’s intentions – from its “aura.” We could well argue, through this line of reasoning, that technology brings art into such close affinity with the audience that the audience no longer wants to call it “art.” “Art,” as it were, refers to a social and historical institution with its own values and norms, which is what Gould particularly wanted to get rid of in his discourse on technology.

From the discussion so far, it has become obvious that technology, for Gould, has its own moral and ethical aspects. In reading Gould’s writings, one quickly draws the conclusion that in the debate on the pros and cons of live concerts vs. recordings, his arguments – all in favor of recordings – are based primarily on moral judgments and only secondarily on musical ones. (Gould says as much in his 1974 “self-interview,” see Gould 1974/1990,

316). But what kinds of specifically ethical questions are involved in Gould's argumentation pro technology?⁸⁶

Matthew McFarlane (2002) has shed new light on the scholarly discourse about Gould's technological thought and morality. McFarlane emphasizes the significance that the French theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin had on Gould's ideas. Gould had six books by Teilhard in his library (McFarlane 2003), the content of which is impossible to paraphrase within the space of my discussion here. Suffice it to say that de Chardin's main goal is to establish a synthesis between man's spiritual existence and technological progress. As McFarlane (2002, 70) puts it, de Chardin's technological vision was by its nature teleological. According to Teilhard, all technology would ultimately form a vast organism, which would be situated between man and "nature." This vision is in keeping with Gould's idealization of technology. McFarlane (*Ibid.*, 77) brings out an interesting convergence between Gould's metaphor of "ecstasy" and de Chardin's particular conception of "energy." The latter refers to a potential of mankind, a power that ultimately brings into being all the major achievements in art and science. These achievements, de Chardin argues, are the outcome of mankind's potential to separate the spiritual from the material, which is the major factor that separates us from the rest of nature. It is no won-

⁸⁶ The reader may be puzzled by my use of "moral" and "ethical" in my discussion of Gould's ideals of music interpretation. Gould himself used the terms almost interchangeably, and the same applies to my commentary on Gould.

der that Gould was attracted to this kind of reasoning, even though direct references to de Chardin's work are scarce in Gould's writings.⁸⁷

Jean Le Moyne, a Canadian theologian and journalist is another major influence on Gould's technological and ethical thought (see Payzant 1997, 61), and his name comes up relatively often in texts by and about Gould. Gould and Le Moyne were both prominent intellectuals in their country. Both were awarded the Molson Prize in 1968 – a significant award by the Canada Council of the Arts. (The award had been given to Marshall McLuhan a year earlier.) Gould interviewed Le Moyne for his *The Art of Glenn Gould* radio series in 1969, and refers to the latter's ideas from time to time in his later writings as well. Here's a brief excerpt from Gould's interview with Arthur Rubinstein:

[A]n extraordinary man who lives in Quebec. ... He is a theologian primarily but also a poet and a theorist of technology. ... [In Gould's interview] he said something to the effect that technology has now given us something like a network – a radio network, a television network, an oil network, a railway network, a communications network of all kinds – and this network has circumscribed the earth in such a way that we can no longer go to nature, we can only go to nature through the network. (Gould 1971a/1990, 289–290.)

Le Moyne's idea of the beneficial impact of technology on mankind is something which clearly appealed to Gould. We recall how all competition, theatricality, musical virtuosity, and collective experience of music are highly suspect for Gould – technology offered a way out of all that. It is outright puzzling to notice at times exactly how technology itself has a moral function in Gould's thought. In his essay, quoted earlier, "Music and Technology," for instance, Gould professes his belief in the "intrusion" of technology,"

⁸⁷ McFarlane (2002, 71) argues that Gould never explicitly mentions Teilhard. This is not quite true – in his 1980 interview with Jim Aikin, Gould (1980/1999, 278) takes up Teilhard's name briefly.

because that intrusion “imposes upon art a notion of morality which transcends the idea of art itself.” (Gould 1974–75/1990, 355.) The “distance” provided by technology is a virtue in itself. Some of Gould’s arguments regarding morality and technology are logically untenable and even childish. In his “Music and Technology” essay, for instance, Gould argues that hypothetically a war “engaged in by computer-aided missiles is a slightly better, slightly less objectionable war than one fought by clubs and spears.” This is because “the adrenal response⁸⁸ of the participants ... is less engaged by it.” (1974–75/1990, 355.) “Morality,” Gould goes on to argue, “has never been on the side of the carnivore,” and technology’s great contribution is that it has enabled man to “operate at increasing distances from, to be increasingly out of touch with, his animal response to confrontation” (Ibid.). With no hesitation, Gould saw a devastating war, bull fights, and concerts all as manifestations of humans’ “primal instinct,” which he never could accept in any circumstances. Without taking this into account, it is very difficult to understand the following striking statement by Gould in a CBC interview in 1966: “I detest audiences, not in their individual components, but en masse, I detest audiences. I think they are a force of evil.” (Gould 1966.) For Gould, public concerts were nothing but a form of

⁸⁸ For Gould, all “adrenalin-tinged” commitment to a collective activity was aesthetically distasteful, which may have had a connection to an incident from Gould’s childhood. Gould often told his interviewers of a certain tantrum, during which he had realized that in his rage, he would actually be capable of killing his opponent. This realization was a strong ethical awakening for Gould, who throughout his life was known as someone against all forms – actual and symbolic – of violence. Biographical literature (see Ostwald 1998, 49; Friedrich 1990, 23) emphasizes Gould’s strong need for self-control. One may well ask, therefore, whether or not Gould’s idealization of solitude and isolation reflected, in fact, his own fear of being human. Helen Mesaros and Lynne Walter (2000) go so far as to argue that Gould’s obsession with isolation, both in real life and aesthetic thought, was a carefully constructed psychological defense. (See also Roberts 2003 for a hypothesis that Gould’s hypochondria may have its roots in the death of Gould’s dear mother and Gould’s fear of a public failure.)

symbolic violence, which has nothing to do with a contemplative relationship to music. In this regard, it is of particular interest for my discussion here that Gould (1966a/1990, 355) regards recordings as “one of the best metaphors” for a detachment from the social collective. In another interview, Gould (1980/2002, 10) goes so far as to say that recording music is first and foremost a moral principle, which ultimately is more important than the music gotten out of it. In the end, then, Gould is no believer in high fidelity as such – the quality of the recorded sound, it seems clear, is only of secondary importance to the fact that recorded music is listened to in privacy and solitude, safely detached from the social collective of a music audience. This distinction between privacy and collectivity seems to matter to Gould because of the respective difference in the emotional commitment. In a 1981 interview, Gould (1981a/1999, 346–347) argues that recorded music should function as a “tranquillizer” rather than “excite” the listener like public concerts do.⁸⁹

For Gould the purist, Le Moyne’s reflections on the moral implications of technology provided a valuable ideological background, because both men saw the potential of technology as part of a large ethical and moral framework. For Gould, that framework was essentially musical. Le Moyne, by contrast, wrote more from a philosopher’s point of view, from which no area of human life is excluded. It is curious, however, how much Gould and Le Moyne share as far as music itself is concerned. Le Moyne’s comments on Mozart’s music are strikingly similar to Gould’s:

⁸⁹ In *Prospects of Recording* essay, Gould (1966a/1990, 350) argues that the preservation of sound and image makes possible “the unimpassioned reflection upon the condition of society, the acceptance of a multifaceted chronological concept.”

I begrudge the entertainment aspect of Mozartian aesthetics. His music is generally devoid of supernatural content and it locks us up in a world of pure entertainment, which diverts attention from what is essential, urgent and uniquely necessary. His style is a kind of incurable gallantry that only reluctantly turns its eyes up towards the heights of piety. (Le Moyne 1966, 249.)

Gould (1976/1990, 43) himself admits being influenced by Le Moyne's thinking. Le Moyne also writes about counterpoint in a very similar tone to Gould's. He considers fugue, for instance, to be a kind of an *Ur-form* of music, a type of musical texture that has refused to disappear but instead has remained alive in music throughout the centuries.⁹⁰ Le Moyne writes about the fugue as the "supreme form of music," a representation of God's universe in musical terms. For this reason, counterpoint is the ultimate musical device, since in music it functions as an iconic reference to the universe and Christ's second coming. (1966, 254–255.)⁹¹ Le Moyne's arguments are, as it were, a "spiritualized" version of Gould's thoughts, in which religious considerations are very seldom apparent.⁹²

In another essay, Le Moyne writes about the fugue as "the supreme musical form," as a kind of musical representation of God's universe which is "a counterpointing of all creations from angels to the electron." Musical counterpoint, for Le Moyne, refers to "coun-

⁹⁰ C.f. Gould (1964c/1990, 241) "the persistence of fugue through the centuries does suggest that it draws upon conceptions as permanent as any that the still-young art of music may be said to own."

⁹¹ Le Moyne's idea of the fugue as metaphor of "God's universe" is centuries old. As David Yearsley (2002, 25) writes, Bach's last chorale *Vor deinen Thron*, "with its melodic inversions and ingenious examination of the permutational possibilities of the chorale melody itself, is no less committed an investigation into the mysterious principles of God's order, an order manifested so perfectly in heaven and its music."

⁹² See, however, Gould's (1976/1990, 36) characterizations of Mozart's sforzandos as "overt theatricality" which his own "puritan soul strenuously opposes."

terpoint cadenced to the promised coming of Christ in glory, the total Christ, the summation of all things, the centre of all attention” (1966, 255).

I will return to Gould’s ideas concerning technologically enabled isolation and the relationship between technology and ethics in chapter 5. I will conclude this section, however, with an excerpt from Gould’s radio program “The Scene,” in which Gould discusses the debilitating impact of competition on human nature.

Properly used there’s a protective-shield aspect to technology, which invalidates the necessity for human beings to measure themselves on a primarily physical and only secondarily spiritual scale. I think that a lot of the enterprises we tolerate in our society suddenly seem utterly irrelevant.
(1972/2003, 15.)

Through technology, it becomes possible to “opt out creatively” (Ibid., 14) and thus sidestep the competition principle, deeply embedded in all social domains of art. In addition, as we’ve seen, Gould associates “competition” with a conception of history that emphasizes the need for music to be “up-to-date” and the “progress” made through composing it. Against this type of “tyranny of the *Zeitgeist*,” Gould argues, technology provides a shield.

Gould’s Ideas in the Present

In this chapter, I have discussed Gould’s unwavering belief in technology as an important cornerstone of his musical aesthetics. In Gould’s thinking, technology offers a way out of everything that Gould regarded as detrimental for making and listening to music: compe-

tition, commercialization, and particularly the limits that tradition, canons and conventions set for a creative artist. I've also tried to see Gould's ideas in broader local and historical contexts through setting them in dialogue with philosophers such as Gianni Vattimo, Walter Benjamin and Marshall McLuhan. I regard this constructed dialogue as essential for understanding the significance of Gould's ideas, since many of his prophecies concerning the technologically mediated future of music have actually become a reality through the Internet and digital reproduction. Gould's technological utopia, I think, has to be probed in the present.

For these reasons, the perhaps surprising title of this section is justified. Ultimately, in our evaluation of Gould's thinking, we are faced with the same now-old question: what, after all, is music's primary mode of existence – a recording or a live performance? Has technological progress made live music-making obsolete, as Gould argued? Was he right about the death of concerts?

Philip (2004, 232–233) has summed up the aesthetic changes brought about by 20th-century recording technology as follows: musical interpretation has become more “finished” and technically proficient; rhythmic articulation has become more exact; *rubato* is more controlled than before; the national schools of musical interpretation have largely vanished. Of course, the whole relationship between music and its audience has changed: while any given 19th-century composer was able to hear his music only as a temporal live performance, today recordings are the main mode of music's mediation for the audience. Because of its overwhelming dominance, the performance aspect of music was aestheti-

cally emphasized in the 19th century – more important for performing than bringing about an “accurate,” note-perfect performance was to create a unique, personal and interesting musical performance, which was evaluated by audience as a performance, not as an execution of a normative musical score.⁹³

It is not difficult to see how the interpretation of music has become more and more “perfect” through recording technology when all contingencies, hazards and limitations of a live performance have become bracketed from musical interpretation. Gould, however, sees the function of technology as much broader than this; his idea of an intimate relation between technology and morality is a very interesting aspect of his thought and particularly important in evaluating the relevance of his ideas in today’s music world.

I build my conclusion of this chapter on four main arguments. First of all, Gould’s – and by extension Benjamin and Vattimo’s – idea of the primacy of the technological mediation of music has to be seen more as an aesthetic *credo* than as a tenable theory of the future of art. In all their enthusiasm for the potential of technology, Gould and Vattimo set aside the notion that even when mediated in digital data, art cannot actualize outside of Western capitalism. Ultimately Gould’s vision of an independent, technologically detached listener unfolds in the context of a certain kind of consumerism. Edward Said

⁹³ This, of course, is in an interesting conflict with our idea of the 19th century as the emergence of *Werktreue* and the idea of musical interpretation as a kind of “exegetical” interpretation of the composer’s intentions. Philip does not discuss this conflict in his book, but I suspect that the current aesthetics of music did not yet at that point have such a normative influence on the performance practice as it has later come to have. The *Treue* to the *Werk*, in the 19th century, was probably more shown in the “spirit” and thought of the musicians than the actual performance practice.

(1983b, 53–54) pointed out how Gould paid no attention whatsoever to the economic infrastructure – multinational record companies, musical marketing and commercialization – which made *himself* the artist and star that he was.

All this is to say that technology is ultimately a product, and consuming it necessarily brings the musician into a dependency on multi-national corporations, as Paul Théberge (1997, 3–7) has accurately observed. This dynamic applies to the record business as well: for very few recording artists does recording provide a similar domain of freedom and creativity as it did for Gould – demand in the music market ultimately dictates what is recorded and what not. In this respect Gould’s arguments are relatively simplistic and even naïve.

Second, Gould’s unwavering belief in the “charity of the machine” was surprisingly uncritical. The above citation that starts this chapter, testifying to Gould’s enthusiasm for Jean Le Moyne’s idea of charity, refers to Gould’s (and Le Moyne’s) idea of technology as a huge surrounding network which cannot be avoided. Technology has, as it were, become a “second nature,” through which all human actions are mediated – whether that is intended or not. The particular moral contribution of technology, according to Gould (1974–75/1990, 355), is in that it takes away the “animal need for confrontation” symbolically manifested in live concerts. But much of his argumentation here, such as assertion about the moral superiority of a computer-controlled to one fought with clubs and spears, does not stand any kind of critical scrutiny. It would seem that in Gould’s thought the *distance*, setting aside the live presence of participants, plays itself out as the main con-

tribution of technology to human life. In itself, this is not an unproblematic statement – any philosophy undergraduate knows that technology by itself is neither good nor bad. Everything depends on how and to what purposes it is used.

Third, Gould completely underestimates the social and interactive aspect of music. Music has never been, nor will it likely ever be, an activity taking place outside social interaction. Some of Gould's arguments could be countered by Adorno's (2002b/301) notion of "the barbarism of perfection" in today's Classical music – the aesthetic norms of any given live performance of music are those of a recording, and the performance begins to sound like its own recording. This is obviously a phenomenon something deeply embedded in the same process of homogenization and survival of the fittest that is often manifest in today's world of Classical music: countless competitions function as an instrument for selecting those capable of the most accurate, flashy, and virtuosic playing. It is no secret that often the most personal, unique, and different artists do not succeed in this kind of competition. Walter Benjamin seems to have gotten at least one of his arguments right: with reproduction, the aesthetic norms of evaluating live performance merge with those of reproduction – today we evaluate the quality of a live performance more or less by the standards of studio recordings. This is not just a positive thing.

Fourth, Gould put too much stock in the anonymity of a technologically mediated aesthetic experience. The majority of listeners, I believe, still don't want their music "pure" of all traces of agency and subjectivity, or merely as raw material for their own technological re-creation. Most people listen to music as something that someone else has done,

as an “aural” manifestation of a skill unfolding in a quasi-real-time temporal process. This in itself has nothing to do with competition, which is the opposite of what Gould argued. As Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld (2003, 558–559) observe, the audience still expects a certain manifestation of a “skill,” even in technologically mediated music. In this respect, the “aura” as the basis of our aesthetic experience has not gone away but has rather demonstrated its ability to adjust its essence to a new context of meaning.

Gould’s own recordings are a good example of this. Even though he fancied his recordings to be “x-rays” of the music, devoid of live presence or personal display of the musician, one could argue that his technological innovations (such as acoustic choreography), humming and distinctive interpretations bring to the fore a new kind of agency: Gould’s own mediated presence in our ears. If we had to accept Gould’s premise that recordings are at their best when all traces of underlying agency are wiped out, there wouldn’t – perhaps paradoxically – be much to praise in most of his recordings. The fascination and merits of most of them derive from the particular musical presence – Gould’s personal presence – and musical vision that they display. The same, I think, applies to Gould’s public persona – the parody of his self-interviews and the articles written by his pseudonyms Herbert von Hochmeister or Nigel Twitt-Thornwaite, only serves to emphasize his own artistic agency.

But no matter how black and white his thinking may have been at times, Gould was also right about many things. As Pope (1999, 49–50) has observed, audio technology has emancipated music – the making of and listening to it – from time and place, as well as

from limitations on its production, interpretation, and distribution. It is in this sense that the “democratizing” potential of technology – in the particular sense that Gould, Benjamin and Vattimo conceive of the term – has actually happened. Music has really entered our living rooms as technologically mediated – even as a bit stream – and we have the means of modifying our experience of it as much as our technological equipment allows us. All this is something that Gould foresaw already in the 1960’s, and were he alive, he would most certainly agree with Timothy D. Taylor (2001, 3) on his argument that the digitization of music, begun in the early 1980s, has been the most significant and far reaching change in music since the invention of the notation system in the 9th century. Putting under critical scrutiny the huge impact that digitization has had, we can see the breadth of the change: digital samples have made much of the “craft” of musicianship obsolete, recording standards have risen, distribution is more efficient over the Internet, and the “original” doesn’t mean anything anymore, since there is no loss of quality in reproduction. Some commentators (e.g. Kasaras 2002/2006), fascinated by this process, have seen it as manifesting a new kind of democracy in arts: when the collections of museums and a good part of the world’s music – think of Spotify⁹⁴ – have become available to billions of people, we have finally reached a technologically connected “global village” that McLuhan and Gould could only dream about.

The “democratizing” potential of technology, which Gould associated with his idea of a new “participant listener,” has also gained a whole new dimension with recent innova-

⁹⁴ Spotify (www.spotify.com) is a digital music service that gives access to millions of tracks of music: Classical, Rock, Jazz, Country, Hip Hop, etc. As opposed to Napster and other peer-to-peer services, Spotify is legal. It is funded by commercials and subscriptions for the Premium versions (4 euros/month).

tions, such as interactive hyperinstruments. These innovations are also a direct extension of Gould's ideas presented more than four decades ago. The composer Tod Machover (1996/2009) has in fact pointed out the connection to Gould's prophecies:

I predict we will go even further towards the vision expressed by Glenn Gould in his 1966 article [Prospects of Recording]. I imagine musical instruments built into our environments – our furniture, clothing, walls, handheld objects – that will project our conscious and unconscious intentions onto our surroundings. A concert then would not be a special occasion but always around us, meaningful sound responding to our subtle commands, mirroring our attitudes, enhancing our actions at some moments, providing counterpoint and contradiction at others. Perhaps five or ten years down the line we will have developed Home Opera, designed to be experienced in the place where one is most comfortable, completely vivid and theatrical, yet personalized for and by each individual. Gould went even further, predicting that 'in the electronic age the art of music will become much more viably a part of our lives, much less an ornament to them, and that will consequently change them much more profoundly.' Our goal is to figure out how – in technological, musical, and human terms – to turn Gould's fabulous vision into reality.

In spite of the undeniable importance of these new possibilities for making music, however, it would seem that music still is, for most of us, something else. Nicolas Collins (1998), among others, has criticized Gould for completely neglecting the social, ritual, and symbolic aspects of music. People still go to concerts; and concert-goers, Collins argues, still look for the charisma and presence of the performing musician in their experience of music.

Collins (Ibid., 30–31) makes another important point concerning the shortcomings of Gould's thinking. While Gould idealized the technologically mediated musical experience and saw it as a focused, re-creative, and independent undertaking, it is obvious that most often listening to music at home is a distracted, fragmented, and passive experience. Collins also points out that it is the spatial quality of music in particular, its reverberation

and sounding in a certain time and place, that is nonreproducible. Looking for that aspect in a musical experience does not necessarily lead to an adrenalin-filled experience akin to bull fights, contrary to more or less what Gould argued.

In recent years it seems that technology is also of help in making new kinds of live experiences of music possible. In 2005 Zenph Studios corporation put out an application through which it is possible to convert analogue music information, music on LP's, for instance, into an accurate digital bit stream, which then could be played through any midi-compatible instrument (see Hamer 2005 for more detail). In 2007 this new innovation took Gould once again to a concert stage – against his will. Gould's 1955 recording of *Goldberg Variations* was converted into a midi file and then this file was “re-played” through a midi-compatible keyboard, Yamaha Disclavier, in a recital in Toronto. A new kind of eery recording was made out of the event – Gould's humming was not there, nor the squeaking chair. Something, I felt, was lacking.

CHAPTER FOUR:
Musical Interpretation as Criticism: Philosophical
Perspectives on Gould's Music-Making

This chapter addresses Gould's musicianship as an intellectual undertaking that is not only about producing a sonic realization of the score but also about making an analytical judgment on it. I propose a view of Gould's musical interpretation as "pianistic criticism," which was, at times, motivated primarily by intellectual rather than aesthetic goals. A good case in point of Gould's criticism is his controversial complete recording of Mozart's piano sonatas, which I will discuss in more detail at the end of this chapter.

I also venture to construct an "imaginary dialogue" between Gould and the German music philosopher Theodor W. Adorno. Why devote a whole chapter Adorno (1903–1969) and Gould? At least in some ways, the pure documented facts in my research material would not seem to give support for such an undertaking. As late as 1966, in his letter to Martin Sohn-Rethel, Gould (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 98) acknowledges his complete lack of knowledge regarding Adorno's writings. I don't know what Sohn-Rethel's had written to Gould – the letter has not survived – and whether the similarities between the thought of Gould and Adorno had any part in this, but later, in the 1970's, some "hints" about Adorno do begin to appear in Gould's texts and correspondence to people around him. For instance, in his

1978 letter, Gould's first biographer Geoffrey Payzant (GGA 36, 4, 8) gives an answer to Gould's question regarding Adorno's philosophy – here Gould's letter has not survived – and if I interpret the tone of his response correctly, Gould has just come across Adorno's writings and wants tutoring from a professional philosopher (such as Payzant) to get a good start on an excursion into Adorno's challenging philosophy. Gould owned only one book by Adorno. Adorno's collection of essays titled *Prisms* found its way to Gould's home library in its first English translation which came out in 1981. If we judge by Gould's underlinings⁹⁵ and notes in the margins in his copy of *Prisms*, Gould was not very thorough in his work through the textual puzzles of Adorno's philosophy – some of the essays, such as "Bach Defended Against his Devotees," are heavily annotated while others have remained untouched. It's obvious that Gould's interest in Adorno never was of an abstract or systematic "scholarly" type – he was far too versatile, impulsive and interested in too many things to take such a stance. Gould read his Adorno here and there, inspired by certain ideas while neglecting others. There is, then, a good reason to avoid a conception of Gould as a competent philosopher – this he never was, and any discussion of him in that light necessarily distorts the true picture of the man.

⁹⁵ Some of the underlinings are very telling, and there is a temptation to draw doubtful causal connections to Gould's musical interpretations. For instance, Gould's heavy underlining of Adorno's sentence in his Bach essay "True interpretation is an x-ray of the work; its task is to illuminate in the sensuous phenomenon the totality of all the characteristics and interrelations which have been recognized through intensive study of the score" (Adorno 1983, 144) immediately brings to mind the opening Aria of Gould's 1981 recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, played in a solemn, autumnal tranquillity, like a sounding x-ray of the music.

There are, however, certain striking similarities between the thought of the two intellectuals. Gould, for instance, refers to the dialectics between “system” and “negativity” in a few of his writings – a fundamental dialectic very much at work in Adorno’s philosophy, even if not always expressed in the same terms. Through the same kind of dialectics both Gould and Adorno try to point out the same idea: operating only within the established “system,” framed by canons, conventions and institutions, only leads to an artworld penetrated by “culture industry” – a domain of unquestioned, canonized and uncritical art, in which real innovation has become impossible. “Negativity,” as Gould calls the creative domain outside the “system,” is something external to all this, something located, for Gould, in the sphere of “personal authenticity” discussed in chapter 2 of this work. These kinds of ideas were important for both Gould and Adorno.

Similarities between Gould and Adorno can also be found in their conceptions of music’s ontology. For both of them, music in the modern world is at its best in the private sphere. Also, works of music, for Gould and Adorno, are never pure sound: before the interpretative act, be it scholarly critical inquiry or musical performance, they are meaningless. Interpretation in itself is active and critical and it is not about decoding composer’s intentions out of the printed score but rather about literally re-creating the work in and through the creative act.

Also certain similarities of musical taste connect Gould and Adorno. For both of them, Arnold Schoenberg’s music is important as a kind of symbol of “critical”

potential that music has in the modern world. Schoenberg's music, for both men, accepts the challenge posed by modernity through its turning inwards, by refusing just to provide "entertainment" to its listener. And both Gould and Adorno see Stravinsky as the real *bête noire* of musical modernism, whose music is, in its ideological and aesthetic conformism, opportunism, and constant stylistic change, a real antithesis to the critical approach exemplified by Schoenberg. Furthermore Gould and Adorno both see music's structure as the "real" mode of music's existence, while instrumentation, sonority and other aspects of music remain as secondary aspects of music's ontology.

Out of these broader points of departure arise certain crucial questions which guide my discussion in this chapter. One of them is the following: what, in particular, is more important in music than its sonority? This apparently trivial question is associated with many broader issues in both Gould's and Adorno's thought. For Adorno, the sonic surface is the very element in music that becomes exploited by the culture industry; Gould, in turn, sees sonority as a contingent and secondary aspect of music since, in his anti-pianistic discourse, music as a sounding and sensuous object is only an extension of its structure. For both Gould and Adorno, the structure of music is a "pure" mode of its existence, the substance of the sounding phenomenon untouched by the external ideological forces around it. Through its struc-

ture, Gould and Adorno seem to think, music can function as a critical force in society.⁹⁶

In short, Adorno's philosophy of music functions, in my work, as a hermeneutical frame in which to read Gould's writings and with the help of which it is possible to situate Gould's ideas within modern cultural theory. The relationship between technology and music, the ground bass in Gould's thought, thus becomes relevant again in a new light. In the previous chapter it was proposed that technology, in Gould's thought, was associated with ethics and morality. In this chapter, I take a step back and look at the relation of music and technology in a broader perspective that involves music's mediation as both a public and private cultural phenomenon.

Both Gould and Adorno saw the social dimension of music as something that degrades its true essence. Concerts, for instance, were a form of musical mediation invaded by the banal sociability of the audience. As we've seen before, Gould associates public concerts only with characteristics that have to do with negative aspects of music experience as something that unfolds as a collective experience, and it is in Adorno's analysis of the "culture industry" where I look for a more hermeneutic, more systematic and sophisticated background against which Gould's ideas could be fully understood.

⁹⁶ This is a point where Gould and Adorno converge with Heinrich Schenker – as Nicholas Cook (1989) observes, Schenker's analytical lense, focussing on the deep structure of music, developed as an intellectual and ethical response to the cult of virtuoso at the beginning of the 20th century. In Schenker's eyes, virtuosi displaying their instrumental skills alienated listeners from the "real," structural understanding of music.

The last larger theme I will tackle in this chapter is Adorno's idea of scholarly criticism as the essence of music scholarship. Related to Gould, here's my main argument: Gould's interpretation of music, explicitly dissociated from the composer's intentions and the conventions of tradition, serves as a sounding analogue to Adorno's idea of the criticism of music. Gould's goals for the making of music, I think, are very much to what Adorno saw as the essence of music scholarship – to provide a medium for the unfolding of music as ever “new” and meaningful in its contexts of reception.

The relationship between Gould and Adorno has already been discussed in some detail in earlier literature on Gould. Kevin Bazzana (1997, 21–24, 65–67) labels some of Gould's aesthetic preferences, for example the priority of music's structure over its sound and music's rational and logical ontology, as “Adornian”; in an earlier writing Bazzana (1996, 17) also discusses the similarities of Gould's ideas on Bach and Schoenberg to those of Adorno, René Leibowitz, Anton Webern and Ernst Krenek, arguing that Gould had ideological debt to all these men.⁹⁷

Ghyslaine Guertin (1988, 235–240) has also discussed Gould's ideas in relation to Adorno's philosophy of music. She makes two important points about the two

⁹⁷ In his biography of Gould, Bazzana (2003, 91) writes about another interesting connection between Gould and Adorno: René Leibowitz's was Schoenberg's disciple in composition. His book *Schoenberg and His School* was very dear to Gould – according to Bazzana, “almost like a bible,” which Gould constantly wanted to discuss, and out of which he was able to cite extended passages by heart.

men: first, Gould and Adorno, Guertin argues, both see music primarily as a private, not public, phenomenon, which has profound implications in their ideals of the mediation, consumption and signification of music. Second, Guertin sees Gould's harsh criticism of public concerts as having a philosophical justification in Adorno's critique of "culture industry." Along the same lines, Edward Said (2000, 7) has written about Gould's famous withdrawal from the concert stage at the peak of his career in 1964 as an "Adornian move," since Adorno's biting criticism towards the concert institution, prevalent, for instance, in his essay "The Mastery of the Maestro," is essentially based on the same premises as Gould's retirement from public concerts. Said (Ibid., 10) also analyzes Gould's interpretation of Bach's music in the context of Adorno's essay, "Bach Defended Against his Devotees" in *Prisms*, and it is his argument that Gould's interpretation, in a very Adornian manner, abandons the ideal of historical authenticity as something towards which to strive in music-making since the score serves only as a starting point for the re-creative process. Furthermore, Said argues, Gould's multi-modality as a performing artist brings about a connection between him and Adorno. In an earlier essay, Said (1991, 29) conceptualizes Gould's unique "cultural presence," which unfolds through recordings, writings, interviews, and radio and television programs, by the term "Adornian measure." By this term I take Said to refer to the wide breadth of both Gould's and Adorno's intellectual work: while Gould wrote about, spoke about and played music that fascinated him in his effort to make it meaningful to his audience, Adorno, too, not only analyzed and dissected the music that interested him but also provided interpretation of it that made it meaningful as a social

text. (It is also too often forgotten that Adorno also composed and performed music, even though these activities can not be that easily seen as extensions of his philosophical work.)

Elizabeth Angilette (1992) has also made a contribution to the discussion on Gould and Adorno. But her argumentation does not stand critical scrutiny, and I take the opportunity here to straighten out some of her false assumptions and interpretation of Gould as an “Adornian” musician-intellectual.

Angilette sees both Gould and Adorno in the framework of Marxist aesthetics. This aesthetics, according to her, is based on three basic axioms:

- 1) Music is “referential,” its “full meaning” is associated with “extramusical” world;
- 2) Art reflects the social dynamics of society;
- 3) Music has the power to influence the collective awareness and thus the ability to enhance the world around that awareness.

Angilette (1992, 161–162) sees all these axioms in the background of both Gould and Adorno. This, in itself, is not necessarily a major problem in Angilette’s discourse. On a very general level, all of them do seem to apply to Gould’s and Adorno’s thinking on music. Angilette’s argumentation, however, is based on a peculiarly superficial reading of her sources. She reads both Gould and Adorno literally

word by word, sentence by sentence, but she ignores the larger context and ethos of their thought completely. She makes too much of short and polysemic expressions – what, for example, are we to gain from Angilette’s conclusions that Gould saw music as a means of making the outside world better and thus that his musical thought can be understood in the context of Marxism? Leaving aside the problematic characterization of Marxism, even the Gould-side of this argument is dubious: having read almost all that Gould wrote or spoke on record, I still can’t say whether Gould saw music as a means to enhance society. He simply does not address this issue anywhere.

The particular text by Gould that Angilette cites to prove her point about Gould’s “Marxism” is not at all about social dynamics of society, which is what Angilette argues. Here’s what Gould writes:

Our concepts of variation, our concepts of logical growth factors in art, are really nothing other than our concepts of the society in which we live and our concepts of the historical progression upon which that society is comprised, expressed in artistic terms; and we see this never more clearly than when we compare the artistic attitudes of those societies which we like to tell ourselves are civilized with those which we prefer to regard as primitive. (1964c/1999, 256.)

Though drawing an analogy between art and society here, Gould, it is obvious, does not write about art in Marxian terms, conceived as dialectics between the material base and ideological superstructure. Rather it is one of his favourite subjects that is at issue here: questioning the idea of historical “progress” as the basis of aesthetic evaluation. A bit later in the same essay Gould continues:

[T]he most significant study of contemporary man probably is the study of the relation of history to the forces of time and it is a measure or acknowledgment of the progressive, mythical view that in studies such as contemporary theology we accept the idea that our Polynesian cousin may be 'backward' in a more historically accurate and indeed even complimentary way than we realized when so describing him – that his backwardness, his sense of a duty to retrogress, may be the proper antithesis of our forwardness, our concept of a duty to progress, and it may be that the antithetical qualities of these notions are going to be determining factors in the art of our time and that, in making up systems of analysis to weigh this art, this sense of negation will become the key to these systems and the key to our future as artists. (1964c/1999, 257.)

The association of Gould with Marxism results from Angilette's overall tendency to simplify things to the point of making them trivial. Her argumentation unfolds on such general level that the reader is left with a stupefying indifference to what she's arguing. The following excerpt serves as a good example of this:

Adorno (1973; 1976) declared that art's most dangerous enemy is a preoccupation with historical chronology in order to extract meanings. Gould (1964b/1990) wrote that we should not employ historical chronology to judge a work's value. Rather, one should go to the work itself for its meanings.

Gould (1966/2002) criticized the critics for claiming to know the truth of a musical performance. Similarly, Adorno (1983) demystified the critic's authority as emanating from a higher objectivity than other listeners. Adorno considered that all listeners, including critics, are faced with similar problems of meaning and evaluation. (Angilette 1992, 162.)⁹⁸

Anyone familiar with Adorno's and Gould's prose can see that Angilette's argumentation is simplified and trivializes the substance of their positions. In Adorno's writings, for instance, it is impossible to find a spot where his views regarding the significance of the chronology for the aesthetics of art would be this simple and

⁹⁸ As we use the same sources by Gould with Angilette, I have changed the references within the otherwise exact quotations of her text to match with my bibliography.

paraphraseable. (A lot of my confusion also has to do with the fact that Angilette seldom uses page numbers in her citations.) In addition, what Angilette writes about Adorno's views on music critics, does not resonate with my understanding of his challenging philosophy. For instance, in *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, Adorno (1976, 138–153) manages to create – within the space of a single chapter – a dialectical field of conceptual tensions, contradictions and seemingly opposite arguments on the institution of music criticism⁹⁹ so complex that paraphrasing it in Angilette's fashion seems downright impossible.

Adorno's philosophy of music is written “against the grain” of any efforts to paraphrase and simplify its argumentative essence in the way that Angilette does (on the difficulty of reading Adorno, see Witkin 1998, 9–10). She reads Gould selectively, taking words and sentences out of their context and making huge generalizations on very shaky grounds. In Adorno's case, she completely sets aside the basic ontology of Adorno's philosophy: its constellational and critical nature.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Music criticism for Adorno, in this particular chapter, plays itself out as a twofold historical phenomenon. On the one hand, it is a way for music to unfold as “ever new,” to reclaim its potential to mean within a public horizon of discourse. On the other hand, however, music criticism is something negative: within the modern society, it has become an “opinion centre” of music, which has become an “official voice” for the culture of Classical music. Through becoming conditioned to the stereotypes and hagiography of music criticism, the audience has become alienated from the music itself incapable of listening to music in a way that would grasp its true meaning both as a societal force AND art – two sides of music always present in Adorno's criticism. In another essay on Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Adorno (2002c, 570) writes about music criticism as an *immanent* historical element in art itself, as a kind of duty that Classical music, as an institution, has towards works of art.

¹⁰⁰ As Max Paddison (1997, 14–15) puts it, Adorno's concepts and arguments are in constant tension with each other. His arguments are in a constant flux, playing themselves

As far as Angilette's other scholarship goes, her arguments withstand as little critical scrutiny as the ones on Adorno and Gould. In addition to Marxism, Angilette (1992, 192) sees Gould's thought based on "formalism," "phenomenology," and "existentialism." It is my argument that Gould's thought is not accurately understood through this kind of selective and simplifying reading. One is forced to conclude that Gould's thinking is getting "explained" by associating each and every one of its elements with one or another philosophical paradigm – and all this in a disturbingly forced and superficial way.

Four Adornian Windows

Adorno's philosophy of music is admittedly difficult to appropriate as a hermeneutical context within which to situate Gould's aesthetic thought. Is Adorno's difficult, controversial and non-paraphraseable philosophy a suitable tool for this kind of undertaking in the first place? My argument is that one needs to make an epistemological choice: out of Adorno's challenging and complex thought, one needs to select certain broader themes for hermeneutical contexts within which to situate Gould's ideas. I have selected four "Adornian windows" for a scrutiny of Gould's ideas:

out as seemingly contradictory wholes conditioned by the historical progress. "Modern music" is a good example of what Paddison accurately translates as "force field." The term is something that Adorno discusses from many sides: as something that simultaneously contributes to the musical while also reflecting its alienation from the "true [social?] life" of music that has become impossible in the administered world.

- 1) The idea of music as an artform ideally unfolding in the private sphere; and consequently a conception of the experience of music as by definition a non-collective, solitary event;
- 2) The idea of the interpretation of a musical work as scholarly criticism, as complementary to criticism with respect to meaning;
- 3) The idea of “modernity” as an intellectual-ethical challenge posed to the artist – a challenge that should be met from a critical and historically sensitive position;
- 4) The idea of the “culture industry” as something that both alienates the listener from the true understanding of music and commodifies music.

These four broad issues need some clarification. 1) the assumption of music as a “private” art is associated, in both Adorno’s and Gould’s thought, with the idea that an experience of music taking place in the public domain is apt to lead to a fetishizing relationship, characterized by what Adorno called “pseudo-activity”: the illusion of being a particularly “active” and “original” member of the audience, even though this kind of relationship is constructed by the marketing forces. Pseudo-individualism, Adorno (2002d, “On Popular Music,” 445) argues, makes people forget that the music “they listen to is already listened to for them.” Very similar kinds of thoughts are explicit, with an additional emphasis on the ritualistic behaviour of the audience, in Gould’s (1962b/1990, 245–250) essay “Let’s Ban Applause.”

2) I am looking at Gould's interpretation of music as a practice very similar in its basic axioms of Adorno's criticism of music: the interpretation of music takes place in a critical dialogue with traditions, sometimes explicitly in opposition to them. Also, both Gould and Adorno saw the very act of the interpretation of music as complementing the music's meaning. Thus scholarly as well as sounding criticism of music come to be seen as a means for the historical unfolding of music, since musical meaning is not regarded as embedded in the score. This kind of view is emphasized in Gould's musicianship, since he saw only pitches and rhythms as binding on the performer in the interpretation of music. In Adorno's case, the meaning of music could not be seen as fixed since the music, both as musical material and mediated sound content, is always tied to the social and cultural world around it; thus its meaning is bound to change historically. For Gould and Adorno, there is no historical "authenticity" of music.

3) Both Gould and Adorno see "modernism" as inescapable challenge, an ideological framework within which the artist – composer and musician – has to find an "authentic" and ethical way to function professionally. For Adorno, this entails being "up-to-date" as far as musical material is concerned: only music that speaks the musical language of modernism is able to criticize society through *mimesis* (I will return to this concept later), by showing social antagonisms within its very essence. Adorno is very controversial on the issue of historical progress: paradoxically he rejects the historical progressivism as the essence of "new music" – yet in his harsh criticism towards neo-romantic composers such as Jean Sibelius he calls

for a certain “modernity” in Sibelius’s music, a response to the challenges of modernism instead of an escape into the shelter of an outdated musical style. Adorno argues that Sibelius’s music represents “false ideology” through its “return to nature,” which he associates with the ethos of the art in the Third Reich. Even though Gould does not go this far in his critique, his arguments *pro* Schoenberg and *contra* Stravinsky come surprisingly close to those of Adorno.

4) Gould and Adorno argue against the institutional and social “system” within which music is embedded: marketing, fan clubs, newspaper criticism are there only to alienate the listener from a “true” understanding of music. In one of Gould’s (1966/1990, 353) essays, he argues that “in the best of all possible worlds, art would be unnecessary” since its “offer of restorative, placative therapy would go begging a patient.” Art should be given a chance – through technology, as I will discuss later – to disappear as an institution, because all the social and institutional webs around art do more harm than good for the creativity and self-expression. Adorno is more ambiguous – or dialectical? – in his position, but his writings also display a clear suspicion towards the institutional frames of music as an alienating element in music’s mediation.

At this point, one obvious question raises its head: why did Gould produce more than 80 recordings and hundreds of published writings on music, as well as television and radio programs? Isn’t it contradictory for Gould to preach that “art should be given the chance to phase itself out” while he continued to work as a profes-

sional for almost three decades within the very institutional frameworks he criticized? Or did he see himself as situated outside art as in institutionalized and canonized practice?

Gould solves this contradiction in none of his writings or interviews, but I've seen it as beneficial to make a distinction between two meanings of art in Gould's thinking. On the one hand, art is an institution, a "system" that Adorno called the "culture industry." This system standardizes, canonizes, commercializes and takes away the possibility of creating something really new and authentic. This aspect of art is clearly in Gould's (1977/1990, 257–258) mind when he criticizes public concerts and the "morally disruptive and aesthetically destructive influence" that music critics have had on art, because of their lack of "any defensible criteria" upon which to base their judgments.¹⁰¹ Institutionalized music criticism, Gould argues, feeds into the conformism latent in the audience and makes audience members passive to the extent that they lose their ability to form their own opinions of the music they hear. This is clearly a point where Gould and Adorno converge: Adorno, we remember, called music criticism an "opinion centre," whose stereotypical patterns of reception have come to replace a true understanding of music (Adorno

¹⁰¹ In his interview with Vincent Tovell in 1960, however, Gould writes in a surprisingly favourable tone about music criticism: "I think that more often than not [what they say] is peppered with nonsense, but I think that they serve a useful function." This interview is surprising in other respects as well – Gould (1960/1999, 66–88) says he "adores" Mozart's operas, likes theatre, and most surprising of all, that it is possible to create a better interpretation of a given work on the concert stage than through recording. The Tovell interview is one of the most controversial documents in all literature by or about Gould.

1976, 146; see also Said 2000 and Guertin for more detailed discussion of this matter).

In parallel with this negative definition of art, one that emphasizes the banal sociability of music, there is another to be found in Gould's thought. For Gould, the potential of art to create individual expression, (personal) authenticity, and ethical being-in-the-world is based on the attachment of artistic undertaking to one's own life-world. Every listener, Gould (1974/1990, 320) argues, has potentially his or her own creativity "project at hand." This "project at hand," the re-creation of art, takes place in the sphere of the "negative," outside institutions and conventions. We have come full circle here: music, an artform that by definition is mediated socially, historically and institutionally, plays itself out as unfolding ideally in the private sphere, outside the "culture industry."

I will present my four windows in a modified order. I will start by discussing the dialectics of "culture industry" (4) and music's situatedness in the private sphere (1). After this, I will tackle Adorno's and Gould's idea(l)s of "modern" and "modernity" in music (3). I will close this chapter by proposing that Gould's ideological position of interpreting music is very similar to that of Adorno's position of scholarly music criticism (2).

The Culture Industry

For looking at the ideological relationship between Gould and Adorno, the concept of the “Culture industry” is particularly useful since through it one can open whole new perspectives onto the social mediation of music, which is of interest for both men.

What is the “Culture industry” for Adorno? He refers to the concept all through his writings, but one of the most elaborated definitions is found in the classic *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, originally published by Max Horkheimer and Adorno in 1947. In this bedrock thesis of critical theory, Adorno and Horkheimer describe the concept ontologically and from the point of view of its historical substance. The historical roots of the “Culture industry,” they argue, are in the pre-capitalist era, which is when art became associated with “entertainment” and “consuming” (1972, 135). Since the emergence of the “Culture industry,” it has standardized and commodified the very substance of art. Through capitalism and its exploitation of human labour, art has become the sphere of “relaxation” and “free time,” and art, as entertainment, has become the tool for “recharging the batteries” in order to manage in everyday work.

The Culture industry plays itself out as an abstract web of material and an ideological supply of music, a network that surrounds the music-consuming individual and also has an impact also the production. Even though the concept is never exhaustively defined in any of Adorno’s writings, one can conclude that the Culture in-

dustry is constructed by magazines, newspapers, television, radio, movies, recording industry, and concert institutions – a colossal web of music’s mediation that cannot be escaped in our everyday experience of music. Adorno is deeply concerned that by being tangled in this web surrounding music as creative practice, as practice that defines the potential sphere of *utopia*, the listener loses touch with the actual substance of music itself.

Adorno focuses on radio and television in some of the essays he wrote for the “Radio project” conducted by Paul Lazarsfeld. “Radio Symphony” clearly displays Adorno’s (2002a, 256–261) distrust of electric media as regards Classical music. The “symphonic” nature of symphonic music, its spatial element as a mass of sound – an element of historical authenticity of music – is compromised by radio’s one-dimensional transmission of musical texture. The organic “growth” and “development” of a musical motive in a Beethoven symphony, Adorno argues, dissolves into a trivial medley of tunes and fragments, which then comes to replace the structural whole of the work. All this leads to what Adorno calls “quotation listening,” a superficial mode of attending the music in which a random theme or motive is all that the listener is able to draw from the musical work. “Destiny knocking on the door,” as the cliché has it, comes to replace the authentic experience of the 5th symphony, and the *Moonlight Sonata* becomes equivalent with the arpeggio pattern in c-sharp minor which everyone recognizes immediately. As parallel to “quotation listening” Adorno introduces “romanticization,” in which a single melody puts a spell on the listener to the extent that he no longer concerns himself with the structural whole of the work: “The authoritarian theme, the ‘result’ replacing the process and thus

destroying symphonic spell, acquires a spell of its own” (Ibid., 265). Radio, Adorno argues, dis-assembles the symphonic totality in an ultimately ideological way in which the musical atoms claim a false significance, which they should not have. “If radio atomizes and trivializes Beethoven, it simultaneously renders the atoms more ‘expressive’, as it were, than they had been before. The weight which falls upon the isolated detail conveys to it an importance that it never had in its context” (Ibid.).

It is obvious that these kinds of ponderings are foreign to Gould, who believed uncritically in technology. Gould regarded the authentic reproduction of music as irrelevant in the first place, since access to the historical context of any given music represented only the petrifying tyranny of tradition and conventions on the potentially re-creative work. This means that the potential technological limitations of music’s transmission as spatial art are not his concern. Both Gould and Adorno share an obvious point of concern in relation to the electronic mediation of music: musical structure. While Adorno (2002a, 258–261) clearly regards the structural demands of symphonic music as irreconcilable with the mediative capacity of radio – since radio makes the symphony into chamber music work in its distortion of the music’s timbre, dynamics and structural relations – Gould, for his part, wants to harness the potential of technology into the service of *projecting* the music’s structure into an audible form. In his comments on acoustic choreography, which I discussed earlier in this thesis, for instance, Gould says that the success of this technological invention has been “in the music itself” (1978/1996, 11). In his recording of Jean Sibelius’s piano piece *Kyllikki*, Gould aimed at reflecting the various areas of tonality and the thematic structure through the change of acoustic perspective brought about by multi-

channel recording at different distances from the instrument. At the end of the day, it could be argued, Gould and Adorno have a similar point of departure, separated only by differing beliefs in technology's reproductive potential. For Adorno (e.g. 2002b, 288–317), the technological reproduction of music both distorts the music's essence and makes it into a purchasable commodity. Gould, however, saw technology as means for the actual re-creation of music. The chronological distance between Gould and Adorno, of course, has to be kept in mind: the technology Gould had at his use in the 1960's and 1970's, was just being dreamt of in the 1940's (on the technological development more generally, see Chanan 1995).¹⁰²

Adorno's distrust of technology is not restricted to music. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer also write about the "standardization" of music, a theme very much present in Adorno's critique of jazz (see Leppert 2002, 470–495; Adorno 1983, 119–132; and Witkin 2000). Movies, too, become a victim of the standardization process: in a Hollywood movie, Adorno and Horkheimer (1972, 125) argue, it is obvious from the very start "how it will end, and who will be rewarded, punished, or forgotten." The standardized movie does not leave room for the spectator's imagination – the fast flow of events and details limit the spec-

¹⁰² Although Adorno is particularly critical towards radio, in a number of essays he actually has good things to say about long-playing records. This difference may be due to his own experiences in the Germany of the 1930's, where radio was used to disseminate Nazi propaganda. For a more detailed discussion of this, see Bergmeier & Lotz (1997): *Hitler's Airwaves: The Inside Story of Nazi Radio Broadcasting and Propaganda Swing*. See also Leppert (2002, 214).

tators to hanging on to the film narrative so as not to lose the thread; there is no time for thoughtful reflection or imagination (Ibid., 126–127).¹⁰³

But let us return to music, in particular public concerts. In his *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, Adorno (1976) devotes the eighth chapter to a critical discussion on public concerts. He starts off with a pessimistic view: concert life is ruled by the laws of capitalism, and even “pure” concert music is no exception of this situation. Classical music, it follows, has become alienated from the very media-tive practice in which it is historically embedded: live concerts. “The life of music is not a life for music. ... Music is realized in musical life, but that life conflicts with music” (1976, 119). The established patterns of concerts do not favour structural interpretation, and musicians are described very cynically by Adorno: “Artists are rounded up like acts for a monstrous circus. Performances are illusionary apotheoses. What is sensually pleasing and takes an errorless, undisturbed course comes to replace a meaningful presentation” (Ibid., 122–123).

Gould’s writings are rife with arguments against public concerts as unsuited for a truly devoted mode of listening to music (see e.g. Gould 1968/2001, 47–60). At this point, however, we should stay with Adorno for one more question: where – if indeed anywhere – should music be performed, in Adorno’s mind, if not in public

¹⁰³ This is a point where Adorno and Walter Benjamin famously diverge. As became obvious in the preceding chapter, the potential of movies for the collective experience of art, was in Benjamin’s mind, an example of the democratizing potential of technology. For Adorno, this public effect is obviously false ideology, something that vulgarizes art’s essence as private phenomenon.

concerts? Adorno never finished a theory of musical reproduction, an undertaking he planned for years with Rudolf Kolisch (Paddison 1997, 195–196), and we are left with only fragments (Adorno 2006) of what was supposed to become a full thesis. Adorno, however, touches upon the reproduction of music in many of his other writings, and that way it is possible to get a view of what a critical interpretation of music in performance meant to him. In the *Introduction*, Adorno (1976, 125) argues that an artwork “always attacks the law of the marketplace, and the polish of whatever that law unreservedly honors will expunge the freshness of becoming.” Technical perfection in musical performance, represented by his celebrated contemporary Arturo Toscanini, seems to be something outright bad: “The official ideal of performance ... helps to sanction a condition ... which may be called barbarism of perfection” (Adorno 2002b, 301). This “barbarism of perfection” – an expression Adorno borrows from Eduard Steuermann – turns a performance into a kind of “machine,” a fetish grotesque in its very perfection:

There is iron discipline. But precisely iron. The new fetish is the flawlessly functioning, metallically brilliant apparatus as such, in which all the cogwheels mesh so perfectly that not the slightest hole remains open for the meaning of the whole. Perfect, immaculate performance in the latest style preserves the work at the price of its definitive reification. It presents it as already complete from the very first note. The performance sounds like its own phonograph record. The dynamic is so predetermined that there are no longer any tensions at all. (Ibid.)

Max Paddison (1997, 192–198) makes an important dialectical distinction between two strains of thought within Adorno’s philosophy of music. On the one hand, interpretation, for Adorno, is about the relationship between the score and the performer; on the other hand, through the act of interpretation, the musical work be-

comes “public,” reaches its audience and gets its immanent possibility of *meaning* something.

Adorno is concerned with different things in these two discourses. In his ponderings on the relationship between musician and the score, Adorno’s point of departure is in the historically changing concept of the musical work, which also brings about a certain change in the musician’s relationship to the music. As Adorno (2002e, 412) himself puts it, the “change within works themselves is portrayed in reproduction; this happens under the sign of radical alienation as the reduction of reproductive freedom.” This means that composing and interpreting are dialectically intertwined: in the modern era, just as all the music’s parameters are, at least in most of 20th-century music, exhaustively defined by the score, the score itself has become the starting point for the musical interpretation even of older works. In the case of older works, however, this adherence to the score has nothing to do with the composer’s intentions – rather it has “emancipated itself from the [composer’s] will” (Paddison 1997, 195). Today, the ultimate task of a musical interpretation is to make the “content” – what Adorno calls “Inhalt” – audible, and concerning this duty, any “freedom” associated with interpretation is necessarily illusory.

It seems that we are set in a dialectical standstill here: on the one hand, the rational *Zeitgeist* of music in modern times requires a strict adherence to the score; on the other hand, the “barbarism of perfection” makes such a musical interpretation itself into a fetish. Is there a way out of this contradiction?

The other element in Adorno's philosophy, as elaborated by Paddison (1997, 197) could be helpful here: the view of musical interpretation as a public, mediating practice. Adorno's philosophy of music's mediation is based on two internal paradoxical hypotheses:

- 1) Even though it is in particular the sphere of music's public performance where works of music enter into the orbit of the "culture industry," they still have to be performed publicly in order to gain the possibility of "meaning" something, i.e. to "unfold" historically, as "ever-new";
- 2) Since a musical work is through and through a contradictory whole, and since this contradictoriness also sets its own demands for the act of interpretation, no interpretation can ever "exhaust" the musical work in terms of its whole potential significance.

Adorno uses the concept *Gehalt* to refer to the unreachable ideal of actualizing the content of a musical work in a single act of interpretation. What actually gets realized, in terms of the music's substance, is referred to as the term *Erscheinung*. (Paddison 1997, 197.) The tension between the two is what marks a good performance – this he refers to as the term *Tour de force* (Ibid.). *Tour de force*, for Adorno, involves the need for any critical, truthful interpretation to acknowledge itself as unavoidably partial, a fleeting attempt to grasp the historically changing, unfolding meaning of a musical work. It is this particular challenge of the music to

the musician that constitutes the starting point for any aesthetic interpretation of music. In *Prisms*, Adorno writes the following:

The musical score is never identical with the work; devotion to the text means the constant effort to grasp that which it hides. Without such a dialectic, devotion becomes betrayal; an interpretation which does not bother about the music's meaning on the assumption that it will reveal itself of its own accord will inevitably be false since it fails to see that the meaning is always constituting itself anew. (Adorno 1983, 144.)¹⁰⁴

Against this backdrop, it is easy to see what bothers Adorno about Arturo Toscanini, the most celebrated conductor in the U.S. in Adorno's time. His overflowing virtuosity, brilliance and sonorous dazzle turn the performance itself – not the interpretation and the problem that the music poses for it – into the basic unit of music-making. Toscanini, as it were, reifies the performance and creates what is truthfully impossible: the illusion of perfection.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ This particular essay was, on the basis of his heavy underlining, the essay that Gould knew best out of all Adorno's writings. His take on Adorno lays emphasis on the distinction between the score and the work: the latter is the aspect of music that gets re-created time and time again in different contexts by different musicians, the score, in its turn, is only the starting point for a musician's creative undertaking, in Gould's case only as far as pitches and rhythms are concerned.

¹⁰⁵ In the "Mastery of the Maestro" essay, Adorno blames Toscanini for the impression that the latter's interpretation of Beethoven's 7th symphony sounds as if everything was be predetermined, and that the whole aspect of the music's unfolding as a sound event failed to happen. Toscanini's interpretation, Adorno bitterly argues, makes the music into a "prefabricated product," in which the whole comes off as a finished product that the listener can buy and take with him. As far as the musical content goes, Adorno criticizes Toscanini for wasting all his attention on the melody at the cost of counterpoint – to the extent that he "never wastes his time on anything but the principal event." As the outcome of all this, Adorno says that Toscanini's musicianship is "visual" – it displays his ideological personification of the music he conducts. The listener's enjoyment, as it were, depends on how well Toscanini holds the listener in the "music's grip," makes it his own. (Adorno 1999, 40–47.)

Out of these brief citations, one can easily get the picture of the impact that the “Culture industry” has, according to Adorno, on music:

- 1) Electronic media: the Culture industry, through the radio and LP record, dis-assembles the totality of the musical work into fragments, which falsely come to represent the whole work (the “theme of destiny becomes the signifier for the 5th symphony”);¹⁰⁶
- 2) Public concerts: through the banal sociability that the Culture industry brings about, it feeds the star cult and distorts performances and artists into fetishes;
- 3) Musical material: the Culture industry propagates “listener friendly” and “appealing” musical material, which then becomes “second nature”; historical works of music forget, as it were, their origin and social function, and their musical and structural elements become raw material for today’s music (Adorno adapted this idea from Lukács, see Paddison 1997, 33 for more detail).

The “Adornian” side of Gould’s thought shows most in his critique of public concerts.

The most explicit antagonism in many of Gould’s writings is that between the adrenalin-

¹⁰⁶ At many points in his philosophy, Adorno is concerned with the dialectics between whole and parts, for instance between an individual theme and the structural whole of the work. In Beethoven, for instance, the “truth” of the work is embedded in the very particular way in which its thematic material, its “subject” – conceived of as both musically and philosophically – is seen as separate from the totality and yet functions as a dynamic element of music’s “becoming.” (Paddison 1997, 236). It is no wonder, then, that Adorno’s philosophy lays emphasis on music in which structural integrity, such as that in Beethoven’s late piano sonatas, plays a prominent role. This emphasis has bearing in a certain narrowness, in cluding the Germanophilia that Adorno displays in his aesthetics. Music that does not operate on his preferences (Debussy, Sibelius, Stravinsky), is rejected out of hand by him.

filled, spontaneous, unfinished and ritual-like atmosphere of live concerts, and the “womb-like security” of the recording studio (Gould 1968/2001, 54), enabled by technological control. As became obvious in the preceding chapter, the studio, for Gould, meant a working environment in which the linearity of time could be set aside and the musical work, through recording, could be detached from its “aura” – the historical, biographical and social context that inevitably surrounds music in live concerts (Gould 1983/1998, 4). The live audience, for Gould, represents all the negative latent aggression – Adorno’s “monstrous circus” also comes to mind (see my earlier citation in this chapter) – embedded in the public performance of music. Of public concerts Gould says the following provocative comment in one of his interviews:

There is a very curious and almost sadistic lust for blood that overcomes the concert listener. There’s a waiting for it to happen, a waiting for the horn to fluff, a waiting for the strings to become ragged, a waiting for the conductor to forget to subdivide, you know. . . . There’s a kind of gladiatorial instinct that comes upon the hardened, the case-hardened concertgoer, which is why I don’t like him as a breed, and I don’t trust him, and I wouldn’t want one as a friend. (Gould 1968/2001, 50.)

In his essay “Let’s Ban Applause” from 1962, Gould writes in an apparently humorous tone¹⁰⁷ about one particular feature that particularly bothered him in live concerts: applause. Gould saw live concerts as an event essentially similar to bull fights – both were marked by a potentially strong adrenaline response, impulsivity and spontaneity. In all this, the applause, associated with Italian opera, displayed

¹⁰⁷ One of the interesting features in Gould’s writings is that even at his most humorous – like when writing in the name of his alter egos Nigel Twitt-Thornwaite and Herbert von Hochmeister – Gould is obviously dead serious. In these carnevalistic writings, Gould discusses the same issues that he regarded as important elsewhere: for instance, the deteriorating effect that competition, the quest for authenticity, and live concerts bring to music. See two essays by “Herbert von Hochmeister”: “Of Time and Time Beaters” and “L’esprit de jeunesse, et de corps, et d’art” (1965/1990, 402–410).

“the vulgar artistic hostility of those sun-baked societies who have built an operatic tradition in which their primal instinct for gladiatorial combat has found a more gracious but thinly disguised sublimation.” (Gould 1962/1990, 247.)¹⁰⁸ On the contrary,

the justification of art is the internal combustion it ignites in the hearts of men and not its shallow, externalized, public manifestations. The purpose of art is not the release of a momentary ejection of adrenaline but is, rather, the gradual, life-long construction of a state of wonder and serenity. Through the ministrations of radio and the phonograph, we are rapidly and quite properly learning to appreciate the elements of aesthetic narcissism ... and are awakening to the challenge that each man contemplatively create his own divinity. (Ibid., 246.)

This is the particular issue that I discussed in the preceding chapter in Benjamin’s terms: Gould saw the concert hall, a traditional context for Benjamin’s “cult value” of art, as fundamentally a false venue for a contemplative relationship to music. The replacement of the “cult value” of art by its use value, which is what Benjamin argued would take place through the mechanical reproduction of art, is analogous with Gould’s argument for letting art have “the possibility to phase itself out” because the societal of art function is “potentially destructive” (Gould 1974/1990, 324). These kinds of arguments clearly display Gould’s suspicion of art as an institution of norms, conventions and a cherished history. One of the advantages to technology, Gould argues, is that listeners get emancipated from ritualized and canonized patterns of behaviour in their experience of art – which is arguably what live concerts are all about – into their own ecstasy of aesthetic narcissism made

¹⁰⁸Already in his interview with Vincent Tovell, Gould (1960/1999, 79) says of the audience: “They are not there to respond. They are not there to applaud. ... Because it seems to me that applause and response of any kind is not only a misleading thing, it can be a vicious instrument.”

possible by technology. In Gould's mind, the theatricality of concerts, the artistic irreversibility of live musical performance, and a collective experience of music construct the counterpole to the creative, personal and individual act of artistic creation that by definition takes place in the private sphere.¹⁰⁹

Here we return obviously to Gould's anti-social conception of art. Art as an institution is everything to which Adorno refers by the concept "culture industry" – the passivity of the listener and collective conformism instead of a personal, individual and re-creative relationship to music. "Art," in this negative view, plays itself out as a social, historical and institutional frame that prevents the signification of music as an activity from penetrating an individual's life-world. This frame, with its conventions, norms and ideals, sets itself as an obstacle to an individual's truthful relationship with music. Music, for Gould, is first and foremost a *process*, and it is more about individual creative ecstasy than about anything else.

An obvious difference between Adorno and Gould is that Gould very seldom writes about music in general, that is, about composing, performing and listening, which is Adorno's main mode of musical discourse. When Gould ventures into that domain, it is often in the spirit of a very general critique of specialization in

¹⁰⁹ Gould played at least one recital without applause, on July 8 1962 in Stratford music festival. In commenting on this concert in an interview, Gould gave two reasons for asking, in the printed program notes, the audience to abstain from this accustomed ritual: "the performer should ... be allowed to dictate his acoustical surroundings. ... I feel that the frame of sound during a concert should be one of silence. Secondly ... I am rebellious about the institution of the concert – of the mob which sits in judgement. Some artists seem to place too much reliance on the sweaty mass response of the moment." (Gould 1962, 11–12.)

music – the divergence of the roles of composer, performer and listener. This is what we already saw in his “Forgery and Imitation” essay: the professionalization of music, begun somewhere in the Renaissance era, was the ultimate source of the listener’s passivity, crystallized in the idea of public concerts. In his honorary address for the Doctorate in Music that he received at the University of Toronto in 1964, Gould sees as the outcome of this line of historical development “an absurd competitiveness,” which has no positive impact on any musician’s character and artistic development (Gould 1964b/1999, 224). In this speech, Gould sees the particular contribution of technology in the fact that with its help, nothing less than a complete re-evaluation of individuality, and of the significance of art’s historical context, will become possible.

In Gould’s critique of concerts, he also refers to a phenomenon very similar to what Adorno (2002d, 445) called “pseudo-individualization.” Pseudo-individualization, for both Adorno and Gould, is a certain kind of “illusion of freedom” – manifested, for example, in the alleged “spontaneity,” “freshness” and “fantasy” of improvisation, while in reality the structures of expression (stylistic formulas, length, musical clichés) are already pre-determined before a note is played.

An analogous term in Adorno’s philosophy, one suited to conceptualizing the alienated listener created by the Culture industry, is “pseudo-activity.” This term refers to various almost caricature-like listener types that all manifest a certain re-

gression in the active reception of music: jazz-enthusiasts, radio hams, “experts,” who see the history of jazz as a kind of “holy scripture” and want to learn to play like their idols (2002b, 309-310). All these musical subject positions, for Adorno, are produced by the Culture industry and fail to manifest truthful musical activity.

For Gould, “pseudo-activity” is not an entirely negative term – as we’ve seen, he championed the ideal of a listener equipped with audio technology. Moreover, Gould himself was a kind of “radio ham” – a musician-listener characterized by an enthusiasm for technology. In Gould’s thought, however, “Culture industry” is associated with one important negative dynamic aspect: competitiveness. The competition principle is the central target of Gould’s criticism of the “tyranny of the *Zeitgeist*” – the limitations that the aesthetic *Zeitgeist* sets on an individual’s potentially unlimited creative possibilities. In his interview with Tim Page, Gould (1981/1990, 460) expresses his wish that the type of thinking that “you hold a C-major chord for thirty minutes, I’ll hold it for thirty-one” would be obsolete in the near future.

In this typically tongue-in-cheek formulation, one can clearly glimpse the full range of what Gould points at. New avant-garde music, for instance, can be seen as a cultural domain in which certain aesthetic and ideological musical ideals are under constant negotiation for their economic and ideological support.¹¹⁰ As Georgi-

¹¹⁰Those who dismiss this linkage of aesthetics and economy utterly irrelevant should take a look at the public discussion concerning the state funding of Classical music in Scandinavia and central Europe.

na Born (1995) points out in her ethnography of IRCAM in Paris, the negotiation on the epistemology and aesthetics of “modernity” is ongoing in the art world, and this negotiation has cultural and economic ramifications. In this kind of context Gould’s abhorrence of all competitiveness – in performing arts as well as composition – can be understood, particularly when one keeps in mind that the work of Gould as a composer is situated in the same horizon of public discourse as that of his contemporaries. Against this background, one could see Gould’s post-romantic compositions, such as his String Quartet in f-minor (1955), as an aesthetic argument pro anti-competition. Certainly Gould’s own compositions display an ideal of anti-competition, that of “anti-historicity,” the idea that a composer, in Gould’s own words, “makes his own time richer by being out of it.”

But beyond this, competition is associated with certain specifically musical features – and even whole musical genres, such as the solo concerto – that Gould associated with the corruption of Classical music. This attention to ideological ramifications in the very structures of music is, again, an important focus that Gould and Adorno share: according to Adorno, society gets mediated through music’s material, and thereby ideological aspects of music become manifest in musical structure (Paddison 1997, 55). This process becomes obvious in Adorno’s critique of the “standardization” of popular music: the forms and harmonic structure of popular music and jazz – Adorno seems to be thinking about Tin Pan Alley in general – have become so standardized and petrified, indeed that the listener does not expect anything else to happen (see Adorno 2002d, 441-444 for more detail).

It is obvious that Gould's argumentation does not reach – for the better or worse – the complexity level of Adorno's prose, and a holistic theory of music's social mediation is definitely not something that Gould aimed at (see Paddison 1997, 108-183 for a comprehensive paraphrase of Adorno's thought in this respect). There is, however, much that is "Adornian" in Gould's thought here. In his interview with Bruno Monsaingeon, Gould (1976/1990, 41) argues that a solo concerto is a perfect musical analogue to the socially prevalent competition principle, and Gould wanted to do away with this principle at all costs in everything that he did. Sometimes this wish led to absurd results: Gould's 1962 recording of Brahms's d-minor concerto is a good example of this. In his interpretation of the concerto, Gould wanted to eliminate the traditional contrast in tempo between the two main themes of the first movement – the common practice of slowing down the tempo of the second theme considerably represented the false temptation of "wooing the upper balcony" (Gould's phrase) through sentimental clichés of piano performance, that is, of making make unjustified interpretational choices just to please the audience. Gould (1981a/1999, 348) hated the whole genre of the (19th-century) piano concerto with its built-in contrast between the soloist and the collective. Accordingly, even composers enjoying Gould's respect, such as Beethoven and Brahms, were at their worst in concertos, since the "absurd musical conventions" of the genre – the orchestral exposition the function of which is to pave way to the flamboyant entrance of the soloist; thematic redundancy between the orchestra and the soloist; and the cadenza as the venue for the soloist's bravura – limit their true abilities as composer. All this has, according to Gould, brought about "some of the

most embarrassing musical examples of the primeval human need for showing off.” (Gould 1990, 70-71.)

Gould had no problems in venturing from his real area of competence, music, to other areas of life in his public work. In the radio program *The Scene* (1972) which he did for CBC, Gould scrutinizes in an apparently humorous but in fact dead serious tone the significance of the competition principle in sports. Having read a magazine article (“Psychic Murder at the Chessboard”) on Bobby Fischer¹¹¹ and his intentions to “crush the opponent’s ego,” Gould is guilty of a huge generalization in his argument: that the general impulse underlying all sports, along with other areas of life unnecessary for one’s well-being, is competition:

I don’t think you can distinguish between ... ‘psychic murder at the chessboard’ and actual, if not necessarily intentional, murder in the ring, or any other kind of murder, for that matter. I’m convinced that one impulse – domination, obviously, however sublimated it appears, however genteel – underlies all of those manifestations. And in every case, its form, its excuse, its access to evil, so to speak, is competition. (Gould 1972/2003, 9.)

Gould sees the competition principle as some people’s primeval way of coping with the fear of death; given “the fear of losing out in the ultimate competition with life itself, they must of *necessity* make it the very substance of their work” (Ibid., 14). It goes without saying that the kinds of quasi-psychoanalytical theories Gould offers here don’t stand closer scrutiny, but they are telling about his own

¹¹¹ I leave it to the reader to evaluate if Fischer’s intellectual imbalance in his late years is the outcome of his exposure to competition – as Gould’s probably would have been keen to argue. See Fischer’s obituary for more detail:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3900793.stm>

thought: one gets a broader view onto his musical “puritanism,” his musical idealism, and his general view of music as an abstract and non-physical art (see Bazzana 2003; Payzant 1997; Ostwald 1998, 265-266).

For both Gould and Adorno, the sounding materiality of music and its structural elements are the particular aspects of music that make musical works into a kind of simulation of the world around it.¹¹² This in itself is the epistemological starting point for both of them, and one through which it becomes possible to approach this crucial question: how does music mean and what types of meanings music is capable of expressing? Both men pay attention to similar kinds of issues: while the solo concerto, for Gould, is by its very nature a morally dubious genre because of the antagonism that it establishes between the individual and the collective, Adorno sees the whole authoritative relationship between the conductor and orchestra, embedded in grand orchestral works, as highly problematic. Adorno hears the orchestral whole as mystically appearing from one “equalizing” centre, which by its very essence negates individual efforts of spontaneous expression (Adorno 1976, 107). Musicians’ alienation from the structural whole together with the personification of music in the dictatorial conductor display, for Adorno, some of the “negativity,” even “violence” of “great music.” Adorno even goes as far as to argue that there is an analogy between hypnosis and orchestral music-making: in both of them, the

¹¹² Adorno’s view of music as through and through social has been set under critical scrutiny in many commentaries. Stephen Miles (1997), for instance, blames him – as well as the Adorno-influenced New musicology – for situating music’s social meaning outside the social agency of people playing, listening and composing music. (See also Born 1995, 22.)

conductor does not speak or rationalize his decisions – if he did, that would break the spell. (Adorno 1976, 108–110.)

For Gould and Adorno, music is *subjectivized*. For both men, the subjects represented by, and in, music have a certain structural analogy with the world outside. Here, as we'll see in the next chapter, counterpoint, for instance, plays itself out as a sounding metaphor for individual expression and freedom. Indeed, counterpoint plays itself out as an iconic representation of democracy, a sphere of freedom in which a true polyphony, freedom of individual expression, is possible. This is particularly an idea that Gould proposes, but Adorno shares much of the same in his writings on chamber music. For Adorno (1976, 86), chamber music is one of the last domains in which freedom and equality are still possible. Interestingly, however, Adorno sees chamber music as a domain of “negative,” “spiritualized” competition, which by its very existence poses a critique of the competition principle prevalent elsewhere in society. For Adorno (*Ibid.*, 87), chamber music plays itself out as a societal utopia: a sphere of competition devoid of all aggression and evil. As to the subjectivization of the music, Adorno writes of the 20th-century hero Schoenberg as someone, in whose music the “totality, true to the historical level of the mind, starts from the individual, not from a plan of architecture” (Adorno 1983, 156). Similarly, writes of Schoenberg’s “objectification of subjectivity” that has its origin in the polyphony – a dimension of counterpoint – of his music (*Ibid.*, 156).

Here I make, in order to understand the ideological relationship between Adorno and Gould, a hermeneutic move in drawing thin equation marks between chamber music and polyphony. For the sake of my argument, imagine that, in the following commentary by Leppert (2002, 522) every “Adorno” were replaced by “Gould” and every “chamber music” by “counterpoint” – the paraphrase of the thought of both men, as far as the question of polyphony and counterpoint is concerned, is striking:

For Adorno chamber music, both as a sound and as a social phenomenon, was a site of momentary refuge, a place of promise, imagination, and perhaps memory, where another kind of individuality might be thought, seen, and indeed heard. In chamber music he located a space for a lost sociability, where each musical voice was heard by mutual consent, and where being heard was not defined by the competitive survival of the fittest, the loudest, the most clever. In chamber music, as a principle of musical organization, Adorno heard and saw musical conversation, musical give and take, musical sharing, musical support of intertwining voices: in short, an enactment of mutual respect and friendship. In chamber music Adorno could imagine the possibility of what otherwise seemed unavailable: a society that was actually social (or sociable). (Leppert 2002, 522.)

Chamber music and counterpoint, in Gould’s and Adorno’s thought, function as a musical signifier of a world that has no possibility of existing in modernity: a world of democracy, equality and altruism. Competition, authoritarianism, and a flashing display of virtuosity are incompatible with these sorts of ideals. True music, for Gould and Adorno, takes place in privacy, ideally as an ethical, abstract and contemplative undertaking. As Leppert (2002, 522) puts it, polyphony (and by extension, counterpoint), exemplified by chamber music, functions, for Adorno, as a musical enactment of “lost sociability,” of “musical conversation, musical give and take, musical sharing, musical support of intertwining voices: in short, an en-

actment of mutual respect and friendship.” In chamber music, Leppert argues, “Adorno could imagine the possibility of what otherwise seemed unavailable: a society that was actually social (or sociable).” (See also Bazzana (1997, 21-24; and Said 1991, 29; 2000, 6-8, 10-12). Counterpoint, even if originated in the pre-Enlightenment era dominated by the church, appears to “offer the most promising human possibilities of collective expression and discipline” (Subotnik 1991, 28). Gould certainly shared this Adorno’s respect for the independence of the components of counterpoint, as we’ve already seen.

Music as a Private Art Form

In the preceding chapter we saw how Gould sees technology as the means for bypassing music’s ultimate sociability and history – both manifest in music’s mediation in live concerts. Through technology, Gould argues, the listener has the potential of becoming an artist himself, of taking part in the perpetual process of music’s “becoming” and also of bracketing music’s “aura” – its historical, biographical and social context. This is exactly what Gould meant by the “suprahistorical” relationship to music brought about by technology. From an artist’s point of view, technology emancipates music from its real-time character, the limitations that the conventions of the concert-ritual pose to its unfolding, competition, theatrical over-interpretation and musical “show” which Gould seems to associate with all live performance.

On the face of it, Adorno's thoughts regarding technology seem opposite to Gould's. Just a little earlier we saw how Adorno saw radio as ultimately degrading the music by leading the listener into "atomistic listening," destroying the spatial quality of symphonic music, and ultimately bringing the listener into a position conditioned by the culture industry. In this issue, however, Adorno is thoroughly dialectical: technology has also positive sides for him.¹¹³

Here I am concerned with the issue most supportive of music technology for Adorno: music's privacy. In his *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, Adorno (1976, "Musical Life," 134) writes:

The phonograph record is closer to the listener due to several of its qualities. It is not tied to given programs but at the listener's disposal; the catalogs leave a greater freedom of choice. ... [A] record allows frequent repetition and can thus acquaint us more thoroughly with a work than the broadcast, which is mostly a one-time thing. ... [T]he medium of the record would enable us today to make all of musical literature available to all those willing to hear, and this potential abolition of educational privilege in music should socially outweigh the disadvantages which hoarding records as a hobby of an audience of consumers involves under present conditions.

Adorno seems to argue that one of the advantages of listening to music on records is that it allows a greater intimacy with the musical work than the one granted by the concert hall or radio transmission. The particular mode of listening that he, in the famous listener typology (Adorno 1976, 1-20), favours is "structural listening,"

¹¹³ The same dialectics are manifest in Adorno's critique of public concerts: even though he writes in one essay (1973, 10) that "the concert hall veneer of false interpretations and stereotyped audience reactions patterns must be destroyed" (1973, 10) and in another, that the listener is "really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the Toscanini concert" (2002b, 296) – it is hard to figure out what the most important form of music's mediation would be for him, if not public concerts.

which also seems to function as a metaphor for true understanding of music. The focus, in this mode of listening, is on the “logic of music”: the listener, as it were, understands every detail of music as necessary for the whole, tends to miss nothing and is also able to grasp everything (1976, 4-5). Listening to music structurally entails a type of real-time analysis of music, intellectual effort, which is a mentally active state of mind, not merely sensual pleasure.¹¹⁴

The idea of structural listening, in Adorno’s philosophy of music, is embedded in a larger distinction between two modes of listening that he conceptualizes with *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*. *Erfahrung* refers to rational contemplation and structural listening to music while *Erlebnis* is only about pleasure and fleeting sensations. In his *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno characterizes the former as an aesthetic act oriented towards aesthetic judgment. In this sense, *Erfahrung* is incompatible with the “regression of listening” brought about by the culture industry: it requires an independent, rational and contemplative mode of listening to music. *Erlebnis*, however, is only passing enjoyment which does not, for Adorno, satisfy the requirements of “immanent critique,” which true criticism is all about. *Erlebnis* is not, at the end of

¹¹⁴ Here Adorno subscribes to a particular historical discourse, which lays emphasis on the idea of listening to music as rational contemplation as opposed to mere enjoyment. As Eduard Hanslick (1986, 64–65) puts the same issue: “With every artistic pleasure, there is an indispensable intellectual aspect ... with predominantly intellectual people, it becomes nothing short of crucial ... without mental activity, there can be no aesthetical pleasure whatever.” Adorno’s structural listening requires a substantial musical competence: elaborating and dissecting the structural elements of Anton Webern’s *String Trio*, which Adorno gives as an example of structural listening, is something that I’ve managed to do only after an extended homework with the score of the work!

the day, genuinely about aesthetic pleasure; it's about something else. (Adorno 1997, 245.)

Ultimately structural listening, for Adorno, is about ethics. As Leppert (2002, 221) aptly comments on Adorno's thoughts regarding this issue, to enable the critical potential of any musical work to resist the commodifying and exploiting forces around it, the reception of music has to correspond to the requirements it poses on the listener. In short, music has to locate its true meaning within its structure rather than on its sonic surface. In order to be serious music, then, it has to pose intellectual challenge rather than sensual pleasure for the listener.

It is noteworthy that music's ability to resist the Culture industry is located in music's structure. In taking this position, Adorno is in good company. Intellectuals such as Eduard Hanslick, and Heinrich Schenker saw the ontology of music as dialectics between surface and structure, corresponding to the "fleeting sensations" and true "aesthetic judgment" as the two extremes of the experience of music. For Adorno, all this is related to art's critical function in relation to society: the structure of music, Adorno argues, is what's "anti-barbaric" – through its very structure, music "imitates – through mimesis – the social structure that it criticizes through its very existence. (Adorno 1997, 143.)¹¹⁵ Even though the musical struc-

¹¹⁵ The philosophical basis on which Adorno builds his aesthetic theory here is Kant's argument of the structure of any given artwork as the ground of the aesthetic experience it brings about. Consider Kant's (1790/2000, 214) argument that "in all beautiful art the essential thing is the form.... [T]he essential element is not the matter of sensation (charm of emotion) which has only to do with enjoyment; this leaves behind nothing in

tures, for Adorno, are “given” historical circumstances in which composers go about composing their artworks, they are also the domain through which music “turns inwards” to its own formal processes. This focus on structural integrity is the only way in which art can retain its critical function in society.

Adorno’s ideal of structural listening brackets the whole sonorous surface of music as secondary to its structure (Subotnik 1996, 161–162). The sonority of music, Adorno seems to think, is the very element of music through which music turns into entertainment and liquidates into harmless “pleasure.” This became obvious already earlier in the context of Adorno’s radio critique: when Beethoven’s symphony turns into sheer sonority, a medley of recognizable tunes, this false reproduction of the potentially critical structural whole distorts the essence of music. Ideally, the listener does not pay attention to the composer of the music; as Adorno (2002a, 262–265) puts it in his “Radio Symphony” essay, even knowing the composer of the music can be a disturbing factor in the act of contemplation.¹¹⁶ Adorno takes this view into its extreme in his essay on Schoenberg in *Prisms*:

Mature music becomes suspicious of real sound as such. Similarly, with the realization of the ‘subcutaneous’, the end of musical interpretation becomes conceivable. The silent, imaginative reading of music could render actual playing as superfluous as, for instance, speaking is made by the reading of written material; such a practice could at the same time save music from the

the Idea, and it makes the spirit dull, the object gradually distasteful, and the mind, on account of its consciousness of a disposition that conflicts with purpose in the judgment of Reason, discontented with itself and peevish.”

¹¹⁶ Compare this with Gould’s (1990, 341) statement: “The determination of the value of a work of art according to the information available about it is a most delinquent form of aesthetic appraisal.”

abuse inflicted upon the compositional content by virtually every performance today. (1983, "Arnold Schoenberg, 1874–1951," 169.)

According to Adorno, Webern's music, characterized by an "aura" of an "inclination to silence," points to a future state of affairs, in which not only music but all art will vanish: "Its ultimate result, however, can only be that artistic maturity and intellectualization abolish not only sensuous appearance. but with it, art itself" (Ibid., 169-170).

Look familiar? Gould (1974/1990, 324), as seen earlier, spoke in a vein very similar to Adorno's about art as ideally "phasing itself out" and as a "potentially harmful" institution: since art in the modern world unfolds within an institution penetrated by the Culture industry, an individual gets no chance at an individual relationship with art and is left with no choice other than social conformism. The ways out of this situation are totally different for Gould and Adorno: the latter withdraws to his armchair reading a score, Gould retreats to his recording studio. Both, however, relate to the sonic surface of music as a potential site of exploitation by the world outside.

There is also a surprising meeting of minds between the two men as far as music technology is concerned. Adorno who in retreating to "silent reading" withdraws from technological mediation, warns on the one hand (2002b, 288-317) about the danger of technologically mediated music's changing into a commodity and a reified, purchasable "thing." On the other hand, however, he writes that through recordings, the listener has the potential to get closer to music, to listen to it structurally. Recording also "saves" musical genres from being obsolete: in his essay "Opera and the Long-Playing Record," Adorno writes

of opera as an outdated relic, which through recordings gains a “new life” which as stage productions is impossible (Adorno 2002f, 283-286).

One can get a fresh perspective into Adorno’s seemingly contradictory arguments regarding technology by pointing out the distinction that he makes between the *potential* and the *consequences* of technology. In one of his essays, Adorno (2002g, 278) argues that listening to music as a “substitute for music” is not as ideological as accepting that the phonograph record changes music into an object that one can purchase, sell and destroy. A record is at its best as a medium that documents, i.e. “records,” music albeit devoid of its best quality. This “best quality” is the “music itself,” which was already in existence before the record – and ideally not touched by it.

It seems as though Adorno tries to have it both ways here. Technology, he argues, turns music into a “thing”; yet “the music itself” is non-material, something that is not reducible to any concrete object. This same dialectic plays itself out in his arguments *pro* and *contra* technology. Private contemplation of recordings takes the listener away from the ideological social sphere; yet Adorno’s arch-enemy Toscanini produces interpretations that “sound like their own phonograph record” in their “barbarism of perfection.” I don’t have another way out of this contradiction but to reason that Adorno wants to separate the “music itself,” as a potential sphere of utopia and social freedom, from musical works, which cannot escape being mediated by recording technology. One could argue that Adorno is pessimistic in his views, but he is obviously also a pragmatist: since true authenticity, so to speak, has become impossible in the music world penetrated by culture

industry, recordings can, Adorno seems to argue, still embody, or at least “remember” some of the foregone “spirit” of serious music destroyed by the commodification of music by culture industry. At times Adorno seems to subscribe to Gould’s view of concerts as a relic from past times: “There is no doubt that, as music is removed by the phonograph record from the realm of live production and from the imperative of artistic activity and becomes petrified, it absorbs into itself, in this process of petrification, the very life that would otherwise vanish” (Ibid., 279).

In his essay “On the Social Situation of Music,” Adorno (2002e, 391) argues that music no longer “serves direct needs nor benefits from direct application, but rather adjusts to the pressures of the exchange of abstract units.” Music’s value within the Culture industry becomes synonymous with its use value; any intrinsic value has become impossible in market economy.¹¹⁷

In this kind of situation recording, for Adorno, plays itself out as serious music’s “last chance” to become meaningful in the modern world – in spite of all the commodification and fetishization that recording brings about. Viewed together, Adorno’s critical view complements Gould’s naive optimism about technology: while Gould sees the potential of technology as located altogether outside Culture industry, commercial interests and commodification of music, Adorno looks at technology as the last way out from Culture industry – and yet not one safe from its impact. It is noteworthy, however, that both men

¹¹⁷ Here we can see the difference that Adorno and Benjamin have in discussing the “use value” of art. As we saw earlier, Benjamin calls “use value” of art as such that it is beneficial to the audience. Adorno, by contrast, uses the term as something that degrades art, in determining its exchange value. I thank Rose Rosengard Subotnik for this observation.

associate recording with similar kinds of emancipatory aspects: recording makes possible a more intimate, personal and analytic relationship to music than concerts. Furthermore, the listener can get to know a wide array of different music through recordings in the sphere of his privacy.

One can get a whole new perspective on Gould's ideas of music as an artform ideally existing in the listener's privacy by looking at them through Adorno's music philosophy. To do this, however, one needs to tackle an important issue that is at the heart of the thinking of both men: the problem of modernity.

The Challenge of the Modern

What do the "modern" and "modernity" signify for Adorno? Looking at his philosophy as a whole, one gets a kind of picture of an intellectual writing from a "post-history" perspective, at the "ground zero" of technological, moral and intellectual development in the western world. It is from this kind of position that Adorno's pessimistic, disillusioned and perhaps even cynical philosophy unfolds. As Leppert (2002, 513-514) puts it, Adorno's thought is characterized by an idea of modernity as a kind of "permanent" crisis resulting from the betrayal of the emancipatory promises given by the 19th-century industrial revolution and modernity. The modernity that Adorno had in mind was a distortion of the noble ideals of modernity of the French revolution – a catastrophic world of alienated individuals.

Martin Jay (1984, 37) sees two basic elements as constructive in this process in Adorno's philosophy. First of all, rationality in and of itself plays itself out as an imminently destructive potential, which has become actualized through the economy of exchange in market capitalism and has led to art's becoming only a unit in this exchange. This notion, we recall, is at the heart of Adorno's critique of Culture industry: music, ideally a non-material, utopian and critical art form, has turned into a marketable commodity.

Second, Jay argues that the rational control of "nature," for Adorno, has led to distortion – the control over human subjects, in a word reification, of which the fascism of the 1930's and 1940's was a good example. In the Third Reich which smashed his life in Europe, Adorno saw the manifestation of "barbarism," the dialectical counterpole of "progress," promised by the Enlightenment. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno and Horkheimer write about fascism as a kind of regressive return of the mythical "nature," taken over by instrumental rationality, and penetrated by anti-civilization in the guise of rationality.

This kind of ideological background plays itself out in Adorno's critique of modern music as well. It could be argued that Adorno is, at the heart of his music philosophy, a modernist but a very selective one. Schoenberg, Berg, Stravinsky, Webern – those names include almost comprehensively the modernist 20th-century composers whom Adorno treated in his writings.

The depth, sophistication and metaphorical richness of Adorno's thought, however, makes up for its apparent narrowness. Just as he hears various "voices" of "subjects" in music, one could argue that he "subjectivizes" whole historical periods – the time of "modern music" is a good case in point. For Adorno, Schoenberg is a crucially important composer of the 20th century because his music actively resists the commodification and economic exploitation of the Culture industry. Interestingly, Adorno does not value Schoenberg because he was the "innovator" of serialism; rather he sees Schoenberg as a composer with a critical relationship to tradition and future alike. Schoenberg, in Adorno's eyes, sees his music as rooted in the (Austro-German) tradition while also taking off from it.

It is a curious co-incidence – if, indeed, that's what it is – that the dialectical juxtaposition of Stravinsky and Schoenberg is discussed in both Gould's and Adorno's writings. As far the latter is concerned, the best place to look at this juxtaposition is his *Philosophy of Modern Music* (1973), which gives a good picture of what "modernity" means in his thought.

Before separate chapters on both Schoenberg and Stravinsky, Adorno gives his sketch of the state of modern music. As one can imagine, the picture is downright bleak: the whole history of modern music after the World War I is history of decay, a kind of regression into traditionalism (1973, 5). "Radical music," exemplified by Schoenberg, has become alienated from its listeners and society, and Adorno (1973, 6) sees the otherwise prevailing *status quo* as a moral and social "pretense for a false peace" with the surrounding

cultural and societal context. In his typical polemic tone, Adorno accuses “Hindemith’s generation” of doing away with everything musically distasteful and falling prey to routine neo-academism (Ibid.).¹¹⁸

As far as listening to music is concerned, Adorno maps out the situation in modernity in exceptionally clear Marxist terms: it is characterized by “false musical consciousness” everywhere. This situation means that all criteria that separate “good” from “bad” in music have ceased to exist and outright dilettantes have come to be seen as “great composers.” Culture industry raises to the fore such composers as Jean Sibelius and Edward Elgar, neither of whom Adorno favors, and there is an obvious disjuncture between prevailing standards of taste and quality. Musicians have fallen into the temptation of playing only music that is in the vogue, and an uncritical mode of musicianship pervades the profession; older music loses its critical potential in the process as well. (Ibid., 7-10.)

This music’s alienation from the world outside has led to stereotypical assertions of modern music taken for granted by the audience. One example is the idea that new music is particularly “intellectual,” that it does not “come from the heart,” and that it has nothing to do with sensual pleasure but only with theoretical and intellectual speculation (Ibid., 11). All this manifests in a growing indifference towards music; the “truth” of even

¹¹⁸ In the same category with Hindemith, Adorno (1973, 6) also includes a number of other composers: “These impotent late heirs to a traditional hostility towards true originality resemble one another everywhere in their feeble mixture of compositional facility and helplessness. Shostakovich, unjustly reprimanded as a cultural Bolshevik by the authorities of his home country; the facile pupils of Stravinsky’s pedagogical supervision; the triumphant meagerness of Benjamin Britten – all these have in common a taste for tastelessness, a simplicity resulting from ignorance, an immaturity which masks as enlightenment, and a dearth of technical means.” (Ibid., 7.)

“radical” music, its potential for social critique, dissolves as music becomes solely a commodity for market exchange.

How does this relate to Gould? It is obvious that modernity, in Gould’s writings, unfolds as a very different concept from Adorno’s take on the term. For Gould, the modern world plays itself out as the realm of emancipatory potential provided by technology. “Modernity” for Gould is a time in which the services of the radio and the long-playing record have proven successful in their intrinsically moral mission to mediate music to a contemplative audience (Goehr 1998, 133). In this modern mode of listening to music, contemplation takes place without the interference of the musician and thereby leads, in Gould’s own words, to a kind of technologically mediated “ecstasy” within the listener’s privacy.

On the other hand, however, Gould does not accept all elements that we normally associate with modernism. Throughout his writings, he departs from that conception of the “modern” in which “being musically up-to-date” is seen as important. This is one point on which Gould and Adorno part ways – even though Adorno is not as straightforward in his presentations as, say, intellectual composers such as Pierre Boulez (1990, 445-463) or Milton Babbitt (1984, 529-534), still many of his writings display the following argument: a contemporary composer, in order to be authentic and “truthful” to the aesthetic and ethical demands of his profession, must work with the musical material of his time and thus to draw on the critical potential of contemporary musical language, with its capacity for societal *mimesis*. As Paddison (1997, 188-189) puts it, in Adorno’s thought both composing and musical material are ultimately socially mediated, and for this reason

the composer's relationship to his/her societal context is manifest in the musical material he/she uses in the musical works. Here's what Adorno (1973, 36) has to say in his own words about the effect on the composer of honoring the imperatives of contemporary material:

He loses that freedom on a grand scale which idealistic aesthetics is accustomed to grant to the artist. He is no longer a creator. It is not that times and society impose external restrictions upon him; it is rather the rigid demands for compositional accuracy made upon him by his structure which limits him. (Adorno 1973, 36.)

For Gould, as we've seen, any idea of music's "contemporaneity" is totally foreign. For him, Richard Strauss's music, just to mention one example, represented the ultimate "argument for individuality" in its ability to create a stylistic "synthesis" of all music by not being in the least bound to a surrounding aesthetic *Zeitgeist* (Gould 1962a/1990, 92). This conviction is, of course, in harmony with Gould's general idea of the artificiality of the "system" – tradition, conventions and norms – in music and his conviction that truly creative work can only be done in the sphere of "negativity" outside the system. For Gould, all universally valuable creative work is in a certain sense "timeless" and independent of any idea of artistic "progress." In the previous chapter I ended up labeling Gould's ahistorical views of art's aesthetic value as "proto-postmodern." In the same breath, however, it should be pointed out that Gould's view here is not completely coherent. While he seems to depart from the linear and progressive conception of history, at times he seems to have no problems in committing himself to relatively progressivist views on some composers he admires. Nowhere is this dilemma more obvious than in his arguments about Arnold Schoenberg's music.

Schoenberg and Stravinsky

For Gould, Arnold Schoenberg's music and his aesthetic world-view seem to have been an important yardstick for his own development as a musician. Gould recorded all Schoenberg's vocal music, a major part of the piano music, and a number of chamber music works. Ghyslaine Guertin (1998, 7-29) has proposed that through all his radio and television programs, writings and recordings, Gould in fact was busy building his own self-image and identity as a critical musician and intellectual. This argument is, I think, highly plausible: In Schoenberg's music Gould emphasizes all the musical values he held dear: analytic grasp of music, logic, counterpoint, romantic ethos, artistic non-conformism and auto-didact musical background.

All these characteristics are prominent in Gould's musical worldview. As early as 1956, Gould (1956/2003, 49) admits that his own String Quartet was influenced by Schoenberg's music. In his radio documentary series on Schoenberg in 1974, Gould expresses his keenness for the composer's mode of grasping music. Gould wrote that the particular way Schoenberg elaborated his own music and combined analysis with interpretation¹¹⁹ had a "huge impact" on Gould's own musical thought (Gould 1974/2004, 10).

¹¹⁹ Schoenberg's (1984, 319) own ideal of music interpretation is highly "Gouldian": "The highest principle for all reproduction of music would have to be that what the composer has written is made to sound in such a way that every note is really heard, and that all the sounds ... are in such relationship to each other that no part at any moment obscures another, but, on the contrary, makes its contribution towards ensuring that they all stand out clearly from one another."

As Bazzana (2003, 90-93) argues, Gould saw in Schoenberg's analytic conception of music a kind of "timeless" ideal that in Gould's mind applied to all music and was not tied to a progressive idea of history. Gould, just like Schoenberg, committed himself to the Austro-German canon, through his repertoire and also to some extent in his aesthetic views. Gould also adapted the negativity towards Italian and French music that also shows up in German 19th-century music philosophy (more about these in the next chapter).

Schoenberg is ultimately as much a composer of "ecstasy" for Gould as is Bach: while the latter's "magnificent indifference to any particular sonority" is a proof of the composer's "universality" (Gould 1972/1990, 21), Schoenberg, too, – even in his compositions for piano – cannot be accused of writing the music with an instrument on mind (Gould 1966b/1990, 123). For Gould this characteristic is an undeniable aesthetic merit in his music.

Igor Stravinsky, on the other hand, is Gould's eternal *bête noire* throughout his writings – and in some cases for reasons that he shares, interestingly, with Adorno. In Gould's eyes, Stravinsky lacks personal authenticity as a composer, a lack manifested in his stylistic *oeuvre*. This quality Gould associates with the "Russian problem":

But what is this indecision of Stravinsky's relation with the world – what are the adoptions and renouncements of vows from one decade to another – what are the bursts of enthusiasm and then the sudden cooling or ardor for a certain experience of the past – if not in a certain way the quintessence of the Russian spiritual problem? (1964b/1990, 181.)

In Patricia Moore's interview, Gould (1964a/1999, 198) argues that Stravinsky is a composer who, through his music, wishes to "shock for the sake of being shocking" and that there is plenty of *enfant terrible* in his character as a composer.¹²⁰ The most "Adornian" argument against Stravinsky, however, applies to the latter's aesthetic relationship with the thoroughly historical musical material.

He uses the Classical forms of the eighteenth century and he turns them inside out, not because of some restoration of a technical tradition for which he turns to them, but simply to be shocking, simply to be irritating and annoying to a degree. ... What he lacks, I think, is a certain consistency, starting from himself. He has never really uncovered the total character of himself. (1964a/1999, 198-199.)¹²¹

Adorno's critique of Stravinsky is in many respects relatively similar to Gould's. Stravinsky's stylistic chameleon practice and his apparent attraction to "shocking" through music draw Adorno's attention too (see Adorno 1973, 137). At the heart of Adorno's critique, however, is a broader issue, one related to music's critical function. While Schoenberg's music, in Adorno's ears, is based on an introverted, withdrawn subjectivity, Stravinsky's music does not identify with the individual but rather with the oppressive, "destructive element" of society (1973, 142-143). For Adorno, Stravinsky's success speaks for the liquidation of individuality in the face of the hegemony of the social collective. Schoenberg's music expresses the last effort at individuality, while Stravinsky

¹²⁰ I wonder if Gould ever looked in the mirror after these kinds of statements!

¹²¹ Pierre Boulez's critique of Stravinsky is very similar to Schoenberg's and Gould's: "He always liked manipulating any musical objects upon which he came even if they were in future to be museum objects. He had an almost childlike curiosity in taking any toy to pieces – and that toy might be a musical masterpiece – and then showed an almost unsophisticated delight in putting it together again "differently," giving it an individual significance. In this way he "collected" a number of historical objects, choosing elements from them that he needed for his own purposes, and in any order he pleased." (Boulez 1990, 356.) I thank Rose Subotnik for bringing this excerpt to my attention.

mainly goes along with the societal and ideological *status quo*. This difference, for Adorno, matters enormously in the ideological ethos of the music, and has to do with the whole emancipatory and utopian function of music, which Stravinsky abandons.

In the *Rite of Spring*, for instance, Adorno hears in Stravinsky's music a manifestation of an adrenalin-tinged total destruction of a suffering individual, musically manifested by rhythmic repetition and primitive ritual. Stravinsky's music expresses a psychologically pathological condition: self-absorbed hebephreny, coldness, lack of empathy, and false objectification – in a word, musically expressed false ideology. Stravinsky and Schoenberg represented for Adorno the two extreme positions in the moral and ethical “degree zero” of the Western world of the 1930's. As Sharma (2000, 61) observes, Adorno associates Stravinsky's music with the anti-humanism prevalent in Nazism¹²² while Schoenberg's music shows the dark destiny of individuality within thoroughly administered, socially oppressive modern society. The difference between Stravinsky and Schoenberg, then, is ultimately that between conformism and opportunism on one hand, and intellectual criticism on the other.

As far as modernism and the challenge it posed to the artist are concerned, Adorno and Gould clearly operate in different discursive frameworks. For Gould, “modernity” is mostly an epoch, an age of technology, wherein the conditions in which we create, listen

¹²² Even though Adorno (1998, 148) explicitly argues in *Quasi una Fantasia* that “it is the act of a philistine to confuse the objective form of a work of art with the psyche of the man who created it,” it is difficult to avoid the impression – even at the risk of simplifying things just a bit – that Stravinsky's public support of fascism is an important element in the background of Adorno's harsh criticism of his music.

to and compose music have changed for good. Adorno's conception of "modernity" by contrast emphasizes morality, civilization and power, and music can't escape its irrevocable ties to any of these. The fact that Gould always chooses to discuss these issues in the abstract – through his criticism of the competition principle, the "system" canons of the music world, and the cult of individuality – proves his willingness to dissociate his music-making from social reality. Technology seems at times to bridge the gap between the social and musical, but looked at more closely, it turns out that the world Gould's writing about is that of a technological *utopia*, a world in which technology is a solution to all problems.

But in spite of all differences, it is still of interest to note that for both Gould and Adorno, Schoenberg and Stravinsky make up the dialectical extremes of 20th-century modernity. Schoenberg, for both men, represents criticism, morality and intellectual integrity, while Stravinsky is the scapegoat because of his opportunism, conformism and lack of artistic (and hence moral) integrity. All this, for both Gould and Adorno, plays itself out as a continuous intellectual struggle to define the ontology of "modernity" and the ethical challenges it poses for a critical intellectual and an artist alike. For neither of these men is music-making is "innocent"; ideally, rather, it is an intellectually and morally critical, yet constructive, undertaking.

The Idea of Criticism

What does criticism, as a philosophical concept, mean for Adorno? To answer this question, one needs to keep in mind the broader context of his philosophy – the idea that music has, since the 19th century, detached itself from society into an autonomous sphere, which has brought about a certain discrepancy of meaning with the world outside. More simply, since music has become an autonomous historical, social and aesthetic discourse in modernity, its general comprehensibility and communication with the world have become problematized.

Through this kind of historical process, the critical interpretation of music has gained a particular function: to make music meaningful in the modern world. As Rose Rosengard Subotnik (1991, 52) has argued regarding Adorno's conception of the criticism of music, it seems as if for Adorno the term criticism inherited what was seen as the task of art itself in the 19th century: "to resupply the wholeness and meaning of a lost divine order," through language. According to Subotnik, the ontological relation between music and its truthful scholarly criticism could be seen as complementary. In Adorno's mind, criticism itself, in order to do justice to its subject, should "simulate" music as an aesthetic structure. Through this kind of undertaking, it becomes possible to bring the musical experience into the very domain of language, by creating a critical hermeneutic framework in which musical allusion and verbal interpretation are seen as so thoroughly intertwined as to virtually preclude seeing them as separate elements (Ibid., 51). From this point of departure stems a paradox: two media, which both have lost their transparent meaning in society, can through criticism regain, only if momentarily, their full potential of meaning.

This entails that music becomes “up-to-date”: a truly critical interpretation of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, for Adorno, would have to

break through the aura of irrelevant worship which protectively surrounds it and thereby perhaps to contribute something to an authentic aesthetic experience of it beyond the paralyzing respect of the academic sphere. This attempt necessarily requires criticism as its medium. ... This effort is not one of *debunking*, of tearing down recognized greatness for the sake of tearing something down. ... Instead, criticism with regard to a work of such demand and with regard to the total *oeuvre* of Beethoven, can only be a means of penetrating the work. It is the fulfillment of a duty vis-à-vis the work and not a means of gaining malicious satisfaction from knowing that once again there is one less great work in the world. (Adorno 2002c, 570.)

Culture critique, for Adorno, is never positioned from “above” its object or seen as located in its own semi-autonomous cultural sphere – this kind of hypothesis he calls the “false emancipation” of culture criticism (1983, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” 21). Rather Adorno speaks for “immanent critique,” the point of departure of which is located in the work of art itself – not, for instance, in a legitimized institution of art’s public commentary – and the function of which is to bring to the fore the “truth content.” From this it follows that since art, in Adorno’s view, is the mediated expression of the conflicts and human suffering in the modern era, the true function of criticism is to unmask this art’s nature as riddled with societal conflicts – and finally unmask its “ideological” nature in the modern world. For Adorno (1983, 30), the function of criticism is ultimately to “decipher the general social tendencies” that are embedded in musical works. At this point I have to make one important point: even though Adorno often implies that the task of criticism is to interpret music in a relation to its social context, this relation is not seen as direct; thus art does not “reflect” the society around it but rather embeds the tensions and conflicts within its own material.

At the heart of Adorno's argumentation here is the concept of *mimesis*, which he uses in an exceptional way, one that deviates radically from the tradition in which the term is used in the history of aesthetics.¹²³ In Adorno's philosophy, *mimesis* refers to the ways in which music "assimilates" the administered and rationalized world outside, paradoxically to protect itself from the corruptive impact of the world. In addition to this already complex and contradictory theory of music's social character Adorno makes one more important distinction: music does not "imitate" reality as a *thing* but rather as a *process*, that of increasing rationalization penetrating a whole society. Thus in Adorno's mind the only way for modern art to aim at emancipation from the instrumental reason and totalizing tendencies prevalent in society is to operate with the same means of rationalization as the very forces that threaten its status as *art*, within the domain of potential *utopia*.

Of the concept of "culture" itself Adorno (1983, "Cultural Criticism and Society," 23) makes a surprising observation: "[T]he greatest fetish of cultural criticism is the notion of culture as such."¹²⁴ This somewhat paradoxical statement is explained by Adorno's idea that an assumption of "culture" as a "harmonious" and unitary whole distorts by default any form of culture critique that departs from that assumption. This position is shared by both Gould and Adorno. For Gould, it entails regarding the idea of "negation" as an emancipatory possibility located outside the "system" of art-institution. Here's a telling quote from one of his writings:

¹²³ For a more detailed discussion of Adorno's concept of *mimesis* see Paddison 1997, 140–141).

¹²⁴ In his own copy of Adorno's *Prisms* Gould marked this particular passage in brackets.

The implication of the negative in our lives reduces by comparison every other concept that man has toyed with in the history of thought. It is the concept which seeks to make us better – to provide us with structures within which our thought can function – while at the same time it concedes our frailty, the need that we have for this barricade behind which the uncertainty, the fragility, the tentativeness of our systems can look for logic. ... When people who practice an art like music become captives of those positive assumptions of system, when they forget to credit that happening against negation which system is, and when they become disrespectful of the immensity of negation compared to system – then they put themselves out of reach of that replenishment of invention upon which creative ideas depend, because invention is, in fact, a cautious dipping into the negation that lies outside system from a position firmly ensconced in system. (Gould 1964a/1990, 4-5.)

It is this outside-ness of cultural criticism that ties both Gould's and Adorno's ideas together and also makes a context within which the function of criticism can be further understood. According to Gould (1964a/1990, 3) the "most impressive" thing that has been invented and that separates humans from all brutality is a concept for that "which does not exist." By this Gould refers to the idea of "negation," the potential of true creativity located in the sphere of personal authenticity, by definition never in the sphere of social and institutional.¹²⁵ According to Adorno (1983, 28), moreover, seeing the concept of "culture" as a unitary whole "deprives it of the ferment which is its very truth – negation." Taking the principle of negation as its starting point, cultural criticism tackles its object until the very idea of "culture" is negated, fulfilled and transcended. (Ibid., 29.)

In Adorno's philosophy of music, the idea of "negativity" is embedded in the dialectical structure of that philosophy. There's no denying the fact, however, that any comparison with Gould's conception of the term is challenged by the disparity of complexity between

¹²⁵ In his 1973 letter to a young composer, William Clark, Gould (GGA 21, 19, 20) says this: "I do feel quite convinced that one's creativity is enhanced primarily by a more-or-less single-minded pursuit of one's own resources without reference to the trends, tastes, fashions, etc. Of the world outside."

the philosophical thought of the two men; Adorno's argumentation is by far more challenging for hermeneutic interpretation. For Gould, "negativity" refers to the creative sphere outside institutions, canons and conventions, a sphere of an artist's creative freedom. For Adorno, however, negativity is an element of his epistemology, associated with such concepts as non-identity and negative dialectics, and would require a more thorough summary than the one given here.¹²⁶ My interpretation of "negativity" in Adorno's and Gould's thought lays emphasis on two broad ideas important for both of them: first, any act of interpretation of music – considered as intellectual, critical, and fundamentally ethical undertaking – by definition takes place outside the confines of institutions, canons and conventions. Second, these kinds of critical hermeneutic inquiries into music are an immanent part of the music's mediation itself and thus an aesthetically complementary, or perhaps even an intrinsic, so to speak, aspect of the unfolding meanings.

For both Gould and Adorno, the "institutions" of art are not the same. Adorno's essay "Bach Defended Against His Devotees" in *Prisms*, for instance, could be read as a critical voice against the authenticity movement prevalent in the 1960's in Europe and the U.S. Gould, however, was disturbed, on the one hand, by the obsession with historical authenticity, as well as by an unwavering support for orthodoxy in musical interpretation; and

¹²⁶ See Jay 1984 for a more detailed commentary of these two terms in Adorno's philosophy.

on the other hand, by a cultural worship of “stars” such as Vladimir Horowitz.¹²⁷ in Classical music.

The association of “negativity” and creativity as something located outside the “system” of music functions in a very particular way in Gould’s thought: the rejection of concert institution, competitiveness, aesthetic canons and musical communality. All these are out there building up the “system” of Classical music, a distortive and “artificial” ideological base of musical interpretation.¹²⁸ “Negativity” is the way out of all this – a metaphor referring to an isolated, independent, and creative mode of musical creation which Gould regarded as essential.¹²⁹ I think the full understanding of this metaphor is also essential for any understanding of Gould’s music-making and its intellectual-ethical basis.

In most of his writings, Gould situates “art” outside social and historical frames. For instance, in the “Music in the Soviet Union” essay, Gould (1964d/1990, 171) explicitly sees

¹²⁷ For Gould’s parody of Horowitz, see Roberts & Guertin 1992, 93; for his distaste for Horowitz’s public character and personality, see Friedrich 1990, 238–241; Ostwald 1998, 222–223; and Bazzana 2003, 101–102).

¹²⁸ Edward Said (2000, 9) proposes an alternative interpretation of Gould’s conception of “negativity.” For Said, Gould’s “negativity” refers simply to the “world outside music.” I think that the weaknesses of Said’s arguments are, first of all, that the double-meaning of “art” – as both a degrading institution and a sphere of creative freedom – in Gould’s thought, is thereby deprived of critical attention. Secondly, Gould himself implicitly wanted to do away with barriers between music and the surrounding world, and thus it would make no sense to see “negativity” referring to something which plays no role in Gould’s conception of art: For a psychoanalytic reading of Gould’s “negativity,” see McKinnon 2001, 158–159.

¹²⁹ This seems to be one of the few arguments that Gould never changed his mind about. As early as 1961, addressing an audience of children in Vancouver Music Festival, Gould says that “one can only really be faithful in making music to themselves” (1961/2003, 57).

art as ideally separate from society, situated in an autonomous sphere. Art can flourish only if allowed its own independence outside communality and sociability. “Art,” as an institution, is not even necessary for Gould: as you may recall, he wanted to give it the possibility of “phasing itself out” because of its “potentially destructive” effect for its audience at large (1974/1990, 324).

Ultimately, however, despite Gould’s occasional quasi-sociological commentary, it has to be admitted that he did not have a tenable theory of music’s relation to society. Gould, in fact, is surprisingly ignorant of any particular society; rather it is the question of art’s relation to creativity, history and individuality that interests him. Nowhere is this conviction expressed with more eloquence than in Gould’s (GGA, 32, 6, 13) letter to John Roberts. Gould writes of art as being essentially an “anti-world experience,” and this status is inseparable from music’s aesthetic value: “All music which lacks that ability to isolate its listeners from the world in which they live is intrinsically less valuable than one which manages the feat.”

Gould’s Criticism at Work: Case Mozart

In spite of the obvious similarities between Gould and Adorno, Gould has to be seen first and foremost as a populizer of music rather than as a full-fledged philosopher. Most of his writings were written for a large reading public and published in popular reviews and magazines. Unlike Adorno, Gould very seldom wrote for scholars and intellectuals – with the exception of a few articles, such as “Forgery and Imitation in the Creative Process”

and “Prospects of Recording” targeted at readers with some background in the intellectual history and aesthetics of music. Even in these essays, Gould’s profile is not that of a rigorous scholar and intellectual, but rather that of an intuitive artist who “fancied being an intellectual” (Bazzana 1997, 258).

For this reason Gould’s “Adornian” musicianship, together with his idea of the interpretation of music as criticism, has to be looked at on a more practical level as well, through the actual recordings he made. Within Gould’s *oeuvre*, criticism enters into practice nowhere more explicitly than in his sounding and literary commentary of Mozart’s music. Gould’s extremely provocative view of Mozart was that he was at best a mediocre composer who died “rather too late than early.” In Mozart’s music, Gould is bothered with many things. In Bruno Monsaingeon’s “interview” – Gould had scripted the whole thing – Gould (1976/1990, 32-43) writes about a certain “theatricality,” manifested by structurally ungrounded sforzandos, prevalent in Mozart’s music,¹³⁰ which Gould sees morally and aesthetically suspicious.¹³¹ Gould is also bothered by the homophony of Mozart’s style, which Gould is trying to “make up for” in his recordings by accentuating and lengthening some notes over others (see Bazzana 1997, 145; Gould’s justification for this practice, see 1976/1990, 36). Gould was not exactly praised for this practice – B.H. Hag-

¹³⁰ Mozart was by no means the only composer whose music Gould recorded but obviously disliked. Jean Sibelius’s *Kyllikki*, for instance, Gould (1978/1996, 11) characterized as a “silly” piece of banal salon music. See also Gould’s (1970/1990, 53) comments of Beethoven’s *Appassionata* as reflective of the composer’s “egoistic pomposity.”

¹³¹ Gould poses the same criticism to Scarlatti’s music, also a composer whose music he recorded and performed in public. In the music, Gould suffers from the “empty gestures,” “theatricality” and a certain “worldly and hedonistic quality” (Gould 1980/2002, 7).

gin, for instance, put down Gould's recording of the c-minor concerto (KV 491): "Mozart's homophonic writing is not unrealized contrapuntal writing; and the practices with which Gould attempts to make it contrapuntal flaw his performance" (Haggin 1962a). Gould's overall judgment of Mozart's music is that it's too redundant, empty and full of clichés of the Viennese Classical style. This last complaint is explicit in many Gould's manuscripts for a radio- or television program under the title "Why Mozart is a Bad Composer." This program was never realized,¹³² but Gould circulated parts of his manuscript into his other writings.

According to Gould, Mozart is a "bad composer" because he failed to compose structurally integral works but instead fell into pathological redundancy in his musical style. This tendency applies also in later works: in Gould's mind, Mozart had taken the exploitation of the tonal system into such extremes that his last works become, in fact, encyclopedias of musical clichés (GGA 18, 30, 4). Among these clichés was a certain improvisatory impression that Mozart's keyboard music often, according to Gould, gives to the listener; Gould argues indeed that a certain "arrogant quasi-improvisatory escapism" was Mozart's main mode of musical expression (GGA 18, 28, 3). Gould never held much respect for improvisation; in his ears, it was a musical domain prone to idiomatic automatism and empty musical formulas devoid of real content. This is also the bottom line of Gould's criticism of Mozart's music – he argued that even in his best-known works, Mo-

¹³² At least not under this title, but some parts of the manuscript found their way into public. This becomes obvious in the correspondence between the Boston music critic B.H. Haggin and Gould. In a 1968 letter from Haggin, he criticizes Gould for characterizing the musical style of KV 491 in a television program as "mechanical clichés like inter-office memos," the exact phrase that Gould uses in the manuscript. Haggin challenges Gould's view of the work in his review published in *New Republic* (Haggin 1962b).

zart was in the grips of a “glib, improvisatory attitude” and based his music on a very simple maxim: “when in doubt, write a sequence” (GGA 18, 19, 3). The “over-tamed” diatonicism and “statistical predictability” of Mozart’s musical style made Gould (Ibid.) characterize the *Magic Flute* as the most “narcissistic opera between Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* (1607) and Richard Strauss’s *Friedenstag*” (1938). In Gould’s eyes, Mozart was always too prone to clavieristic “hedonism,” displaying his quasi-improvisatory ability at keyboard virtuosity – instead of working on a particular musical problem (GGA 18, 26, 3-4).

Theatricality, improvisation, stylistic redundancy, virtuosity – those were the pitfalls of Mozart’s music in Gould’s ears. The improvisatory element, for Gould, was clearly proof of music’s structural inconsistency not only in Mozart but in all music – his argument was that within an “improvisatory moment” no musician can be in control of the structure of the whole (Gould 1966/2002, 50). It looks as if Gould associated improvisation with the same kind of adrenalin-tinged spontaneity in musical expression that so bothered him. The recording studio provided a way out of all this – a domain of musical creation with the most possibilities for controlled rational reflection of the outcome.

Gould’s critique of Mozart’s music could also be looked at against the backdrop of his more general view of music’s aesthetic value as something not associated with historical progress. As became obvious earlier, Gould denies time and again the teleological concept of history as a progressive narrative. In his Mozart-sketches, however, Gould often expresses his idea that the creation of music is always dialectics between “invention” and “curation” – any given musician and composer always necessarily works within a certain

stylistic context with its own musical language and idioms, which forms the backdrop for his own musical innovation.¹³³ According to Gould (GGA 18, 29, 7), Mozart's music shows no sign of any conflict between the two: in one piece after another, the "curation" – Viennese Classical stylistic idiom – wins, and there is no sign of either "tension" between the two aspects or "shame" on Mozart's part in his stylistic commitment to the musical language of his day.

In his critique of improvisation, Gould (1966/2002) expresses his conception of the evolution of a musical style in McLuhanesque terms: the "art" – that is, "innovation" – of one generation becomes "content for the next. In the same manner, legitimized works of music become the musical "language," the material and aesthetic basis, so to say, on which the next generation bases its innovations. Here's the bottom line for Gould's judgment of improvisation and Mozart's music: as to the first, the real-time nature of improvisation necessarily set limits on innovation and brings about the redundancy of improvisation – it ends up only "speaking the musical language" of its time, not displaying any innovation.¹³⁴ As to Mozart's music, it was too "pianistic," too "hedonistic" in its pianism; Gould heard only Viennese Classical clichés where he expected innovative substance. Mozart's music, Gould argued, was a display of routine – he was a composer who could "knock off a *divertimento*" with the same ease as an "accountant an inter-office

¹³³ Gould does not seem to acknowledge the fact that the argument of "curation" and "innovation" in and of itself implies a certain teleological conception of historical progress. As we've seen, Gould is very much against this in his other writings. Gould thus criticizes Mozart with arguments that he himself denies elsewhere.

¹³⁴ I wonder if he ever heard Keith Jarrett...

memo” (GGA 18, 23, 2). Music came “too easily,” and it was too idiomatic – not displaying the “tactile indifference” which made Bach’s music so great for Gould.

Ultimately, Gould’s pianistic criticism, I think, makes him exceptional among his peers. My argument in this chapter has been that Gould, in fact, at times transforms musical interpretation into re-creation, and the mediation of existing music into aesthetic argumentation and evaluation – into a peculiar kind of sounding quasi-philosophy. This intriguing aspect of his musicianship has also been singled out by Edward Said:

What they [Gould’s musical interpretations] consciously try to present, however, is a critical model for a type of art that is rational and pleasurable at the same time, an art that tries to show us its composition as an activity still being undertaken in its performance. This achieves the purpose of expanding the framework inside which performers are compelled to work, and also – as the intellectual must do – it elaborates an alternative argument to the prevailing conventions that so deaden and dehumanize and derationalize the human spirit. This is not only an intellectual achievement, but also a humanistic one. (Said 2000, 15-16.)

Gould argues about music by playing – which is often more convincing than what he achieves with verbal commentary. Some of the commentators have gone so far as to treat Gould’s interpretations as analyses of music. Victor Coelho (1992, 921–922), for instance, has tried to prove Gould’s peculiar interpretation of Mozart’s A-major sonata (KV 331) “wrong” by treating the sounding outcome as an analysis of the work (for Gould’s rationale for his strange interpretation, see Bazzana 1997, 49–51).

My conclusion is that Gould’s mode of musical interpretation, both musical and verbal, is not so much analysis as criticism in a very Adornian mode – making canonized music meaningful time and again in new frames of reference. The most important factor in

Gould's version of criticism, I think, is detaching the music itself from the taken-for-granted – conventions, history, social context, institutions – and moving it into the domain of the artist's creativity and intellectual freedom.

CHAPTER FIVE:

The Ethics of Isolation – The Idea of North as a Hermeneutic

Window on Gould's Musical Thinking

My topic, “the North,” might, on the face of it, seem an awkward issue to consider in relation to music. Taken literally, North, both in music and other spheres of life, refers simply to the cardinal point of the compass, the opposite of the “South.” North, we’ve become accustomed to think, is the place of cold, snow, and uninhabited territories. Northern music, it would follow, is simply music composed in those northern territories.

The North, as a hermeneutic window, would thus seem to lend itself only superficially to an enquiry of music. Things are not, however, that simple. As scholars in cultural geography (Davidson 2005), cultural studies (Hulan 2002), semiotics, comparative literature (Grace 2002), and, quite recently, musicology (Sallis 2005; Torvinen 2010), have reminded us, the North is, and has always been, more than just a place of music’s creation, mediation and reception. The North could also be seen as functioning as an ideology of music and its composers, an aesthetic category with the help of which it’s possible to draw distinctions between “us” and “them.”

The argument put forth implicitly by the title of this chapter – that Gould was in many ways a “northern” artist and that the North plays a pivotal role in his aesthetic thought – sounds, to anyone familiar with Gould’s life and work, merely obvious. Indeed, particu-

larly after his 1964 retirement from the concert stage Gould became more and more fascinated with the northern part of his home country. This also shows in his identity – he came to see himself as a “Northerner by temperament” (GGA 10, 56, 1) and began to see Canada’s particular location in the margins of the international music world as an asset rather than a disadvantage. In the Prologue to his audiodocumentary *The Idea of North*, Gould describes his fascination with the North as follows:

When I went to the north, I had no intention of writing about it or of referring to it even parenthetically in anything that I wrote. And yet, almost despite myself, I began to draw all sorts of metaphorical allusions on what was really a very limited knowledge of the country and a very casual exposure to it. I found myself writing musical critiques, for instance, in which the north – the idea of the north – began to serve as a foil for other ideas and values that seemed to me depressingly urban oriented and spiritually limited thereby. (Gould 1990, 391)

Gould, however, never cared that much about the concrete North. The pertinent questions relating to the geography, history, population, or economy of Canada’s northern territories never seemed to be Gould’s concern.¹³⁵ Rather Gould was interested in the symbolic and metaphorical meanings that the idea of North implied for him. The North, in his aesthetic thought, served from the very beginning as a metaphor for things Gould regarded as indispensable for his music-making: isolation, loneliness, and the ideal of artistic creation as an activity taking place outside institutions, canons and conventions of the art-world.

¹³⁵ This is somewhat surprising, considering the fact that a particular political organ, Indian and Northern affairs Canada, was established in 1966 to support the rights of the indigenous people in the country. There must have been lots of media feed about this at that time in the Canadian media, but Gould never wrote or spoke in public about these issues.

Gould's fascination with the North – in this abstract sense – plays itself out not only in his work, the audiodocumentaries and essays in particular, but also in the public reception of his artistic persona. Gould was, in fact, presented as a “northern artist” in many instances: in biographies and other commentaries about him, music reviews,¹³⁶ in photographs taken of him and used in many album covers of his recordings (about whose designs he was very fussy) and even in Francois Girard's award-winning movie, *Thirty-Two Short Films about Glenn Gould* (1993). Gould, in his own as well as in the eyes of others, became, over the course of his career, the “pianist from the North” whose eccentricities – his deliberate isolation from direct social interaction, his hypochondria, his strange stage mannerisms, his harsh criticism of deities (like Mozart) of the Western art music canon – have come to mold the “myth of Gould” which is widely circulated in biographies, documentary films, and other commentaries on the pianist. Gould has become a cult figure in and outside the world of Classical music, an artist who is celebrated year after year in film festivals, panel discussions, congresses, and travelling exhibitions. Gould's North, together with the values and ideals that it stands for, is a prevalent theme in many of these events, as well as in the reception of Gould more generally.

¹³⁶ Bazzana (2003, 293–294) cites two examples of the “northerliness” in Gould's public reception. David Dubal hears Gould's Bach as “sparse, abstract, yet mysterious,” as “never pretty and certainly not sensuous.” Gould's Bach, in Dubal's ears, is “northern Bach, piercing the listener like the cold.” George Steiner, in turn, hears Gould's Bach as “a luminosity, sharp and dry and as strangely intoxicating as a Canadian winter morning.” See also Peter Goddard (1978) for his review Gould's recording of Sibelius's piano music. Goddard sees Gould and Sibelius as spiritual soulmates, who are united by the surrounding harsh climate.

Ultimately, Gould's North as an aesthetic construction¹³⁷ concerns larger issues, which are the focus of this chapter. In addition to being Gould's topic of interest and a *topos* of his public reception, the North is, I assert, also a third, even more interesting thing: it is, for Gould, an aesthetic ideal, a broad, multi-faceted aesthetic category, which permeates his musical thought on many levels. The North, given this broader sense, is an abstract aesthetic ideal which had great impact on his interpretational choices and views on music. In Gould's writings and interviews, however, it is not possible to find a neat definition of the North, any example in which the North, in all its aspects, manifests itself. Rather, the North, even as this kind of abstract ideal, appears as a hermeneutic backdrop against which to read and listen to Gould's musical discourse – his writings, interviews and recordings. The North ultimately provides a backdrop for understanding Gould: a historical and cultural horizon of meaning in which Gould's musicianship and the ideas embedded in it gain deeper meanings.

This kind of hermeneutic¹³⁸ backdrop is an *intertextual* construction. By this I refer to a reading of Gould's texts together with a number of other texts, within a larger cultural

¹³⁷ I can't emphasize this too much: Gould's North is not *Canadian* North; he never reflected his artistic identity in a national frame of reference. Gould rarely spoke or wrote about his nationality. In a rare interview on the meaning of nationalism for his self-identity, Gould says that "there are tremendous virtues within the country and I personally am more at home with the somewhat reserved, quieter Canadian spirit than with the more energetic American spirit.... But I don't think that you necessarily preserve it by keeping those who didn't happen to be born here out of the country" (1981a/1999, 351).

¹³⁸ The term "hermeneutic" has a long and rich history. Here I am using it rather loosely, referring to an effort to gain deeper understanding of Gould's ideas by situating them in two intellectual and cultural contexts: Romantic and Canadian discourses of the North. Hermeneutic interpretation, in my text, thus means striving for better understanding of Gould's musicianship not by "explaining" his ideas exhaustively, but rather by seeing

and historical horizon. This historical frame of reference is a particular *discursive formation* of the North, defined as such by Sherrill Grace. Grace (2002, 27-29) argues that the North, in arts and literature, is under constant negotiation: its changing meaning is due to the processive and transdisciplinary nature of discourse of the North. Grace, as a Canadian scholar, is concerned with the de-centering of power in defining and setting the limits for the North in Canadian cultural history.

What I am getting at is this: even if Gould did not associate his music-making and thinking with his nationality, his own idealization of the North must be seen against a particular local and historical discourse of the North that has a long history in Canada. Before trying to understand Gould, I need to get a picture of the Canadian North in other domains such as painting and literature. In Michel Foucault's terms, I am engaging in a particular "archeology of the North" to understand Gould.

Gould was a significant intellectual in the public eye of his time and place. Gould's writings on the North, if we stick to Foucault's terms for a while longer, can be seen as "enunciative statements" of the North. The "enunciative function," Gould's "northernness," is formed by statements, each of which belongs to a larger whole – earlier writings of the North. According to Foucault, any enunciative statement is "always a part of a network of statements, in which it has a role, however minimal it may be, to play." (Fou-

them as part of, as well as interpreting them in, larger cultural and ideological horizons. "What is true of the written sources, that every sentence in them can be understood only on the basis of its context, is also true of their content" (Gadamer 1989, 177).

cault 1997, 99.)¹³⁹ In other words, Gould's idealization of the North resonates with, and can be further understood in, the Canadian discourse of the North before and around him. In this chapter, I am comparing Gould's ideas of the North to those of R. Murray Schafer, a contemporary Canadian composer, Margaret Atwood and Northrop Frye. I will also go beyond the national hermeneutical context: figures such as Percy Grainger, Friedrich Nietzsche and Eduard Hanslick had their own take on the North in music, and one of my goals here is to position Gould's thought in not only a local but also a historical hermeneutical context.

How does one grasp the relationship of Gould's ideas to the intertextually constructed hermeneutic backdrop of the North? The path I've chosen is simple: it is to read Gould's writings and interviews in the context of other texts – texts dealing with the North. As said earlier, the Canadian discursive formation of the North, constructed by intellectuals such as Frye, Atwood and Schafer, is only a “local” part of my scrutiny. The North is also a 19th-century Austro-German aesthetic construction reflected in writings by Hanslick and Nietzsche, among others. These contexts, Canadian and Romantic discourses of the North, help to situate Gould's ideas in broader intellectual frameworks. Through this kind of contextual reading that I've undertaken to understand Gould, I've come to realize how close his musical thoughts come, at times, to 19th-century ideas about music.

¹³⁹ Why not simply talk about the “discursive formation of the North” in Gould's thinking? Given the historically and culturally contextualizing approach that I use to read Gould, this would seem like the obvious choice. However, Foucault (1997, 55) explicitly states the following: “discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined.” Gould's statements of the North rather take part in the Canadian discursive formation of the North than construct such a formation in and of themselves.

My interpretation of Gould's ideas begins with an effort to reconstruct cultural, historical, and ideological frameworks to which his writings, interviews and even musical interpretations refer and from which they acquire their deeper meanings. In the end, by reading *between* various texts, I hope to arrive at a more contextualized, critical and theoretically elaborated view of one of the most fascinating musicians of all time.

The North functions as a kind of *hermeneutic window*, to borrow Lawrence Kramer's term, onto Gould's musical thinking and his character. Kramer (1990, 9-10) used the metaphor originally to mean a kind of interpretation in which the texture, structural allusions and musical material all make music meaningful in larger cultural and historical contexts than is the case with ordinary music analysis. Even though Kramer uses the term thus in his discussion of music, I expand the term to cover also the musical thought of Gould. Just as Kramer reads musical works hermeneutically, I read Gould's thoughts and ideas in relation to the historical and cultural North. Expressed in semiotic terms, I am looking for "northern signs" in Gould's thought – signs whose signified can be found in the cultural history of Canada and 19th-century aesthetics.

Meanings of North in Canada

Among Canadian artists, Gould, in his fascination with the North – even if only as a metaphor – was nothing exceptional. The North, the barely accessible frontier, has always had huge importance for the Canadian identity and cultural imagination. One finds vari-

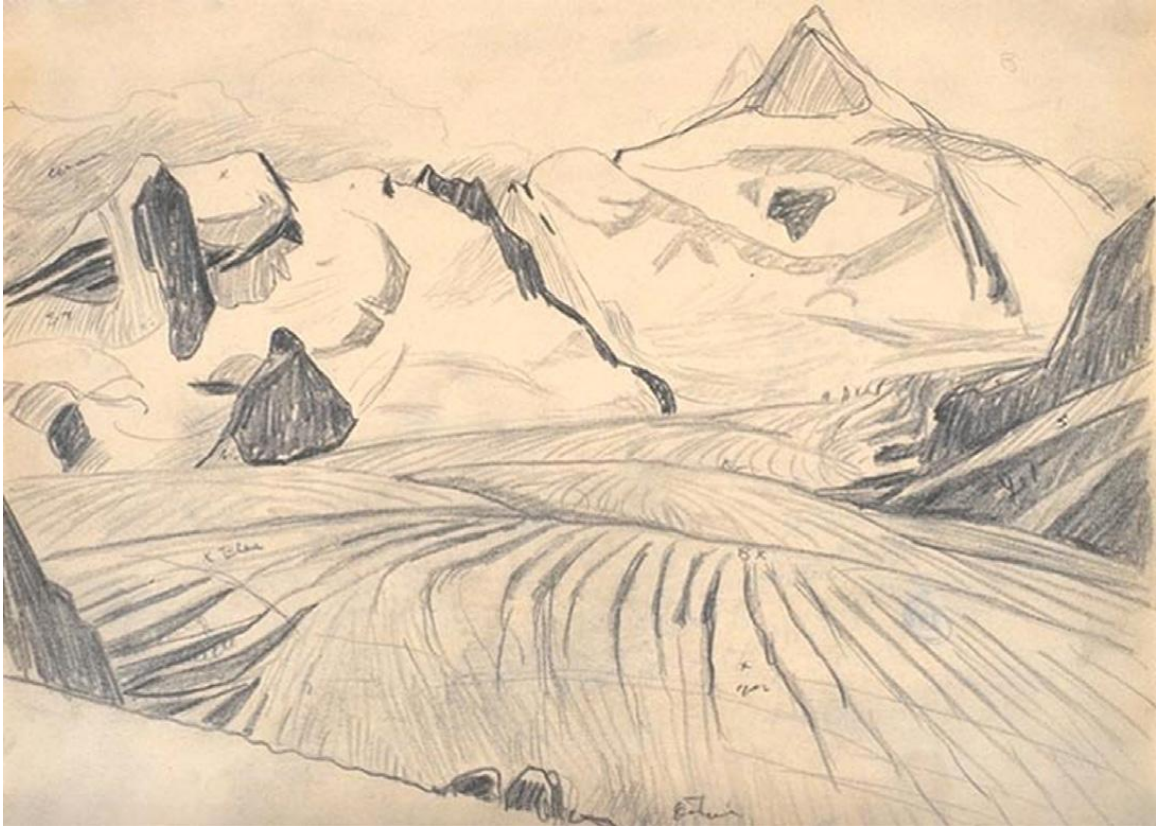
ous representations of North in Canadian arts and letters all through the 20th century and even earlier. Canadian artists, composers, writers, scientists, explorers, and even politicians have all had their own take on the North, which they then formulated in compositions, writings and statements. The works of Lawren S. Harris¹⁴⁰ the best-known painter in the Group of Seven, serve as a good example here. As Hulan (2002, 140 – 141) has observed, the influence that the Group of Seven “had on the way the north was and is imagined cannot be overstated,” and their paintings contributed to the common image of the North as “the blank page from which the presence of all people has been erased.” This sublime, beautiful idyll of the Canadian North can be seen in Harris’s paintings very clearly:

¹⁴⁰ Lawren Harris’s paintings are printed by Stew Sheppard’s kind permission.



Picture 2. Lawren Harris: *Afternoon Sun, North Shore, Lake Superior* (1924)

In Harris's famous painting *Afternoon Sun, North Shore, Lake Superior* we see many characteristics typical of the romanticization and mythologization of the Canadian North: pure, uninhabited and austere scenery, in which nature itself is the topic of depiction. "The North," in this sense, is the real protagonist in many of Harris's paintings, often in its arctic guise:



Picture 3. Lawren Harris: *Isolated Peak* (c. 1929)

Isolated Peak takes its beholder into a sublime, perhaps even threatening nature, where rugged and edgy mountains, as it were, underline and symbolize the danger of the northern territories – someone venturing into these circumstances, the painting seems to tell us, is completely left to himself in order to survive. This idea is even more manifest in a slightly earlier painting which has become a real Canadian cultural icon, William Blair Bruce's work *The Phantom of the Snow*:



Picture 4. William Blair Bruce: *The Phantom of the Snow* (1888)

I will not venture into an interpretation of all symbolic and metaphoric meanings in this enigmatic artwork, which is inspired by a poem “The Walker of the Snow” (1867)¹⁴¹ by Charles Shanley. As Sherrill Grace (2002, 3) observes, this particular work has a privileged position in the national historical iconography, and a sufficient interpretation would require a thorough knowledge of the cultural history of Canada, as well as of the conventions of Western art history.

¹⁴¹ The poem can be found at <http://www.bartleby.com/246/1194.html>

There are, however, some more general issues that I wanted to bring into the discussion of the Canadian North through this example. First of all, the painting reflects the idea of the North as a potentially dangerous, even lethal place. Second, the grey spiritual phenomenon seen in the picture – is it the spirit of the dying journeyman leaving the body, or a northern killer who has become a destiny for him? – brings up an association between the North and a metaphysical, transcendental reality. In the North, it is implied in the painting, strange and irrational things happen, and this metaphysical semiotic dimension is an important part of the fascination that this enigmatic and nocturnal painting evokes. This imagery also has to do with the idea of a sublime horror, which is a prevalent theme in many “northern” artworks in Canada. The North is a place where the individual gets face-to-face with with a metaphysical mighty force – and the encounter can be dangerous.

As Sherrill Grace (2002, 50) puts it, the North “is a part of the imagined community called Canada and a defining characteristic, a crucial metonymy, for the whole.” Indeed, the “vast hinterland of the north, with its sense of mystery and fear of the unknown,” which Northrop Frye (1971, iii) refers to as the ground of Canadian identity, has fascinated visual artists such as Lawren Harris (together with other Group of Seven painters) and William Blair Bruce ever since the late 19th century. The same could be said about composers: at a later point in this chapter, I will take a look at what R. Murray Schafer, perhaps the most articulate contemporary Canadian composer on the significance of the North in music, has written about the North and its musical repercussions.

Grace has pointed out that “going north,” as it is reflected in, for instance, various literary genres in Canada (novels, children’s stories, thrillers) means a number of things, many of them relevant to the formation of a Canadian identity. “Going north” in Canadian literature implies a certain softness and corruptness of southern, feminized civilization, as opposed to the promise the North holds out: “riches, renewed manhood, escape, freedom, a new beginning/rebirth, even the release of death” (Grace 2002, 183). The North provides an opportunity to search for (and discover) one’s self, and to go where few men have ever gone before. “Going north,” in Canadian literature, also means to explore the unknown, to penetrate the *terra incognita* of the North, to simply obey the irresistible call of the unknown.

From an American perspective, Canada, in many ways, *is* the North: a country that reaches two thousand miles north from the American border, past sub-Arctic Churchill, Manitoba, up to the North Pole. Some forty percent of this second largest country in the world lies north of 60°, and it is this vast, mostly uninhabited and barely accessible area that has served, via art and literature, as a unifying concept for the Canadian cultural identity.

It has been suggested that the essence of being Canadian is in many ways constructed through a symbolic opposition to the United States and American culture. For instance, Northrop Frye (1982, 85-86) goes so far as to argue that “Canada has been steadily building up something like a North American counter-culture against the United States.” Along the same lines, he continues: “identity only is identity when it becomes, not mili-

tant, but a way of defining oneself against something else” (1982, 75). This “something else” at the heart of the Canadian identity, Frye argues, refers to what many Canadians have regarded as the cultural and economical threat posed by the south’s colonization of the north.¹⁴²

Canadian identity is not built on what Frye (1982, 46) calls “a revolutionary tradition” like that of United States. Canada, unlike countries such as the United States, or Finland, for that matter, was never forced to create an identity for urgent political reasons. For this reason, I believe, much of what really has come to be considered “Canadian” rests on an abstract, complex and multi-faceted idea of what it is that makes this country so unique in its relation to the rest of the world. Another aspect of Canadian “north-ness” to which Frye (1982, 49) refers is the nation’s close relationship with its natural surroundings. Both of these aspects of “being Canadian” have been important throughout the country’s history.

¹⁴² As far as this mechanism of formation of cultural identity goes, Canada’s case is far from unique. For example, Finland, my native country, has, during the last two centuries of its cultural and political history, constructed much of its national identity within the historical context of having been ruled first by Sweden until 1809, which is when Finland became part of Russia. Following the Russian revolution and the country’s withdrawal from World War I in 1917, Finland was finally able to claim independence because of political confusion in St. Petersburg. Culturally the struggle against Russia in the 1910’s had even more far-reaching consequences for what came to be Finnish cultural history: from the end of the nineteenth century on, artists and composers, while being politically weak, made a great contribution to the construction of Finnish identity in their continuous definition of “Finnish-ness” through their work. The things we now regard as “Finnish,” it could be argued, have more to do with artistic and literary achievements than with politics.

Let me make clear the crux of my argument so far: the Idea of North, an idea of *ultima Thule*¹⁴³ can not be defined exactly, nor can its origin be traced back to any particular instance. It has nevertheless had a profound influence on Canadian culture and sensibility. I think it is safe to say that this idea of Canada's unique relation with the North has acted as a "mental signifier" to much of Canadian culture, literature, poetry, music,¹⁴⁴ and to the cultural identity all these have served to build.

This is essentially the same argument that Frye has put forth about Canadian identity. According to him, it has "always had something about it of a centrifugal movement into far distance" (Frye 1982, 77), and conversely it is difficult to think of a better example of this cultural fascination with the unknown, with the sense of distance and of the unreachable sublime, than the importance the abstract idea of the North has for Canadian art and identity – and for Gould.

¹⁴³ The term *ultima Thule* in medieval geographies denotes any distant place located beyond the "borders of the known world."

¹⁴⁴ Of course there are other "signifiers" as well – I definitely am not arguing for a reduction of the whole of Canadian culture and identity into a single hermeneutic principle! But still, North has been important for Canadian culture: one thinks of the Group of Seven paintings, novels by writers such as Margaret Atwood and Michel Ondaatje, essays by Northrop Frye, music by R. Murray Schafer, Serge Garant, Harry Freedman, Violet Archer and, of course, Glenn Gould. Many of these works manifest a unique fascination with individual survival, both literally and metaphorically, against the threat of annihilation.

However, tracing the whole of Canadian identity to one central idea, as Frye and Margaret Atwood, in her famous essay “Survival” (1993)¹⁴⁵, seem to do, is always a dangerous business. Some scholars have re-evaluated the North’s relevance for Canadian identity. For instance, Renée Hulan has gone so far as to argue that “the north has little if anything to do with being Canadian today.” She goes on to claim that the definition of Canada-as-North “is severely limited because it rests on the specious notion of national consciousness” (Hulan 2002, 27). In her richly documented book, Hulan argues that the “northern values” reflected in literature and the arts – self-sufficiency, independence, endurance – do not spring naturally from the North itself, but are artificially constructed on historically contingent ideas of gender and race. “By representing the north as a setting for the quest,” Hulan (2002, 185) argues, writers thematize the development of a traditionally defined masculine identity, thereby constituting what some call the ‘spirit of the north’ as a set of qualities the rugged individual possesses.”

Where do these two mutually exclusive arguments – Frye’s and Atwood’s Canada-as-North and Hulan’s North-as-Myth – leave us at this point? Hulan sees great epistemological problems in what she calls Frye’s “geographical determinism,” and I definitely do agree with her. Gould, however, seems to have been far more uncritical of the North; he constantly spoke of its “modifying effect on the human character” and of the creative possibilities that the “experience of the land” offers for a thinking and self-reflective individual. Many other writers and artists, as we’ve already seen, have thought along simi-

¹⁴⁵ Atwood’s essay locates the idea of “survival” at the heart of Canadian identity. She writes about it as a metaphor referring to Canadian “survival” against the harsh reality of nature. However, it also has, for Atwood, another aspect: cultural survival against the culturally colonizing threat from the south.

lar lines. In any case, I don't intend to worry, in this chapter, about whether or not the North is important for all real Canadians, or whether or to what extent it is the cornerstone of all Canadian culture. It is, and this is the substance of my argument in this chapter, a cornerstone of Gould's musical thought. This is why we can't leave the obviously challenging, abstract and even disputed idea of the Canadian North out of the discussion. Any hermeneutic effort to understand Glenn Gould's work – and much other Canadian art – cannot leave the controversial and complex North outside its scope.

Gould's Construction of the North

Gould wrote about the Idea of North on many occasions. In fact, one of his radio documentaries is titled *The Idea of North*. Commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 1967 to commemorate the passing of the British North American Act in 1867, *The Idea of North* is less a documentary on the Canadian North itself – the Inuit and other indigenous inhabitants, for instance, are markedly absent in Gould's documentary – than about Gould's own construction of the North and about his own aesthetic world-view. In his Introduction (printed in the *Glenn Gould Reader*, see Page 1990) to the work, Gould tellingly speaks about the *Idea* as “an excuse,” as “an opportunity to examine that condition of solitude which is neither exclusive to the north nor a prerogative of those who go north” but which, for Gould, may appear more clearly to those “who have made, if only in their imagination, the journey north” (Gould 1990, 393-394).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Gould's correspondence after the mid-1960s testifies to his growing fascination with the North. In a 1965 letter to Ralph Corbett, Gould (GGA 31, 28, 1) writes about the

At the end of the day, as Gould himself says, the North has nothing to do with the “latitudinal factor.” In the same Introduction, Gould explains (1990, 392) that most people who “go into the north” “become philosophers” because they “come to measure their own work and life” against the “staggering creative possibility” that the journey offers. Fourteen years later (Gould 1981/1990, 456), however, he explicitly argues that it is not the latitude that “made these people philosophers.” It was rather their rejecting the norms and conventions of an ordinary life that had made an impression on Gould.¹⁴⁷ The North, in this later statement, is not about “going” anywhere but is rather about an individual creative ecstasy, something which, for Gould, takes place in solitude, outside the social and historical frameworks of art.

This idea of artistic and creative isolation is the key to understanding Gould’s enigmatic statement in another essay: “[A]rt should be given the chance to phase itself out. ... [A]rt is not inevitably benign” but, instead, “potentially destructive” (1990, 324). This “potential destructiveness” refers to canons, conventions, and institutions, which act as barriers

“northern mystique” that has begun to haunt him for the last couple of years. In another letter from the same year, addressed to the principal of a high school in northern Ontario, Gould (GGA 31,28, 18) writes: “I sometimes wonder whether those of you, who have the opportunity to live in what can only seem to an urban southerner as blessed isolation, do in fact appreciate the wonderful advantages that isolation offers.” A couple of years later Gould (GGA 31, 35, 4) writes to producer Norman Singer about “ecstasies and eccentrics” that he has encountered in the Canadian Arctic. Gould’s choice of the word “ecstatic” is of particular interest here, since, as we’ve already seen, it is associated in his thought with creative isolation, solitude, technology, and living productively outside the social collective.

¹⁴⁷ Gould seems to have changed his mind on the question of “latitudinal factor.” In a 1967 letter to James Lotz, one of his interviewees for the *Idea of North* documentary, Gould writes that “latitudinal factor does seem to have a modifying influence upon character” (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 105), whereas in his later comments, such as the one cited here, he departs from that view.

between art and the individual. In Gould's thought, music is more a process than a product, and musical creation is, by definition, a particular individual experience, *ecstasy*, which has no limits imposed from outside.

Ultimately "going North" for Gould, is not about a particular place, but about a particular *experience* – about defining oneself as an individual creative agent. It is about Atwood's "survival," if you will, amid the suffocating impact of traditions, conventions and institutions on creative work.¹⁴⁸ Gould's *credo* of individual creation can also be seen as underlying his enigmatic statement about "dreaming of a world where nobody cared what anybody else was doing" (Gould 1990, 460), of a world devoid of systems of institutional qualification – a world in which everyone has his or her "project at hand," enabled by the emancipatory potential of technology.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ As Howard Fink (1997, 37) observes, *The Idea of North* was clearly autobiographical for Gould: it was written just three years after he had gone through a major identity shift from stage performer into a studio artist, and, in Fink's words, Gould had "turned inward, to the solitude of the studio," which offered "womb-like security" for musical interpretation. Along the same lines, Gould's decision to abandon live concerts, was about artistic "survival": he never felt at home on stage (like his arch-enemy Horowitz), and displayed an open dislike to social aspects of concert institution.

¹⁴⁹ McKinnon has suggested that the real subject of Gould's North is technology: Gould's idea of North as solitude, in which communication takes place through information technology, is an imaginary utopia, in which a "fully spatialized community devoid of place" exists. According to him (Ibid., 207, 211), Gould's North is "techno-dialogic" since communication takes place without the interference of a body. Paradoxically he (Ibid. 207) hears, however, Gould's agency behind the latter's audiodocumentaries: "These sound poems are not so much about remote communities banding against the vast expanse of a ruthless natural world, but rather they invariably point to the isolated figure of Gould; he is alone with technology and his hopeful imagination, far from the crowd, in flight from the bureaucratising and homogenizing forces of the south on which he nevertheless depends for his art."

Going North, as it is reflected in Gould's documentary and thought, is ultimately an existential decision. In his 1964 address to the graduates of the Toronto Conservatory, Gould identified this notion of social and ideological detachment as a concept of "negation." In this highly interesting speech, Gould warns his listeners of "the dangers of positive thinking" – of reliance on conventions, norms and canons that make up the "system" of Western art music. "Invention upon which creative ideas depend," Gould argues in his address, must negate that system in order to search out the grounds for creation in the realm of the possible, yet unexplored. In other words, Gould warns his listeners of "the futility of living too much by the advice of others" and of reliance on models imposed from outside. (1964/1990, 3–5.)

In Gould's documentary, one looks in vain for his attempt to formulate a coherent, normative "philosophy of (going) North." It is impossible to find a clear statement, in the *Idea* or elsewhere, regarding what "going North" means. As Kevin McNeilly (1996, 87) has observed, Gould's North, as reflected in the documentary, "is not a single *topos*, a functional 'idea' of North, but a site at which many voices and 'ideas' coalesce, antagonize, support, subvert, mingle, and separate." This North, McNeilly continues, is like "a name for a certain multiplicitous music, an imaginative zone in which the voices, noises and ideas of the human community" – which is formed by the shared experience of going North – "entangle and sound themselves out."

One may with good reason wonder why I am spending so much space on a discussion of radio programs. The reason is simply this: Gould clearly regarded all sounds surrounding

in everyday life as music. This position becomes explicit in, for instance, his interview with Curtis Davis, where Gould (1970/1983, 280) talks of the concept “music” as one which has come to cover all sounds surrounding us. The organization of such sounds, Gould reminds us, can thus be nothing but composition. This kind of talk in the early 1970’s, of course, reminds of what was going on in Canada in soundscape studies. R. Murray Schafer’s World Soundscape Project, initiated at the beginning of the 1970’s, was a relatively well-known project in Gould’s times. McLuhan’s influence on Gould’s conceptions regarding the impact of technology on apprehension of the world was also enormous, as became evident in the previous chapter. It is noteworthy that Gould never mentions Schafer’s projects in any of his writings and interviews, even though he obviously must have been aware of these.¹⁵⁰

Gould regarded *The Idea of North*, together with his other documentaries, as a musical composition.¹⁵¹ His statements concerning it reflect his musical aesthetics. In a letter to Roy Vogt, one of his interviewees for the last work of the Solitude trilogy, *The Quiet in*

¹⁵⁰ Schafer and Gould had the same piano teacher, Alberto Guerrero in the 1940’s. After Gould became famous in the 1950’s, Schafer even applied for a position as Gould’s assistant, but his application was not successful. (Schafer 2004.)

¹⁵¹ In Gould’s correspondence there are many statements which give an idea of what Gould regarded as music. For instance, in his 1971 letter to Chris Nelson, the editor of *Piano Quarterly*, Gould (GGA 32, 7, 9) asks him not to change any single colon or semi-colon in his “Orlando Gibbons and His Time” article so as not to disturb the rhythm of the text. This, of course, can be simply fussiness on Gould’s part, but a more interesting example of Gould’s “pan-musical” view of his intellectual work appears in another letter, to Jacek Galazka, in which he (GGA 32, 37, 20) notes that his “Search for Petula Clark” article is a symmetrical mirror-structure, remotely based on Webern’s *Variations for Piano* (op. 27). Also, the working title for his *The Quiet in the Land* radiodocumentary was “Variations of a Theme of Bach” (see GGA 22, 33, 2).

the Land, which touches upon the social isolation of Mennonites from modern life, Gould ventures into a quasi-philosophical reflection on the nature of counterpoint in music:

I hope to devise a form for the programme which in musical terms could be called ‘contrapuntal’. I really cannot apologize for that analogy, however, because in my view – and I think this view would be shared by most 20th century, as opposed, perhaps, to 19th century historians – counterpoint is not a dry academic exercise in motivic permutation but rather a method of composition in which, if all goes well, each individual voice lives a life of its own. .. [I]n musical terms, the more accurate expression of the totalitarian ideal ... could be found in homophonic music in which one thematic strand – usually the soprano line – is permitted to become the focus of attention and in which all other voices are relegated to accompanimental roles (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 150).

In an earlier letter in which he comments on Mozart’s concertos to the famous music critic B.H. Haggin, Gould touches upon this same issue. According to Gould, “The whole idea of a melodic attribute as distinguished from the component parts of a harmonic environment” – that is to say, separating melody and harmony into individual entities, which is a prevalent feature in the predominantly homophonic Classical style – “has always seemed to me anti-structural and even, dare I say it, undemocratic”(Ibid., 109).¹⁵²

Thus homophonic musical texture in which one line “is permitted to become the focus of attention” at the cost of others, seems, according to Gould, to function as an iconic representation of a “totalitarian ideal.” These quasi-philosophical considerations are the key to understanding the metaphorical meanings of counterpoint – the central aesthetic idea in the *Solitude Trilogy* – in Gould’s thought. Homophonic texture privileges one line at the

¹⁵² Gould’s commentary here is very similar with Heinrich Schenker’s (1868–1935) idea of *synthesis*: the conception of a musical work as an organic whole, in which every part of it is supported by the underlying background structure, *Ursatz*. On other similarities between Gould’s and Schenker’s ideas, see Bazzana (1997, esp. 92–3, 151–2, 216–17, 223, 226).

cost of others, while counterpoint, for Gould, lays bare the antagonistic, diverse lines in the musical structure. Counterpoint, through its very mode of unfolding as a musical narrative, leads the listener to dissect the musical discourse. And the important point here is that for Gould, counterpoint is like the North itself: a multi-voiced *utopia*, which, by its nature, is more a way of thinking, a process, than something normatively defined.

In the next section I will have more to say about the ethical implications that counterpoint carries in Gould's thinking. However, let me conclude this section by arguing that counterpoint, both through *The Idea of North* and in Gould's musical thought more generally, implies a "democratic," diverse, polyphonic, and multi-levelled existential and musical presence in which there is no real center of attention, and which he clearly associated with the North. Looking back to his life in an interview for the CBC in the 1970s, Gould describes his "awakening" to the richness of the polyphonic music in these words:

I was definitely homophonically inclined until the age of about ten and then suddenly I got the message and Bach began to emerge into my world and has never altogether left it. Of course one of the great moments of my life – and it was not with a Bach fugue but it was with a fugue, and its relevance is entirely fugal – was when I was exposed to my own performance of the Mozart fugue K. 394, the C-major one. ... I was learning it – I was an early teenager, I don't remember exactly how old – and suddenly a vacuum cleaner was struck up beside the piano and I couldn't quite hear myself play. ... I began to feel what I was doing, the whole tactile presence of that fugue as represented by finger positions and as represented as by the kind of sound that you might get if you stood in the bathtub and in a shower and shook your head. ... [A]nd it was the most luminously exciting thing you can imagine, the most glorious sound, it took off, all of the things Mozart didn't quite manage to do I was doing for him and I suddenly realized that that particular screen through which I was viewing this and which I had erected between myself and Mozart and his fugue was exactly what I needed to do and exactly why, as I later understood, a certain mechanical process could indeed come between myself and the work of art that I was involved in. (Quoted in McGreevy 1983, 275–276.)

Mark Lee Harris (2001, 68) finds “intriguing” the “apprehension of multiple perspectives that is not grounded in self-consciousness.” He (Ibid., 70) goes on to argue that Gould’s idealizing of polyphonic musical texture functions as a sort of metaphor for dissociation from the social collective. This dissociation, as we’ve seen, has an ethical dimension as well: indeed Harris calls the elaboration of the phenomenology of the fugue together with the field of ethics “the Gouldian problematic” (Ibid., 2–3).

As far as the experience of music is concerned, Gould was inspired by a McLuhanesque idea of a polyphonic “global village,” a virtual “community of ecstasy” (Guertin 1988, 234) mediated by technology, which Gould saw as a way out of public concerts. In music itself, counterpoint embodies a structurally transparent, multi-dimensional musical discourse, in which every individual line has space – and by definition an aesthetic right – to flourish.¹⁵³ In the *Idea*, the mode of listening to this diverse and multi-levelled whole is explicitly named “northern listening,” which, according to McNeilly (1996, 87), “is a means of attending to others,” “a means of participating, directly, crucially, in the multiple streams of human presence in the world.”¹⁵⁴ This, for Gould, is the aesthetic and ethical essence of being in, and going to, the North.

¹⁵³ Gould sees this as the major contribution of the Renaissance and Baroque composers: “As composers, they were the first people who recognized that it was possible and feasible and realistic to expect the human mind and the human ear to be aware of many simultaneous relationships, to follow their diverse courses and to be involved in all of them. ... I think these were the first realistic people in the sense that they understood some aspects at least of this environmental compote which was to become music and which is now, perhaps for the first time, truly becoming music.” (1970/1983, 280–281.)

¹⁵⁴ Ajay Heble (2000, 28) sees Gould’s *The Idea of North* as manifesting an ethical maxim for ethnography and historiography: “Unless we select, understand, and use what we

The North in Music

As Geoffrey Payzant (1997, 55) observes, Gould's musical preferences were "strongly influenced by northerliness." Gould was always "ill at ease with the passionate, sunny Mediterranean temperament in all its manifestations, but particularly the Spanish bullfight and the Italian opera." Kevin Bazzana (2003, 293) says essentially the same thing: for Gould, "North was more than a place," it was "a way of life, a way of thinking, and he associated his personal and aesthetic values with a Nordic temperament." Gould said as much on various occasions. For instance, in a 1960 interview with Vincent Tovell, Gould declares that he "squirms with Verdi and wriggles with Puccini" because of his feeling "intensely uncomfortable with this music" (1999, 87). In a letter written 14 years later, Gould blames his "general francophobia" (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 216) for not doodling with French music beyond his own tongue-in-cheek transcription of Ravel's *La Valse* and Debussy's *Premiere Rhapsodie*.¹⁵⁵

hear, he tells us, we will be lost as human beings. Such an admonition, I suggest, offers a purposeful point of entry for research and scholarship in Canadian studies because it encourages us to attend to the very processes we use to interpret, make sense of, and respond to what we hear. Gould's documentary itself is about the need to listen and, perhaps more importantly, about the need to learn *how* to listen." Heble's enthusiasm is remarkable considering the fact that, viewed anthropologically, there are some unethical characteristics in Gould's "ethnography": interviewees had no chance of participating in the final product, indigenous people are excluded from Gould's take on the "North," and statements by informants are taken out of the context all through the documentary. For the anger that this practice caused in the informants, see Friedrich 1990, 198.

¹⁵⁵ Both works were performed within a series of radio programs titled "Music in Our Time." *La Valse* was performed in "The Flight from Order, 1910–1920" (1975), and the *Rhapsodie*, with the clarinetist James Campbell, in "The Age of Ecstasy" (1974). Both are now available as commercial recordings in the Sony Classical Glenn Gould series.

Moreover, the “Mediterranean” element that Gould so despised in Ravel and Debussy is not geographically defined. It seems to function more as a nexus of stylistic criteria in his judgment of various works, even of music composed outside the actual geographical area to which the word “Mediterranean” refers. An example is the music of Mozart¹⁵⁶ – a composer who, in Gould’s mind, “died rather too late than too early” – is a case in point. For Gould, it represented a “pretension to self-sufficiency” and displays, in addition to its “totalitarian” homophonic style and “hedonistic” elements, which Gould abhorred. On a more detailed level, Mozart’s *sforzandi* are musical representations of theatricality to which Gould’s “puritan soul strenuously objects” (1976/1990, 36).¹⁵⁷

The “explosion of simultaneous ideas,” which is how Gould described counterpoint, is one of the cornerstones of his musical preferences and his approach to the cognition of music,¹⁵⁸ as we’ve already seen. It is no exaggeration to say that in all music Gould thought highly of, counterpoint and polyphony were prevalent features. And where this element is lacking, Gould re-composes it in the music. Indeed, anyone familiar with Gould’s controversial complete recording of Mozart’s piano sonatas can recall the way he “adds vitamins” (Gould’s phrase) to the otherwise mostly homophonic texture. Gould

¹⁵⁶ Adorno (1976, 160–161) also writes about the “southern” elements in Mozart’s music: “The national moments in Mozart relate dialectically to each other. The sensually southern one is broken by a spirituality that removes it by taking hold of it and thus lends it a complete voice. Southern amiability, which centuries earlier had smoothed the provincial and gross side of the German form of musical reaction, is now, as the spiritualized picture of a substantial unsplit life, recovering its own from the German or Austrian.”

¹⁵⁸ Sean Malone’s (2000, 2002) fascinating transcriptions of Gould’s humming in his recordings of Bach’s music give an interesting glimpse of Gould’s musical cognition. In many instances, Gould hums in real-time counterpoint to the score, inventing new melodic lines on the spot.

creates counterpoint through accentuation and prolongation of certain, carefully selected notes over their notational duration in what is essentially a harmonic and homophonic musical situation, the Alberti bass (Bazzana 1997, 145). Gould “forces” counterpoint on Mozart’s music, x-raying the musical skeleton while totally side-stepping the musical elegance, *finesse* and melodic invention which are the virtues of Mozart’s music.

In doing this, Gould’s aim is interesting and typical of his music-making: he extends his criticism of Mozart, expressed in numerous writings and interviews, to musical interpretation and transforms it into an audible commentary on the music’s value. The analytical bent in his interpretations is almost always obvious. For instance, when he describes his first encounter with KV 333 to Bruno Monsaingeon (1976/1990, 34), an interpretation which supposedly shocked his teacher, he explains that he wanted to draw attention to “why Mozart would ignore so many obvious canonic opportunities for the left hand.” Similar comments reflecting his interpretation as analysis would not be hard to find.

Mozart’s “theatricality” and the “pretension to self-sufficiency” which Gould found so intolerable are also aspects of this music’s merely idiomatic, pianistic substance. Mozart’s piano sonatas offered the merely “tactile pleasure” of running his “fingers up and down the keys, exploiting all those scales and arpeggios” (1976/1990, 33).

But so far we’ve not tackled the most important question: what is it in music that made Gould “squirm and wriggle” with Verdi and Puccini? What is the musical element of

“theatricality” in Mozart to which Gould’s “puritan soul” “strenuously objects”? What is this “music from the South” made of?

Gould’s first biographer Otto Friedrich (1989, 175), wrote that Gould “felt an almost mystical sense of that Canadian North and of its connections to the rest of the northern world.” It is no coincidence that Gould’s *oeuvre* as a recording artist consists for the most part of works by Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, Brahms, Schoenberg, and Strauss. He chose to record little-known curiosities by Sibelius and the Norwegian atonalist Fartein Valen – not to mention those of various Canadian composers – rather than works by Chopin, Rachmaninov or Liszt. In one of his last interviews, he expressed the astonishing opinion that “the whole centre core of the piano recital repertoire is a *colossal* waste of time” (1981/1990, 453, italics original). There is no doubt that he genuinely hated the passionate Italian opera, theatrical Mozart, as well as the works of Debussy, Ravel and Chopin, all of which, in Gould’s opinion, relied too much on the sensual aspect of music and were not structurally interesting music. Chopin’s music, for instance, was in Gould’s ears much too idiomatic, too pianistic to meet structural standards of good music (Gould 1970).

However, Gould did not love *all* of Bach, Sibelius or Wagner, and the simplistic conclusion with which Friedrich leaves the reader – that the place of origin of the music had, in and of itself, aesthetic relevance for Gould – is only part of the truth. True, Gould was, at

times, guilty of stereotypical assertions of whole nations.¹⁵⁹ In his 1962 interview with Bernard Asbell, (Gould 1962/1999, 187) he refers to “Latin Americans” as “savages,” whose “heartless,” “ruthless” and “senseless” tendency to enjoy bullfights is aesthetically analogous to listening to music in concerts (!). In his 1968 interview with John McClure, Gould argues that, in both of these rituals – concerts and bullfights – the audience is there waiting for “something to happen”:

There’s a very curious and almost sadistic lust for blood that overcomes the concert listener. There’s a waiting for it to happen, a waiting for the horn to fluff, a waiting for the strings to become ragged, a waiting for the conductor to subdivide ... there’s a kind of gladiatorial instinct that comes upon the hardened, the case-hardened concert-goer, which is why I don’t like him as a breed, and I don’t trust him, and I wouldn’t want one as a friend. (Gould 2001, 50.)¹⁶⁰

Interestingly, Gould uses almost the same words in his comments on “the artistic hostility” of “sun-baked societies” – a not-too-sophisticated reference to Italy – who have “built an operatic tradition in which their primal instinct for gladiatorial combat has found a more gracious but thinly disguised sublimation” (1962b/1990, 247). It is the passionate, emotional, virtuosic, and flamboyant quality of Italian opera that clearly bothered Gould. Music from the “South,” reduced music to “a momentary ejection of adrenaline,” whereas, for him, the true purpose of art was a “gradual, life-long construction of a state of wonder and serenity” (Ibid., 246).

¹⁵⁹ In a letter to his friend who had been in a car accident in Mexico, Gould (GGA 31, 20, 5) shows, even if tongue in cheek, his pejorative presuppositions about Latin Americans: “I rather suspect, though, that it was one of those drowsy, siesta-bound Mexicans and I really feel that for your vacations in the future you must head North to the cool, clear air of Canada.”

¹⁶⁰ Four years later (1966) Gould uses even stronger words: “I detest audiences, not in their individual components, but *en masse*, I detest audiences. I think they are a force of evil.” (<http://archives.cbc.ca/400d.asp?id=1-74-320-1686>).

Music for Gould is ideally something beyond emotions, excitement and display of virtuosity. As Bazzana (1997, 33) points out, “contrapuntal ingenuity, harmonic sophistication, and motivic development” were features in all Gould’s favourite works, and he tended to judge musical works negatively according to the extent to which they emphasized their own “pianistic,” idiomatic qualities and thus put forward the virtuosity of their performers. For instance, in writing about Bach’s *Die Kunst der Fuge*, Gould writes about the composer as “withdrawing from the pragmatic concerns of music making into an idealized world of uncompromised invention” and, more generally, about the “magnificent indifference to specific sonority” as indicative of the “universality of Bach” (Gould 1990, 17, 21).

Considering Gould’s unwavering belief in music’s detachment from any particular instrument – and, by extension, the act of performance – it is possible to understand how Gould could deplore works such as Bach’s *Chromatic Fantasy* and the Toccatas, while almost in the same breath be full of praise for the composer’s “universality.” Bach’s “withdrawal from the pragmatic concerns of music-making” in *Die Kunst der Fuge* also meant, for Gould, a withdrawal from the physical and corporeal aspect of music. Thus music becomes a pure, abstract, non-idiomatic entity.

Gould’s distinction between music as *sound* – as idiomatic and physical entity – and music as *structure* was, at heart, motivated also by ethical considerations. “Competition, rather than money,” was “the source of all evil,” (1990, 41) and it is fascinating to observe how Gould converts this essentially ethical maxim into a basis for making aesthetic

judgments. Whole genres of music had moral implications for Gould: the competition principle, so thoroughly embedded in the piano concerto, bothered Gould so much that most of Gould's interpretations of concertos tried in different ways to do away with the public display of virtuosity and the musical antagonism of the soloist with the ensemble, which are the aesthetic substance of the genre. Rather, Gould saw the soloist, in an almost Baroque fashion, as part of the ensemble – as only one line in the orchestral structure. The virtuosity of the soloist, in Gould's thinking, can not constitute a legitimate aesthetic substance of good music.

In the next section of this chapter I will have more to say about the relationship between Gould's ideas and those of Eduard Hanslick, who with great success codified the 19th-century idea of absolute music in his tractate *On the Musically Beautiful* (1854). However, to conclude the present discussion, I will draw together some preceding lines of discussion to elaborate on two central issues regarding the relationship of sound and structure.

First of all, we've seen that *structure*, not the sonic aspect of music, is given priority in Gould's musical thought, as has been observed in various commentaries (Payzant 1997, 73-88; Bazzana 1997, 36-58). The audible end-result of the interpretation process was an extension of Gould's analytical re-composing of the work, rather than a mere execution of the score. As noted earlier, in 1980 Gould told Jim Aikin that "premise number one," in his piano playing, "is to try to forget that I'm playing the piano." In a re-creative interpretation of any given musical work, Gould doesn't "want to be aware that anything spe-

cifically pianistic is being done in order to bring out whatever structural design” he has in mind (1999, 260). This kind of instrumental indifference to playing can be found throughout Gould’s public statements. In the lengthy interview with Jonathan Cott (1984, 40), he noted that “an analytical *completeness* ... is theoretically possible as long as you stay away from the piano. The moment you go to it you’re going to diminish that completeness by tactile compromise.”

This idea of separating music’s substance, its inner meaning, from its sonic aspect, was, of course, central in German Romantic aesthetics. It is particularly pertinent to the idea of a musical work as an autonomous object, ontologically independent of its performance. As Carl Dahlhaus (1989, 91) observed, referring to the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Friedrich Schlegel, two of the pivotal figures of early 19th-century music criticism: “To understand music means ... grasping the structure, the harmonic and thematic logic of a work, so as to be able to fathom its aesthetic meaning, a meaning that remains inaccessible to mere mindless enthusiasm.” This kind of physical and instrumental transcendence allowed music to function as “language above language,” as an “intimation of the absolute,” a metaphysical reality. These terms also turned experiencing music into an aesthetic contemplation, a devotion to the work, which came to be separated from pure enjoyment.¹⁶¹ This kind of (post-Kantian) listening to music as meaningful structures meant “immersing oneself in the internal workings of a piece of music as though nothing else in the world existed” (Dahlhaus 1989, 95).

¹⁶¹ For a detailed discussion of aesthetic contemplation as a form of devotion see Dahlhaus (1991, 78–87).

But while Romanticism turned the listener's – and interpreter's – devotion and aesthetic duty to the work into a notion of *Werktreue*,¹⁶² and the notion of interpreting musical works into an *exegesis* of the composer's intentions, Gould, in a very peculiar way, departs from these ideals. Having argued that musical works are structures, independent of their sonic realisations and that musical interpretation is mental, not physical activity – Gould was nonetheless not willing to take the next step that the Romantics had taken: to subscribe to the view that musical interpretation means *mediating* a composer's intentions, expressed in autonomous, original musical structures. On the contrary, “the performer has to have faith,” Gould argues, “that he is doing, even blindly, the right thing, that he may be finding interpretive possibilities not wholly realized even by the composer” (1999, 194).

In Gould's thinking, the performer does not have an ethical duty to the composer but to himself. Enabled by technology, the modern artist and listener are “rapidly and quite properly learning to appreciate the elements of aesthetic narcissism ... and are awakening to the challenge that each man contemplatively create his own divinity” (1990, 246). This “divinity” is not the metaphysical reality in which the substance of music, the composer's intentions, are to be uncovered through aesthetic contemplation, but a private, isolated and re-creative *ecstasy* which Gould considered to be the goal of all artistic activity. This notion of artistic experience – both the listener's and the artist's – as a private, isolated and contemplative activity is something that both separates Gould from and connects him

¹⁶² For an excellent discussion of the historical origin of the term, see Lydia Goehr (1989).

to the Romantic discourse of music. Gould has, as it were, one foot in the German Romantic culture of musical “innerness” – in his emphasis on music as a private phenomenon and his view of listening to music as contemplation – and another in a kind of proto-post-modern detachment, particularly when we consider his notions of interpretation as an active, re-creative process (Nattiez 1996, 30–33; Bazzana 1997, 83–4, 255). This conflict does not find any resolution in Gould’s thought, even though both allow a certain distance from the actual historical composer, Romanticism through metaphysical transcendence, postmodernism through the poststructuralist decentering of the author.

Arctic Resonances

Gould’s views of the North in music have peculiar similarities to those of other Canadian composers, notably R. Murray Schafer. Compare, for instance, Schafer’s view of the purpose of art as being “to affect a change in our existential condition” (Schafer 1991, 32; quoted in Harley 1998, 125) with Gould’s oft-cited goal of art as the “gradual, life-long construction of a state of wonder and serenity” (1962b/1990, 246). Both men also wished to do away with the distinction between life and art: Gould because of the artificiality of canons and conventions as well as the emancipation of everyone’s creative potential outside the art-institution; Schafer because he wanted to widen the concept of art to cover all human life.

The most striking similarity, however, between Gould and Schafer comes to the fore in the latter’s aesthetic manifesto, *Music in the Cold*, written in 1975. This document is in

fact a series of short poems which, taken together, narrate the invasion of the North by the South.

You know what happened next
The people came.
I became we.
We opened up the country.
We chased the animals from one end of the country to the other for their felt hat business.
We slaughtered the trees, sending the tall ones for masts, mashing up the rest for newspapers. They taught us the domino technique of felling seven trees with one cut, more than we ever needed; but there was always a market for them. ...
No one had seen snow for fifty years, except for a few outdoor freaks who flew up to Yukon for weekends to chase polar bears on snowmobiles. We lived on avocados and flamingo-meat.
We all grew double chins. ...
But no one worked anymore.
Leisure had arrived.
Leisure killed art.
The correlative of leisure is entertainment (Schafer 1984, 67-70).

One easily hears the melancholic substance of Schafer's manifesto: the comfortable lifestyle of southern "civilization" kills off everything that is original and important for being and living in the North. It standardizes life and extends the culture of consumerism to the previously unspoiled northern territory.

Music in the cold is, as Grace (2002, 137) points out, "an important statement" and "a lyrical lament for a lost northern ideal and an aggressive political challenge to the status quo of 'slack-jawed indifference' and creeping Americanization"; it is a story "of a northern nation run amok by becoming its opposite: the South."

With regard to my argument presented here, I find what Schafer says about “northern” art¹⁶³ particularly interesting.

The snows came early this year.
It is the beginning of a new ice age.
The wind howls at our ears as we dig for wood in the snow,
and I wonder
what this will do for music?
It'll toughen it up.
It'll reduce it to the lean shape, maybe even bare bones.
And its form will become clear as icicle.
Northern geography is all form.
Southern geography is colour and texture.
A northern glacier is brute form.
A southern jungle is juicy. ...
The art of the North is the art of restraint.
The art of the South is the art of excess.
It is the soft art of dancing girls and of the slobber.
Of necessity, conservation of energy begins in the North.
It begins with lean stomach and strong bow.
Prodigality is centred in the South,
and the waste of energy begins at the mouth.
Some of this waste energy is called art.
It is thought that warm climates are the best incubators of it. ...
The art of the North is composed of tiny events magnified.
Those accustomed to fat events that don't matter,
or to many events, miss these details (Shafer 1984, 64-65).

¹⁶³ The idea of the North has remained with Schafer through decades. In 2004, I wrote him a letter, asking the significance of the “North” for his thinking after almost three decades after *Music in the Cold*. Here's what he responded: “But there is (and was) a definite Canadian attitude towards the North. It resulted from Canada being such a vast and unpopulated country. For us (when I was young) the north was a billion uninhabited acres of snow. It was the true myth of Canada. While no one actually went there everyone thought that if things in the south ever turn bad, they potentially could go there and start life again. The north was pure. The north was uncorrupted & temptationless.” (Schafer 2004.)

Here's the dichotomy between North and South in Schafer's fascinating text:

<u>North:</u>	vs.	<u>South:</u>
winter		summer
formal, structure		technicolor, surface
restraint		excess
lean stomach, fitness		dancing girls, slobber
strong bow, work		flatulence, ease
conservation of energy		prodigality
tiny events magnified		fast, many events
art		entertainment

In the program notes to his orchestral piece *North/White* – which, according to Grace (2002, 139), is “the closest musical formulation of the ideas in *Music in the Cold*” – Schafer (1984, 62-3) writes that “Canadians are about to be deprived of the ‘idea of the North’, which is at the core of the Canadian identity.” The North, for Schafer¹⁶⁴ (and

¹⁶⁴ Schafer's own work in music, a fascinating topic in itself which I am unable to demonstrate without audiovisual documentations, often sounds more like mimesis of Canadian wilderness than learned counterpoint. A certain kind of neo-primitivism, primeval ecstasy and scenic appropriation of the surrounding mythical nature are all hallmarks of Schafer's northern music. A good example of this is Schafer's *Patria*, a cycle of music dramas that the composer has been creating for the last thirty years. Richard Cavell (2003, 152–156) calls these massive musical works by the term “space opera,” by which he refers to Schafer's intention to “embody in them the synaesthetic unities of ear and eye in order to produce what one of his critics has called ‘a total sensorium,’ in which the goal is not so much to produce a total art work as to bring together the senses” (2003, 155). I leave for the future a more thorough discussion on Schafer's holistic conception of music as a lived and experienced space, but for my purposes here suffice it to put forth an argument that the North, the northern space in particular, plays the crucial role in Schafer's aesthetics. Schafer, in his environmental works, aims at an intertwining of sound and space, a sort of neo-Wagnerian celebration of music as an inter-sensuous spectacle, relocated in the archaic nature of the North.

Gould, for that matter), “is a place of austerity, of spaciousness and loneliness; the North is pure; the North is temptationless” (1984, 63). The North exhibits a kind of *utopia* of possibilities similar to Gould’s ideas of North, though Schafer’s views are somewhat spiced up with a touch of Canadian nationalism¹⁶⁵ and notions of cultural ecology.

Gould’s view of music – as abstract, non-idiomatic, structural, austere, and contrapuntal – fits together strikingly well with Schafer’s construction of the North. What does a work such as *Die Kunst der Fuge* represent for Gould if not Schafer’s “structure,” “form clear as icicle,” as opposed to the “surface” and “colour” of, say, Debussy’s or Ravel’s music? What else does an idiomatically indifferent Bach fugue represent for Gould than “restraint” or “tiny [thematic] events magnified,” as opposed to the Southern “excess” and “ease” that the virtuosic works of Liszt and the melodic elegance of Mozart display?

¹⁶⁵ At times, Schafer’s views are surprisingly nationalistic. In the introduction to *On Canadian Music*, he writes: “Another affair that has prevented Canadian culture from taking stronger or quicker root is that of immigration. The immigrant can’t help but look outside the country for a good portion of his inspiration, even if this is mere nostalgia. Because of the massive influx of peoples entering Canada, first from Europe and now from other parts of the world, we have made an enthusiastic virtue out of a condition in which everyone speaks of a different homeland, to which we have given the name multiculturalism. I happen to think that Canada is already overpopulated, and probably most people who live outside cities would agree with me[.]” (Schafer 1984, ix.) In spite of his prejudice against Latin Americans and Mediterraneans, Gould does not seem to share Schafer’s views. In his 1961 speech to an audience of children at the Stratford music festival, Gould (1961/2003, 57) gets into a real multiculturalism-groove: “[Y]ou should really feel very fortunate to be living in a country which has become a composite of the cultures of many countries, where the best of all nations can be found, where the view points of many men of different backgrounds can be assimilated, and where the generation of which you are going to be a part will be able to have a broader, wider, clearer view of history, and indeed of the present than ever existed before.”

Does the North have a gender? Andra McCartney (2000/2006) has pointed out that Schaffer's views in *Music in the Cold* lay emphasis on music's "purity" and "form" – both qualities associated with the idea of absolute music. These ideas, McCartney continues, essentialize composing with masculine characteristics – ruggedness, strength, purity and exploration. North, defined in those terms, excludes musical femininity.

Even if masculine hegemony is absent from Gould's statements, one of them has caught my attention. In his interview with Bernard Asbell, Gould (1962/1999, 189) argues that there is less "spinal momentum" in women's playing, since they "tend to be more committed, more directly acting upon the keys, rather than feeling above the instrument." Gould, then, implies that women are incapable of lifting their music-making into an abstract, non-physical and contemplative level of musical ecstasy in which the physical aspect of playing the piano is completely irrelevant.¹⁶⁶ In another interview with Jonathan Cott, Gould, however, praises Rosalyn Tureck's playing of Bach's music for "such uprightness, to put it into the moral sphere. There was a sense of repose that had nothing to do with languor, but rather with moral rectitude in the liturgical sense" (Cott 1984, 63).

¹⁶⁶ Hanslick's views of women as composers resemble Gould's views strikingly. Hanslick wonders why women, who are by nature preeminently dependent upon feeling, have not amounted to much as composers." One reason to this, apart from the "circumstances ... which prevent women from achieving more in the way of intellectual creativity" is that composing, Hanslick seems to argue, demands a certain "renunciation of subjectivity" that women are incapable of. (Hanslick 1986, 46.) For both Hanslick and Gould, women are lacking in their capacity for abstraction, unable to elevate themselves above the physical aspect of artistic creation.

This example shows once more how Gould saw issues of musical interpretation directly associated with ethics.¹⁶⁷

The Shadow of Hanslick

Gould's views on the "northern" listening to music as an analytical, contemplative and individual activity, ideally taking place in privacy, also have certain resonances with Eduard Hanslick's conception of listening as aesthetic contemplation. In his *On the Musically Beautiful*, Hanslick writes:

The tyranny of the upper vocal part among the Italians has one main cause in the mental indolence of those people, for whom the sustained penetration with which the northerner likes to follow an ingenious web of harmonic and contrapuntal activity is beyond reach. So the pleasure is more superficial for hearers whose mental activity is slight, and such musical tosspots are able to consume such quantities of music as make the artistic soul shudder (1986, 64).

Just like Gould in his depiction of the "sunburned" as an aesthetically degenerate people, enjoying music in the emotional flush of adrenaline, and in his view of Latin Americans as "savages," experiencing music as analogous to a bull fight, Hanslick excludes Italians from the "northern" contemplation of music. Contemplation, for Hanslick, means the "sustained penetration" of "harmonic and contrapuntal activity," of which Germans are, in his view, capable. Gould never mentions Hanslick in any of his writings or interviews, and it is unlikely that Hanslick's writings ever had any direct influence on him. Rather we

¹⁶⁷ Ethics are often associated with interpretation in Gould's thought. In his 1971 letter to Wendy Butler, Gould (GGA 31, 43, 12) comments about Stokowski: "His testimony is constantly subjected to subtle parenthetical qualifications and he seems incessantly involved in the search for moral correlatives of his aesthetic undertakings."

are talking about a larger discourse on absolute music that originated in the late 18th century, was crystallized through Hanslick's treatise (as well as E.T.A. Hoffmann's music criticism), and with which some of Gould's ideas resonate.

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that Hanslick's views represent the only 19th-century Austro-German view of contemplative music listening that more than a century later, finds resonance in Gould's writings. Romantic composers and philosophers of music were far from unanimous on what they considered to be important in music and on how they thought one should listen to it.¹⁶⁸ Hanslick's treatise was itself an argument, in an interesting ongoing aesthetic debate of the 1850's, against program music and "aesthetics of feeling."

Friedrich Nietzsche's eventual harsh criticism of Wagner, based on an entirely different set of aesthetic principles, is well known. As opposed to Wagner's, which "sweats," Bizet's music "approaches lightly, supplely, politely." It "treats the listener as intelligent, as if himself a musician" and enables Nietzsche to "become a better human being" and also "a better musician, a better listener" (1967, 157). "Il faut méditerraniser la musique," Nietzsche goes on to say, and in the same breath he does away with values we've in fact come to associate with absolute music:

¹⁶⁸ For instance, Dahlhaus (1989, 8–15) drew up a relationship within which Rossini and Beethoven represent dialectical counterpoles of early 19th-century music. For Rossini, a score was to be treated as a mere recipe for a performance, whereas a symphony by Beethoven was to be seen as an autonomous work of art, complete within itself.

It [Wagner's music] has filled our whole life with its rattling about 'devotion', about 'loyalty', about 'purity'; and with its praise of chastity it withdrew from the corrupted world. – And we believed in these things (1967, 160).

In another essay, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche elaborates on his idea of “mediterraneanizing” music in more detail:

Against German¹⁶⁹ music I feel all sorts of precautions should be taken. Suppose one loves the south as I love it, as a great school of convalescence, for all the diseases of senses and spirit, as a tremendous abundance of sun and transfiguration by sun, spreading itself over an autonomous existence which believes in itself: well, such a person will learn to be somewhat on guard against German music because, by spoiling his taste again, it will also spoil his health again. Such a southerner, not by descent but by *faith*, must, if he dreams of the future of music, also dream of the redemption of music from the north and have in his ears the prelude to a deeper, mightier, perhaps wickeder and more mysterious music, a supra-German music which does not fade, turn yellow, turn pale at the sight of the blue voluptuous sea and the luminous sky of the Mediterranean, as all German music does (Nietzsche 2005, 255).

Now what should we make of these notions in relation to Gould's ideas of music? First of all, Gould certainly did not subscribe to Nietzsche's anti-German view on music, as we've seen. Even though the two had, somewhat surprisingly, a mutual favourite in Bizet, whose *Variations chromatiques*, for Gould, was “one of the very few masterpieces for solo piano to emerge from the third quarter of the nineteenth century” (1973/1990, 78), “Mediterranean” culture, for Gould generally, represented everything he despised: competition, virtuosity, sensuality, emotionality, flashing displays of musical colour (think of Debussy), and so on. Music, in his view, was something else: a rational, abstract

¹⁶⁹ Nietzsche's judgement of German music in general and Wagner's music in particular is interesting because it completely bypasses the conflict between absolute music (Hanslick) and program music (Wagner).

and mental activity, in which the interpreter's analytic relationship with the musical structure is a priority.

As far as their views on musical values are concerned, it would seem that Gould and Nietzsche are total opposites. Gould, we would be justified to conclude, abhors Nietzsche's "tremendous abundance of sun and transfiguration by sun," represented in music, and after Nietzsche turns against Wagner, there is certainly no meeting of the minds on the significance of Wagner for the history of music.

However, two similarities between their views strike me as noteworthy here. First of all, both Nietzsche and Gould associate the "South" with sensuality, lightness, spontaneity, colour, dance, even corporeality. The musical North, on the contrary, is represented by structure, musical development, seriousness, music's anti-sonorous quality, and so on. Whereas Nietzsche clearly departs from the latter values – note that he even comes to denounce "devotion," "loyalty," and "purity" in the experience of music – in favour of the southern light-hearted enjoyment, Gould sticks to his neo-Romantic aesthetics, as far as musical idealism is concerned. However, in spite of their different reactions to these values, the two share essentially the same view as to what northern and southern qualities are in music.

Second, both Nietzsche and Gould depart from the Romantic notion of experiencing a musical work as aesthetic devotion. Nietzsche's reason seems to be that this kind of devotion makes corporeal enjoyment impossible – Hanslick's view of aesthetic contempla-

tion certainly does – though a stronger motive is surely his revulsion towards his own previous of Wagner. Gould, of course, regards any historical and biographical information about a given musical work as irrelevant. Gould’s idea of aesthetic contemplation, as opposed to devotion detaches its object, in a far less paradoxical way than does Romantic metaphysical yearning, from time, place, and its composer’s intentions: Hanslick, too, as noted earlier, discredits historical and biographical information in aesthetic contemplation, though he values the ideal of structural integrity that underlies the composer’s right to *Werktreue*.

So why did Hanslick’s idea of aesthetic contemplation, through the values of “northern listening” associate “northern” listening with a more thorough and more analytic acquaintance with the music?

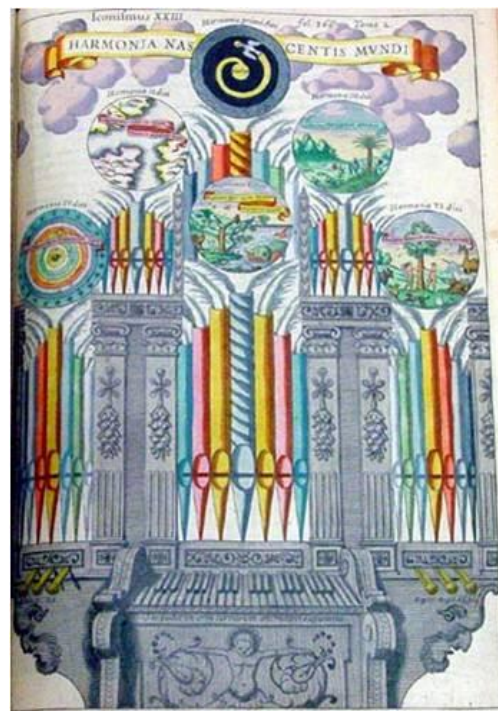
As we saw, “northern listeners,” in Hanslick’s thinking were capable of ““sustained penetration” of the “ingenious web of harmonic and contrapuntal activity” in their experience of music as autonomous musical works, while Italians want it all here and now: overflowing emotions, dazzling coloratura, and other musical fireworks of 19th –century opera. We immediately notice the historical resonance of Hanslick’s ideals – Theodor W. Adorno’s idea of “structural listening” as an ideal mode of music’s contemplative appreciation, proposed a good century after Hanslick, is just one example – but more interesting here is this question: what’s “northern” about Hanslick’s ideals? Obviously the “tyranny of the upper vocal part” on display in Italian opera is aesthetically worlds away from the austere, abstract and non-sensual music of, say, Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Kunst*

der Fuge, but why is the latter, contrapuntal music of highest structural integrity and learnedness, associated with the North?

Answering this question is difficult, but it still is worth asking. We know a lot about the semiotics of counterpoint in music history: David Yearsley (2004) has shown how counterpoint, as a musical device of learned music, was associated with intimation of death, the human's ultimate encounter with God's universe. Writing contrapuntal musical texture, Yearsley argues, was seen in the 17th century as an investigation of God's order as it manifests itself through music.



Picture 5: Frontispiece of *Musurgia Universalis*



Picture 6: "The Harmony of the Birth of the World". Below the keyboard is written: "Thus God's eternal wisdom plays in the sphere of the worlds."

We can get the sense of what Yearsley is talking about by looking at two illustrations in the famous treatise by Father Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), a contemporary of Bach, famous treatise *Musurgia Universalis* (1650). Counterpoint, in the 18th century, was seen as a kind of simulation and imitation of God’s universe. These associations of counterpoint with the metaphysical found their way into 19th-century musical thought as well – one thinks, for instance, of the 19th-century idea of music as “language above language” – and there’s no doubt that Hanslick echoes some of aesthetic and ideological overtones of earlier centuries. Hanslick had in mind a clear aesthetic hierarchy not only between absolute and program music but also between music that displayed abstract, non-sensual counterpoint and the music constructed on the basis of the “tyranny” of melody, as in his example of Italian opera.

Hanslick’s northern listener is one capable of abstract musical thinking, that is, aesthetic contemplation that finds, in a post-Kantian manner, its object in the structure of the artwork, not merely its sonic surface. Northern contemplation is a rational – not sensual – undertaking from which the Mediterranean “others” are excluded. The demands that it poses for the listener are exemplified by counterpoint – a musical device that by definition excludes positing a single focal point for the listener’s attention. Northern listening means “penetrating” – and I’ll save a critical scrutiny of that musical metaphor for a later occasion – the unfolding of an abstract, contrapuntal, ultimately non-sensual structure, which engages with the listener not as sensual pleasure but rather as rational process. North, it follows, is more about rational contemplation than emotions or pleasure.

Just as counterpoint, in Gould's thought, functions as a metaphor for freedom and individual creativity outside canons, conventions and institutions, the word has gained other associations in the discourse of music and culture which may also shed some hermeneutical light on Gould's thought here. No less a culture critic than Edward Said (1991) has used the term as a metaphor for a mode of criticism devoid of a centre, an aggregate of autonomous subjects. As in a fugue, Said's "worldly" criticism and "contrapuntal analysis" – these are his very terms – unfold in a dialogue without a conclusion or a forced Hegelian synthesis. Said's analogy of cultural criticism as a huge, multi-voiced musical conglomerate of autonomous subjects is an interesting one and obviously inspired by Adorno's philosophy. As we saw earlier in the previous chapter, at the heart of his musical thought, there is an obvious epistemological premise about the irrevocable tie between music and society. Music, for Adorno, functions as a sounding mirror of the world surrounding it – sometimes affirming its ideological and administrated nature, sometimes pointing towards an alternative. Some genres of music are more inclined to the latter function than others – chamber music, for instance, seems to function as a sounding metaphor of *utopia*, defined as an unreachable social balance between competitive, appetitive, ultimately solipsistic drives and the enactment of community and a common good (Leppert 2002, 522). However, this balance could never be realized in modernity: Adorno saw chamber music, and by extension, counterpoint, the sonic embodiment of a utopian ideal of society, as being in actuality denied by the progress of history. Here, I think, is the fundamental parallel between Said, Gould and Adorno – Gould's idea of counterpoint as a sounding metaphor for the unbound creative musical potential of an expressive indi-

vidual is, as it were, a simplified version of Adorno's idea of counterpoint as mimesis of a utopian society. In Gould's mind, all this has the possibility of unfolding in the North.

Said, Gould and Adorno are not the only musical intellectuals who saw counterpoint as an embodiment of democracy and at least in a broad sense a mode of criticism sensitive to the epistemological and historical foundations of democracy. Percy Grainger, a peculiar Australian-American composer perhaps best known for his pioneering work as a collector of folk music and as an avant-garde composer of his day, is another personality whose ideas regarding the North in music deserve a short excursion here.

Grainger's ideas about North, race, and polyphony are not without disturbing overtones – to the extent that Graham Freeman (2008, 188) a brilliant scholar of Grainger's aesthetics, has observed that Grainger's idealization of the North was “a vicious poison that crippled his mind, corroded his aesthetic and ultimately destroyed his life.” Indeed, viewed against the backdrop of what racial theory led to in the first half of the 20th century, it is extremely disturbing to read Grainger cheer from one writing to the next what he calls the “Nordic” characteristics of music: “spiritual, unadorned melodies with long sustained notes or at least clearly defined intervals, gapped scales and a marked tendency to some kind or other of underlying harmonic or polyphonic thought” (Grainger 1933, 259).

Grainger's ideas concerning the "Nordic" could be summarized as follows:

- There are three main racial group in Europe, namely Mediterraneans, Alpines and Nordics (Teutons);
- All fair-haired people can be traced back to Nordic roots;
- Great thinkers, innovators, soldiers, athletes, artists and mystics have generally had some substantial Nordic blood;
- Where Nordic blood is genetically mingled with other types, the characteristics of the other group predominates, to the detriment of cultural advancement;
- Nordics are generally out-of-doors individuals;
- Local influences are, however, more important in determining artistic type than is racial inheritance.

Holding out Edward Grieg's music as an uncontested model of "Nordic beauty" and "Nordic greatness" (Gillies & Pear 2007, 6), Grainger drew inspiration from the work of popular American nordicists such as Madison Grant's 1919 book *The Passing of the Great Race* and Lothrop Stoddard's 1920 *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy*. According to David Pear (2000, 26), racial theory provided Grainger with a framework for his views regarding the aesthetic and cultural superiority of the Nordic race.

What Grainger saw as the greatest contribution of the Nordics to the rest of the world was their embodiment of democracy. In his essay "Democracy in Music," Grainger argues

that “the value of all existing art music depends on the extent to which it is intrinsically many-voiced or democratic – that is to say, the extent to which the harmonic texture is created out of freely-moving voices, each of them full of character, or vigor, or melodic loveliness.” Grainger sees democracy as an ontological characteristic in music, exemplified by “freely moving voices,” “melodic loveliness,” and vigorous, energetic ethos of music. Examples of the kind of music Grainger has in mind include music by Palestrina, Purcell, Bach, Wagner, Delius, Vaughan Williams, Cyril Scott, and Arnold Schoenberg. Just as in Hanslick’s tractate, Grainger’s target of attack is “top-melody, accompanied by subservient chords and basses”, which in his mind serve as sounding metaphors for “musical feudalism,” “aristocracy,” and “high-priest-craft” (Grainger 1931, 218). Grainger’s peculiar breed of aesthetic xenophobia also addresses the question of polyphony more generally. According to him, all truly “Nordic” music, even when not technically polyphonic, is generated from an underlying framework of “polyphonic thought.” The particular gift of the North to the rest of the world, Grainger argues, is the “gift of freedom,” which Grainger hears exemplified in polyphonic music (Etherington 2008, 233). It seems, then, that Grainger’s epistemology of the North is in this sense similar to that of Gould, Said, Hanslick and Adorno: All these men are engaged in a sort of polyphonic ethics, in which a curious assimilation of *melody* with *identity*, a *mimesis* of music and its environment, takes place. Qualities of mind and attitude characterize the Northern race in Grainger’s proto-racist thought. Masculinity, orientation to outdoor activities, openness and democracy characterize the Nordic race. Democracy aside, Grainger even admired the Third Reich racist ideology, which becomes clear in his idea that “pure goodness” unites all the “gifted men” of his time – Roosevelt, Cyril Scott, Hitler – and in his convic-

tion that Jews should be separated from the Nordic people. (Cited in Pear 2000, 42). Malcolm Gillies (2000, 20) points out that in Grainger's musical thought, music's various parameters all have a particular socio-cultural dimension. Rhythm, for instance, was associated with "Negro tribal, rhythmic polyphony" and juxtaposed with "Nordic melody". Harmony – and one could include polyphony in this category – signified noble "cooperation and teamwork" which were "empowered to turn our natures towards the angelic state" (Ibid.). Gould, for his part, turned to the imagined North in his quest for this kind of angelic state.

Gould's North as an Aesthetic Category

In this chapter, I have attempted a hermeneutic excursion into Glenn Gould's idea of the North as expressed in his published statements. My argument consists of three basic points:

- (i) Gould's idea of North is a broad aesthetic category which reflects itself on many levels in his thought;
- (ii) This idea is important in Canadian cultural history, where there is such a thing as a "discursive formation of the North";
- (iii) Gould's ideas also tie him to 19th-century discourses of absolute music and contemplative listening.

These ideas are by no means entirely new in the Gould literature. For instance, Kevin Bazzana, in his two wonderful books (1997, 2003), discusses Gould's ideas and musicianship critically, brilliantly and through a rich scholarly apparatus. What I have tried to emphasize, perhaps more than some scholars – the aforementioned Elizabeth Angilette (1992) being a good example – is a hermeneutic reading of Gould's ideas, a reading that tries to understand Gould in wider intellectual and cultural contexts. This hermeneutic reading is not exhaustive. My purpose is not to reduce Gould's complex mind to the unfolding of a single idea. Neither have I tried to argue that this idea is somehow "caused" by Gould's living in Canada at a particular moment in the history of that country, in spite of the fact that many of his ideas are particularly "Canadian." What I have tried to do, instead, is to offer a reading of the central ideals in Gould's musical thought which *relates* them hermeneutically, not causally, to his own time and place, as well as to the history of that time and place.

As I see it, the Idea of North, in Gould's thought, works on four levels. First, on a personal level, Gould's own public image, the reception of his art, as well as his own personal fascination with the North. Second, on a musical level, Gould writes about music as an abstract, non-sensual, rational, and structural entity. He also emphasizes music's non-virtuosity, counterpoint and polyphony, which, in his thought, make music a representation of "democratic" and "untotalitarian" qualities. Third, the North is reflected on what we could call the aesthetic level. Here Gould emphasizes the idea of "historical isolation," the potential of technology, contemplation and individual ecstasy as proper responses to music. And fourth, Gould, through his work and ideas, subscribes to a particu-

larly Canadian “discursive formation of the North,” as well as to important 19th-century ideas about listening to and interpreting music. Perhaps Gould’s artistic voice should be listened to in the context of the Idea of the North and the implication that idea has for aesthetic and ethic ideals, rather than in terms of 20th –century pianistic tradition, where Gould will always remain an eccentric, a figure who somehow does not fit. My writing here is a modest hermeneutic attempt to do this. As Gould was a complex man, so were the intellectual and cultural frameworks in which his ideas find new meaning.

CHAPTER SIX:

The Afterlife of Gould

In this last chapter, I step out of Gould's mind and look at the unique literary and visual reception of his work and character – a reception that I've never come across with any other musician of Classical music. Gould does not remain in the cultural consciousness only as photographs and recordings, but also as a kind of cultural *icon*, the ontology of which I want to examine more closely here.

While stepping outside, I am also, as it were, entering my own experience of Gould much more than in the previous chapters. I am not only interested in “direct” visual or literal representation of Gould in, say, paintings and youth novels but also focus on more subtle, more nuanced “hints” of Gould's semiotic presence in artifacts of pop culture. For instance, the semiotic significance of Bach's *Goldberg variations*, played by Gould, in three horror movies based on a novel trilogy by Thomas Harris – *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Hannibal* (2001), and *Hannibal Rising* (2009) – has puzzled me for some time, and this research lends an opportunity to scrutinize this puzzlement more closely, to analyze the “semiotic overflow” (the term will be explained further in this chapter) I experience in seeing certain scenes in the movies. For instance, I've been puzzled by the scene in the *Silence of the Lambs* in which the protagonist, psychopath-genius Hannibal Lecter gesticulates like Gould, over the latter's 1955 recording of the *Goldbergs* in the sonic background of the scene, after a brutal massacre of two policemen. Also, seeing Hannibal

playing the piece himself in *Hannibal* over Gould's 1982 recording of the work has been a hermeneutic riddle for me, as has been the scene in *Hannibal Rising* where young Hannibal injects himself with a dose of sodium thiopental, accompanied by Gould's 1955 recording of the piece, in his effort to recollect the faces of the German soldiers who killed his little sister Mischa. I argue that there is something semiotically important embedded in the curious mix of outright horror and violence, Bach and Gould, which I want to look at more closely in this chapter.

In addition to these three horror films, my research material into the cultural reception of Gould consists of three novels and two collections of poems. The novels are *The Loser* by Thomas Bernhard (orig. *Untergeher*), *The Maestro* by Tim Wynne-Jones, and *The Song Beneath the Ice* by Joe Fiorito. In addition to these, I focus on two children's biographies of Gould: Vladimir Konieczny's *The Story of Glenn Gould* and Lynette Roy's *The Genius and His Music 1932–1982*.

At the end of the chapter, I also make some analytical remarks on the reception of Gould in visual arts. For reasons having to do with copyright issues, I don't have the same opportunities for citing this material as with movies and literature. I have obtained permission for scholarly use only from one collection, the Internet gallery Glenn Gould Galerie by a German painter Heidemarie Schäfer.

“Glenn Gould” as a Representation

How then to grasp, theoretically and conceptually, reflections of “Glenn Gould” in the wide field of popular culture? As far as my theoretical and conceptual point of departure goes, the ontological status of my research material has to be kept in mind – I am looking at auditory, literary, and visual signs which, by some of their properties, have a denotative relationship to the Glenn Gould of real life. This representation consists of elements in his public image: gestures of playing, eccentric behaviour and peculiar musical interpretations.

As I’ve noted before, Gould’s public image was very early on built on the *topos* of the “eccentric genius.” Gid Waldrop’s 1958 concert review for *Musical Courier* is a good case in point: he keeps on wondering how this “unbelievably talented but very eccentric” musician has time to conduct himself, stomp his feet and sing while executing flawlessly his concert repertoire. (Waldrop 1958). In the same year, another review from one of Gould’s concerts deserves an extended citation since it displays all the characteristics in Gould’s public appearance that later have become clichés – only three years after his break into public consciousness.

The most-talked about young pianist in the world is a 25-year-old, Canadian-born bundle of eccentricities named Glenn Gould. Last week, for example, he arrived for his concert at Carnegie Hall swaddled to the ears against the New York chill, his hands covered with two pairs of gloves. As he waited off-stage, Gould, a confirmed hypochondriac, doctored himself with a whole pharmacopoeia of pills and drank tepid bottled water. To limber up his hands, the thin, tousle-haired pianist soaked them in hot water for fifteen minutes. When he finally combined forces with Dimitri Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic, he slouched over the keyboard, often flapping his elbows

and sometimes appearing as if he were hitting the keys with his nose or chin. (GGA 38, 7, 13).

On the face of it, this review may seem positive and encouraging for a young artist. However, the closer I look, the more I find it extremely pejorative. It evokes notions about Gould, emphasizing his “freak” appearance on stage, similar to those one makes about rare animals in a zoo. Some critics went completely nuts with Gould. Graham George’s 1960 review displays the critic in rage:

If it is showmanship – even though based on natural idiosyncracies – it is a great pity that so fine a musician should make himself appear indistinguishable from a movie comic. Potential audiences may soon be divided into those who can tolerate his antics for the sake of his music and those who cannot – together, of course, with those who will go to his concerts for the antics more than for the music. The question for him is: does he *want* a reputation as part musician, part clown? Because that’s what he seems to be getting. (George 1960.)¹⁷⁰

Recognizing the “signs” of Gould in the public reception requires a certain competence in the performance tradition of piano, as well as in historical conventions of literature and film. More than these, however, is required to know Gould’s character as it plays itself out in the public eye, as well as his life and work, inside out. For a lay spectator, for instance, the particular scene in *Hannibal* in which the protagonist plays the *Goldbergs* does not necessarily carry any meaning, whereas this particular scene, in my interpretation, at this point in the film is filled with meanings which I hope to show in more detail

¹⁷⁰ See also Harold Schoenberg’s crushing critique of Gould’s interpretation of Brahms’s d-minor concerto (cited in Friedrich 1990, 105–106). It is interesting to compare the reception of Gould’s concerts in Europe and North America. In the European reception, Gould’s stage mannerisms did not draw the same kind of attention as in Canada and the U.S. (See *Glenn Gould* Spring 1998, pp. 21–26.)

later in the chapter. These meanings have to do with other texts – the discursive web of Gould’s public reception from the beginning of his career.

The rich and multifaceted public reception of Gould’s character is a consequence of one fact: Gould is a *star*. Needless to say, his stardom is also constructed and maintained through his reception. Richard Dyer (1982, 38) has raised important issues regarding stardom in popular culture that apply equally well to Gould’s afterlife in popular culture. Dyer argues that stardom is often built on a certain kind of image of its object. This image is not, however, seen as a simple visual image but rather as a “complex configuration of visual, verbal and aural signs,” which have become associated together in the stardom of a given individual. In Gould’s case, it is easy to point to his eccentricity, intellectual brilliance, probing interpretations, and perhaps even his good looks as constitutive of his stardom. Gould was always “special,” a thinking person’s choice in Classical music, one who never ceased to be original and innovative.

Dyer does not, however, give us answers to apparently simple questions: how and through what kinds of processes, in fact, do “stars” gain significance in the public eye? How is the “star” consumed by his/her audience? How is the stardom mediated? With a focus on these important questions, Dyer’s theory has been further elaborated by Finnish scholar Janne Mäkelä. According to Mäkelä (2002, 36), a “star” becomes a commodity through the technological reproduction of his life and work, and the issue of whether or not there is a concrete proximity to the audience loses its relevance. The “star” can become immortal even though only a fraction of the audience has seen him/her live.

Stardom, Mäkelä (Ibid., 37) argues, is all about technological reproduction, through which a mediated “copy” of an individual is both produced and disseminated to masses of people. In this sense, the “star” is always “present” even though the copy is with the audience.

The particular concept Mäkelä (Ibid., 47–49) uses to refer to the construction, consumption and mediation of a star is *starnet*. By this term, Mäkelä refers to four elements constructing and maintaining stardom. First of all, the basis of all is the (usually) living individual, whose work – recordings, movies, books, etc. – along with first-hand knowledge, by interviews and other public statements, of that work is of interest for the audience. Second, the entertainment industry markets and commodifies the “star.” He/she is associated with qualities that enhance the sales. Third, media, in its many forms, comments on and makes reproductions of the star. And finally, the audience “consumes” the star by its purchase decisions, on which the existence of stardom depends.

What is particularly interesting in Mäkelä’s (Ibid., 51) account of *starnet* for my own take on Gould is the conclusion that through technological reproduction, the “star” can continue living even though the actual person is long dead. This is very much the case with Gould. Even though he has been dead for 28 years, the reception of his work shows no signs of waning. The music industry keeps on bringing new releases of Gould’s music to market, up for grabs for millions of people devoted to his art. Entertainment media circulate his character in new forms and for new audiences. As Bazzana (2003, 8) puts it, “dying was a great career move for him,” and his stardom does not find its equal in the do-

main of Classical music – Maria Callas may be an exception. Rather he should be compared to such figures as James Dean and Elvis Presley.

This chapter focuses on Mäkelä's third element in the *starnet*: media representations. I will start with film.

Who's Playing the Goldbergs for Me – Gould or Hannibal?

It simply does not follow that because music is an initially nonsemantic medium that the products of the medium cannot engage meaning or do cultural work. (Kramer 2002a, 146.)

In the following, I look closely at three horror films: *Silence of the Lambs* (1992), *Hannibal* (2001) and *Hannibal Rising* (2007). As already mentioned, these three films form a trilogy, based on Thomas Harris's novels, depicting the tragic and brutal story of Hannibal, the psychiatrist turned serial killer. Paying particular attention to the interaction of music and the visual aspects of the film, my point of departure is in two crucial notions concerning the trilogy:

- 1) All three films exemplify a highly particular and unique mode of reception of Gould's music-making and his public image;
- 2) In all three films, particularly in *Hannibal*, there are certain moments where meanings usually associated with Gould's playing become translocated into the protagonist Hannibal's character. This semiotic process, which transcends all dis-

cursive boundaries between movie, film, and my own domain of experience, I call, after Lawrence Kramer, a *semantic loop*.

In these films, the following details, in particular, have caught my attention:

- 1) In *Silence of the Lambs*, Hannibal is asked what he wants in return for the consulting help he's providing for the police in their search for "Buffalo Bill," a serial killer on the run. Hannibal has only two wishes: a telephone and Gould's recording of the *Goldberg variations*;
- 2) In the same film, the *Goldbergs* play a significant role in the key scene of the film – Hannibal's brutal, almost scenic killing of the guards and his escape to freedom. During the very act of the brutal killing, *Goldbergs* are playing¹⁷¹ in the background, seemingly providing inspiration and joy to Hannibal in his contemplative commitment to the horrific act. In the scene, Hannibal is seen also "conducting" the music in a very Gould-like manner;
- 3) In *Hannibal*, the protagonist has begun a new life in Florence under a new identity, "Dr Fell." He has learned to play the piece himself, as we witness in a very important scene of the film. The same music, Gould's 1982 recording of the *Goldbergs*, also functions as a *Leitmotiv* for Hannibal's presence at the beginning of the film, perhaps signifying the threat he poses to the world outside;

¹⁷¹ For reasons unknown to me, the film version does not use Gould's version of *Goldberg Variations* even though Gould's recording is explicitly mentioned in the novel. The version of the piece by Heinz Zimmermann heard in the film soundtrack, however, sounds deceptively like Gould's 1955 recording of the piece.

- 4) In *Hannibal Rising*, we get the explanation why the *Goldberg variations* is so important for Hannibal. During the World War II, German soldiers have occupied his native Latvia, killed his parents, and taken Hannibal and his little sister Mischa as captives. In harsh conditions with no food to eat, the soldiers eat Mischa, leaving Hannibal with a life-long trauma. Years after this event, Hannibal, as a medical student, is committed to finding the murderers of his sister and plots his revenge. He injects himself with sodium thiopental, and tries to recollect the faces of the German soldiers. The music playing in the background is Gould's 1955 recording of the *Goldbergs*.

In the Hannibal-trilogy, I am interested in how the *Goldberg Variations* becomes “Hannibal's music,” which both signifies his presence and also brings extra meaning and fascination to his enigmatic character. In this process, Gould's highly recognizable versions of the piece, already so associated with him in the world of Classical music, bring a whole new dimension to the semiotic overflow – ultimately my own experience of the audiovisual content – that I experience in the films. This effect is augmented by Hannibal's gestique, which is at times highly “Gouldian.”

Before going to the films, let me first introduce some theoretical background on how music works as part of film's auditory and visual environment. Anahid Kassabian (2001, 41–42) probes us to ask three questions:

- What is the relationship between music and the narrative world of the film?

- In what way do we, as spectators, encounter the music in a given context?
- What does the music mean for the spectator? What kinds of emotions does it evoke in him or her?

Through these important questions it is possible to make sense of the important role that Gould's recordings of *Goldberg Variations* play in the three films I discuss in this chapter. On a more general level, it is also important to introduce an important distinction between *diegetic* and *non-diegetic* music. For those not familiar with the terms, suffice it, for my purposes here, to define diegetic music as music that occurs as part of the action and can be heard by the film's characters; and non-diegetic as background music used to underline, and enhance – sometimes also counterpoint – the general mood of its visual and narrative context, and not heard by the characters in the film. With the exception of my one example from the introduction of *Hannibal*, all the scenes discussed below belong to the first category. In a sense, the starting point of my whole reading of music and the Hannibal trilogy is based on diegesis – what initially caught my attention in these films was the interaction of the music heard and the protagonist, psychopathic genius Hannibal Lecter. It is of particular interest for me that Gould is Hannibal's pianist of choice and that even Hannibal has learned to play Gould's hallmark piece, the *Goldberg Variations*, the significance of which we come to witness in various phases of the protagonist's life.

First the *Silence of the Lambs*. Here's a still from the film, at the crucial scene where Hannibal manages to escape from his guards.



Picture 7: Hannibal, after brutally killing his guards, listens to *Goldberg Variations*.

And here's another one, just seconds later in the scene:



Picture 8: Hannibal “conducts” the music like Gould.

In this scene, there are certain features that draw the attention of anyone familiar with Gould's recordings. First of all, *Goldberg Variations* is the auditory center of the whole narrative action. The whole scene opens with a close-up to Hannibal, contemplating the opening Aria of the work with his eyes shut. Just a little provocatively one could argue that Hannibal shows his cultural capital, sophistication and musical understanding by enjoying the work in this manner. Thomas Fahy (2003, 30) argues that the picture of Hannibal as an aesthete for whom killing is an artform, goes against the Arnoldian 19th-century conception of "cultivation" and "civilization" as a kind of "project of the self" in harmony with the surrounding world. Viewed in this light, Hannibal is to "culture" what Frankenstein is to technological progress – the dark side and distortion of the noble ideal.

Second, in my experience of this scene, Hannibal's conducting gestures draw particular attention because Gould's playing is often characterized by a gesticulation approximating aesthetic auto-communication.¹⁷² Hannibal's gesticulation in the context of a horror film brings about a semiotic overflow in the experience of a spectator such as I: a psychopath intellectual Hannibal "conducting" in a very Gouldian manner music very much asso-

¹⁷² Gould was aware of the exceptional nature of his live performance in this respect. In a letter to a fan, Gould (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 100) comments on his gestures as follows: "They represent a kind of intensifying relation to music. ... I have never been able to play the piano without gesturing semaphorically toward an imaginary horde of side-men. I suspect that it has to do with a desire to externalize, not the music or even one's relation to it, but perhaps the responsibility for it." This kind of self-conducting has to do with the anti-pianistic nature of musical ecstasy: "When I'm conducting very often what I'm doing is creating some sort of imaginary picture in my own mind of a reluctant cello player who needs cajoling to phrase better or try harder." (Gould 1981b/1999, 333.) The idea of gesticulating as reflective of a certain "responsibility to music" is one that Gould mentions nowhere else in his documents.

ciated with him – who is playing for me here? What, semiotically speaking, brings about the *meaning* of my experience?

To start answering the last question, one could first ask this: how relevant is Gould's gestic in his music-making for the aesthetic experience that it brings about? Why does a certain kind of gestic immediately evoke meanings associated with his character? Eero Tarasti (1994, 204–105) has observed that famous musicians often have one or more characteristics, “semantic” gestures that dominate their interpretations of music and help to distinguish them from others. Jane Davidson (1993), in her turn, has pointed out that this kind of gestic establishes *communication* between musician and audience, and the latter gets expressive content out of the concert experience through this visual element.

Sean Malone (2002, 25–34) has put Gould's gestic under close scrutiny as reflective of his aesthetic thinking. Looking at an excerpt of Gould's recording of *Kunst der Fuge*, Malone is able to separate seven expressive gestures in Gould's playing. Malone shows, in my opinion convincingly, how different gestures in Gould's playing have their musical counterpart in the score – they thus help to enhance the musical expression of a certain affect or musical idea. On a more aesthetic note, Malone sees Gould's gestic both as a window onto the latter's aesthetic cognition and as conducive to the abstract and contemplative condition of the musical experience that Gould considered ideal. Malone – and I could not agree with him more about this – sees Gould's live performance as “so personal, so intensive” that it is almost “embarrassing to watch” (Ibid., 34). I think Gould wanted us to feel this way: as Payzant (1997, 65) puts it, musical ecstasy, in Gould's

thinking, was a thin thread that brought together the music, musician and listener in a shared awareness of a certain “innerness” in music. The *gestique*, in a way, invites us to join the contemplative act as listeners. As Eugene Narmour (1988, 318) reminds us, any musical performance is always built on a triarchical interrelationship between composer, performer and listener; and even though the reaction and feedback of the audience does not have an impact on Gould’s playing on video, Gould’s gestures somehow enhance his *presence* in and through the music for me as his listener. In this sense, I am thus engaged in the “re-construction” of the music as meaning.

My multidimensional experience of Gould’s playing described above has obviously to do not with *Kunst der Fuge*, *Goldberg Variations*, or with any other musical work per se – even though the meanings historically associated with the work also matter (see footnote 172 below) – but rather with the live mediation of music: the *performance* of the music, Gould’s corporeal presence in the act of playing. Carolyn Abbate conceptualizes this performance-aspect of music as the “drastic” in music: the non-material, non-tactile element in music not reached by a scrutiny of recordings, scores and graphic musical examples (Abbate 2004, 510). Abbate’s interesting argumentation springs from her “conviction that what counts is not a work ... but a material, present event” (Ibid., 506). Music’s meaning as performance, as “ephemeral phenomenal being” (Ibid., 513), has, I think, an obvious groundedness in the listener’s subjective life-world – there is very little “objective” meaning involved in music as perceived, phenomenal sound. Abbate (Ibid., 534) writes of music’s (as performance) “cryptographic sublimity” in the sense that music “allows multiple potential meanings and demands none in particular.”

In my experience of the scene in *Silence of the Lambs*, Hannibal's conducting functions as a signifier for the kind of musical "innerness" brought about the drastic: it brings together meanings associated with Gould's fascinating musical thought, Bach's music riddled with numerological mystery, and Hannibal Lecter's enigmatic character in the film. We could say that through this kind of audiovisual unfolding of the music, the *Goldberg Variations* becomes double-mediated in my experience: first through Gould's interpretation of the work, and second through the context of the narrative of the film. Both of these domains of significance exist in continuous interaction.

As Kassabian (2001, 49) reminds us, films are only partially autonomous units of signification. They exist, for their viewers, as elements of a textual web – a web of their previous sonic, musical and visual experiences. She also argues that music's degree of "appropriateness" helps define the meanings produced by any film. This is an important point to make here – who would think that a psychopath killer would wish to listen to Gould's recording of the *Goldberg Variations* after a brutal kill of the guards. Here's how this scene is depicted in Harris's (1989, 145) novel:

Dr. Lecter toyed with his food while he wrote and drew and doodled on his pad with a felt-tipped pen. He flipped over the cassette in the tape player chained to the table leg and punched the play button. Glenn Gould playing Bach's *Goldberg Variations* on the piano. The music, beautiful beyond plight and time, filled the bright cage and the room where the warders sat. For Dr. Lecter, sitting still at the table, time slowed and spread as it does in action. For him the notes of music moved apart without losing tempo. Even Bach's silver pounces were discrete notes glittering off the steel around him. Dr. Lecter rose, his expression abstracted, and watched his paper napkin slide off his thighs to the floor. The napkin was in the air a long time, brushed the table leg, flared, sideslipped, stalled and turned over before it came to rest on the steel floor. He made no effort to pick it up, but took a stroll across his cell, went behind the paper screen and sat on the lid of his toilet, his only private

place. Listening to the music, he leaned sideways on the sink, his chin in his hand, his strange maroon eyes half-closed. The *Goldberg Variations* interested him structurally. Here it came again, the bass progression from the sara-band repeated, repeated.

This excerpt opens up interesting perspectives, each of which also has a role in defining the relationship of the scene and its music. First of all, Hannibal thinks of Bach's music as one the beauty of which is independent of its time and place, as absolute music, which is to be listened to just as Hannibal does listen – in a state of aesthetic contemplation. In Hannibal's experience of the music, the *Goldberg Variations* is also a sonorously interesting piece ("Bach's silver pounces were discrete notes glittering off the steel around him"), but he's also competent enough to make a distinction between the structural and sonic aspects of the music.¹⁷³

Gould's recording of the *Goldberg Variations* in the *Silence* becomes a part of an identification process of which Kassabian (2001, 141) distinguishes two aspects. First of all, through *assimilating identification*, a given music becomes a part of a certain individual or group. Through hearing the *Goldbergs* playing in Hannibal's cassette player, we learn that he is a musically enlightened, educated listener. The work, in a sense, becomes "his

¹⁷³ Thomas Fahy (2003, 32) proposes an interesting reading of the importance of the *Goldberg Variations* as Hannibal's favorite piece. According to Fahy, "The highly structured form of the piece parallels Hannibal Lecter's cold, meticulous nature. ... Like the make-up of this piece, all of Hannibal's actions and behaviors are highly measured. ... The meticulous artistry of this crime [the killing and crucifixion of his two guards] is accompanied by one of Bach's most meticulously structured pieces." Fahy also argues that there is a particular reason why the *Goldberg Variations* plays such a prominent role in the *Silence*. The music is, according to him, a kind of "night music" which refers to the traumatized FBI-agent Clarice Starling's insomnia, stemming from nightmares caused by her traumatic childhood. While this interpretation has a lot of strength – we recall the famous myth of the work as commissioned for Count Keyserling to entertain him in his sleepless nights – it is noteworthy that Fahy does not discuss Gould's presence in the narrative at all.

music,” and through his taste and cultivated mode of listening we see this monster expressing a genuinely human need for aesthetic enjoyment. We can safely watch Hannibal on screen, from a distance, because his musical taste points to something good in his otherwise brutally destructive and dangerous personality. The *Goldberg Variations* plays a big part here.

Through this kind of reading, however, we don’t get outside the film. Kassabian’s other concept, *affiliating identification*, together with the previously introduced *semantic loop*, refers to the production of intertextual layers of meaning the genesis of which I am trying to sketch out here. Through affiliating identification, the experience and ultimately the whole subjectivity of the viewer is seen as historically and locally constructed, and for this reason as heterogeneous and multivoiced.

Even though music in all my examples so far functions as the starting point for the signification of the subject, the intertextual layer of meaning is not unlimited. I have tried to point out two features in *Silence of the Lambs* that play an important role in my experience of the film: Hannibal’s explicit fondness (particularly emphasized in the novel) for Gould’s recording of the *Goldberg Variations* and his very “Gouldian” gestique while listening to the music. Both of these features actualize the meanings of Gould and his public image *as part of my experience of the film*.¹⁷⁴ This process of signification works in two directions: Gould on Hannibal and Hannibal on Gould. After seeing the *Silence*, I

¹⁷⁴ At this point, it would obviously be possible to make a scholarly excursion into psychoanalytic criticism of this music – my semiotically many-layered experience of the film is produced by the “listening subjectivity” in me (on this concept, see Schwartz 1997, 275–276).

no longer have access to my “pure,” “neutral” experience of Gould’s music-making. Hannibal has made an entrance into the act.

At the beginning of this work, I already wrote about “Glenn Gould” as something produced by the “web of culture” around him. Here we see this web as expanding – besides Gould’s own texts and ideas, his character also gets mediated and imbued with signification through *starnet*, from one domain to another.

Let’s return to Gould, Hannibal and *Goldberg Variations* for a while. The music has a particular function in the whole Hannibal trilogy. In addition to characterizing the protagonist by creating cultural and historical associations, the music also creates continuity between the movies of the trilogy, almost like a *Leitmotiv*. It is no coincidence that Hannibal is listening to Gould’s *Goldbergs* in the *Silence* in the scene of his escape from his guards – and that he himself is playing the piece in *Hannibal*. Gould is present in both of these films – and as we’ll see in a little while, Gould’s 1982 recording of the work is a kind of *Leitmotiv* for Hannibal in the latter film. The music signifies Hannibal’s freedom – we hear it in the intro to *Hannibal* in the background as the camera sweeps the streets of Florence, Hannibal’s new place of residence under a new identity. Hannibal is also *present* through the music: this we recognize the second time we hear the music in the film – first as background music to agent Starling’s reading of Hannibal’s letter, but soon as music coming from Hannibal’s own piano-playing in his elegantly decorated apartment. In a sense, the *Goldberg Variations* signifies Hannibal’s freedom and presence: in the *Silence*, Hannibal enjoys his spiritual freedom, his right to aesthetic enjoyment under

the tightest of constraints before actualizing his real freedom; in *Hannibal*, the music points to the sophistication and cultural capital that Hannibal, alias “Doctor Fell,” has, living the life of an educated gentleman whom, above all, we see playing this demanding piece of music as we watch.

In the movie, this scene is of particular interest not only because of the continuity it helps to bring out between the films but also as the visual *mise-en-scène* of the film. The societal respect, cultural capital and legitimate taste that Hannibal has gained through his intellect and hard work are all on display in his playing of the grand piano in his library.



Picture 9. Hannibal is playing the *Goldberg Variations* in his library.

This kind of imagery resonates strongly with 19th-century western cultural history. As Leppert (1995, 153) observes, for Victorian culture

the domestic pianoforte was as essential as the dining room table – in an ideological sense perhaps more important; respectability demanded its purchase as a marker of family position and accomplishment. ... Set up in the principal room of the semipublic portions of the home where guests as well as family members would gather, the piano bridged the gap between the public world and the private.

Here's how the scene is depicted in the novel:

The windows of the Palazzo Capponi are dark now, behind their iron grates. The torch rings are empty. In that pane of crazed old glass is a bullet hole from the 1940's. Go closer. Rest your head against the cold iron as the policeman did and listen. Faintly you can hear a clavier. Bach's Goldberg Variations played, not perfectly, but exceedingly well, with an engaging understanding of the music. Played not perfectly, but exceedingly well; there is perhaps a slight stiffness in the left hand. ... Cross to the music. We are dimly aware of passing large groups of draped furniture, vague shapes not quite still in the candlelight, like a sleeping herd. Above us the height of the room disappears into darkness. The light glows redly on an ornate clavier and on the man known to Renaissance scholars as Dr Fell, the doctor elegant, straight-backed as he leans into the music, the light reflecting off his hair and the back of his quilted silk dressing gown with a sheen like pelt.... Our musician smiles, ends the piece, repeats the saraband once for his own pleasure and as the last quill-plucked string vibrates to silence in the great room, he opens his eyes, each pupil centered with a red pinpoint of light. He tilts his head to the side and looks at the paper before him. (Harris 2000, 71-72.)

For any viewer with some background in the cultural history of music, Gould's recordings of the *Goldberg Variations*, and perhaps Harris's enigmatic way of referring to Gould in his novels, this scene in *Hannibal* brings about a similar kind semiotic overflow as my previous example from *Silence of the Lambs*. First of all, we've come to learn from the previous moments in the trilogy that Hannibal has a sophisticated understanding of Classical music and that Gould is his favorite pianist.¹⁷⁵ Nowhere earlier, however, have we learned of his ability to play the piano himself, let alone music that demands profes-

¹⁷⁵ This we learn in the novel *Silence of the Lambs* (Harris 1989). Gould wants particularly Gould's recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, and is also listening to Gould's recording of the *English Suite* later in the novel.

sional level skills, such as the *Goldbergs*. Against this background, this particular scene in the movie is shocking: in addition to being Hannibal's musical sign, the *Goldberg Variations* also ties Hannibal and agent Starling together. We hear the music in the background as Starling reads Hannibal's letter, which is his first attempt to contact her in years.

The grand piano and Hannibal's ability to play it point to his newfound social status and cultural capital as a member of the upper class, as curator of the museum in Florence. Even though Hannibal is playing for himself, one can well imagine visitors to his salon, similarly sophisticated guests who share his interests. One can almost hear the vivid conversations on literature, the visual arts, music.

The picture, however, is not without its conflicts. As Leppert (1995, 67) puts it, there is an obvious association between the piano and 19th-century bourgeois femininity. A bourgeois gentleman, we are accustomed to think, does other things – hunts, enjoys gourmet food, reads. Hannibal's playing of the piano brings an interesting aspect to his enigmatic character. It draws the viewer's attention, brings a touch of humanness, a sense of aesthetic taste, to his brutality and cruelty. Secondly, one is also curious as to whether he's always known how to play the piano or learned the skill only after his escape – despite his congenital anatomical anomaly.¹⁷⁶ Perhaps Gould's recording of the *Goldberg varia-*

¹⁷⁶ In the novel, we learn that Hannibal has six fingers in his left hand.

tions, Hannibal's cherished treasure in *Silence of the Lambs*, has given the inspiration to learn a new skill? Has he always had the beautiful grand piano on display in the scene?¹⁷⁷



Picture 10. Hannibal is injecting sodium thiopental in order to recall the faces of the German soldiers who killed his sister.

In *Hannibal Rising* the *Goldberg Variations* has significance only in the movie, not the Thomas Harris's novel that is the basis of the film. Here's what's taking place in the scene of which the still above is captured: in order to recall his own repressed past memories, Hannibal injects himself with a certain drug, sodium thiopental, while listening to a phonograph record playing Gould's 1955 recording of the *Goldberg Variations* in his apartment, and viewing six pencil sketches he had made of the Lithuanian soldiers who had cannibalized his sister. He's trying to *remember* to get the revenge on the Nazi soldiers who destroyed his life. It is of interest that Hannibal is depicted in the conventional

¹⁷⁷ One very small detail in the film version draws my attention in the library scene discussed above. Hannibal is reading a newspaper while playing. This kind of ability for multi-tasking is also always pointed out in the biographical literature on Gould. He was famous for practicing the piano with the radio on, so it seems that he and Hannibal were alike in their ability to multitask.

settings of the 19th-century genius: stormy, rainy night, alone in his solitude. Here's how the scene is depicted in the novel:

Hannibal lay on the low bed in his garret room. His candles flickered on the faces he has drawn from his dreams, and shadows played over the gibbon skull. He stared into the gibbon's empty sockets and put his lower lip behind his teeth as if to match the gibbon's fangs. Beside him was a windup phonograph with a lily-shaped trumpet. He had a needle in his arm, attached to a hypodermic filled with the cocktail of hypnotics used in the interrogation of Louis Ferrat. "Mischa, Mischa. I'm coming." *Fire on his mother's clothes, the votive candles flaring before St. Joan. The sexton said, "It's time."*

He started the turntable and lowered the thick needle arm onto the record of children's songs. The record was scratchy, the sound tinny and thin, but it pierced him. *Sagt, wer mag das Männlein sein Das da steht im Walde allein* He pushed the plunger of the needle a quarter of an inch and felt the drug burn in his vein. He rubbed his arm to move it along. Hannibal stared steadily by candlelight at the faces sketched from his dreams, and tried to make their mouths move. Perhaps they would sing at first, and then say their names. Hannibal sang himself, to start them singing. He could not make the faces move any more than he could flesh the gibbon. (Harris 2007, 235–236.)

As one notices immediately, Hannibal is not listening to Gould in the novel. Instead, he's listening to a well-known 19th-century German children's song "Ein Männlein stäht Im Walde" by August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben. This song has particular importance both in the film and in the novel: it is Hannibal's sister Mischa's favorite tune, which she was singing when the German soldiers took her. In the scene depicted in the novel, Hannibal is using the song as a trigger to bring back memories from the traumatic incident.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ I don't know why Harris decided to use the *Goldberg Variations* instead of "Ein Männlein" in the screenplay. Since Harris never gives interviews, I can only speculate. Perhaps one important reason is that *Goldbergs* provides continuity between all the films in the Hannibal trilogy. What is also noteworthy is that Hannibal, played by the young French actor Gaspard Ulliel, looks strikingly like young Gould of the 1950's.

Before I move on to discuss the reception of Glenn Gould in literature, let me conceptualize and theorize this extraordinary mode of mediation of Classical music. Lawrence Kramer (2002a, 145) has observed how

mixed media specifies both the general form and the historical basis of musical meaning, and with them the means for music to enter the culture-wide stream of communicative actions and exchanges. ... [M]usical meaning always exceeds its specification by mixed media, but in a way that vitally supports what it exceeds and helps position mixed media, too, in the general communicative economy.

According to Kramer, even from the idea of music's inherent cultural autonomy, it does not follow that musical works are incapable of "engaging meaning or do cultural work." In fact, Kramer is ready to re-evaluate the whole autonomous status of music: since "all music can be adapted for mixed-media use, it becomes possible to recast the whole question of musical meaning" (Ibid., 147). This, in my reading, is exactly what takes place in *Hannibal* and *Silence of the Lambs*. As Kramer (Ibid.) puts it, since music "comments" and functions behind the image, it also engages meaning all the time.

From this standpoint, it is understandable that Kramer's metaphor for the genesis of music's meaning is *a loop*. Through mixed media, meanings come into existence as if in a loop: music, Kramer argues, pretends to embody its autonomous meaning in itself, in its structure, but through its audiovisual mediation, music is "returned" to culture semiotically enriched and modified. This new, mediated meaning of music has a generic relationship to music's original meaning but in the act of the viewer's experience of the music, comes to replace it. It is this concept of semantic loop that is Kramer's formalized way of mapping out music's ability to engage meaning outside its structure as an active cultural

force (Ibid., 153). This becomes explicit also in Kramer's argument concerning music's ability to do "cultural work": music creates semiotic associations with public figures, brings about meanings and constructs narratives – all this outside the domain of the printed musical score.

In the "semiotic overflow," which is how I metaphorize my experience of the three films, Kramer's semantic loop is clearly at work. Through the scenic mediation of Bach and Glenn Gould described above, the two are "returned to culture" and changed – I would venture to argue that for anyone having seen the Hannibal-trilogy and having some knowledge of Gould's extraordinary musicianship, neither of the two – Bach nor Gould – remains the same. Kramer (Ibid., 154) argues that the "essence revealed" by the music is always culturally "posited for it in advance." My take on this somewhat enigmatic argument of Kramer's is that both Gould and Bach's music, as it were, posit culturally a certain potential for meanings which then gets actualized in the audiovisual mediation of the two.

The semiotic process described above would not be possible without the strong cultural association between Gould and the *Goldberg Variations*, his "signature piece." Régis Debray (2000, 106) has written about the "Gould-effect," by which he means a kind of intertwining of the artist and music, which consequently, from the listener's point of view, becomes part of the music's meaning. The "Gould-effect," Debray argues, gets constructed in two phases. First, the "star" "proves" to the world his exceptional skills and potential and draws the public's attention to his figure. Little by little, the myth, in-

volving qualities of the star's personality and public appearance, comes into existence: in Gould's case, the "eccentric genius" who isolates himself in his own creative solitude was a common *topos* of Gould's public reception early on in his career. In the second phase, the culture industry – record companies, radio and television, and print media – makes the myth into a commodity. After this process, the listener does not hear "Bach played by Glenn Gould but Glenn Gould played by Bach" (Ibid.).

The mythical and enigmatic nature of Gould's public image is without doubt an important part of his afterlife. This also includes Gould's gestic, to which Hannibal, in my watching of the *Silence*, provides an allusion. In the scene of Hannibal's escape, Gould emerges from the past, as a public musician, accentuating his own music-making as a physical act – all this while we hear the *Goldberg Variations* in the background. The intertwining of Gould and Hannibal is also connected to a larger cultural association between violence and Classical music. One, of course, thinks of *The Clockwork Orange* here, but there are several other examples as well – *The Terminal Man* (1974), for instance, is another movie with parts of Gould's recording of the *Goldberg Variations* in its soundtrack. What is of particular interest for me in the Hannibal trilogy, however, is that the protagonist loves Bach's music – not Beethoven, Mahler, Brahms or other monumental music which often is the case in the usage of Classical music in the context of horror. No, Hannibal loves Bach, and it is somehow extremely intriguing that this "monster" of a man plays the music of the "fifth evangelist" of western culture. Bruno Nettl (1995, 132-133) has referred to the qualities of holiness, religiosity, and purity with which Bach's music is generally associated. With these qualities, the character of Faustian red-brown-

eyed Hannibal is in direct conflict. However, one could also look at this conflict the other way round: Bach's music is good for Hannibal because it is abstract, rational and contrapuntal.¹⁷⁹ There is something in Bach's music in particular that brings about an association with it and violence – as Julie Brown (2010, 8) has observed, the famous *Toccatina and Fugue in D minor* is by far the most repeated organ work in the history of horror film. Perhaps Bach's music over the centuries, because of its ambivalent character as both virtuosic and religious music, has come to posit a semiotic potential for sublime horror which gets actualized most obviously in the Hannibal trilogy.

At this point, it might be useful to return to my starting points in this chapter. Gould is a “star,” whose stardom is “consumed” all over western (popular) culture through starnet. In this section of my thesis, I have looked at “Glenn Gould's” mediation in film as an example of how, through the semantic loop, a given music – and artist – takes genres and musical idioms across into new environments. Next I will look at Gould's mediation in literature.

¹⁷⁹ One could also contextualize this issue historically. David Yearsley (2004, 1–41) has discussed the 18th-century association between counterpoint and death. Counterpoint, in Bach's music, was seen as a kind of metaphor for the order of the universe, connected with the finity of the human life and the last doom.

“Gould’s” Story in Literature

Before I move on to discuss the reception of Glenn Gould in literature, let me re-state two broader contextual points of departure:

- 1) The general reception of Gould’s musicianship (biographies, encyclopedia articles, documentaries and newspaper criticism) has emphasized Gould’s eccentricity, his, as it were, “otherness” in the domain of Classical music. This public discourse of Gould’s eccentricity involves stories and anecdotes of his humming while playing, dressing up in winter clothes in the middle of summer, hypochondria, social isolation and obsession for long phone calls at odd hours, notable gestique in live performance, enigmatic sexuality,¹⁸⁰ and a fondness for a number of alter egos – such as New York taxi driver “Theodore Slutz,” British authenticist-conductor “Sir Nigel Twitt-Thornwaite,” and the German musicologist “Herbert von Hochmeister” – who circulated in Gould’s radio and television programs, and under whose signature he even published some of his writings;
- 2) Gould is a major cultural icon in his native Canada. His legacy, institutionally supported by The Estate of Glenn Gould and The National Archives of Canada, was cherished by the journal *GlennGould*, published until 2009. Institutional commemorations abound: the university program for musical performance at the

¹⁸⁰ Robin Elliott (2005, 116–117) approaches Gould’s biographical identity particularly from the sexual point of view. He lists four conscious strategies in biographies to deal with Gould’s staying single for the whole of his life: “The Ladyfriend trap” – Gould was heterosexual and had secret relationships with women; “The Mother Alibi” – Gould was incapable of serious relationships with women because of his strong fixation to his mother; “The Sexless and Celibate Syndrome” – Gould was an asexual person; “The Aesthetic Fallacy” – Gould sublimated his sexual energy into his art.

Royal Conservatory of Music is named the “Glenn Gould School of Music”; the concert hall of the CBC is named “Glenn Gould studio”; a whole variety of statues, installed in public places all over Canada, have been commissioned over the years; Canada Post even recognized Gould’s musical legacy with a commemorative envelope in 2007. CBC maintains Gould’s status with documentaries and previously unreleased material, together with Sony Classical, which owns the rights for most of the unreleased material.

These two contexts are important background for my discussion of Gould’s reception in literature. At the same time, they also serve to illustrate on a macro-level the enthusiasm and popularity which Gould’s music-making has engaged. Gould was simply an artist capable of very intense engagement with his audience. For some of his fans, finding Gould’s music has meant a life-changing experience, almost like a religious conversion (see, for instance, Rhona Bergman’s *The Idea of Gould*). This kind of reception is not even exceptional among Gould’s fans. Here’s an example from a 1972 letter from a fan (GGA 35, 6, 9):

When one listens to your interpretations of Bach-works, he notices at once, that there comes to exist a foreign cosmos around him, namely your own particular cosmos, resulting probably from that very specific, the most exquisite articulation, rhythm and tact of your own, of your inner respiration. And this very cosmos, strained to the highest degree, seems to me to have nothing to do with our five senses, but have rather to do with something being far beyond such a category of human sense. ... Your way of interpretation in general suggests to me, somehow, something of transcendental, of metaphysical nature.

Reading a large number of letters, personal reminiscences and other documents such as this helps one to understand the vast quantity and qualitative range of secondary literature

on Gould. During this research, I have come to know this literature quite thoroughly. However, I have also come across whole new genres of Gould's literary reception previously unknown to me, such as biographies of Gould targeted for children. I have found two examples of this interesting literary genre: Vladimir Konieczny's *Struggling for Perfection: The Story of Glenn Gould* and Lynette Roy's *Glenn Gould: The Genius and His Music 1932–1982*. I will start this section of my chapter by a closer scrutiny of these two examples.

The ideological roots of the biography as a literary genre reach to the 19th century. The original idea of the genre was to “enlighten” and “develop” the reader through reading about the lives of exceptional and exemplary individuals. In Gould's case, this exemplarity has to do with his national iconicity in Canada. As Elliott (2005, 107) observes, nationally significant individuals are most often biographically constructed in discourses that have to do with important national values. In this manner, the meanings of exceptional life stories become associated with national histories and particular modes in which a given nation defines its history and identity. A biography, in this sense, becomes national history, symbolizing aspects of a nation's self-image, hopes and ambitions. (Sturken 1996, 31, 33).

This is the ideological frame in which I am looking at the biographies mentioned above. Generally viewed, these biographies set an example through creating a success narrative of Gould's exceptional talent, devotion to music and willingness to work towards a goal.

On a macro-level, all biographies of Gould that I am aware of – including the two children’s biographies – display a similar kind of master narrative:

- Gould is a *Wunderkind*, studying the piano with his mother and later with Alberto Guerrero;
- Gould ends up in conflict with Guerrero at the age of 19 and states that he’s learned nothing from him;
- Gould withdraws to the family summer house pondering his future, starts a successful career as a performing artist;
- Gould becomes frustrated with the excessive traveling, limitations that live performance sets for musical interpretation, the “lust-for-blood”-atmosphere of live concerts; suffers deteriorating health;
- Gould withdraws again to the summer house to ponder his future;
- Gould returns again to the scene, this time concentrating on recording, television, and radio documentaries;
- Gould’s mother dies, relationship with the father cools off because of his re-marriage;
- Gould isolates himself from the world more than before and plans a new career as a conductor;
- Gould dies of a stroke at the age of 50.

This quasi-narratological sketch is not to question whether or not the incidents were “real” but rather to pay attention to how linear and straight-forward this life-narrative

plays out. Also, within this kind of schema, certain events gain a larger function in the larger whole. Withdrawing into the summer house, for instance, plays itself out as an almost quasi-mythological “recharge” – as in Vladimir Propp’s theory of the universal structure of folk tales – of the protagonist, from where he returns having resolved conflicts and matured.

These events unfold clearly in Konieczny’s *Struggling for Perfection*. Gould’s childhood summers at the summer house play themselves out as an outright idyll:

The small, white cottage was a sanctuary. He hated to go back to the city. When it was time to go back to school in September, he would become very sad. The cottage was his haven, a place of peace where he could just be himself. (2004, 23.)

The isolation following the conflict with Guerrero is described as follows:

So he removed himself from Toronto’s music scene for a while and went to the cottage, leaving only to perform concerts arranged for him by Walter Homburger, his agent. Life at the cottage turned into a comfortable routine. Music now absorbed him completely. He didn’t have to worry about school, or about preparing lessons for Guerrero or anyone else. ... He spent hours practicing. He’d play a few bars, then stop, walk around the room, gaze out the window thinking, hearing the music in his mind over and over and over again. Sometimes he’d sing what he was hearing, then sit down and play again. He’d repeat this many, many times each day and night. He was searching for the best way to express the music. He was struggling for perfection. (Ibid., 45.)

The solitude following Gould’s retirement from giving concerts is narrated in a similar tone:

Glenn retreated to the cottage, where he recharged his batteries. With the exception of a few speaking engagements, he kept mostly to himself, reading, walking and thinking a great deal. This period was very important to him, as

critical as the time years earlier when he'd quit his music lessons and taken refuge at the cottage to ready himself for the future. (Ibid., 77.)

All these examples show Gould's isolation in the pastorate of the countryside as a kind of withdrawal into the serenity of solitude. It could be argued that Gould is living the life of a 19th-century artist in these examples: close to the sublimity of nature, immersed in his music, at a distance from everyday worries, surrounded by "pure" emotions and thoughts. This kind of idyll has traditionally been the discursive space reserved for autonomous art within which artists have been situated in biographical narratives.

The traditional function of a biography as setting an example before the reader comes to the fore clearly in *Struggling for Perfection*. Gould's complex personality is idealized – he's described as "a gentle rebel who struggled for perfection in everything he did" (p. 7); as "different," one who "some people thought ... was strange, but they simply didn't understand him" (p. 8); as "an honest man" who "had no fear about stating what he believed" (p. 17); as "courageous," always "prepared to take a chance with music and in life"; as well as one with an "eccentric lifestyle" but "brilliant, funny, kind and interesting" (p. 64). I was surprised to read about Gould's playing Mozart's music "beautifully" (p. 17) and being interested in how people in the north lived, how they got along, how they survived, what kinds of lives they made for themselves" (p. 84). This last characterization draws my particular interest here, taking into account the fact that in his audiodocumentaries on the Canadian north, no single indigenous person is interviewed, nor is any factual (economic, geographical, etc.) information presented to the listener.

What, then, is particularly “Canadian” in *Struggling for Perfection*? Even though Gould never regarded his Canadian-ness as an essential part of his identity, this aspect is highlighted in the narrative: “Glenn loved Canada. ... He was in awe of this country’s natural beauty, its vastness and its people. He believed Canadians to be very cultivated people” (p. 83). It should be stressed that Gould never states *any* of these things, nor does he emphasize his own nationality related to his identity. All this, however, is not relevant for my argument here: in the biography, “Gould” is constructed as a national hero, an example for children – a cosmopolite who, in spite of all possibilities available, loves his native country and does service to her through his work. This is in harmony with Elliott’s (2005, 107) more general argument regarding biographies of significant persons: through reading about the lives of the elite, we also learn what the essence of their nationality is.¹⁸¹

Lynette Roy’s *Biography for Young People* is, compared with my previous example, clearly more neutral in its tone. There is almost none of the disturbing hagiography characteristic of *Struggling for Perfection*, and overall the targeted reader seems to be a teenager or older. Roy’s main argument in her book is that Gould was a “visionary”¹⁸² in Classical music and that his exceptional commitment to recording as the main mode of

¹⁸¹ The main issue of my previous chapter, the Idea of the North, is obviously one of the ideological cornerstones on which the Canadian “imagined community” (see Anderson 1991; Grace 2002, 23) is built. Life stories of significant Canadians are important material in this collective identity work. Canada, of course, is no exception in this respect. Biographies of Jean Sibelius, Finland’s best known composer, give a clear picture what the essence of “Finnish-ness” is.

¹⁸² Gould would have objected to characterizations of him as a “visionary” because these imply the very “progressivist” conception of history that he explicitly argues against.

musical interpretation pointed directly to the future. Roy (1999, 64) also argues that the world has been changing much from how Gould lived it even as early as the 1960s, isolated as he was from normal social interaction – how else could we explain the breakthrough of email, skype and communication over the world wide web. Roy is guilty of only a slight overstatements in her characterizations of Gould as a “music theorist and philosopher” (p. 45), as a “compassionate humanitarian who cared little about material things” (p. 56) – Gould’s oft-cited success in the stock market proves to the contrary – and as a thinking individual, who “perceived that there was disrespect for the value of life, and that we should teach our children that they are special and unique” and believed that “if children learned to value themselves and others there would be less violence in the world” (pp. 50, 52).

Again, I want to point out that the critical reading practiced here is not intended to question the real-life validity of these characterizations regarding Gould’s person. No public or archival material gives reason for such accusations of meanness, malevolence or plain socio-pathological behavior as Gould’s long-time producer Andrew Kazdin (1989) puts forth in his book on Gould. The contrary, however, is true as well – there are no particular signs of philanthropy, charity or goodwill in Gould’s doings or documents over his life. Gould’s vast correspondence consists for the most part of business letters, letters to fans and colleagues, and casual short notes to family members. There are hardly any signs of a private life in the letters; in its stead one gets a picture of an almost obsessively music-devoted, talented and intelligent person, who does not seem to have had time for serious relationships.

It is obvious that Gould's particularly charitable personality, as well as the "genius in the pastorate" -*topos* that Konieczny puts forth, are biographical and literary constructions. The same can be said about the idea that Gould was a "visionary" of Classical music – he did not, after all, really contribute to recording practice *anything* that would become legitimized common practice after him. Rather his exceptionality is based on the significance that recording in and of itself, as a "philosophy of making music," had for him. In other words, it is not what Gould did but rather what he thought could be done – and leave aside in the future – through technology that matters most in evaluating Gould's significance for the history of performing Classical music. Moreover, Gould's new ideas concerning recording technology should, perhaps, not be evaluated against the backdrop of technological "progress" since any kind of "progress" or status as a "pioneer" are completely foreign to his musical values.

Gould in Poetry

The object of my discussion here, a collection of poems under the title *Northern Music – Poems about and inspired by Glenn Gould*, edited by J.D. Smith, is quite a unique example of Gould's mediation in the western world. It is, as far as I know, the only example of a whole collection of poems inspired by a 20th-century musician. 19th-century poetry inspired by Wagner (Baudelaire, Valéry), Paganini and Franz Liszt¹⁸³ is, as one can im-

¹⁸³ See Susan Bernstein *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century* for more detail.

agine, a broad literary domain, but the closer one comes to our own times, the more scarce does this literary genre, inspired by Classical musicians, become.

Northern Music is, I think, a good case in point for discussing the exceptional and multifaceted afterlife that Gould has enjoyed after his death. The 39 poems in the collection, divided into 6 larger “chapters” – “Performance,” “Lore,” “North,” “Tributes,” “Variations” and “Coda” – focus, in their poetic substance, on issues, anecdotes and myths in Gould’s life that are often prevalent in the biographical literature. For instance, Ka Po Eleanor Kwan’s *Two Verses on a Note by Glenn Gould* opens with a quotation from a well-known letter by Gould to an unidentified woman named “Dell,” which in itself has been seen as a document proving Gould’s intimate secret relationship with a woman.¹⁸⁴ In her poem, Kwan creates a fictional romance between Gould and the woman, left unidentified in the poem. One, of course, is reminded by the 19th-century discourse in which the “suffering genius” writes letters to his “immortal beloved,” which is exactly the *topos* reflected in the poem.

“Suffering genius” is not the only mythological figure that is reflected in the poems. Lola Haskins’s *Story*, to show another example, is also based on a well-known incident in Gould’s life, the famous 1962 recording of Brahms’s d-minor concerto with Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic. This oft-cited live performance that I discussed earlier in chapter 2, has remained in the history of Classical music because of

¹⁸⁴ Bazzana (2003, 344–345) abandons this hypothesis. According to him, the letter is obviously copied from an unlocated source for an unknown purpose.

Gould's odd choice of tempi in the piece and Bernstein's public dissociation with the interpretation that he however executes with his orchestra and the soloist.¹⁸⁵ This incident has been commented upon widely in the biographical literature, and Gould's intentions regarding his interpretation may have been at least partly misunderstood.¹⁸⁶ Haskins creates a dichotomy between "the north" and tradition, represented by Leonard Bernstein:

This is not our tempo, Bernstein said. And, more to the point, this is not what Brahms wanted. But Gould said: I am Canadian. And I know something about mountains. And I know something about genius, which is like a mountain. And I know how this piece should be played, which is like the snow that lies quiet and glittering on the Rockies. And Gould was cold in this, and adamant as diamonds. (Ibid., 24; italics original)

Gould's Canadian-ness is reflected in the poem above all as a close affinity with sublime nature, out of which the "Gould" in the poem draws inspiration for his interpretation. It is noteworthy that the metaphor for his interpretation is located in the "northern" sphere – the performance of the Brahms concerto should be "like the snow that lies quiet and glittering on the Rockies." The dialectics in the poem could also be grasped through an old dichotomy between "nature" and "culture" – Bernstein representing tradition and Brahms's intentions as they guide the musician into an "accepted," "normal" interpreta-

¹⁸⁵ For Gould's own reasons for his exceptional performance, see "N'aimez-vous pas Brahms" in *Glenn Gould Reader* (Page 1990); as well as Gould's own letter regarding the issue (Roberts & Guertin 1992, 56). A commercial recording of the concert exists (Sony SK 60675), and it also includes Bernstein's speech to the audience before the concert in which he dissociates himself from the interpretation that is about to be heard.

¹⁸⁶ The critic Harold Schoenberg, then with the *New York Times*, was ruthless in his review (Friedrich 1990, 105–108; Bazzana 2003, 204–208). Viewed against this backdrop, it is easier to understand the mutual distrust between Gould and Schoenberg. In *The Scene*, a radio program by Gould (1972/2003, 9), he comments on Schoenberg's music criticism: "To an extraordinary extent, adjectives normally associated with sports in general, and pugilism in particular, found their way into his descriptions of concert experiences, which is perhaps understandable in view of the fact that he began his career behind the sports desk."

tion, while Gould's "northern" music-making points to an archaic and strong interpretation inspired by "genius" and "nature."

It comes as no surprise that the "north" plays a prominent role in other poems as well.

Laura Hope-Gill's poem *To Understand a Canadian* takes the reader into the mythical, sublime pastorate of the arctic, discussed at length in the previous chapter:

Understand that Canada is made mostly out of air
That disintegrates into nothingness the farther you go North
See how the atlas lies about how much of us
cannot be lived in when we lose our distance from the city
Know the city is a falseness even the forests understand

To understand a Canadian do not push too hard on the surface.
Under Canada is a silence
Only ice can break (Ibid., 35-36.)

This is the sublime "north" surrounding the Canadian genius in the poem. Jeff Kersh's

Contrasts is in very much the same domain:

A pile of kindling wards off
Canadian cold as a man
in far too brief of a coat
trudges off in blossoming snow,
no destination in particular.
He hums as he walks, fingers
twitching expert fingerings
for concertos, fugues, sonatas (Ibid., 42.)

The last "northern" poem in the collection, Diane Raptosh's *The Idea of North* (Ibid., 43)

associates Gould with isolation, searching for the truth within oneself in the arctic surroundings:

began with a compulsion to look out
on the polar sea and find it
in my blood. Remove the gear, the I don't-
know-how-many pairs of gloves.
the two black hats, pull down all
the parkas I must wear before I step
from my apartment I shall leave
my mauve hot water bowls at once

The “north,” as I argued in the previous chapter, points to solitude, Canadian-ness, and an overall spiritual purity. From this topos there is only a semiotic stone's throw into making Gould's music-making signify within a religious frame of reference, in the sphere of the sacred. Robert Gray's (Ibid., 14) poem *An Art of the Fugue* is a good example of this:

His face is as ecstatic as any saint's or martyr's
and those ethereal hands would never stop playing
if they could choose their own destiny, but ahead
lurks a white void where the notes simply vanish.
Gould plays and plays and then, suddenly, he snatches
his fingers from the keyboard as if he's been shocked
into freeze frame – a silent stillness and an enviable death.

Any poem as an aesthetic artifact is very seldom a “document” of a real-life incident. In this occasion, however, I can't resist the temptation to bring to the reader the very point in the film that Gray's poem (almost surely) describes so poetically:



Picture 11: Gould raises his hand very dramatically at the famous unfinished ending of the *Kunst der Fuge*, right after the B-A-C-H – motive is introduced. The still is captured from the film *Glenn Gould Plays Bach* (1981).

This still from the 1981 film by Bruno Monsaingeon together with Gray’s poem evokes a whole variety of meanings through the semantic loop that it actualizes. Gould, the “saint” and “martyr” of the poem is playing with his “ethereal” hands the mythical last *Contrapunctus* of the *Kunst der Fuge*, which the composer, so the famous myth tells us, was fervently attempting to finish in his deathbed. We can not be quite sure whether the “silent stillness and an enviable death” points to Bach’s or Gould’s death – Gould’s dramatic gestic in which his hands finally stop playing and freeze into a frame somehow also acts as a metaphor for Gould’s own death a little more than a year after this film. My experience actualizes thus both historical and biographical meanings: associations with Bach and death, the mythical origin of the music, the sacred transcendence of Bach’s

music. At the same time, the poem is a kind of homage to Gould, who is poeticized in the context of the writer's own experience of his music.

The most common type of narrative position in the poems is one in which the narrator poeticizes a musical experience that is defined and named in the poem. These poems in the collection include *Listening to Glenn Gould Play the Grieg E Minor Sonata* (June Owens), *Glenn Gould: The Bizet Variations Chromatiques, Eyes Shut* (June Owens) and *Listening to Bach's English Suites at the Seashore* (Richard Broderick). Also Leslie Monsour's (Ibid., 25) *The Last Concert* can be read in the same context – it is obviously inspired by one scene – “The Last Concert” – in Francois Girard's film *Thirty-Two Short Films of Glenn Gould*:

Before he plays, he fills the bathroom basin
with birthwarm water for his room-chillied hands.
The way he floats them, they could be his child;
they have his seriousness, and there's his face in
their grasp, which heaven won't exceed. He stands
flexing off tension, bathes his wrists with mild
affection, almost with a father's pride.

Gould is also seen as an object of romantic and erotic longing in some poems – Rebecca Loudon's (Ibid., 72) is a good example:

Glenn Gould is my secret lover
He sails to my bed as I sleep
Hovers above my piano
Tapered hands veined as a leaf

He sails to my bed as I sleep
Voice rising above the fugue
Tapered hands veined as a leaf
Bach from his body blooms

In addition to these kinds of sensual metaphors an important *topos* of Gould's poetic reception is textual counterpoint. Even though these two verses don't suffice to display it in detail, the total eight verses of the poem construct a kind of textual simulation of a fugue, in which the lines assimilate the voices into a fugal texture. As the same expressions in the poem – "He sails to my bed as I sleep," and "Tapered hands veined as a leaf" – change positions in the totality, the experience of the totality is in an intriguing way contrapuntal.

All in all, one can argue that the poems circulate and re-imbue with significance the same "Glenn Gould" so familiar to us from representations in other media: an eccentric, isolated, lonely genius somehow particularly associated with the north. Even though this character is strange, peculiar and even frightening, he also achieves the affinity of the erotic fantasy – as in my last example. On the other hand, in a number of poems poetry serves simply as the medium of a musical experience, which is an old form of music's public reception – one thinks, for instance, of E.T.A. Hoffmann poetic reception of Beethoven's and Haydn's symphonies, already cited in my thesis earlier. In this sense, Gould-inspired poetry is not as exceptional as it may seem – particularly if one sets aside the fact that Gould was a musician, not a composer. What I consider as exceptional, however, in all this is that in the poems we meet the same "Gould" as elsewhere, the "Gould" that he seems to have wanted to leave us with: a lonely genius immersed in his private ecstasy, necessarily observed from a distance. On a more personal note, I regard this as slightly melancholic: Gould has remained alive, one could argue, as a myth. And Gould must have been aware of the ingredients of the myth as something of his own making: the

eccentricity, the isolation, the iconoclastic approach to deities (Mozart, Beethoven) of Classical music. Just like the numerous interviews he scripted¹⁸⁷ beforehand to maintain total control of the whole, Gould also built largely himself the frames in which his picture has remained on display in the world of Classical music.

“Glenn Gould” as a Novel Character

If the topic of my previous section – “Glenn Gould” as an inspiration of poetry – was exceptional, all the more exceptional is the topic of the present discussion: a dead Canadian pianist appearing as a fictitious character in literature. Classic examples of literary personifications of musicians are “Adrian Leverkühn” in Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* and “Hans Castorp” in Hermann Hesse’s *Glass Bead Game* as alter egos of Arnold Schoenberg. As will become obvious, however, Gould’s literary reception is both qualitatively and in quantity very different from that of these older literary peers.

One of the better known Gould-novels is Thomas Bernhard’s *Der Untergeher* (1983; trans. *The Loser* 1991). This absurd and tragic novel introduces “Glenn Gould” in the past tense, as a genius who has died at the age of 51 (cf. this with Gould’s actual dying at

¹⁸⁷ Gould started doing this as early as mid-1960’s, which however not all commentators were aware of. Victor Coelho (1992, 917), for instance, writes about Bruno Monsaingeon’s interview – scripted *in toto* by Gould – that Gould, in supposedly Monsaingeon’s hands, has to defend his views on Mozart to the extent seldom seen in his interviews. Gould (GGA 32, 33, 8) himself comments on this interview in his 1976 letter to Monsaingeon: “Herewith a copy of our imaginary conversation. I trust that I did not seriously misinterpret any of your Mozart persuasions. I know that I didn’t capture the essence of your remarkably tolerant disposition, but I did feel that a few uncharacteristically nasty lines towards the end would lend a certain realism to the conversation.”

50!) while listening to his own recording of the *Goldberg Variations*. Gould, the unnamed narrator of the novel, and a third character “Wertheimer” have all studied in Vladimir Horowitz’s master class at the Mozarteum in Salzburg in 1953. Glenn Gould’s genius is the real protagonist in the narrative: its destructive power makes Wertheimer first give up his own playing, and later, after Gould himself had died, commit suicide because of not “daring to be alive anymore.” Wertheimer is led to an act of self-destruction by his tragic inability to want to be anyone other than Glenn Gould. His maniacal belief that Gould’s performance of the *Goldberg Variations* is the unattainable model that he must struggle against all hope to emulate in his own performance of this work condemns him to utter despair. The narrator, in turn, gives up his own playing and develops an obsession for writing about Glenn Gould. As one can see, even from a short paraphrase like this, most of the events in the narrative unfold in the narrator’s memories and in the past tense.

The “Gould” in the novel is, for anyone familiar with the real Glenn Gould, absurd. This pianist genius advances his friend’s decision to commit suicide by calling him “loser” straight at his face – to think of the real Gould, who preached against the competition principle throughout his life, doing this sort of thing is downright preposterous. One also finds other “distortions” of facts: Gould would never have studied with his older contemporary Horowitz – because he hated him and everything that he pianistically represented: sentimentality, dazzling display of virtuosity, spontaneity; Gould did not love New York, nor was he a German-speaking cosmopolitan; Gould was not keen on practicing his repertory, nor did he have a pulmonary disease as the “Gould” in the novel did.

In spite of these distortions, there are a number of characteristics in the novel that make the character recognizable: Gould performed the music of Brahms, Schoenberg and Webern and constantly criticized that of Mozart and Beethoven; Gould escaped, in a way, from the audience into a voluntary isolation; Gould was sloppy in his appearance but was, at the same time, a control fanatic and in many ways the worst critic of himself.

As an example of Gould's cultural mediation, then, Bernhard's novel is peculiar. Bazzana (2002/2006, 5) gives an interesting reading of this strange novel: its depiction of "Gould" could be read as a kind of self-portrait of Bernhard himself. Bernhard himself turned 51 when Gould died; he had a pulmonary disease; he broke up with his family and isolated himself in the countryside. According to Bazzana, the obsessive and intensive mode of narrative prevalent in the novel, as well as the temporal shifts between present and the past, unfolds just like a dialogue inside the writer's experience and his memories.¹⁸⁸

It is also interesting that many commentaries on Bernhard's novel raise issues that are particularly difficult not to associate with Gould's own aesthetic thought. Michael Olson, for instance, reads *Der Untergeher* as a literary contrapuntal work, which by its very ontology assimilates its musical counterpart, the fugue. Olson also points out that "Glenn Gould" is a key figure also in two other novels by Bernhard – *Alte Meister* (1985) and *Heldenplatz* (1988); – and asserts, that not only were a quest for perfect control and per-

¹⁸⁸ The writer's own personal background is interesting. Bernhard also studied music before embarking in a literary career, and it is difficult to imagine that he would have missed Gould's concert in Salzburg in 1959. Be that as it may, Gould's musicianship obviously had a high impact on Bernhard, and the fact that *Der Untergeher* was published in 1983 compels one to ponder the possibility that the novel is a peculiar *hommage* to Gould.

fectionism hallmarks of Gould's work but also Bernhard's – counterpoint was a way of achieving this experience of total control over the whole. Bernhard, Olson (Ibid., 77-79) writes, was throughout his career writing his *Magnum opus*, constantly renewing his literary language from work to work. It is in this sense that Olson writes about Bernhard's *oeuvre* in very Gouldian concepts: it can be seen as a series of "takes."

In a more recent commentary on *Der Untergeher* Reinhild Steingröver (2003) pays attention to intertextuality and philosophical heroes in the novel. In this novel Steingröver reads "Gould," for instance, as a Schopenhauerian reflection of a romantic Genius, a solitary, isolated and tragic character. At the same time, however, parody is prevalent: the tension involved between the real Glenn Gould and "Glenn Gould" in the novel is never resolved, and it becomes part of the controversial Genius in the narrative. Another element of textual parody in the novel is that the novel focuses most on the losers of the narrative: the narrator and "Wertheimer" instead of the Genius, who only lurks there in the background.

In addition to this kind of philosophical and historical intertextuality Steingröver reads the novel as a musical allusion: ostinato, repetitiveness and variation are musical elements that he detects in the novel. The textual counterpart to all this – "Gould"-genius – is ultimately left alone, in spite of all parody and controversy embedded in it.

A whole different "Gould" can be found in Tim Wynne-Jones's novel for teenagers *The Maestro* (1995). In this book, "Gould" enters under another name – eccentric pianist "Na-

thaniel Gow.” The narrative in the novel is interesting: the protagonist, “Burl Crow,” 14 years of age, escapes from his violent and dishonest father into the woods, where he wanders for days with no food or drink. Finally he finds, in the middle of the forest, a peculiar cottage shaped like a pyramid, to which the pianist Gow has isolated himself to finish the highlight of his musical career, an oratorio. The encounter with the Genius is significant for young Burl – for the first time in his young life he is heard and challenged into an intellectual and moral dialogue, and he gains courage to search for his spiritual potential.

As West & Lee (1999, 78) accurately describe, Gow serves as a spiritual and moral guide to Burl in his journey towards understanding the world around us and above all, himself. West and Lee also point out that the relationship between Gow and Burl plays itself out in an archetypal pattern found in the relationship between guide and novice in many myths, legends, fairy tales and children’s fiction. To be secluded with the Maestro provides an opportunity for intellectual and moral growth and ultimately a “re-birth” as a more mature individual.

Living together with the Maestro, however, is not without its problems. Maestro decides to return to town, promising to return in a few days. Burl stays at the cottage when something unexpected happens: the Maestro dies. Burl feels it his duty to take care of the cottage and the grand piano, of which even Gow’s lawyer is not aware. Burl has no knowledge of Gow’s family or friends except for one sign of a friend in the outside world: a letter from a woman named Reggie Corngold, which he finds at the cottage. Burl returns

to Toronto to meet Corngold and introduces himself as Gow's son, claiming possession to the cottage in the woods, which neither Reggie nor Gow's lawyer are aware of anyway. Burl's story does not convince the two, and they demand a DNA-test to proceed with the matter. Burl refuses to take the test, so nothing seems to come out of his demands. In his discussions with Reggie, however, Burl learns that the oratorio, of which he'd seen the manuscript at the cottage, would be sensational news about the world-class pianist. Reggie tells Burl that should he manage to bring the work to Toronto, it might be possible that as an act of pure generosity, Burl could perhaps inherit the cottage since there are no blood-relatives.

Things, however, don't proceed this smoothly. Upon returning to the cottage, Burl finds his violent father there dead drunk. A fight with Burl follows, and accidentally a fire starts, burning the cottage to the ground. The oratorio cannot be saved. Burl's father gets a painful wound in the leg, which hinders his walking. The situation measures Burl's moral growth – should he leave his violent father in the middle of the woods freezing to death, or should he try to save him no matter how bad a father he has been? Burl chooses the latter and makes a sled to carry his father through the forest closer to the railway. Father and son have to wait for some days, but finally a train passes by and all ends well.

How is the benevolent genius depicted in the novel then? First of all, he seems to have all the features, including the eccentric behavior, of the Gould of the 1970's. He conducts his "imaginary orchestra" with gloves with the fingers cut out – both prevalent in the existing iconography of Gould.

He was stooped a bit, balding, and dressed in a heavy gray coat, a scarf, and a flat hat. He took a cookie out of a box but paused with it halfway to his mouth, as if struck by a thought. He raised the cookie, held it poised in the air, and then he began to wave it around. Not waving, thought Burl. Conducting. As if he was not on a deck at all but on the podium of a music hall and there was an orchestra below him on the lake. The man was wearing gloves with the fingers cut out of them. The man was humming, lost in the music. (1995, 32–33.)

Part of the eccentricity of Nathaniel Gow is that he, too, uses what amount to alter egos in conversation with Burl – just like Gould in his radio- and television programs. Here’s an excerpt of one conversation which reminds one of Gould’s alter ego, the German conductor/musicologist “Karlheinz Klopweisser.”

‘You are, by ze looks of you, a second bassoon player’, he said in an imperious voice. ‘Vell, I’m sorry, you’re too late. Ze position has already been filled. Good day.’ He dismissed Burl with a wave of his hand. But Burl did not move. ‘I wonder – ‘

No, wait!’ said the man. He took another cookie from the box, an Arrowroot cookie, and took a thoughtful bite. ‘I’ve got it wrong. You’re ze new public relations fellah from Columbia Records – zey get younger every year – und you’ve got a slate of interviews with ze press lined up for me. *Ja?*’ (Ibid, 33.)

As far as Gould’s reception in literature is concerned, it is of particular interest for me that not only is the Maestro modelled obviously on Glenn Gould – “a heavy grey coat, a scarf, and a flat hat” – but also the frame of the whole narrative plays itself out in very Gouldian circumstances: isolated north, hermetic nocturnal living, extreme privacy, negativity towards the social collective. In a word, Nathaniel Gow is “Gould,” so familiar to us from his representation in other media: a modern sage, who never got tired of speaking about the importance of relying on one’s own resources, on one’s own creativity and on one’s own aesthetic norms.

The maestro, just like his real-life counterpart, is also a hypochondriac, using a number of different medicines and taking his own blood pressure many times a day. Just like Gould, the Maestro finally dies of a heart attack. What is interesting as well is that two particular moral guidelines that the Maestro gives to Burl resonate strongly with Gould's ethics of life: animal rights and anti-competitiveness in arts. To Burl's seemingly innocent question as to whether the Maestro considered editing studio takes to be somehow dishonest, the latter bursts out:

Even the woods are filled with critics! Do you really think, Master Burl, that art is like a game of football? That the dropped pass must forever remain dropped? The fumble cannot be scooped up and placed back in the hands of the otherwise competent fullback? Nonsense. And that, you see, is the problem with live concerts. They are like some dreadful sports event: the noisy crowd, the fumbles, having to play when you're sick as a dog. That's not art. (Ibid., 45.)

Animal rights¹⁸⁹ are discussed in a scene where Burl thinks he has both himself and his master a favor by catching a perch from the lake for dinner. When showing the fish to the Maestro, the latter's reaction is the opposite of the one intended:

'I'm almost entirely a vegetarian', he said. 'A fact you obviously had not noticed. I have a great affinity for animals.' 'This is a fish', said Burl. The Maestro's grip on the railing tightened. 'It is something that is – was – alive.' Burl felt his insides cave in. His arm ached from holding up his prize. He lowered it to the sandy ground. Hung his head. The Maestro spoke again – quiet, distant. 'There is a basic problem here, Burl Crow. You seem to thrive on excitement. I'm quite dizzy with it.' (Ibid., 72.)

¹⁸⁹ From a very early age, Gould was a loud-spoken advocate for animal rights. Gould's "awakening" to this cause is described in many biographical accounts: as a young boy, he was fishing with his father on Lake Ontario, and upon catching one fish and seeing it gasp for breath in the bottom of the boat, he then suddenly started to see the whole thing from the animal's point of view (Roy 1999, 21; Konieczny 2004, 24; Ostwald 1998, 50; Friedrich 1990, 25–26). Gould never fished again in his life.

The animal-loving and anti-competitive Maestro plays out as a sage whose characteristics are immediately recognizable to anyone familiar with the real-life Gould. The novel also has other indirect references to Gould's world: the Maestro's mistress Reggie Corngold works as producer for the CBC, just as Susan Koscis and Margaret Pacsu did in real life – both were rumored to have romantic affiliations with Gould. Just like Gould, the Maestro loves the North, winter and solitude; the Maestro's full name is Nathaniel Orlando Gow – an obvious reference to Gould's "favorite composer," Orlando Gibbons.

Also, the Maestro's *oeuvre* as a composer reminds one much of Gould's real compositions: "The Northern Suite" (Gould's *Solitude Trilogy*), "The First Quartet" (Gould's *Quartet* op. 1), and "Twelve Variations on a Theme by Orlando Gibbons" are all imaginary works with obvious references to Gould's music.

Last but not least, it is also noteworthy how Sherrill Grace's ideas of the North in Canadian literature, discussed in the previous chapter, dovetail with those in *The Maestro*. As Grace (2002, 183) observes, "North" often points to "manlihood," "escape," "freedom," and "rebirth" – and one can see immediately that these are very much at issue in this novel. It is the northern nature that Burl escapes from his violent father. Also, Burl learns and matures not only through his encounter with the Maestro but also through nature, and he finally goes through a kind of "rebirth." As West and Lee (1999, 85) conclude, *The Maestro* suggests to its reader that there is always the possibility of hope, no matter how strong the feeling of alienation, or how great the sense of angst. The novel, then, offers an "important threshold to be crossed on the journey in which every child must be a hero,

that of life.” This ideal of a modern “Bildungsroman,” I think, would not be realized without the semiotic icon-potential of Glenn Gould. “Gould’s” appearance in the middle of what might seem a most unlikely context, a boy-scout novel, only further testifies to the wide array of semiotic potential that his character has in Canadian culture. Gould himself died in 1982, but his character, the “star,” goes on living in his many guises.

The last “Gould-novel” I discuss here is *The Song Beneath the Ice* (2003) by Joe Fiorito. This is a very different example of Gould’s literary mediation from the two previous examples. “Glenn Gould” never appears in the novel – a bit like in *Der Untergeher*, “Gould” shadows the protagonist concert pianist Don Amoruso’s tragic life. The narrative in the novel starts off in a very peculiar way: Amoruso interrupts his piano recital in the middle of Musorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, leaves the stage and disappears for months. A year goes by, and there is not a word from Amoruso. Then all of a sudden, his friend, journalist Joe Serafino (who is also the narrator in the novel), receives a postal delivery which contains Amoruso’s notepads and cassette recordings of various moments in his life. This is where the actual narrative begins: Serafino starts listening to the tapes and reading the notepads manically in his effort to find out about Amoruso’s whereabouts.

So it is Gould’s “shadow” that haunts Amoruso. Right at the beginning we learn that Amoruso has had troubles relating to his more famous senior colleague:

Dom had a thing about Gould. A mania, really. He never quite explained why, but I think he was jealous of GG’s gift, despised the liberties Gould took with scores, was scornful of his retreat to the recording studio, and above all

could not bear the legendary quirks – the famous little boy’s chair, the overcoat and gloves at the height of summer’s heat, the naïve belief in chiropractic and homeopathic remedies – *Imaginary cures for imagined ailments!* (2002, 9.)

After all, however, Amoruso is in many ways just like Gould: he has won the Kiwanis Music Festival piano competition just as Gould did, likewise he is a hypochondriac living in solitude. Amoruso as a kind of “Gould-allusion” is also a parody of his real-life counterpart: Amoruso’s disappearance from the concert stage could be seen as an allegory for Gould’s retirement from live concerts. In addition, Amoruso’s obsession to document his personal life on audio cassettes could be seen as a kind of distortion of Gould’s preference for working in recording studios instead of live. Finally, like Gould, Amoruso is obsessed with the North, but in a whole different way than Gould. Here’s how he describes Gould’s *The Idea of North* documentary:

snobbish, stiff, unoriginal, and hard to listen to. Plenty of references to Shakespeare and Pirandello, Eldorado and Utopia, Prospero and Caliban. There are no native people. Not a word in Inuktitut. The flaw is typically Gouldian. There was nothing in his North to show how northerners might view southerners. In addition to which, the device he used of overlapping voices was a contrivance, an annoyance, an impediment. (2003, 271.)

As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that Amoruso is hiding in a little town called “Wolf Cove” in the northern part of Canada. Amoruso has escaped from his recital in a tuxedo, taken a plane to the little town, and slowly made himself at home in the new environment. He now works at a grocery store and has even made new friends in Wolf Cove.

From the very start of his residence in the North, it’s obvious that Amoruso has a very different take on it than Gould:

Gould never imagined any of this. He never got his hands dirty, never ate raw seal – not that I recommend raw seal or dirty hands – never sat next to a nickel miner who handed him an envelope stuffed with pornographic photos and the admonition, ‘It’s a long winter, you better take a good look, there’s no women up there.’ He met no men on the run from wives and families or themselves. He met none of the men who have lived in the North so long they are afraid of the South, who no longer go South, not even for a holiday; this town is full of them. Nor did he, at breakfast, sit next to drunk white men who call their Inuit girlfriends rats. Gould, deaf to the North. (2003, 289.)

Within the narrative of the novel, Amoruso’s own “idea of the North” begins to emerge through the audio tapes that Joe Serafino, the narrator, transcribes. The polyphonic, multi-faceted North for Amoruso is a little town, in which incest, amorality, suicides and alcoholism are features of everyday life. Paradoxically, through the experience of this all, the protagonist begins the healing process and starts to rise above his earlier obsession with Glenn Gould. He refinds his independent creative self, which becomes obvious in the last audio tape:

You will think the real story is that I stopped and walked away and found myself again. I suppose that’s true. The people of Wolf Cove took me in, no questions asked. I was the man in the tuxedo. I was the penguin, I was that man who worked at Northern Ventures. I have no illusions – I did not rock the boat while I was here – if I had, they’d have found a way to push me over the side and cut off my fingers. Or they would have left me buried under a heap of stones. ... I have a better idea of North now that Gould ever did. I will play again, and seriously, and soon. (2003, 347-348.)

The North, then, has liberated Amoruso not only from his own personal anxiety but also from his obsession with Gould. This, I think, is of great interest, in a novel that exemplifies Gould’s literary mediation. Just as in *Der Untergeher*, “Gould” is a shadow from which the protagonist seeks escape. In Fiorito’s novel, however, it is of particular interest that the protagonist escapes to the North, just like the object of his anxiety, but meets a

very different reality than he imagined. Amoruso has to emancipate himself from the romantic, idealized – and Gouldian – conception of the North to become himself.

Conclusions

Gould's reception in all its richness and thematic variety derives simply from the popularity that he enjoys in the world of Classical music. In a strikingly similar vein, Thomas C. Carlson (1998) writes about Elvis that the "King of Rock'n Roll" has become a cultural icon, a persistent figure refusing to "leave the building" even after decades after his death. Carlson (1998, 10) brings up interesting examples of obvious allusions to Elvis in two Hollywood-movies (*Mystery Train* and *True Romance*). Elvis's iconicity in western popular culture has invaded our collective consciousness to such extent that certain bodily gestures, verbal ties, and facial expressions are enough "information" to evoke and actualize the "image" of Elvis – even though the star himself remains absent. Through these patterns of reception, Elvis indeed refuses to "leave the building."

The same characteristics apply very well to Gould. Erika Doss (1997, 4-5) writes about Elvis's first appearance on public television – the hot new medium of the day – in 1956 as the obvious starting point for his cultural reception. Since then, his iconicity has become the subject of continuing redefinition – in other words, we're never quite sure what "Elvis" is taken to mean. The next excerpt from Doss's essay could apply, *mutatis mutandis*, also to Gould:

But there is no particular agreement about what his image really means. Multifaceted and diverse – rockabilly rebel, teen angel, Army private, matinee idol, Las Vegas superstar, Nixon admirer, drug addict – Elvis’s image is ambiguous and contradictory, solid but unstable in terms of his larger cultural significance. Just as American popular culture has always been unstable – ‘a site of conflicting interests, appropriations, impersonations’, says historian Eric Lott – Elvis’s image has been consistently renegotiated and reconstituted to mesh with individual and institutional preferences. The various ways Elvis is seen on racial, sexual, religious, and class terms reveal the plurality of meanings that any single image can embody.

It is obvious that Gould’s cultural significance is very different from that of Elvis’s. Religion, politics, youth culture and race are not exactly the frames in which Gould’s meaning is located. However, the vagueness and constant re-definition of the meaning of “Gould” over time is something that both Gould and Elvis share. Just as we’ve seen above, “Gould” is played out and represented as a national icon, a gentle sage who loves his northern country; this kind of figure has been used to construct a model for being “Canadian.” On the other hand, the same “Gould” is an eccentric genius, located in his sphere of “otherness” and walking his own sublime path “between ‘sanity’ and ‘madness’, between the ‘monstrous’ and the ‘superhuman’,” which is how Christine Battersby (1990, 148) describes the 19th-century conception of genius.

On the other hand, “Gould” is very much like “Elvis”: an object of daydreams and romantic love, an object who quite simply “changes the life” of his listeners – this particular phrase I read in dozens of fan letters while researching in the Gould archive. The musician-documentarist Bruno Monsaingeon, one of the most prolific commentators on Gould and a close friend of his, has described his own “conversion” to Gould’s music in almost biblical terms: studying in Moscow in 1965 and getting his hands on his first re-

cording by Gould, Monsaingeon (1997, 9) writes of having heard “a gentle but imperative [douce mais impérieuse] voice which said: come and follow me.”

The reception of Gould also functions as a medium of “nailing down,” in order to solve and clarify, certain puzzling features in Gould’s public image. The poem by Rebecca Loudon cited earlier in which the female narrator speaks of Gould as her “secret lover” is a good example of this – the sexuality of the unmarried Gould has been an enigma for many of his biographers. Loudon’s poem constructs an unproblematic heterosexual, an object of a woman’s erotic love. Heterosexuality is by no means the only *topos* of Gould’s public reception. For instance, the paintings by Heidimarie Schäfer – published here with her kind permission – to which I now turn to conclude my chapter, display a clear sexual ambivalence:



Picture 12: *Poesie der Nichtbegegnung*



Picture 13: *Glenn Gould und die Traumtänzerin*

It is the sexuality in particular which strikes me as interesting in these paintings. The woman in the left-side painting is clearly wondering what to do, since her appeal obviously does not suffice to top that of playing the piano. She looks at us, the spectators as if to seek advice on how to proceed with the awkward situation. “Gould,” in turn, casually seems to ignore the woman and apparently could not care less how the scene will play out.

This “Poetics of Non-Encounter,” as I’d freely translate the name of the painting, seems thus to hint at the possibility of Gould’s homosexuality. In the criticism of Gould’s musicianship, this interpretation is far from unique: Kevin Kopelson (1996), for instance, takes Gould’s homosexuality as a given and characterizes his playing as a “touchstone of queer pianism.” This phrase of Kopelson’s comes to mind also in looking at the painting on the right side: the “dream dancer” approaches “Gould” immersed in his playing and paying no attention to the dancer. The master narrative in the painting seems to imply that making music is, at the very least, a sublimation of Gould’s sexual drive.

Gould’s sexual orientation has been a prevalent theme in secondary literature about Gould (see Ostwald 1998, 277-278; Friedrich 1990, 285-287; Bazzana 2003, 338-352), and my aim here is not to further contribute to this discussion. The reason why I brought the issue up here is that in Gould’s reception, his sexuality as such plays an important role. It is interesting that the mediation of his figure functions as an arena of cultural negotiation in which certain ambiguous features in his persona – such as his sexuality – are “explained,” settled and turned into unquestioned “truths.” In Schäfer’s paintings, for

instance, “Gould” is not interested in the approach of the attractive women because he’s so immersed in the music, which ultimately functions as sublimation of his sexuality. For Kopelson, on the other hand, Gould is a homosexual pianist, a conception that in itself makes a context for Kopelson’s criticism of Gould. Both of these examples, in their own way, settle and fix the question of Gould’s sexuality.

In addition, the patterns of reception discussed in this chapter show evidence of Gould’s cultural status and iconicity in his native Canada. In my reading, the very fact that a deceased Canadian pianist gains a new life within the narrative of a boy-scout novel or the grim world surrounding the fictional pianist Don Amoruso is highly interesting and exceptional.

In this sense, Gould’s reception could be seen as a *cult*. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (<http://dictionary.oed.com>), the word points to a worship of and dedication to exceptional individuals. Also, a cult often has certain rituals and an organization of other activities to maintain the cult. Even though there is very little that would suggest any “religious” features in the Gould-cult, the *GlennGould* magazine, the society Friends of Glenn Gould, and various congresses, exhibitions and seminars serve the purpose of maintaining Gould’s status in the world of Classical music. Sometimes this cult takes on outright hilarious characteristics: on the 60th anniversary of Gould’s birth, there was organized a “Gould-parade” in which the parading children were dressed up like “little Goulds” – all of them were wearing a basker and a long trench

(see the clip at <http://archives.cbc.ca/400d.asp?id=1-74-320-1704>). These kinds of public manifestations, “cultural performances,” as Clifford Geertz (1973, 113-114) calls them, tell of the huge national significance that Gould enjoys as a Canadian icon.

Another interesting issue which I have not had the opportunity to raise in this work is the ownership of Gould’s icon. Who ultimately has the power to decide what kinds of meanings are associated with Gould’s figure in his public reception? Is it legitimate to “use” Gould’s significance to serve external, national, for instance, purposes? As Michael Madow (1993, 1-3) has observed, public figures have a lot of semiotic potential and also economic ramifications. The public’s constant demand for new information, products, and other material related to the star makes the issue of the “ownership” of Gould’s after-life a particularly interesting issue to ponder.

Madow (Ibid., 25) also reminds us of one important thing: fame is always relative. That is, the public constructs for itself the very kind of “Gould” that it needs. For this reason, in looking at the mediation of a significant musician in different domains, we ultimately end up looking at ourselves – at the norms defining musicianship, genius and artistic quality. This is the guiding thought that I’ve tried to cherish all through my work.

EPILOGUE:

Did He Get it Right 50 Years Ago?

The main focus in this thesis has been on Glenn Gould's musical thought in general, and more particularly, the aesthetic and ideological premises under which he conceptualized and interpreted music. I have looked at Gould from four angles:

- 1) Gould as part of the North American technology discourse of the 1960's and 1970's;
- 2) Gould's ideas within the intellectual history of music, 19th-century ideas of *Werktreue*, and the ontology of the musical work as an autonomous entity;
- 3) Gould's "philosophy of recording" as part of the more general 20th-century mediation and commercialization of music, brought about by the "culture industry";
- 4) Gould as a Canadian artist, subscribing to, and constructing one version of, a particular "discourse of the North" through his work.

After this discussion of Gould's musical world-view and its historical, ideological and cultural affiliations, one crucial question remains to be asked: why Gould? What is the significance of his ideas for us as educated listeners in the 3rd millennium? Can we learn something from Gould's provocative ideas about the death of live concerts, especially to the extent that they are caused not only by the erosion of a broader high culture, but also by the advanced audio technology and the proliferating possibilities for technically re-

producing Classical music in the recording studio? Should we, inspired by Gould's provocative questions, rethink certain issues related to our experience of music?

As I hope I've demonstrated above, many of the issues Gould raised already almost 50 years ago are still worth considering – many of them, in fact, even more than before now that the Internet has become the main instrument of music's mediation. The digitalization of music has meant a revolution in the production, mediation and experience of music. Stephen Travis Pope (1999, 49) has argued that this revolution has brought about three new categories of changes: "freedom of gesture," "freedom of production," and "freedom of availability." By the first of these "freedoms" Pope refers to the relatively recent possibility of controlling, through midi-interface, any other midi-instrument as a sound source. This means that with a 50-dollar midi-keyboard, one can – of course depending on the computer sound card and sound modules – create whole orchestral works. There is no necessity of mastering any instrument; everything can be taken care by the computer. Freedom of production, in turn, points to the new possibilities for high-quality home productions by personal computer and good software. In other words, there is no essential difference in quality between professional studios and home productions. All this leads to "freedom of availability," by which Pope refers to dissemination of music electronically to different parts of the world in a fraction of second. Music does not have to be bought anymore, but rather electronically mediated music has become the *Hausmusik* of our age: information technology has relocated a significant part of listening to and making music from institutional frames – such as public concerts and conservatories – into the private sphere.

As I write this, one easily comes across a number of Internet websites such as the Independent Musicians Network (<http://www.indie-musicnetwork.com>) that go far in demonstrating how permissive the whole digitalization process, observed so accurately by Pope, has become in the musical world around us. Here's what the site promises upon entering it:

Now is the time to take action, and pursue your music dreams. You have access to tools that can help you get your Music Heard by Thousands. We have proven resources for indie musicians that can help you improve your skills, so that you can Create Music, *Make Your Own Beats*, and Produce Music that rivals the sound of a professional ... right from the comfort of your home. Take advantage of these great resources, and you'll be on your way of Discovering How You Skyrocket Your Music Sales .. As Early As This Month.

A postmodern version of the American Dream in music? Sure, but I'd venture to argue that the Independent Musicians Network, more than anything else, reflects larger changes in making, listening to and distributing music today. Pope's "freedom of availability" has truly invaded every corner of music's traditional venues of mediation. It has also made possible phenomena such as the British rock band Enter Shikari, a group that made it to the Top 1 on the British charts in 2007, refused a deal with Warner, and continued its literally self-made success story through its own label Ambush Reality.¹⁹⁰

Agency and (personal) authenticity have also, just as Gould envisioned, become reconsidered through technological mediation of music. To mention just one recent example from my native Finland, a project titled "Opera by You" was launched in 2010 by Savonlinna Opera Festival. In this project, a virtual community on the Internet will create an

¹⁹⁰ Quite recently, however, the band has signed a distribution deal with Warner for their two albums *Take to the Skies* (2007) and *Common Dreads* (2009).

opera together. The opera that will result – composed by the virtual community and the composer Markus Fagerudd, who helps with scoring and orchestration of the raw material – will have its first performance in 2012, to mark the festival's 100th anniversary. The aim is to expand the festival's audience base and connect with the Internet generation, those in their 20's whose range of interests does not include opera. (Hautsalo 2011, 36.)

The members of the community are from all over the world: Peru, Australia, Canada, the United States and almost all the countries of Europe. The discussion is in English, and that is also the language of the libretto. At present, the community has a little over 350 members, and they include opera directors, musicians, costume designers, or simply ordinary music lovers, but they are all united by their desire to *create* music online anonymously. (Ibid.)

Technology has brought a fundamental ontological, aesthetic and ideological change to Classical music and this change was something that Gould envisioned decades ago. In line with Nicholas Cook's (2007, 3) research on Heinrich Schenker, I might, *mutatis mutandis*, ask the same simple question: if Gould's philosophy of music was the solution, what was the problem? Just as Cook situates the famous music theorist's thought in the cultural, historical and ideological context of the turn-of-the-century Vienna, I have tried to chart the local, philosophical and historical contexts in which Gould's ideas of music resonate. Just as Schenker was very much a thinking individual in a particular time and place, expressing his musical concerns through his theoretical writings and essays (see Cook 2007, 12–15), Gould, I venture to argue, would not have been the same provocative

musician had he lived outside the intellectual orbit of the North American technological discourse of his time. Also, being a national treasure from a very young age in a country that was only in the process of establishing its own tradition of Classical music, undoubtedly left its mark on Gould's thought and character – not matter how decisively he always denied any influence.

To what extent contextual factors shaped his thought we can never know. Neither is this relevant. As I already wrote at the beginning of this thesis, I am not looking for a *causal* relationship between an individual and his contexts but rather a *hermeneutic* one.

Through looking at Gould's ideas within intellectual, historical and local contexts, I believe I have been able to dissect many of the “voices” that speak in Gould's musical thought. If these voices, to turn to a musical metaphor, organize themselves into a multi-layered, polyphonic whole – as in a fugue – this is the key to the unity that I have been trying to reconstruct throughout this work.

Gould's thought is at many points controversial. I have already pointed out how uncritically he accepts all technology as contributing to a better life – to the extent that music technology as such, for Gould, has a value in itself. One could almost speak of a “technological ethics” in Gould's thought. Isolation and social non-conformism were, for him, prerequisites for artistic work – to such extent that Gould regarded art in any institutional sense as detrimental to individual creativity. Gould wanted to see a world – our world – in which anyone could be an artist, where “nobody is interested in what everybody else is doing.” In his technological utopia however, Gould set aside important issues that have to

do with the social meanings that people draw from making music. For these kinds of philosophical shortcomings, I have characterized Gould's technological utopia more as an aesthetic manifesto than a tenable philosophy.

My more general aim in this work has been to shed light on music and music-making as cultural and historical phenomena. Through my studies within ethnomusicology and cultural musicology, I have become fascinated with the ways in which music becomes mediated socially, how it associates with ideology, how it creates identity, and how it functions as an element within the cultural matrix surrounding it. As far as musicianship is concerned, I have not looked to the same extent at creative individuality and authorship as cognitive, microsocial or biographical phenomena since being an artist is always conditioned by cultural, philosophical and historical contexts. A creative individual, I have tried to argue throughout this work, is always engaged in dialectics with the historical and cultural webs around him, and making sense of or evaluating his/her work always necessitates concrete knowledge of the norms, values and conventions in those contextual webs. This is the reason why I have tried to contextualize Gould's musical thought in local, historical and philosophical settings.

Gould is an important figure to consider even now, almost three decades after his death. The ultimate significance of his life and work in the present, I believe, lies in the fact that he envisioned the world of Classical music that has only within the last 15 years begun to take shape. Gould spoke of interaction, the technological enhancement of music-making and the re-consideration of institutions, canons and conventions at a time when there was

neither a real need nor the means for such an undertaking. Now, when the electronic mediation of music, sophisticated technology and aesthetic pluralism are everywhere, things could not be more different. In many ways, then, Gould's vision of a creative listener and his idea of musical interpretation as a continuing, interactive process are something that has only very recently become reality. Gould would be very pleased to see how far we've come in terms of this process.

I hope he has the Internet in the hereafter.

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