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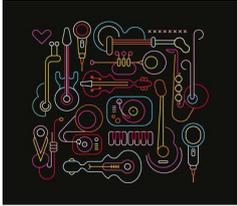
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The Routledge Companion to
Popular Music Analysis:
Expanding Approaches



Edited by *Ciro Scotto, Kenneth Smith, and John Brackett*

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Allan F. Moore

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LISTENING TO THE SOUND MUSIC MAKES

Allan F. Moore

The Obligatory Rationale

In the face of increasing demands for publicly funded research to demonstrate direct social value, what is the use of music analysts? The old arguments for humanities scholarship, powerful as they are, make little headway under neo-liberalism.¹ Even for many people sympathetic to the academic study of music, music analysis seems to be of even less relevance; Simon Frith's view that musicologists don't address the text to which non-musicologists listen still resonates.² In that context, I take issue in what follows with one of the guiding principles of this collection, that methods of analysis for contemporary art music can say useful things about popular music. I begin this chapter with a series of anecdotes, remembrances and idle thoughts which I use to set the context for the rather ungainly swerve I make in its latter part, in the spirit of the "practice as research" paradigm shift which requires all practitioners to be aware of the context for their practice (and analysis is no less a practice than viola playing, choreography, or surgery).

I was recently approached by a young colleague asking advice on how to steer the analytical work he was undertaking for his doctorate toward a sustainable research career, and I found myself insisting that the time for publishing analysis *per se* was past. Not for doing analysis for its own sake, note, but for publishing it. My reason for thinking this is, I realise, long-standing, and was probably the principal reason for getting involved in bringing about the *Critical Musicology Forum* some twenty and more years ago: that analysis as such, unqualified, automatically becomes structural analysis. I have no ideological objection to structural analysis but, as late as the 1990s, I think we tended to publish analyses without clearly formulating the larger-scale research question to which they furnished an answer. In other words, I question whether we seriously asked "why do I want to understand the structure of this piece?" rather than simply employing, or developing, our methodology. I guess that if you analyse our cultural situation at the time as modernist, then the answer to this question is self-evident: we must understand structure before we can understand anything else, but even that position was rarely formulated. Writing now, I do not believe that a structural understanding is necessarily methodologically prior. As a result, I suspect this second nature has blinded us to what that magnificent, and enviable, array of techniques

that we call “analysis” actually permits. If we cannot be clear to ourselves about this, we cannot be clear to our colleagues in our inter- and multi-disciplinary field.

Spiralling Towards

So, a possible first move in the drive for clarity. In *Style and Music*, Leonard B. Meyer distinguishes between what he calls “the primary and the secondary parameters of music.”³ “Primary” is a synonym for “syntactic” and, developing from his earlier writings, Meyer regards syntax as necessary for communication and, hence in his philosophy, meaning. In a footnote, Meyer insists the terms “are value-neutral and imply nothing about the importance of any parameter in the shaping of a particular musical/aesthetic experience.”⁴ That’s the problem with footnotes, of course – they tend not to be read. The terms “primary” and “secondary” cannot so easily be shorn of their connotations. The intensive training undergone by contemporary analysts (and composers) in the Anglophone world strongly institutes Meyer’s binary (its “discourse” as opposed to its “gesture[s]” to use Ivan Hewett’s loaded terms) whereby to explain the musical experience is to explain the music via pitches and durations.⁵ One does not have to go far to understand the reason for this. For publicly funded research to demonstrate direct social value it must be measurable, its data must be quantifiable, and it must be understood as a form of scientific endeavour. I suspect this need to measure helps explain why we talk about (primary) pitches and not (secondary) textures.

While writing my first book, I had an extended written argument with the Marxist historian Dave Harker, who was co-editor of the series in which it first appeared.⁶ I remember Harker’s insistence that I could not use a concept like “G major” to describe a relevant aspect of the music I was discussing since (presumably as a representative of all musically illiterate listeners) he was unable to hear that concept “in action,” as it were. The text I was addressing, by means of that concept, was not, it seems, the one Harker was listening to and thus, for him, I was misrepresenting its meaning. This point, of course, encourages us to insist on the non-inherent status of musical meaning. But my observation leads on to a second, more substantial one. The claim in Frith’s text, also implied in Nicholas Cook’s contemporaneous distinction between musical and musicological listening, addresses what listeners are actually taken to do.⁷ A positive step, surely. But on what basis is this claim made? A reasonable assumption would be that it is securely founded on our knowledge of what listeners actually do. You will presumably know what you do when in the presence of music. However, as far as I am aware, the only way you can communicate what you actually do to me, to Simon Frith, or to anyone else, is through language. You must translate your mental activity into language, presupposing first that you have sufficient self-awareness to be able to tell exactly what you do (and that’s no mean feat), and second that you possess the language necessary to its adequate description. I would submit that for the majority of listeners, and conceivably for all listeners if we ask the question at the neurological level, neither of these steps is possible. Therefore, data as to what listeners actually do, and to which we have access, tends to be of two types: laboratory-conditioned responses to testing which have minimal, or no, contact with the realm of meaningfulness; and listeners’ own ideas of what they do when they listen. Such ideas, mediated as they necessarily are, may not be particularly trustworthy. The other assumption open to us, of course, is that Frith determines “the text to which anyone listens” on the basis of his own projection onto other listeners of what he does, a practice I suspect we all follow to some degree (I certainly do), no matter how self-aware we may be.

And a second move. I relate Frith's comment to so many criticisms of music analysis I have heard over the years, from students, colleagues, friends in the pub and, occasionally, people who should know better. Philosophers distinguish between analytic and synthetic truths. To quote a favourite, because very accessible, primer on logic: "An analytic truth is one that is true in virtue of the meanings of the words it contains, and a synthetic truth is one that is true in virtue of the way the world is."⁸ The pair of oppositions here, between what is true within the system and what is true within experience, can perhaps be allied to the distinction between the analysis of the piece as a piece, and the analysis of our encounter with it in the world. It is at least conceivable that Frith's text assumes music(-ological) analysis addresses the latter, when of course it has developed purely to address the former, giving rise to the question I have recently been concerned with in much of my work: counterposing the "what?" of analysis to the social value of "so what?"

For the third move, I return to Frith's "musicology." For many popular music scholars outside musicology, this term is equated entirely with music analysis, an association that has led to some problems. A most recent public manifestation is Chris Rojek's otherwise masterly *Pop Music, Pop Culture*.⁹ Rojek roundly condemns the work of those people he calls "traditional musicologists," among whom he appears to number Simon Frith. His understanding of musicology is superficial (the definition simply taken from the Oxford English Dictionary) but he says that "practising musicology is like studying a fish without water" – and naturally what Rojek offers is a study of habitable water denuded of any fish.¹⁰ Of course there are internecine squabbles going on here, as Rojek stakes out a claim for the same field already fought over by Frith, Lawrence Grossberg and others, but his dispute with musicology is in parallel with the claims of my Frith quotation, writings of Grossberg, of Peter Wicke, and of other key writers of long-standing reputation within popular music studies.¹¹ It is this misrepresentation (as I would have it) which concerns me, and is the cause of my claim that we should be much more specific about what our analytical techniques are and what they allow us to do.

In talking about larger disciplinary contexts, I want for the moment to cast the net even further. In his widely read and, for some reason, much lauded *This is Your Brain on Music*, Daniel Levitin wants to argue for the essential similarity between, in gross terms, music and science (exemplifying the issue with which I opened).¹² From what he writes, I would assume that he would be even more inclusive and say the same about other practical arts as he does about music. The basis of Levitin's claim is that both super-fields are "experimental." For Levitin, "the work of both scientists and artists involves similar stages of development: a creative and exploratory 'brainstorming' stage, followed by testing and refining stages that typically involve the application of set procedures, but are often informed by additional creative problem-solving What artists and scientists have in common is the ability to live in an open-ended state of interpretation and reinterpretation of the products of our work. The work of artists and scientists is ultimately the pursuit of truth, but members of both camps understand that truth in its very nature is contextual and changeable."¹³ This is simply an enriched reformulation of Einsteinian doctrine: "If we trace out what we behold and experience through the language of logic, we are doing science; if we show it in forms whose interrelationships are not accessible to our conscious thought but are instinctively recognized as meaningful, we are doing art. Common to both is the devotion to something beyond the personal, removed from the arbitrary."¹⁴ In both of these formulations, I think, there is a missing third term, but before I go there I want to present a counter-view proposed by Christopher Small. First, as Small notes in his book *Music, Society,*

Education, “[the] notion of ‘progress’ may have some meaning in regard to science, which is concerned with the accumulation of abstract and objective knowledge divorced from personality, but is impossible to sustain in the arts, based as they are on experience, which is unique to the individual and must be renewed with each succeeding generation.”¹⁵ And, second, “the reality of experience, a reality in fact of even greater significance in our lives than the structure of atoms or of galaxies, is inaccessible to scientific method, and ... it is this reality that art proclaims and explores.”¹⁶ Clearly Small is at odds here with both Levitin and Einstein, but nonetheless still opposes science to art. Perhaps the best way of rationalising them is to argue that both Levitin and Einstein are discussing creativity, but without the precision which Small attains. Margaret Boden makes a distinction between “p-creativity” and “h-creativity,” whereby Small’s scientific progress instantiates h- (or historical) creativity, and his artistic progress instantiates p- (or personal) creativity.¹⁷ One more ungainly leap: to the rather unorthodox historian Ronald Hutton, writing on his own discipline: “the discipline of history operates like a science in its negative aspects, of testing and evaluating assertions, and like an art in its positive aspects, of advancing opinions about the nature of the past.”¹⁸ Here, in the guise of history, we can find that missing third term, but note that, again, Hutton focuses on what distinguishes science and art. The third term, it seems to me, is addressed by what we call “humanities,” a body of disciplines which intervenes between science and art. The positions adopted by both Levitin and Einstein imply that the way to model this relationship is circular, in which science meets art, approaching this meeting point from either side of the circle. Small’s position is diametrically opposed, seeing the relationship as linear in which there is no meeting-point.

What is to be gained from my insistence on a third term intervening between the poles of this variously understood pair? It is this. Working with the analysis of music, I observe colleagues being pulled in two different directions. To the extent that they want to be construed as *addressing music*, then the activity they undertake is fundamentally to be classed as “art,” even if it is not that of a practitioner. To the extent that they want to be construed as *analysts of their chosen field*, then the activity they undertake is fundamentally to be classed as “science,” even if they are not addressing a posited extra-cultural world. Neither, I would submit, is in our best interests, as we can see from the history of analysis. Earlier analysts, Donald Tovey for example, make no attempt to incorporate the rigour by which scientific work is judged. Some more recent analysts, and I have particularly Allen Forte in mind, seem to make correspondingly little attempt to account for the experience that is music. But in all honesty, as analysts and experiencers, how can we set out to forsake either? What I am arguing here, simply, is that when we address the structure of a pop song, for instance, we must surely incorporate in our analysis an account of it as to be experienced, and this should bear on our analysis. And, when we address its cultural function, we must not forget that it has an identity which distinguishes it from all other triggers of musical experience and to make that distinction clear. The status of an analytical musicology is important precisely because of the issues of institutionalisation raised so clearly by Giles Hooper in *The Discourse of Musicology*, issues of the cultural role of what we do: we need to know what it is and how to argue for it.¹⁹

Before moving from discussion to action, there is one further issue to raise. Again, a way in is through that first book of Christopher Small, in which he coins the participle “musicking,” turning a noun into a verb. In exploring his speculative interpretation of the import of quantum physics, David Bohm proposed as a thought-experiment a new linguistic mode, which he termed the “rheomode,” one which privileges the verb and diminishes

the importance of the noun. Its complexity is too great to explore here, but the purpose and value of such thinking is expressed thus:

the world view implied in the rheomode ... is expressed by saying that *all* is an unbroken and undivided whole movement, and that each 'thing' is abstracted only as a relatively invariant side or aspect of this movement ... the mere act of seriously considering such a new mode of language and observing how it works can help draw our attention to the way in which our ordinary language structure puts strong and subtle pressures on us to hold to a fragmentary world view.²⁰

It is this way of thinking, which I have lived with since first reading Bohm in 1983, that led me to propose a reformulation of the value we identify as "authenticity" in terms of the activity of "authenticating" and to insist on the deep continuity between the persona actualised in a musical performance and the musical environment of which that persona partakes, fed back into our indivisibility from our real world environments.²¹ So, in one sense, what follows is (also) an attempt to further the analytical approach which so engages me.

Proving the Pudding

Rising to prominence following her performance at the Woodstock Festival in 1969, the US singer Melanie (Safka) has been frequently lauded for her "vulnerability" and a vocal quality people describe as "haunting."²² A few examples:

*Born to Be is a really charming debut that shows her unique and quite frankly stunning vocals to [sic] their honest, and somewhat vulnerable best. She seems to lay it all on the line, her vulnerability, her sweetness, her honesty, and of course her humour.*²³

*Melanie has certainly stamped her own imprint on [The Rolling Stones' "Wild Horses"]. It's quiet and it's furious ... Her cover of "I Think It's Gonna Rain Today" is raw and emotive – it has just the right dose of pathos.*²⁴

*Melanie could go in and out, off key [and] on key, because all she wants, she is the only singer on the planet who could sing with many haunting beautiful voices.*²⁵

*Her voice is still as beautifully haunting to me as it was when I was 15!*²⁶

and a key phrase from an early interview:

*Repeatedly ... Melanie talks about the intensity of a particular experience, and then steps away from it into some kind of detachment*²⁷

No matter where one reads, the quality of Melanie's recordings is located in her voice, so there I shall begin. In my work in general, following Ricoeur, I try to keep away from discussion of anything external to the text. However, when one of the qualities listeners admire is related to "honesty" this becomes difficult, for it implies that the identities of the performer and the persona she adopts in some way correlate. With this in mind, it is worth noting that Melanie strongly experienced social alienation as a child, and also alienation from the music industry at various points particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, while nonetheless being beholden to that industry. (She is still writing, performing, recording as she enters her seventieth year). These relationships are documented in interviews.²⁸

I suggest that if you are vulnerable to what the world throws at you then you are not thinking along the same lines as what you encounter. In some measure, by feeling vulnerable, you are inevitably alienated from whatever it is that works differently to you.

The first of well over thirty albums, Melanie's *Born to Be* was released in November 1968. The first track, "In the Hour," implies alienation in a number of ways. The accordion (an unusual instrument in Melanie's line-up) hints that "the city where I am alone" might be an imaginary Paris, while her strange stresses ("blind-ed", "wea-ry") point to a dis-ease. Melanie's voice is foregrounded and centred in the mix, while her guitar is panned to the left. Note at around 2'17", when the rudimentary finger-style nylon-strung guitar becomes strummed in earnest, Melanie's hitherto fragile voice rises in intensity and pitch (while the accompaniment thickens in the middle register to provide support) but, as the line ends (2'35"), the register and intensity drop, her voice half-speaks the final "for you," before she shifts into almost absent-minded humming. This entire contour, outlined by Melanie's voice and guitar style, is a basic feature of her idiolect. It is not solely a feature of her voice, and the instrumental support is not negligible.

On the same album, Melanie's cover of Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" seems to capture something of the "magic" in Dylan's lyric. The resources are unorthodox. Melanie's voice and guitar are both in an intimate space, the guitar-playing basic and hesitant.²⁹ Two different tambourine jingles appear in the middle distance across the stereo space at many points, a handful of strings (with prominent bare fifths) accompany the verses to the left, a recorder doubling the space in the chorus, and a second recorder deep in the mix in the ploy (at 3'55" for example). There is little holding this disparate collection together other than Dylan's basic IV-V-I-IV pattern. Her appearance in intimate space, with frequent intakes of breath and wavering of pitch, is, I suspect, a prime candidate for conveying the sense of vulnerability listeners hear. Again, line endings fall away to speaking ("go under it" in verse 1 and "until tomorrow" in verse 2 where you may hear a sense of regret lest her entreaty to an absent interlocutor goes unanswered). Her performance in the second verse seems almost ritualistic in her destruction not only of conventional melodic rhythm in a line which is carried through almost by a sense of experiential wonder, but also concerning melodic shape. Her near-monotone delivery eclipses what Dylan laconically parades on his original recording and on most of his later output, too. The final ploy presents the second recorder repeating the song's first phrase, over what sounds like a collection of Tibetan gongs. I say "sounds like" because their indistinctness is marked. I would not want to use the word "alienation" to relate to this track, but the lack of connectedness between the world of Melanie and her guitar, of the tambourines, of the strings and of the final recorder/gong combination cannot go unremarked. She is not battling other forces, but neither is she supported by them (and these are the two types of relationships we most usually hear in popular song). It seems to me the very distance *between* them which is crucial to the affective quality of the music.

A third track from the album, "Momma Momma," offers a different perspective on the same feature. It is a very basic blues, whose content is perhaps summarised in the final line of the third verse: "I live in this world but I'm only looking on." Alienation again, then. The resources are more conventional for contemporary rock, but again used unconventionally. In the first verse, Melanie appears at a similar distance to the neatly played acoustic guitar and sustained Hammond organ chord, although her voice seems to occupy her own, more resonant, space. In the second verse, her display becomes both more underplayed (falling to a spoken tone) and overplayed as she expands her range and reaches a raucous tone in her

anguish. An electric guitar adds a neat little figure but fails to escape from this little twitch. In the third verse, the organ adds vibrato and an electric bass does little more than simply outline the harmonic roots. The horns finally enter in the fourth verse, but proceed to do very little; the hi-hat outlines the metre while the horns hold a single note. The final verse repeats the opening – as in most blues, nothing has been achieved – where we simply hear those held notes for more than half a minute.³⁰ Melanie's guitar here is absent and the backing musicians are late to match the strength of her second verse; their reaction lacks all the activity a listener might expect. I'm not sure this is vulnerability, but it is certainly weird in its disconnectedness. And yet there is no disconnect from me. In separating herself from her backing sounds, Melanie's presence as the participant other to my listener becomes even more palpable. And there's more.

These qualities abound in her early recordings. On "Soul Sister Annie" from her second album, Melanie sings against two distinct musical environments – standard verses against a solid southern rock groove complete with mobile bass, and two reflections (at 1'13" and 2'13") dominated by sustained harmonies on an organ which seems placed in a larger, wetter, more resonant acoustic space than the band in the verses. Her singing in the verses is at the top of her range, somewhat raucous and slightly distanced from the mic, in a public space. In the reflections she is less energetic, in a personal space, and this change of activity level is matched by the held organ texture, although there seems to be no reverb added to her voice. In these reflections, rather than describe the protagonist's activities (and perhaps Melanie plays that role in the verses), she invites our compassionate response to Annie's life, distinguishing between Annie as on-stage performer and as real-life agent. The effect of being foregrounded against these two very different environments (and the fact that Melanie switches position from protagonist to intercessor) almost puts Melanie herself in a distinct third space, concordant with neither environment.

The song "Johnny Boy" appears on the same album. The four brief verses of "Johnny Boy" trace the regress of Johnny Boy's friend (voiced by Melanie) towards forlornness, signalled in the first verse by a rather careless approach to regularity of verbal space, and then reinforced by the last verse's even stronger utilisation. At the end of each verse, her voice first blossoms into a rich held note, and then wilts into what should be personal space but isn't. By the last verse, this contour has become so strained that the whispered "you gotta help me" is desperate – her attempt to fill out the verbal space in the fourth verse can no longer disguise her desperation. As a result, perhaps, in the ploy she is left wordless. On this track, then, while the narrative curve suggests her alienation from events (and calling on help from Johnny Boy doesn't seem too wise), it is her vulnerability which is to the fore.

While some of the tracks with which she is most closely associated come across as somewhat childlike ("Brand New Key," "Christopher Robin," "Animal Crackers") and others present a clear social conscience ("Peace Will Come," "Close to it All," "Beautiful People"), plenty of songs convey the quality of vulnerability ("Leftover Wine," "What Have They Done to My Song, Ma," along with her covers of "Somebody Loves Me" and "As Tears Go By"). Two songs were particularly relevant in achieving her early status: "Lay Down" and "Ruby Tuesday." Appearing on her album *Candles in the Rain*, "Lay Down" captures and explores that moment at Woodstock during Melanie's performance when audience members held aloft lighted candles.³¹ The opening phrases capture the communal vulnerability desired by members of the Woodstock generation ("we bled inside each other's wounds/ we all had caught the same disease/and we all sang the songs of peace").³² On the original track, Melanie is supported by a gospel choir (the Edwin Hawkins Singers) and a rhythm

section. In the choruses, the choir takes the first half and, in the second half, they are joined by Melanie whose vocals are slightly foregrounded and less rigid in terms of sung rhythm. In the verses, Melanie is accompanied by the block harmonies and wordless syllables of the choir. There is also an upper voice that provides a harmony that may also be performed by Melanie. Structurally, the track is over at about 3'25", but its total length is 7'45". That remaining portion is effectively a vocal "freak out" over the stable gospel rhythm section as the chorus repeats, loses its lyrics, dissolves, and recovers. Melanie wanders in and out of this coda, but remains within the same recording space – aurally, we are presented with a single sound stage.³³ At about 5'45", Melanie's wordless hook appears to recede behind the space of the choir before being reabsorbed. And then, over the last minute or so she can be heard softly, now very much in the foreground. Over the final 20", Melanie's vocals remain in the foreground as the backing track fades out. At this point, she has clearly stepped out of the track's stage into her own space, however momentarily.³⁴ Again, vulnerability is presented with strength as Melanie's persona becomes momentarily disconnected. On the live album, *Ballroom Streets* (1978), a portion of "Lay Down" is inserted into her song "Cyclone." Although in a slightly different mode, the interpolation of "Lay Down" within "Cyclone" maintains this sense of disconnectedness as she speaks over the last 45".

"Ruby Tuesday" originally appeared on the same album, although she has reconceived and re-recorded it many times since.³⁵ In this version, Melanie observes, from the side-lines as it were, the self-assured archetypal, independent wise woman who goes by the name "Ruby Tuesday." Melanie's voice begins with uncertainty, quavering on held notes (listen to "and nothing's lost" in the second verse) but savouring particular syllables. Her accompanying guitar part is almost wantonly simple. But the first chorus positions her very differently; a string quartet overlaps the end of the verse, leading to full strings, kit and aggressively struck guitar supporting her fully fledged, forceful, and self-confident voice. Having introduced this dichotomy, it is replayed through the track. Note the accompanying recorder in the second verse (cf. "Mr. Tambourine Man" above) an instrument which, again, cannot be played with force. Beginning with the third verse, Melanie's voice is in the foreground, mixed in the centre with some reverb, her guitar is mixed slightly to the right, and an obbligato viola line enters that is mixed to the left. In the following chorus, her voice has receded towards the orchestra, yet her guitar remains prominent. In the playout, with a none-too-assured tone, her voice nearly enters our personal space, leaving violas and recorder behind. Again, the same affective elements are employed but in different ways. At least one live version (on *Ballroom Streets*) maintains this appearance in a separate space, but here it's the third verse, as Melanie becomes foregrounded with added aura almost propelling her onto a different aural stage compared to the rest of the band. Similar separations can be heard in the songs "Together Alone" (*Stoneground Words*, 1972), "Till They All Get Home" (*Crazy Love*, 2002), "I Tried to Die Young" (*Paled by Dimmer Light*, 2004) and the compelling "Wild Horses" (*Madrugada*, 1974).

It is hopefully clear, at this point, that Melanie's recorded persona has some distinctive elements: a combination of vulnerability, strength from separation of her voice from other sound sources in the mix, and stepping out from the recording's space into at least this listener's. By no means does this account for all of her recordings – far from it – but it does isolate qualities to which some listeners call particular attention, as suggested above. One further key element is the two tactics Melanie uses to evade words, presumably because they are insufficiently expressive. The earlier tactic to appear is the evocation of an internal world. This is suggested by Melanie's practice of dropping from singing into humming;

because it is not intended for the public, humming evokes vulnerability. “Candles in the Rain” is a particularly potent instance as a wordless recitative gives way to softly spoken lyrics over a minimal accompaniment. Favourite examples include “Stop, I Don’t Wanna Hear It” (*Leftover Wine*, 1970), at a louder volume but filling in an absent line at the close of “Beautiful People” (*Melanie*, 1969), midway through “In the Hour” (*Candles in the Rain*, 1970), and “Prematurely Grey” (*Precious Cargo*, 1991). The other tactic moves to the opposite extreme, head back, exultant, an overflow of affect, as on the playout of “Where’s the Band” (*Sunset and Other Beginnings*, 1975), the climax midway through “Friends & Co.” (*Photograph*, 1976) and its eerie conclusion, the chorus to “Rock and Roll Heart” (*Precious Cargo*), or the astonishing alternate version of “Groundhog Day” (*Photograph—Double Exposure*, 2005). As heard on a number of recorded versions, the song “Tonight’s the Kind of Night” also exemplifies this overflow of affect. On *Antlers* (1997), an album of Christmas songs, the break at 3’13” seems just too rich for lyrics. This performance combines such exuberance with her near-spoken delivery of lines like “lovers will be faithful” (!) at 1’13”, and an equally exuberant vocal backline which includes her daughters (which perhaps accounts for the similarity of tone found in the backing of so many of her later recordings). Sometimes, both tactics appear on the same track, such as “The Actress” (*Madrugada*) or “Lover of My Friend” (*Paled by Dimmer Light*).

Throughout this presentation of aspects of an idiolect, I have been writing about “Melanie” or “Melanie Safka.” I should clarify before continuing. The “Melanie” to whom we have access has two faces, those of her recorded persona and of her presence as protagonist in most of these songs. While the differences between these positions are material, they are not particularly relevant for the discussion so far. I have been building up a picture of some aspects of Melanie’s entire recorded persona in order to address the way some listeners (including myself) read that persona’s character, emphasising how in listening I find it discourages “a fragmentary world view.” Whether this can be mapped on to the character of Melanie Safka–Schekeryk the recording artist is an entirely separate matter.

The key features of this listening I am exploring relate to vocal persona, to spatial location, and to instrumental forces and textural weight. In listening, the ear is drawn to these elements, and away from Meyer’s primary domains. I find that I am not remotely able to listen to recent “art music” in the same way, since persona has no lyric component to anchor it, while in that repertoire spatialisation, movement and density of sound-sources are virtually insignificant. Indeed, it’s a moot point whether the persona projected by an art music oeuvre is as substantial as the character presented by the individual work. And yet, sometimes listening is still motivated by Meyer’s secondary domains as three brief examples will explore. Here, perhaps, is an approach which works both for popular music and art music.

Pawel Szymanski completed his Piano Concerto in 1994, a work which has been described as an “anti-concerto, a powerful yet inevitable end to the history of the genre.”³⁶ In Szymanski’s Concerto, issues of pacing and register are to the fore. The organising gesture of the first movement is a gradual rise in register in the piano matched by a gradual increase of textural density (a sense of creation *ex nihilo*, as it were), which happens three times with overlaps (to bar 79, 3’25” on the recording) and then again immediately summarising the gesture in string glissandi, piano arpeggios, and then the same in the winds (to bar 110, 4’56”). This registral rise has been activated by the presence of multiple strands, each hinting at a portion of a rising diatonic scale. These portions, cutting across each other, almost produce a rhythmic groove with apparent syncopation. That this entirety can be identified as a whole (a working out and compression of rising scales or some such identity) is the

overriding experience. The second movement drops slowly in register then rises again, with no sense of beat, gradually thickening in the process (as had the first movement). It finally recovers its starting point (at bar 179, 14'28"). The motion in this movement is achieved differently – the winds gradually build up a chord “before our ears” as it were (roughly from top down), each note pulsing, falling away, returning, according to no obvious pattern. Simultaneously, the tessitura of the chord gradually drops, almost before you’ve noticed it. Against this motion, the strings have an exorbitantly long glissando which eventually gathers up the winds to re-achieve the starting-point. The piano approximately follows the downward motion in what works as a series of unfocused arpeggiations with gradually increasing frequency of pitches. In the coda, the piano gradually takes over, again with increasing textural density, ending the piece with a summarising, extended falling gesture. So, gestures which are formed from the large-scale movement of pitches through registers dominate the piece and the notes Szymanski writes in the score have, as their chief function, only to articulate these gigantic gestures.

Marc-André Dalbavie’s brief Oboe Concerto of 2010 manages continuity differently. I focus on two moments. Downward tending mordents develop into two-octave arpeggios in both directions over the first 100 bars or so with the orchestra providing an auratic glimmer to the oboe’s line. These arpeggios become regularised by bar 143 and are gradually transformed by the progressive loss of single notes into a single high, reiterated pitch which will become the substantive material for what is, effectively, the second movement. By bar 306, in what I hear as the third movement, the regular arpeggios are retrieved, together with their dissolution (which we remember), but the process is then reversed as the recovered arpeggios intercut with the repeated upper and lower notes. In such ways, the listener rides the change in the music’s direction, neither as slowly as in early Reich nor as hazily as in early Boulez, but without needing to know what pitches, or precise intervals, are being played. The potential involvement may be heard “as ear candy” but the “feeling that he’s amassing stock gestures” is preferable to the misleading invitation to re-imagine the composer’s thought processes in listening.³⁷

Valentin Silvestrov’s *Metamusik* for solo piano and orchestra from 1993 is a much larger piece. The work consists of a succession of statements and comments with the piano filling one of these two roles at all times and the orchestra frequently providing an aural haze around the piano. The beginning provides the impetus for the late Romantic Adagio which forms the first large section and which, like each of the large sections, avoids generating momentum.³⁸ What matters in the exchanges (the statements and comments) is their relative length and dynamic level which are never static and are never simply repeated. The opening Moderato (from Rehearsal Figure 4) is as good an example as the closing Andante/Allegretto (from three bars before Rehearsal Figure 83). Throughout, the piano has directed arpeggios rather than the more directionless pointillism of high modernism, but register plays no large-scale role. So, although we have no momentum, we have assured continuity set up by these exchanges and by the shifts in and out of Romantic tonality to which these give rise (as during the third bar after Rehearsal Figure 18 or four bars after Rehearsal Figure 32), although which of these two manners is in focus is never clear. It is this pattern of endless exchange which is the piece’s dominant experience.

All three present different rejoinders to the problem of continuity, what I argue is *the* problem in post-tonal concert music, for however far modernity embraces fragmentation, as a listener, my consciousness of my own continuity is my grounding experience. But limitations of space prevent...

Envoi

Now don't get me wrong. I greatly enjoy playing with pc sets, neo-Riemannian transformations, durational schemes and their subversion, and the like. But such games are not for listening. I still maintain that "the reason we ... go out of our way to experience music is simply in order to have been part of the experience that was that music."³⁹ Recalling Eliot: "You are the music while the music lasts."⁴⁰ It is still open for music analysts, of whatever practice, to turn the fearsome subtlety of their ears toward capturing and elucidating the fundamental way the sound music makes, in all its intra-specific difference, engages our perception. (To plunder George Steiner: "Our capacities to ... respond to musical ... sense directly implicate the mystery of the human condition."⁴¹) That is the use of music analysts.

Notes

- 1 This is succinctly explored by Wendy Earle, "Let's Stop Being Defensive About the Value of Arts Degrees," *The Guardian*, 29 May 2014, www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/may/29/study-arts-humanities-enrichment. Accessed 12 June 2017.
- 2 "[So] much musicological analysis of popular music misses the point: its object of study, the discursive text it constructs, is not the text to which anyone listens." See Simon Frith, "What is Good Music?" *Canadian University Music Review* 10, no. 2 (1990), 97.
- 3 Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History and Ideology* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 14.
- 4 Meyer, *Style and Music*, 14.
- 5 At least, that's what I assume Hewett is aiming for. Yet the "discourse," or "substance," he identifies is what I would have thought the term "gesture" was in part invented for. See Ivan Hewett, *Music: Healing the Rift* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 197.
- 6 Allan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993).
- 7 Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination and Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 122ff.
- 8 John Allen Paulos, *I Think, Therefore I Laugh: The Flip Side of Philosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 52.
- 9 Chris Rojek, *Pop Music, Pop Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).
- 10 Rojek, *Pop Music, Pop Culture*, 15.
- 11 See particularly Simon Frith, "Reasons to Be Cheerful," *Popular Music* 23, no. 3 (October 2004), 363–72. See especially 368–71.
- 12 Daniel Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (London: Atlantic, 2008).
- 13 Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music*, 5.
- 14 Einstein quoted in Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith* (Oxford: Lion 1998), 301.
- 15 Christopher Small, *Music, Society, Education* (London: Calder, 1977), 9. Cf. intellectual historian Stefan Collini: "[We] do need to repossess ... old truths and understand and state them anew in new circumstances. Some of those circumstances are very obvious, like the enormous expansion of higher education ... in recent decades which, for Malthusian reasons, may have forced later arrivals to attempt to extract fresh yields from marginal or unfertile plots." (Stefan Collini, *English Past* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 239.)
- 16 Small, *Music, Society, Education*, 97.
- 17 Margaret Boden, *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004).
- 18 Ronald Hutton, *Witches, Druids, and King Arthur* (London: Hambledon/Continuum, 2006), 36–7.
- 19 Giles Hooper, *The Discourse of Musicology* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 41–72.

- 20 David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 47.
- 21 Allan F. Moore, "Authenticity as Authentication," *Popular Music* 21, no. 2 (May 2002), 209–223; and Moore, "The Persona–Environment Relation in Recorded Song," *Music Theory Online* XXI, no. 4 (October 2005), www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.05.11.4/mto.05.11.4.moore.html. Accessed 12 June 2017.
- 22 That is, among those listeners who can bear her singing – she provokes very strong reactions either way.
- 23 Review of *Born to Be/Affectionately Melanie* at www.amazon.co.uk/Born-Be-Affectionately-Melanie/dp/B000MQ57VY/ref=sr_1_22?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1455291127&sr=1-22&keywords=melanie. Accessed 13 June 2017.
- 24 Review of *Madrugada* at www.amazon.co.uk/Madrugada-Melanie/dp/B012B84R4S/ref=sr_1_3?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1455290952&sr=1-3&keywords=melanie. Accessed 13 June 2017.
- 25 Comment accompanying Melanie's cover of "Unchained Melody" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aBE9LEMzZw&list=PL382301501FB91EA8&index=20. Accessed 13 June 2017.
- 26 Comment accompanying a live performance of "Freedom Knows My Name" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYYY2-MrAFQ&list=PL382301501FB91EA8&index=44. Accessed 13 June 2017.
- 27 Mopsy Strange Kennedy, "Melanie: I Want to Buy a Mountain," <http://melaniemusicsociety.tripod.com/mountain.htm>. Accessed 24 November 2016.
- 28 For example, Hubert Saal, "The Girls – Letting Go," *Newsweek* 14 July 1969; online at <http://jonimitchell.com/library/view.cfm?id=2664>. Accessed 24 November 2016; and Sam Tweedle, "Little Sister of the Sun: A Conversation with Melanie," *Popcultureaddict.com*, <http://popculture-addict.com/interviews/melanie>. Accessed 20 July 2017.
- 29 Characterisations of space as "intimate," "public," "personal," etc., and the theory of proxemics are explored in Allan F. Moore, *Song Means* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 186. "Public" spaces are marked by the embeddedness of the lead vocal in the accompanimental texture, rather than being foregrounded. "Personal" spaces are marked by the presence of the lead vocal in front of the accompanying environment, but not close enough to the listener for other vocal sounds to be audible.
- 30 Michael Haralambos has argued that the blues was static and exploratory in terms of the situations it describes, whereas soul was dynamic, thus explaining the shift in popularity between the styles in the 1960s in relation to the civil rights movement: Michael Haralambos, *Right On: From Blues to Soul in Black America* (New York: Drake, 1975).
- 31 At least, that is how the myth now goes.
- 32 I hear "wombs" to rhyme with the previous line's "room." Some listeners may hear "wounds" rather than "wombs." Both words present unsettling images.
- 33 The "sound stage" is the virtual space created by the recording process within which the "actors" (i.e. the sound-sources) are located. The concept is widely used in the record production literature. See, for example, William Moylan, *The Art of Recording: Understanding and Crafting the Mix* (Boston, MA: Focal Press, 2002).
- 34 The physical metaphors here accurately describe the effect I perceive.
- 35 In her cover, Melanie completely rethinks the melodic articulation of the original as written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. Interestingly, when singing with a full rock band (as heard on her album *Cowabonga* from 1988), she sometimes reverts to Jagger's original phrasing.
- 36 Elżnieta Szczepańska-Lange quoted in "Concerto for Piano and Orchestra – Paweł Szymanski," <http://culture.pl/en/work/concerto-for-piano-and-orchestra-pawel-szymanski>. Accessed 13 June 2017.
- 37 From a review by Leif Ove Andsnes, *Shadows of Silence* at www.amazon.co.uk/Leif-Ove-Andsnes-Shadows-Silence/dp/B001PKVFFS/ref=sr_1_2?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1455290567&sr=1-2&keywords=dalbavie. Accessed 13 June 2017.
- 38 Silvestrov has commented on our period being one in which we are writing over the end of music, "coda" understood metaphorically, although there is still much to say: "it is very much in the area of the coda that immense life is still possible." Quoted in Paul Griffiths, "Romantic

Ghosts in a Rueful Present,” *New York Times* 11 August 2002, www.nytimes.com/2002/08/11/arts/music-recordings-romantic-ghosts-in-a-rueful-present.html. Accessed 20 July 2017.

- 39 Allan F. Moore, “Introduction,” in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Allan F. Moore (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.
- 40 T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber, 1959), 44.
- 41 George Steiner, *Real Presences* (London: Faber, 1989), 6.