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Character, Ground, And Contradiction In My Recent Music

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CHARACTER, GROUND, AND CONTRADICTION  
IN MY RECENT MUSIC

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A Portfolio of Compositions with Commentary submitted to the  
University of Huddersfield in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

April 2011

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(word count: circa 10160)

## Portfolio

I. *time corners* for bass-clarinete, trumpet, and trombone (2009)

Performance History: ELISION. St. Paul's Hall, Huddersfield, UK. December 2, 2009.

II. *shards* for solo cello (2010)

Chris Wild (Ensemble *dal niente*). Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Darmstadt, DE. July 29, 2010.

Chris Wild (Ensemble *dal niente*). Music Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA. January 20, 2011.

III. *maps of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness*, series of works for open instrumentation (2010)

A. *clinamen* for four to eight players

Postgraduate Ensemble. Phipps Hall, Huddersfield, UK. April 27, 2010.

Edges Ensemble. Site Gallery, Sheffield, UK. May 22, 2010.

B. *drift* for five to eight players

Postgraduate Ensemble. St. Paul's Hall, Huddersfield, UK. May 6, 2011.

C. *simulacrum* for two to five players

Matt Endahl and Colin Tucker. Canterbury House, Ann Arbor, MI, USA. September 8, 2010.

D. *snarls and tangles* for five to fifteen players

Edges Ensemble. Site Gallery, Sheffield, UK. May 15, 2010.

E. *mesh* for two to four players

Matt Endahl and Colin Tucker. Canterbury House, Ann Arbor, MI, USA. September 8, 2010.

F. *veil* for two or more players

Matt Endahl and Colin Tucker. Canterbury House, Ann Arbor, MI, USA. September 8, 2010.

IV. *the indifferent horizon apathetically rests on the ground, devouring everything that looks like something* for violin, B-flat clarinet, and piano (2010)

Plus-Minus Ensemble. St. Paul's Hall, Huddersfield, UK. March 10, 2011.

V. *spaltung* for solo violin (2011)

Johnny Chang. Phipps Hall, Huddersfield, UK. April 5, 2011.

VI. *futures unmade in the boundlessness of the instant* for solo soprano saxophone (2011)

Unperformed

VII. recordings:

*time corners* (ELISION)

*shards* (Chris Wild)

*clinamen* (Edges Ensemble)

*the indifferent horizon apathetically rests on the ground, devouring everything that looks like something* (Plus-Minus Ensemble)

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## **Abstract**

This thesis discusses contradictory foreground-background relationships within my MPhil portfolio of compositions. Part I elaborates a constellation of concepts. Foreground organization is considered as “character,” the treatment of musical material as if it is a living subject, while background organization is approached as “ground,” a frame which mediates and is mediated by character. The contradiction between these levels is examined as a directed, multileveled syntax. The discussions are contextualized with examples from nineteenth- and late twentieth-century music as well as from philosophy, cultural theory, and non-musical art-forms. Part II discusses how specific techniques have actualized these concepts, focusing upon issues of behavior, shape, and stratification. In the conclusion, I analyze how an aesthetic of contradiction redefines relationships between sound and meaning.

## Introduction

This “life of spirit” is not something separate; it is not a spirituality that floats above and beyond materiality. It is nothing—or simple abstraction—as long as it remains considered in itself as if it were outside the world of effectivity. It is the breath of spirit, but this breath is not an immateriality: on the contrary, it is the unsettling of matter inseparable from matter itself, the sensible insofar as it senses, is sensed, and senses itself. It names the restlessness and awakening of the world, immanence always already tense, extended and distended within itself as well as outside itself; space and time, already, as the ex-position of every position. Spirit is not something separate—neither from matter nor from nature, neither from the body, from contingency, nor from the event—because it is itself nothing other than separation. It is separation as the opening of relation.<sup>1</sup>

-Jean-Luc Nancy

My recent compositions propose that the category of subjectivity, far from being exhausted, has startling and far-reaching implications for musical syntax, volition, and meaning. The assumption that “subjectivity” in music is a mechanistic, undialectical imposition of meaning onto sound becomes questionable if the concept of subjectivity is re-examined. As Jean-Luc Nancy explains in the passage quoted above, the subject is an intensely dialectical entity, perhaps *the* dialectical entity; as such it is positivity only as much as it is negativity, and therefore a properly “subjective” aesthetic will only stabilize meaning to the extent that it destabilizes it.<sup>2</sup>

These concerns have grown out of an internal dialogue between two competing aesthetic standpoints. On one hand, I have been drawn to how nineteenth-century music regards material as a living, desiring subject, yet I take issue with the one-dimensional relationship between sound and meaning which sometimes results from this strategy. On the other hand, I am fascinated by how post-WWII new music interrogates the very mechanisms which produce musical meaning, yet I object to how some of this music abandons, rather than re-approaches, the possibility of musical meaning.

The way out of this dilemma has been re-evaluating the category of subjectivity through the lens of Hegel’s dialectical approach to the problem. From a

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<sup>1</sup> [Nancy, 2002], p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> In this essay, I use the term “dialectic” in the Frankfurt School’s sense. For these thinkers, dialectic emphasizes opening over closure and difference over identity. Theodor Adorno writes that “the name of dialectics says no more...than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder...the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived...dialectics is the consistent sense of nonidentity;” “dialectics means to break the compulsion to achieve identity, and to break it by means of the energy stored up in that compulsion and congealed in its objectifications” [Adorno, 1973], p. 5 and [Adorno, 1973], p. 157.

Adorno’s emphasis on that which exceeds identity is shared by Jacques Lacan, whose theories are referenced extensively throughout this essay.

dialectical viewpoint, the problem with nineteenth-century music is not, in fact, that it is too “subjective,” but rather that it is not subjective enough. A genuine subject in the Hegelian sense does not confirm and reproduce meaning but creates, renews, and negates it; in turn, this emphasis on the production of meaning satisfies the “materialist” imperative of post-WWII new music.

My MPhil compositions have developed an integral subject-object syntax out of these considerations. In this syntax, foreground material is the site of subjectivity, or *character*, which I define as any level of material which consistently concretizes its identity. Background structure, or *ground*, operates as the outer limit of subjectivity, an “objective” frame which constrains and is constrained by character. While character seeks the fullest possible realization of its inner potential, ground seeks prominence and redundancy; the resulting collision is discussed as *contradiction*.

Part I elaborates this tripartite conceptual framework and part II examines specific compositional techniques which implement it. These analyses reference the compositions of my MPhil portfolio, which are listed below.

- *time corners* (2009) for bass-clarinete, trumpet, and trombone
- *shards* (2010) for solo cello
- *maps of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness* (2010) series of works for open instrumentation: *clinamen*, *drift*, *simulacrum*, *snarls and tangles*, *mesh*, and *veil*
- *the indifferent horizon apathetically rests on the ground, devouring everything that looks like something* (2010) for violin, B-flat clarinet, and piano, hereafter *the indifferent horizon*
- *spaltung* (2011) for solo violin
- *futures unmade in the boundlessness of the instant* (2011) for solo soprano saxophone, hereafter *futures unmade*



# I. Concepts

## A. Character

### 1. Definition

In my MPhil research I have investigated the consequences of treating musical material as if it is a self-conscious subject. This subject is not an actual subject, but is an “ideal,” concentrated, musically-embodied “subject-function,” which has been developed in dialogue with Hegel’s discussion of self-consciousness in *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>3</sup>

For Hegel, the self-conscious subject can find stable self-identity only through interaction with the outside world: through experience, dialogue, and social being. True self-consciousness is achieved only when a subject’s inner world is totally integrated and reconciled with its outside, “where the external reality which embodies us and on which we depend is fully expressive of us and contains nothing alien... the subject is not limited by anything outside.”<sup>4</sup> To attain this, an incipient self-consciousness must confront its others—potentially risking its life—and successfully recognize and be recognized by them; the subject assimilates their otherness and fundamentally changes in doing so.

This framework suggests guidelines for the creation of a music-immanent subjectivity, or *character*. If an aspect of musical structure is to take on a meaningfully subjective identity, it must be capable of basic cognitive operations. A musical “character” must have awareness of its inner self and outer environment in the present and must be able to engage with past and future, through memory and goal-setting, respectively.<sup>5</sup>

In my music, characters are dynamic, multi-faceted, hierarchical constellations of distinctive properties. They concretize their inner identity while interacting with other characters and ground, their “outside.” However, in my works ground mediates character to such an extent that character’s reconciliation with its outside, while a crucial “motivating horizon,” can never occur in the actuality of the music.

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<sup>3</sup> [Hegel, 1977].

<sup>4</sup> [Taylor, 1975], p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> [Cox, 2002], p. 162.

## 2. Precedents

### A. Gustav Mahler

While in much nineteenth-century music character is rendered into stable, complete thematic statements, in Gustav Mahler's music character is defined more flexibly. Character, embodied in the recurring subcomponents of background rotational form, is a dynamic hierarchy of related materials and properties (cells, intervals, tendency, key, mode, instrumentation, register, dynamic level) whose exact composition is constantly changing, but which nonetheless retains identifiable "fingerprints" under transformation.

While in the thematic approach, for example in Schumann's *Phantasiestücke* opus 12 (1837),<sup>6</sup> character's actual and potential identity is often clear within its first phrase, Mahler's characters continually uncover new, often startling implications of their "original potential" throughout the course of lengthy symphonic movements; remarkable examples include the second movement of the Fifth Symphony (1904) and the first movement of the Ninth Symphony (1910).<sup>7</sup> In short, Mahler's characters, unlike Schumann's, are dialectically-defined subjects: they confront and recognize their others, as well as metaphorically "risk their lives" in pursuit of richer inner identity. As Hegel underlines, these limit situations are constitutive of subjectivity.<sup>8</sup>

### B. Frank Cox

The music of Frank Cox employs similarly dynamic strategies of characterization. The composer describes his aesthetic as "pan-subjectivity," "an approach that treats every element, every 'parameter,' every aspect at every level, which has attained a basic degree of self-definition as though it were potentially a 'subjectivity.'"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [Schumann, 1912].

<sup>7</sup> [Mahler, 1904] and [Mahler, 1912].

<sup>8</sup> See for instance [Hegel, 1977], p. 19: "The life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself. It is this power, not as something positive, which closes its eyes to the negative, as when we say of something that it is nothing or is false, and then, having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else; on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being. This power is identical with what we earlier called the Subject, which by giving determinateness an existence in its own element supersedes abstract immediacy, i.e. the immediacy which barely is, and thus is authentic substance: that being or immediacy whose mediation is not outside of it but which is this mediation itself."

<sup>9</sup> [Cox, 2002], p. 162. [Cox, 2008b] outlines this aesthetic in more detail.

Cox's characters are highly elemental, usually defined in terms of a textural or gestural identity, such as "accented notes" or "trill/oscillation," which is easily identifiable under transformation. Secondary aspects of character identity, such as pitch and rhythmic contours, as well as performance techniques, flexibly align with primary aspects, concretizing and dispersing as identity forms and reforms. In keeping with the composer's pan-subjective aesthetic, middleground and background (such as meter, hypermeter, and structural pitches) are also treated as "characters," organically issuing out of the struggles of the foreground characters.<sup>10</sup> Works such as *Clairvoyance* (1989) and *Recoil* (1994) exemplify these techniques.<sup>11</sup>

My approach to character is indebted to Cox's work, but our work differs in one crucial way: Cox's central concern is the immanent development of character, whereas mine is character's contradiction with the "objective" otherness of ground (discussed below).<sup>12</sup> If his work emphasizes interiority and identity, mine emphasizes exteriority and rupture; if his syntax is motivically "logical," my syntax tends towards the anamorphic "stain" which exceeds such logics (explained below); finally, if his work enacts conflicts between shapes, my work enacts conflicts between listening categories (subject/object, reversible/irreversible, diachronic/synchronic, gestural/inert, etc.).

### 3. Practice

In my trio *the indifferent horizon*, there are two character-types, related by their contradiction. As will be discussed later, this contradiction emanates from the deeper contradiction between character and ground: the "gestural" character (G) (Figure 1), where "character in general" is primary, materializes ground's pitch ascent and deflects it into a downward-tending gestural syntax; the "scalar" character (S)

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<sup>10</sup> The organic flexibility of Cox's approach stands in stark contrast to the music Elliott Carter, whose work, such as *String Quartet no. 2* (1959) [Carter, 1962], was an important starting point for the younger composer. Carter's "characters" are hardly subjects in the sense of the Hegelian framework proposed above. In Carter's music, character identity is fixed, being capable of insignificant transformation, growth/decay, or recognition of others. These characters cannot engage in dialogue; rather, their interactions are created from the outside through juxtaposition. Therefore, while in Cox, characters' interactions drive the piece in time, in Carter, they cannot function in such a way, resulting in background processes which sound as if they have been artificially imposed upon foreground material.

<sup>11</sup> [Cox, 1989] and [Cox, 1994].

<sup>12</sup> In fact, my "objective" approach to background is diametrically opposed to his "subjective" approach to the same.

(Figure 2), where ground is primary, passively internalizes ground’s pitch ascent and materializes it into clear durational and dynamic shapes whose identity is only latently gestural. More generally, if S is “smooth” in its bare presentation of ground, G is “rough” in its denaturing of ground; these fundamental properties inform decisions about instrumentation, articulation, performance techniques, dynamics, density, pitch interval size, and registral compass size.

Figure 1: *the indifferent horizon*, bars 49-50: “gestural” character

Figure 2: *the indifferent horizon*, bars 2-3: “scalar” character

While the above are “internal logics”—horizons at which identity is most itself—the characters also utilize “external logics” through which they recognize each other. G recognizes S by containing S’s ascent within its more complex pitch shapes and by creating an internal representation of select aspects of S, which eventually “breaks off” and becomes its own character (see bars 30-32, 45-48, and 54-61; this material also increasingly “infects” the violin’s behavior in “normal” G passages). S,

on the other hand, recognizes G more abstractly, by halting its ascent in the form of repeated notes, fermatas, and silence.

These atemporal possibility-spaces are collided in time. The piece's three main sections (bars 2-12, 13-61, and 62-64)<sup>13</sup> are defined in terms of character hierarchies, with S primary in the outer sections and G primary in the middle section. Section-lengths and local-level details grow out of these evolving hierarchies. As will be elaborated in the discussion of *contradiction*, these hierarchies tend to invert themselves, but in the present piece they may do so only within the following constraints: in the primary character, a move towards fuller recognition of its other (external logic) is merely a means to a bolder move towards fuller self-identity (internal logic), whereas for the secondary character, analogous to the "stain" discussed below, internal logic can only advance through more a drastic move in external logic.

S's dynamic trajectory through these hierarchies is as follows: it progresses from a dominant yet inchoate identity in section I to a subordinate yet persistent identity in section II to an again dominant yet undifferentiated identity in section III. Within section I, S begins "not quite itself" due to the almost-gestural nature of its durational and dynamic shapes (Figure 2), which also serve as source material for the "birth" of the G; as the section progresses, S's identity is further mediated as it recognizes the emerging G via repeated notes (bars 6 and 8) and silences (bar 13), after which it is forced to cede to G in section II.

Now in the subordinate position, S recognizes G with all three of its available external logics at once (repeated notes, fermatas, and silences) while consolidating its "smoothness" by reducing its durational variety and lowering its dynamic level. Its silences recognize G in one way but significantly undermine it in another. If S's first statement in section II—sound then silence in bar 18—is a subordinate afterthought to the preceding statement of G, in its subsequent statements—starting with sound, silence, sound in bar 25—S can no longer be read as subordinate; it is increasingly an entity in its own right. While S's incumbent dominance comes at the "price" of a greater scope of its external logics (towards recognition of G), it does force G to resort to increasingly desperate and hysterical means to maintain its dominance, as can be seen in the frenetic textures of bars 49-50 (Figure 1).

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<sup>13</sup> Bar 1 is an "introduction" while bars 64-65 are a coda (elided with the end of the third section).

Section III is a recapitulation (corresponding to the first two phrase-groups of section I, bars 2-11): the scalar character is again fully sustaining (i.e. smooth) and regains some of its former durational differentiation. However, S's regained primacy hardly stabilizes its identity. Rather, its syntax approaches disintegration in this section: dynamics approach the threshold of inaudibility, intervallic content is reduced to quarter-tone chromatic scales, long fermatas break up melodic continuity, and the subordinate G is stripped of all defining properties except those of articulation and dynamics. In summary, the piece's end emanates not from the reconciliation of characters, but rather from the inability of their contradiction to continue itself any further.

## B. Ground

### 1. Definition

Character actualizes itself through the frame of ground.<sup>14</sup> Ground is present, clear, and redundant; it demarcates two structural boundaries with respect to character: it is the highest clearly-defined structural level as well as the most possibly “objectified” (non)character (while it can “adapt,” it lacks concrete essence and cannot recognize others, nor contain contradictions).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, ground and character are contradictory; each is always mediated by its other.

Ground has distinct diachronic and synchronic aspects; within a single piece, one of them is prioritized, although the other can be present in a subordinate role. Diachronic ground emphasizes connection and progression between time intervals, while synchronic ground emphasizes their separation and equivalence. In *the indifferent horizon*, diachronic ground is a background pitch ascent which frames foreground material as perpetually intensifying and incomplete; ground is also diachronic in *spaltung*, *simulacrum*, and *drift*. In contrast, ground in *futures unmade* is synchronic in the form of parallel relationships between middleground units

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<sup>14</sup> The term “ground” was chosen because of its resonance with the figure-ground problematic of Gestalt psychology and visual art theory, as well as with Hegelian logic (my approach corresponds most closely to Hegel’s “real ground”—see [Hegel, 2010] and [Žižek, 1993]). The similar terms “form” and “content” were rejected for two reasons: 1) “form” and “content” imply fixed places within musical structure, whereas character and ground are dynamic, transferable modes of operation and 2) “form” and “content” prioritize each term’s outer function over its inner volition, whereas in the framework proposed in this essay, the opposite is arguably the case.

<sup>15</sup> In this essay, “higher” levels are closer to background, while “lower” levels are closer to foreground.

(articulated by sound/silence patterns and by stabilization/destabilization processes),<sup>16</sup> which situate character against a “gradient” towards objectification and inertness; *shards*, *clinamen*, *snarls and tangles*, *mesh*, and *veil* also investigate synchronic ground.

Ground’s presence on the music’s surface, as mediated by character, occurs between two extremes. First, character must at all times have some semblance of an independent identity and volition—in other words, ground can never emerge clearly as foreground. Second, and conversely, ground must be consistently present: active at regular time intervals, not too far below surface rhythm, and moving at consistent intervals which are significant relative to surface activity.

## **2. Precedents**

### **A. Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde***

Richard Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* (1856-1859) is replete with examples of diachronic ground, usually embodied in stepwise middleground ascents in the “top voice” (often reinforced by harmony and changes in density, dynamics, texture, and instrumentation).<sup>17</sup> Foreground material is crystallized into short, stable motivic units, which, at one extreme, drive the music’s unfolding through their “subjective” quasi-development and, at the other extreme, are sequenced and fragmented in subordination to “objective” middleground linearity.

A passage from the finale of Act I, reproduced in piano reduction in Figure 3, moves from the former extreme to the latter. Beginning in the third system of p. 31, the relatively malleable melodic material initializes a middleground ascent, which continues until the end of the second system of p. 34. Starting in the last system of p. 32, this melodic material is sequenced, fragmented, and liquidated, culminating in the third bar of the second system of p. 33, when foreground material becomes a morphological non-entity, reduced to arpeggiating the middleground ascent.

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<sup>16</sup> While this behavioral model applies to the piece as a whole, each of the piece’s sections (the three sections begin in bars 1, 8, and 35) enacts it differently, based on its particular ground-character hierarchy. The model discussed here is most evident in the work’s outer sections, where ground is primary. For more detail, see the discussion below of “Parameter.”

<sup>17</sup> [Wagner, 1860].

Wagner — Tristan und Isolde, Act I

(She wrests the cup from him.)  
(Sie entwindet ihm den Becher.)

halbre it! Be - tray  
Häl - - te! Ver - rät - -

(She drinks)  
(Sie trinkt.)

- - er! I drink to thee!  
- - - - Ich trink' sie dir!

*molto espr. ff*

**Lento.**  
*Langsam.*

(Then she throws away the goblet. — Seized with convulsive tremb.  
(Dann wirft sie die Schale fort. — Bide, von Schauer erfasst, blicken

ling they gaze into one another's eyes in the utmost emotion but without stirring, while their expression changes  
sich mit höchster Aufregung, jedoch mit starrer Haltung unverwandt in die Augen, in deren Ausdruck der Todestrost bald

*dim. p più p trem. pp*

from defiance of death to glooming of passion.)  
(Zittern ergreift sie. Sie fassen sich krampfhaft an das Herz)

**Poco mosso.**  
*Etwas bewegt.*

*pp cresc. f ff*

Figure 3: Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, Act I, Finale [Wagner, 1882]



and then pass their hands over their brows —  
und führen die Hand wieder an die Stirn —

*rallent. Lento. Langsam.*

*pp trem.*

Again their eyes seek to meet, — are lowered in con-  
Dann suchen sie sich wieder mit dem Blick, — senken (they) their eyes

*sehr ausdrucksvoll p molto espress. f p p*

fusion, and are again turned with riving longing one another.  
und lassen ihn wieder mit steigender Sehnsucht auf einander.)

*p cresc. sf più f ff dim. p*

ISOLDA (in quivering voice). (shaking upon his breast)  
ISOLDE (mit bebender Stimme). (an seine Brust stützend)

Tris - tan! Trai - tor be - lov - ed!  
Tri - stan! Trau - lo - ser Hol - der!

TRISTAN (with an outburst). (He embraces her passionately.)  
TRISTAN (überstürzt). (Er umfängt sie mit Gluth.)

I - sol - da!  
I - sol - de!

*cresc.*

**Allegro appassionato.**  
**Lebhaft mit Steigerung.**

TRISTAN. (They remain in a silent embrace.)  
TRISTAN. (Sie verbleiben in stummer Umarmung.)

Wo - man di - vine!  
Se - lig-ste Frau!

*cresc.*

Figure 3, continued

ALL THE MEN (without).  
 ALLE MÄNNER (ausken).

2<sup>nd</sup> Tenor.  
2. Tenor.

2nd Tenor.  
2. Tenor.

1st Bass.  
1. Bass.

2nd Bass.  
2. Bass.

Hail! Heil! to King Mark, all hail! Heil! Heil!

Hail! Heil! to King Mark, all hail! Heil! Heil!

Hail! Heil! to King Mark, all hail! Heil! Heil!

*sempre più f.*

(Brangäne, who confused and trembling, has been leaning over the ship's side with averted face, now turns to observe the love-entranced pair and rushes forwards, wringing her hands in despair.)

BRANGÆNA.  
BRANGÆNE.

BRANGÄNA.  
BRANGÄNE.

1<sup>st</sup> Tenor.  
4. Tenor.

Wo- is me!  
Wo he! Weh!

Heil! to King Mark, all hail!  
Heil! Kö-nig Mar-ke Heil!

Heil! to King Mark, all hail!  
Heil! Kö-nig Mar-ke Heil!

(Trumpets on the Stage as from the band.)  
(*Trumpeten auf der Bühne wie vom Landorchester*)

End - less mis - ty I have wrought instead of death!  
Un - ah - wend - bar ew - ge Noth für kur - zen Tod!

**Figure 3, continued**

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 3/4.

**System 1:** The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Dire the deed of my dull, faith-ful" (German: "Thür-ger Treu-e trug-vol-les"). The piano accompaniment features a complex, flowing arpeggiated pattern.

**System 2:** The vocal line continues with "heart! It cries loud-ly to" (German: "Herz! Es blüht aus jam-mernd em-"). The piano accompaniment includes the instruction "molto cresc." and "pff".

**System 3:** This system marks the entrance of Tristan, who is "confused" (German: "verwirrt"). The lyrics are "What troub-led" (German: "Was trübm-te"). The piano accompaniment includes the instruction "p dolce" and "cresc.".

**System 4:** This system marks the entrance of Isolde, who is also "confused" (German: "verwirrt"). The lyrics are "What troub-led dream of I-sol-das" (German: "Was trübm-to mir von I-sol-das"). The piano accompaniment includes the instruction "p dolce" and "cresc.".

Figure 3, conclusion

## B. Helmut Lachenmann, *Fassade*

Helmut Lachenmann's *Fassade* (1973, revised 1987) is a virtual catalogue of the organizational possibilities of synchronic ground, which in this piece takes the form of a fast, regular pulse.<sup>18</sup> As the composer explains,

*Fassade* is a secret march...it is based on a kind of rhythmic scaffolding, the joints of which have been fitted out with fields of sound of varying internal articulation. But the "march-like" ductus, clearly oriented on metre, keeps breaking down because the fields of sound that are supposed to submit to the "marching melody" begin to proliferate and display their structural inner life; in doing so, they counter the dynamic nature of the framework gesture with their own inner statics, by blocking and deforming it.<sup>19</sup>

In two passages—bars 38-104 and their re-reading in bars 220-325<sup>20</sup>—the "march" pulse's presentation and breakdown is particularly overt.

In the former passage, all foreground rhythmic material is a passive expression of ground, the underlying quaver pulse. Each pulse is filled with single impulses and later with generalized figures (scales, glissandi, repeated notes, and trills/oscillations); successive pulses are assigned to contrasting instrumental configurations. Given these two conditions, pulses cannot be grouped into a higher-level directed syntax; they are merely "one thing after another," linked abstractly by their common subordination to the pulse-grid.

However, the breakdown mentioned in the program note gradually manifests itself as the initially internally-undifferentiated materials begin to unfold their "inner life" and form richer identities which conflict with the rigid pulse. From this point onwards, various types of structural *caesurae* (actual silences, notes sustained for two or more quavers, and brief bursts of irregular pulses) intervene against the pulse in increasingly disruptive ways.

In summary, if the Wagner excerpt progresses from the primacy of "subjective" foreground volition to that of "objective" middleground volition, the Lachenmann excerpt moves between the same extremes, but in the opposite direction. These differences of direction indicate broader differences of causality and hierarchy between foreground and background. In the Lachenmann passage, the actualization of foreground material's subjective inner life destroys ground's continuity and thereby

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<sup>18</sup> [Lachenmann, 1980]. I was not able to locate a copy of the revised version of the score, since it is only available on a rental basis; however, in the passages discussed herein, the score of the initial version and the commercially-available recording of the revised version [Lachenmann 2001] do not differ noticeably.

<sup>19</sup> Liner notes to [Lachenmann, 2001], pp. 17-18.

<sup>20</sup> The latter passage is discussed in [Lachenmann, 1996], pp. 47-49 and 127-128.

lays bare the incompatibility between foreground material and ground. In contrast, in the Wagner passage, the primacy—at its end—of objective middleground volition is framed, via the rhetoric of teleological intensification, as consequence and consummation of the initial subjective foreground volition. However, foreground material's reified subordination to middleground is precisely the opposite of its fulfillment; in other words, Wagner conceals—through rhetorical framing—the contradiction between character and ground, while Lachenmann calls attention to it.<sup>21</sup>

The latter possibility has been crucial in my MPhil research. While in *Fassade* the opposition between foreground material and ground is crude and static, my work aims to develop a dynamic, multi-faceted syntax stemming from this contradiction.<sup>22</sup>

## C. Contradiction

### 1. Definition

“Form is nothing more than an extension of content.” And its converse: content is nothing more than an extension of form. The fulcrum of [Robert] Creeley's famous equation is extension, from the Latin term for “to stretch out.” This term reluctantly acknowledges that the nouns on either side are not, in fact, equivalent, but rather are modes of torsion, distortion. If the fulcrum was, as one would expect, that verb of equivalence, is, then the converse would actually read “An extension of content is nothing more than form.”

In what way(s) is content stretched? The terms I want are not strictly synonymous: shaped, sculpted, arranged, ordered, used, manipulated, intervened upon, cut, edited, mashed, fucked over, transformed. Between form and transformation, content gets you across.

Form is nothing more than a confrontation with content—<sup>23</sup>  
Content is nothing more than a confrontation with form

-Ron Silliman

Contradiction is the central agent of change in Hegelian philosophy, where its meaning is highly specific. Here, contradiction is dynamic, active opposition, unlike “pure difference.” Its competing claims are both incompatible and asymmetrical, unlike the “unity of opposites.”<sup>24</sup>

In my work, contradiction is the antagonism between the incompatible claims of character and ground. Character seeks individuation (from ground), and yet ground seeks active presence on the surface. Moreover, if character is subject, diachrony,

<sup>21</sup> Adorno argues that “structural mystification” of this sort is a central facet of Wagner's work—see [Adorno, 2005], Chapter 6.

<sup>22</sup> The details of my approach to ground are discussed in the “Practice” segment of “Contradiction.”

<sup>23</sup> [Silliman, n.d.].

<sup>24</sup> [Hegel, 2010], p. 374, and [Žižek, 1993], p. 130-133.

foreground, embodiment, latency, and adaptation, ground is object, synchrony,<sup>25</sup>  
background, disembodiment, immediacy, and stubbornness.

As with Hegel, contradiction is inherently temporal, and in fact it constitutes the temporal fabric of my music. The collision between character and ground—wherein each constantly adapts in order to actualize its essence—drives diachronic differentiation; middle- and large-scale formal distinctions issue out of this contradiction’s renewal.

The renewal of contradiction stems from the inherent instability of its asymmetrical hierarchies. Jacques Lacan’s theory of *anamorphosis* describes how these hierarchies are stabilized and destabilized. Slavoj Žižek explains:

“Phallic” is precisely the detail that “does not fit,” that “sticks out” from the idyllic surface scene and denatures it, renders it uncanny. It is the point of *anamorphosis* in a picture: the element that, when viewed straightforwardly, remains a meaningless stain, but which, as soon as we look at the picture from a precisely determined lateral perspective, all of a sudden acquires well-known contours. Lacan’s constant point of reference is [Hans] Holbein’s *Ambassadors*: at the bottom of the picture, under the figures of the two ambassadors, a viewer catches sight of an amorphous, extended, “erected” spot. It is only when, on the very threshold of the room in which the picture is exposed, the visitor casts a final lateral glance at it that this spot acquires the contours of a skull, disclosing thus the true meaning of the picture—the nullity of all terrestrial goods, objects of art and knowledge that fill out the rest of the picture.<sup>26</sup>

Holbein’s painting is then a pivot point between two discrete, contradictory syntactic (*symbolic* in Lacanian terms) spaces. Within each space, the object seen straightforwardly may signify only through the mediating effects of the stain. Žižek continues:

This is the way Lacan defines the phallic signifier, as a “signifier without signified” which, as such, renders possible the effects of the signified: the “phallic” element of a picture is a meaningless stain that “denatures” it, rendering all its constituents “suspicious,” and thus opens up the abyss of the search for a meaning—nothing is what it seems to be, everything is to be interpreted, everything is supposed to possess some supplementary meaning.<sup>27</sup>

However, while the stain inevitably becomes the locus of the viewer’s attention, it can only function as such when viewed from an angle—it “must remain an inert, nonsensical ‘blot’ if the rest of the picture is to acquire the consistency of a

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<sup>25</sup> While ground has both diachronic and synchronic aspects, they are both contained within the overarching synchronic temporality inherent in ground’s redundancy.

<sup>26</sup> [Žižek, 1992], pp. 90-91. See [Lacan, 1977], Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion of anamorphosis in Holbein’s *Ambassadors*. [Watten, 2003], Chapter 6, connects anamorphosis and related Lacanian concepts to twentieth-century literature, visual art, and film.

<sup>27</sup> [Žižek, 1992], p. 91.

symbolic reality.”<sup>28</sup> Once the stain becomes recognizable, its function is inverted: it lacks the otherness necessary to function as stain, and in fact itself requires a stain of its own if it is to enter the realm of the symbolic. The viewer is thus caught up in a compulsive oscillation, driven by the unending need to integrate the stain’s otherness.<sup>29</sup>

In viewing *Ambassadors*, this oscillation is driven by disparities of meaning and embodiment. The painting’s straightforward view lacks full meaning, which is conferred by the skull, while the lateral view lacks embodiment, which is in turn conferred by the former view’s validating painterly syntax of perspectival space and a frame attached to a physically real wall.

An analogous syntax informs my recent compositions. The two perspectives of Holbein’s painting correspond to character (embodied) and ground (disembodied) in my music. The anamorphic oscillation between the former perspectives is realized in terms of hierarchies between character and ground. Either character or ground is the dominant attribute at a given time, while the subordinate term functions as its stain, making its identity possible and yet denaturing it. This stain’s otherness is organically played out within syntactic categories defined by the governing hierarchy until the stain manifests itself as a positively-defined entity, at which point the hierarchy is overturned.

## **2. Precedents**

### **A. Michael Snow**

The possibility of contradiction between form and content has been central in post-Duchamp visual art, wherein framed content and framing form are deliberately at odds. The artwork of Michael Snow has uniquely engaged with these possibilities. Beginning in painting and continuing in sculpture, film, photography, mixed media, and performance, Snow’s work uses Duchampian framing strategies to ascertain the nature of the painterly transaction between two- and three-dimensional spaces.

In traditional painterly practice, real three-dimensional space is abstracted into illusionistic pseudo-three-dimensional space through the mediating two-

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<sup>28</sup> [Žižek, 1992], p. 95.

<sup>29</sup> While there are significant differences between Hegelian and Lacanian theories of subjectivity, my use of the Hegelian model is modified by the mediating effects of ground: character can never achieve full reconciliation with its “outside.” This is the main point on which Lacan differs from Hegel—thus in the immediate context of this thesis the two models are compatible. See [Bowie, 1991], pp. 96-98, or many of Žižek’s writings, for an extended discussion.

dimensionality of the picture plane. Snow proposes to reverse this process and grasp the unrepresentable Real which exceeds the abstraction inherent in painterly representation. The artist's solution is to heighten the contradiction between framing and framed so that each functions as "stain" to its other; this stain in turn manifests the Real, which cannot be represented directly.

Snow's sculpture *Press* (1969) is a straightforward example of this strategy.<sup>30</sup> It consists of a four-by-four grid arrangement of photographs, which depict everyday objects (pasta, cigarettes, a glove, etc.) squished between two clamped-together panes of Plexiglas. The photographs themselves are clamped down between two real panes of Plexiglas. Therefore, ground (framing) is the flatness of the picture plane, created literally by the clamps, and is further emphasized by the rectilinear grid format; material (framed) is the objects in their three-dimensional everyday reality.

Contradiction, emanating from ground's attempt to flatten the objects and draw them into an order of abstract equivalence, is rendered as palpably physical anamorphic syntax between two competing spatial perspectives. When the viewer's gaze focuses on the photographed objects, they are denatured by the Plexiglas's deforming pressure. Conversely, when the viewer's attention shifts to the framing mechanism, this is "stained" by the presence of the clamps, which imply the force required to flatten the objects as well as the precariousness of the framing arrangement: there is a concrete implication that the clamps could break, freeing the objects to expand towards the viewer.

*Press*'s contradiction is concrete not only in its sheer physicality but also in its integral embodiment within the work, rather than being an "abnormal" form applied externally to "normal" content, as is arguably the case with Duchamp's readymades. In *Press*, materials are capable of clearly registering, both inwardly and outwardly, the stain of the clamp's pressure: they maintain a recognizable identity when deformed by the clamp, and yet the clamp's flattening makes them fundamentally different from what they are in everyday use, and additionally, the objects' familiar everyday-ness calls attention to this transformation. Moreover, each of the photographed objects registers clamp's effects differently; thus, contradiction is a precise syntax of actions and reactions, rather than being merely generalized conflict. Finally, the collection of photographed objects embodies a syntax of contradictions

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<sup>30</sup> Reproductions of this and other works by Snow can be found in [Dompierre et al., 1994].



(deep/flat, natural/artificial, living/dead, seeing/seen, etc.) which could be read as internalizing the contradiction between the three-dimensional materiality of the objects and the two-dimensional flatness of the clamps and grid.

### **B. Mathias Spahlinger, *128 erfüllte augenblicke***

Mathias Spahlinger's music uniquely engages with the possibility of contradictory foreground and background. Early works such as *vier stücke*, *störung*, and particularly *sotto voce* could be connected to the legacy of Duchamp in their use of readymade and/or "unmusical" sonic materials, which are contextualized so as to externalize otherwise hidden aspects of their identities.

Parataxis is a prevalent contextualization strategy in Spahlinger's work. If hypotactic syntax prioritizes linear, hierarchical connections between objects over objects themselves, paratactic syntax emphasizes the opposite configuration.<sup>31</sup> Much of Spahlinger's work explores the contradiction resulting from the placement of the materials (gestures, textures, rhetorical ploys, topics, and occasionally actual quotations) of tonal music, which ordinarily presuppose a hypotactic background "support structure," within paratactic form.

In *128 erfüllte augenblicke* (128 fulfilled instants) (1976), the composer stakes out a bold approach to this contradiction. The piece consists of 128 autonomous "instants," any of which can be performed, in any order, any number of times, with indeterminate pauses in between.<sup>32</sup> These instants are related to each other in placement within a multi-dimensional parametric matrix. As Philipp Blume explains:

Each *Augenblick* is labeled with a three-digit code and an inequality symbol. The code, using only the digits 1 through 4, indicates the *Augenblick's* position in a three-dimensional parametric matrix...The symbol is always either a greater-than sign (>) or a less-than sign (<), but beyond indicating an increase or a decrease in one unspecified parametric dimension, it is unclear how these inequality symbols affected the compositional decisions.<sup>33</sup>

This matrix defines fewer to more pitches (".1nn" to ".4nn," respectively), longer to shorter durations (".n1n" to ".n4n"), and definite pitches to noise (".nn1" to ".nn4").<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Hypotaxis corresponds approximately to diachronic ground, parataxis to synchronic ground.

<sup>32</sup> The last constraint is not indicated in the score, but is mentioned in [Blume, 2008] and seems to be observed in the commercially-available recordings of the piece, [Spahlinger, 1993] and [Spahlinger, 1998]. Blume's article offers an analysis and contextualization of the work's ontological status in light of its indeterminacy.

<sup>33</sup> [Blume, 2008], pp. 625-626.

<sup>34</sup> [Spahlinger, 1989], p. n.p.

Ground is therefore the cyclic alternation between instant and pause; it is fundamentally paratactic and hence synchronic, creating separation between instants. Foreground material embodies each matrix position and inequality symbol; significantly, it articulates the hypotactic tendency dictated by the latter.

Contradiction emerges from the collision between the hypotaxis internal to the instants and the parataxis created by the interstitial silences and by the frequent, obsessive insistence upon middle C. This collision is tangibly concrete: the silences marking the instants' boundaries commence at the precise point when hypotactic middleground motion becomes an entity in its own right, in other words, the point at which foreground material oversteps the bounds imposed by the spatiality of the matrix-scheme.<sup>35</sup> In fact, the silences' beginnings are the point of anamorphosis, where ground actively cuts off the hypotactic "stain."

As in Michael Snow's *Press*, wherein the squished objects internalize the violence of the framing mechanism, each of Spahlinger's instants bears concrete wounds of its contradiction with ground. On a middleground level, instants' principal tendencies are set in relief against counter-tendencies (for instance ".111>," with an overall diminuendo shape, begins with and reiterates a crescendo) and the inert presence of middle C (for instance in all 32 of the ".1nn" instants and in many others). The wounds extend even to the foreground level, where the anamorphic "initiation—motion—cut-off" syntax described above is miniaturized in the frequent gesture of a single note—surrounded by silence—shaped by violent shifts in both dynamic and bow/voice pressure (indicated by the same notational symbol).

Spahlinger's instants are comparable to phrases in my work (discussed in detail below) in their function as pivot between contradictory foreground and background. His work, like mine, foregrounds the strain which emanates from contradiction, particularly as it emerges at anamorphic discontinuities, such as the boundaries between instants and silence in the *erfüllte augenblicke* and the boundaries between phrases in my recent works.

However, my approach to ground differs from Spahlinger's, and this has significant implications for the resulting syntax of foreground and background. Spahlinger's ground clearly lacks a diachronic component, whereas in my work, even

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<sup>35</sup> The composer's preliminary remark to the score echoes this: "four 'instants' are...derivatives from a whole which is only formal and exterior, but which nonetheless completely determines them...the musical development of this three-dimensional form cannot be depicted." [Spahlinger, 1989], p. n.p. (The composer, in keeping with his paratactic aesthetic, does not use capital letters).

when the synchronic axis of ground is prioritized, the secondary diachronic axis is still functionally significant, as in *futures unmade*, *clinamen*, and *mesh*. In this way, ground's identity is clear, enabling a richer, more multileveled anamorphic syntax between character and ground, whereas in Spahlinger's work, ground is too amorphous to be able to take on a nuanced syntactic identity. That is to say, this is not a proposal to return to the reified teleologies which Spahlinger criticizes (such as those of Wagner), but rather, to define background so that it may enter into more multifaceted relationships of contradiction and mediation.

### 3. Practice

*Spaltung* is a 20-second-long solo violin piece which exemplifies anamorphic character-ground syntax as an integral organizational principle. Figure 4 reproduces the piece in its entirety. The piece's two phrases enact parallel three-part anamorphic progressions: in their first and third bars, ground predominates, whereas in their second bars, character does. In phrase one, this distinction is primarily defined by pitch contour and secondarily by relative rhythmic activity.<sup>36</sup> Ground is diachronic; its primacy is defined as presence of the middleground pitch ascent in large ascending pitch intervals and short time intervals. Together these properties create pure, irreversible motion, which can be further foreground by the suppression of contradictory detail. In active contradiction, character's primacy is defined as the unfolding and growth of its morphological potential, particularly of its spiral-shaped, downward-tending pitch series.

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<sup>36</sup> Dynamics function primarily as a "neutral third-party arbiter" of weight/hierarchy between character and ground (as does the placement of gestures on or off of strong metric positions) and secondarily as reinforcement of phrase-level ground-tendency; as will be discussed below, accents clarify hierarchies between foreground and middleground, and bow-position/vertical bow motion passively articulates ground until phrase two, when its functional identity is actualized.

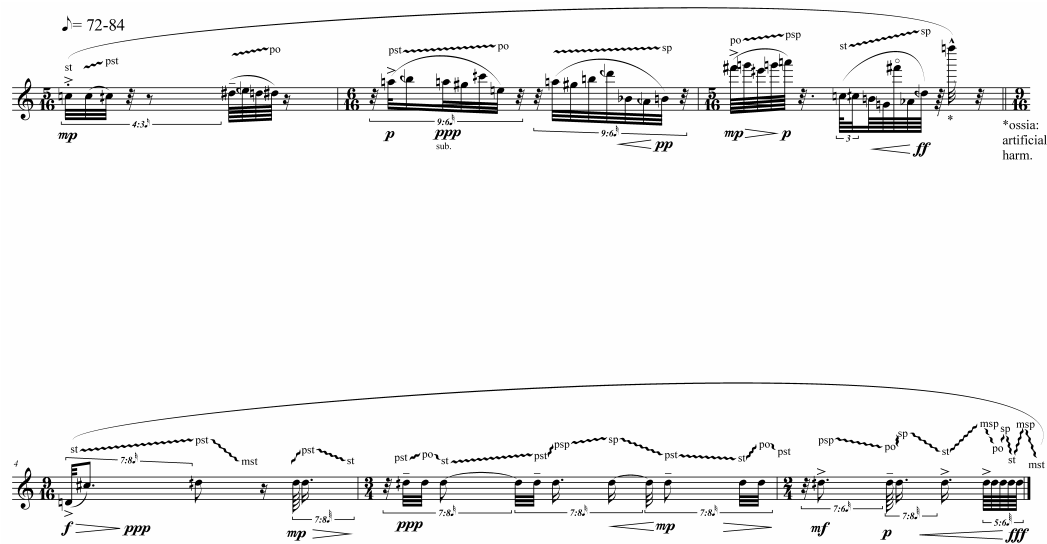


Figure 4: *spaltung*, complete

In greater detail, ground's predominance is the prevalence of ascending tendencies within gestures and bars, larger intervals of middleground pitch change in the *cantus firmus* relative to the registral compasses of individual gestures, shorter sub-bar/gesture lengths, filled with fewer, more regular impulses, and with longer silences following a sub-bar.<sup>37</sup> Character's primacy is defined in the opposite direction; however, in some cases, such as sub-bar length and middleground *cantus firmus* ascent, rather than reversing direction, the given position is simply held, in order to allow clearer articulation of phrase-level tendencies.

From here, a temporal anamorphic syntax was created from the atemporal possibility-spaces described above. Each bar is structured by a progression: its particular character-ground hierarchy is strongest at its beginning; the stain then destabilizes the hierarchy, overthrowing it at the beginning of the following bar. In other words, a bar's initial gesture is a syntactic "tonic," presenting the given bar's character-ground hierarchy in stark form, with minimal interference from the stain. Subsequent gestures "zoom in" on the stain, whose presence intensifies over the remainder of the bar.

<sup>37</sup> Rhythmic procedures were as follows: the number of impulses per sub-bar are constant throughout a phrase (eight in phrase one, becoming nine in bar two given the initial displacement rest), and therefore ratio-speeds directly reflect sub-bar lengths.

The number of impulses per gesture is thus inversely related to lengths of silences. Moreover, in many of my works, the relative proportions, within a gesture, of activity to pause (the latter can be either silent or sustained) is an important tool in defining character-ground hierarchy: gestural activity is "character," while the pause functions as the "stain" of ground.

In this way, bar two of *spaltung* progresses from character's domination of ground to the inverse relationship. Throughout the bar, character's primacy is established by the unfolding of the pitch series into progressively larger, descending intervals, by minimal silence between gestures, and by the cessation of both the middleground *cantus firmus* ascent and the sub-bar length decrease. The stain then consists of the pitch ascents within gestures, the slight tendency towards rhythmic regularity, and the bar's relatively low dynamic level.

Bar two's first gesture establishes the priority of character. It defuses bar one's ascending tendency by materializing it and hence assimilating it into character's morphological field: the ascent is first arrested on the longer B-quarter-flat semiquaver, and then contained within a larger descent as the high C-quarter-sharp leads to the final E-natural. However, the gesture's dynamic contour manifests the stain, subtly suggesting an opposite hierarchy between character and ground, as the ascending first part of the gesture is louder and hence accorded more weight than the descending second part.

In this bar's second gesture, character attempts to consolidate its primacy, in collision with the intensifying stain. The overall internal contour (down-up-down, with each interval larger than the last) of the second part of bar two's first gesture (i.e. the portion where character is most dominant) is enacted with wider intervals, suggesting a descending tendency *between* the gesture's two parts. That is to say, character is beginning to establish itself on a middleground level, displacing ground's ordinarily-expected presence there.

However, the stain's counter-efforts exceed even this, clearing the way for the reassertion of ground on the downbeat of bar three. For instance, character is only able to create its middleground descent by ceding to ground's stain, integrating two consecutive ascending intervals (G-sharp to B-natural to D-quarter-flat (the last pitch, significantly, is higher than the previous gesture's top C-quarter-flat)) into the first gesture's overall descent. The ascending tendency increases its burgeoning precedence in the second part of the gesture, which ends with an ascending interval. This severely denatures the gesture's middleground descent: the "territory" of character's primacy in bar two's first gesture—the final interval—is now "taken over" by ground.

This dramaturgy culminates in the abrupt yet inevitable leap in register and dynamics to bar three's downbeat: this is the point of anamorphosis, the threshold at

which the stain becomes an entity unto itself. The anamorphic “cut” has a clear tactile identity, even on different structural levels and in quite different material circumstances: there is a sensation of torque, of twisting, and even of erasure of the previous unit’s volition. At the cut, latent, “vertical” contradiction between primary term and stain is rendered into concrete, horizontal discontinuity.

In most of my works, anamorphosis occurs on two or more levels;<sup>38</sup> in *spaltung*, relationships between successive phrases are structured similarly to those between successive bars. However, on this level, hierarchies are defined not in terms of character versus ground—as ground is inherently primary on this level—but in terms of relative weights assigned to the component parameters of ground’s phrase-level tendencies.<sup>39</sup>

The multiple levels of anamorphic syntax fluidly interact. In this instance, ground’s attempt to consolidate its primacy in bar three was barely successful: it is overwhelmed by character’s stain, for example, in the bar’s obstinate, empty final gesture consisting of a single note. The phrase-level anamorphosis occurs in response: ground inverts its hierarchy, “demoting” the role of pitch so as to immobilize character’s uncontainable tendencies.

The two phrases of *spaltung* (“splitting” in German) are the minimum complete structural unit of character-ground anamorphosis. Ground’s identity emerges at the anamorphic cut, or “split,” between the piece’s two phrases; in its “last-ditch” move to avoid being submerged in character’s proliferation, ground reveals the limits—and hence the “truth”—of its behavioral space.

If *spaltung* defines the minimum horizontal space necessary for anamorphic syntax between character and ground in its disjunctly-related pair of phrases, the text scores of the *maps of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness* series delineate the minimum vertical space necessary for it in their relative “flatness:” the four or more hierarchical levels of structure of my conventionally-notated works have been distilled into the text scores’ two (or more) hierarchical levels, which enter into

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<sup>38</sup> In fact, I consider *time corners* an unsuccessful piece because it lacks a clear, multileveled anamorphic syntax. The anamorphic disjunction between its sub-metrical units is not sufficiently supported by a similar, higher-level syntax; I have sought, in subsequent works, to develop a higher-level “support system” for lower-level anamorphic discontinuity.

<sup>39</sup> *The indifferent horizon* enacts similar anamorphic inversions on even larger scales, between its two cyclically-alternating character-types and between its three sections (the latter are defined in terms of hierarchies between the character and ground).

similar syntactic relationships. In the text scores, ground is a highly resistant frame (synchronic in *clinamen*, *snarls and tangles*, *veil*, and *mesh* yet diachronic in *drift* and *simulacrum*), while character, barely independent from ground, is effectively the dematerialized detritus of the more morphologically-elaborate characters of my conventionally-notated work.<sup>40</sup>

In *clinamen*, character's potential identity is "melodic agency:" large melodic intervals occurring at short time intervals; character's richness in this work lies not in the complexity of its potential identity but in the numerous ways that that identity is displaced by the stain of ground. Within a realization of the piece, the unfolding of character is constrained by a cue-based network of voice-leading behaviors. As the score reads:

Agree upon a common pitch in a common octave. All players begin playing this pitch, entering within the first 30 seconds and sustaining that same pitch until one minute into the piece, after which any player can change pitch in the following two ways:

- 1) If a player notices that s/he is playing the "same" pitch (microtonally) as another player, s/he should change pitch towards the nearest "different" pitch.
- 2) A player may also move by an interval significantly larger than the former infinitesimally small interval (but no larger than a whole step). However, each player may do so only one time throughout the whole piece (two times if the piece's duration exceeds one hour).

Once three or more pitches are sounding, a third pitch motion becomes possible:

- 3) If a player is stuck on an "outer voice" pitch (i.e. the lowest or highest at a given moment), then s/he can move so as to become an "inner voice."

Ground in *clinamen* is synchronic: its essence is weighty inertia. This is articulated by long time intervals (at least 15 seconds) between pitch changes<sup>41</sup> and the relatively low structural impact of pitch changes,<sup>42</sup> both of which compromise character's diachronic volition.

Anamorphic syntax between character and ground—effectively diachronic and synchronic modes of listening, respectively—occurs on two levels. First, each pitch

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<sup>40</sup> This approach to character, wherein its surface manifestation is a drastic abstraction from its latent identity, stems from my engagement with sculptor-critic Robert Smithson's problematic of "signification as entropy," and in fact the work-series's title is adapted from Smithson's essay "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey:" "The last monument was a sand box or a model desert. Under the dead light of the Passaic afternoon the desert became a map of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness. This monument of minute particles blazed under a bleakly glowing sun, and suggested the sullen dissolution of entire continents, the drying up of oceans...every grain of sand was a dead metaphor...this sandbox somehow doubled as an open grave..." [Smithson, 1996, p. 74]. Significantly, this "deterritorialized" approach to character has become increasingly important in conventionally-notated works written since mid-2010. Examples include the "scalar" character in *the indifferent horizon* and the "silent/inert" character in *futures unmade*.

<sup>41</sup> The overtones, resonant frequencies, beatings, and thick sonorities resulting from voice-leading behaviors reinforce this synchronic mode of listening.

<sup>42</sup> The voice-leading restrictions mandate that only one player change pitch at once, while at least two players sustain their pitches; as a result, only one (or none) of the structurally significant "outer voices" may change at a time.

change is, perceptually, a two-part anamorphic oscillation. At the moment of melodic motion, character is primary but is “stained” by the preponderance of invariant tones. Ground becomes primary during the sustain, but its immobility is denatured by the possibility of change, which becomes increasingly likely as the sustain continues.<sup>43</sup>

Second, the two-part oscillations as wholes embody anamorphic hierarchies: the relative impetus of a pitch change projects a character-ground hierarchy throughout each oscillation’s duration. For instance, a large melodic interval followed by a short sustain makes character primary by generating high relative melodic volition. Successive pitch change-sustain cycles tend to occur at different points within this unstable, multidimensional space between “pure character” and “pure ground,”<sup>44</sup> and the resulting shift—reinforced by harmonic, timbral, and psychoacoustic dislocations at the moment of pitch change—is thus an anamorphic cut.<sup>45</sup> The cut’s qualities of torque stem from the fact that most of the material circumstances remain the same—all but one of the pitches—and yet their syntactic function and experiential import change significantly.

*Clinamen*, as with other works in the *maps of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness* series, prioritizes anamorphic disjunction over complex character elaboration, in contrast to earlier works such as *shards*, which emphasize the opposite. In the former pieces, the differentiation of foreground material is reduced and focused in order to sensitize the listener to sonic nuance. As a result, the anamorphic shifts, while less disjunct in “absolute” intervallic terms than those of the latter works, are more experientially unsettling. However, recent works have internalized this difference as their central contradiction, as *the indifferent horizon* does in the opposition between its scalar and gestural characters.

To summarize, contradiction is the integral syntactic principle of my work, diachronically as its motor of change and synchronically as the generator of its possibility-space. Although the dynamic hierarchies of contradiction are analogous to

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<sup>43</sup> As a performance unfolds, listeners come to expect quasi-regular pitch changes within a finite durational range; this range is precisely determined by the duration of the specific performance.

<sup>44</sup> While it is possible, albeit unlikely, that two or more successive pitch change-sustain cycles could occur in similar spatial positions, this would itself be disruptive in its exceptionality.

<sup>45</sup> These pitch changes are particularly unsettling in live performance. The sensation is that the sounding space changes scale and shape, and that the memory of the previous space cannot be mapped onto the experience of the present space, much like the relationship between successive phrases in *spaltung* or the relationship between two *physical* spaces in Holbein’s *Ambassadors*.



those of tonal harmony, the former are fundamentally more disruptive. While tonal modulation presents an unchanging semantic hierarchy in diverse guises, the anamorphic discontinuities of my work problematize semantic hierarchies themselves. The contradiction between character and ground is in fact a collision between modes of listening: between subjective and objective, diachronic and synchronic, local and global, embodied and disembodied, and gestural and inert. Each pole denatures the other, and this brings about the “opening of the abyss” which Žižek describes above: here, depth is revealed to be nonidentical with and ungraspable through surface; listening breaks free of habit and becomes able to produce, rather than reproduce, meaning.

## II. Techniques

### A. Structure

In my music, up to five distinct hierarchical levels issue out of the surface level: gesture, meter, phrase, phrase-group, rotation, and section (Figure 5).<sup>46</sup> These levels fluidly interact, rather than higher levels being mere “containers” into which lower levels are indifferently “poured,” as is the case with John Cage’s concept of “structure.” Each level has a unique qualitative, behavioral identity: its pitch and rhythmic behaviors are aligned through considerations of stability and instability (i.e. the relative presence of lower and higher levels, respectively).

Individual levels’ identities are further distinguished by their different roles in defining character and/or ground. On the bar and phrase level—where character predominates—each middleground rhythmic unit is aligned to a central *cantus firmus* pitch, which provides a reference point throughout its duration and establishes its boundaries. Above the phrase level—where ground predominates—units are differentiated by character-disposition and character-ground hierarchy, which govern parametric ranges and tendencies.

<i>Level</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Boundary-defining parameters</i>
gesture/sub-bar	unified, directed shape	central pitch, tendency, rest/longer duration
Bar	unified, directed complex of gestures	central pitch, tendency, density
phrase /hyper-bar	main level on which linear tendency occurs; pivot between character and ground	central pitch, range, tendency
phrase-group	group of phrases all in single character-type	
Section	group of phrase-groups with same character-ground hierarchy	

Figure 5: Hierarchical Levels of Structure

### B. Parameter

The materials of my compositions are selected and crafted in order that character and ground are able to enter into a dynamic, multileveled syntax of

<sup>46</sup> This framework is distilled and “flattened” in the works of the *maps of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness* series, where the contradiction between character and ground is implemented on fewer hierarchical levels.

contradiction. The hierarchical stratification of structure necessary for the distinction between character and ground, detailed in Figure 5, can only be accomplished by a nuanced approach to pitch, in alignment with rhythmic/metric strata. Pitch is the parameter capable of most differentiation between discrete positions and intervals; in this way pitch is able to create stable middle- and background reference points which, if articulated clearly, can be tracked through a plethora of competing foreground detail. As such, character-ground interaction can take the form of complex frame-detail syntax; the above analysis of *spaltung* discusses such possibilities. Similar but less complex relationships are possible in the domains of rhythm and meter, as perception of duration and density is relative and localized compared to that of pitch.

In addition to such vertical differentiation, similarly precise horizontal differentiations are necessary to create compelling characters. At each presentation, a character must be subject and not object: its—possibly few—notes must embody its multifaceted inner potential, if only by implication; in subsequent presentations it must move towards concretizing that potential. The creation of multileveled, hierarchical, directed pitch syntax is crucial in foregrounding character's volition: pitch material may grow and decay drastically, but always within an overarching search for stable character identity.

Figure 6 and Figure 7 show three stages of such a transformation across the first phrase of *spaltung*. The first gesture of bar one presents a bare interval, with a destabilizing tendency implied by the C-quarter-sharp's shorter duration; the following gesture unfolds the destabilizing tendency into the beginnings of a spiral shape, which it then cancels by returning to the D-sharp. In the gesture from bar 3, these potentials develop into a more properly characterized shape which refers back to its origins—particularly in the form of the C, C-quarter-sharp, B at the gesture's beginning, which synthesizes the first three intervals of the second gesture of bar 1 with the transposition-level of that same bar's first gesture—while intensifying both earlier gestures' potential towards intervallic divergence.

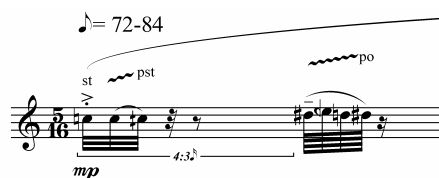


Figure 6: from *spaltung*, bar 1



Figure 7: from *spaltung*, bar 3

Rhythmic organization supports pitch's definition and differentiation of character and ground. As with pitch, I seek to create a multileveled, "living" rhythmic fabric, and in fact each note in my music is created by the behavioral trajectories of at least four independent, colliding processual levels: gestural/submetric structure (itself often regulated by a constellation of processes), density, meter, and hypermeter. Internal gestural structure is the chief rhythmic constituent of character, while external gestural structure (particularly gesture-length), bar-length, and density function primarily as articulators of phrase structure, the "mediator" between character and ground.<sup>47</sup>

In *futures unmade*, character is primary over ground in the piece's middle section and a secondary "stain" in its outer sections (the piece's three sections consist of bars 1-7, 8-34, and 35-54). While in the piece's first section the short, rhythmically regular gestures establish little characterized volition, in the second section gestures become longer and internally-differentiated,<sup>48</sup> thus enabling the formation of viable "subjective" identity. However, the rests and sustained notes—which in section two supported character's development as harmless pauses—erode character's volition with their increased durations in the piece's final section.

Density and bar-length enrich this anamorphic character-ground syntax; their values are diagrammed in Figure 8. Both parameters are important in shaping phrase structure, the unstable "no-person's land" between character and ground; their movement towards character or ground can be decisive in defining anamorphic

<sup>47</sup> In my works, rhythmic organization is focused upon the phrase level to an even greater extent than pitch, as durational/rhythmic perception tends to be most differentiated on foreground/middleground levels.

<sup>48</sup> However, it should be noted that in this context pitch—which is now allowed to develop more elaborate intra-gestural shapes (as more notes are available) and more differentiation between pitches' relative weights (through durational variety)—is arguably the more important "carrier" of character.

hierarchies. For instance, bar-length—at which density<sup>49</sup> and pitch *cantus firmus* change—articulates the piece’s overall ground-character-ground sectional form by aligning its behavior with each section’s primary term. In section one, bars are short (thus preventing intra-gestural elaboration) and the disposition of bar-lengths does not create a strong shape or tendency; in section three, all phrases tend rigidly towards short bar-lengths. In contrast, section two’s bar-lengths convey strong shapes and tendencies, enabling the agency of foreground character.

Density follows a similar global trajectory while on lower levels projecting an autonomous logic. The unfolding of phrase-level spiral density shapes across section two, together with increasing “structural” density values (in bold in the diagram) and the expansion of phrase length/hypermeter, increases overall densities and sharpens density-shapes, in turn heightening character’s primacy. However as the spiral shape further expands its intervallic widths, particularly in section three, its slowing lower values erode character’s momentum: the drastic bar-to-bar shifts in density resulting from these wide intervals cancel rather than support character’s momentum.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> In most of my work, densities change at least once per bar. Density changes, together with distinctions in metric positioning (on/off strong beats), create pressurized, “subjective” foreground gestures in a way that would not be possible with a more regular approach to rhythm. Additionally, the collision between gesture and the former two factors can effectively “imprint” the stain of ground upon character, as was discussed in connection with *spaltung*.

<sup>50</sup> The densities listed in the table do not correspond exactly to the score, as a number of secondary operations have been applied to the former values; however, the large-scale behavioral trajectories described here are insignificantly effaced by the secondary operations.

section	I			II									III								
phrase begins in bar:	1	3	6	8	10	14	15	17	21	26	28	29	31	35	36	38	39	45	46	54	
bar-lengths (quavers; semi-quavers in section I)	Y 3 W 2	X 2 X 4 W 3	X 4 W 3 X	2 4	3 2 4 6	X	4 6	4 6 2 9	2 9 4 2 6	2 6	X	2 9	2 3 2 6	Y	6 3	Y	9 3 2 6 3 1	Z	6 9 3 2 6 3 1 2	Z	
density (pulses added to the number of semi-quavers (demi-semi-quavers in section I) in each bar)	--- <b>+3</b> --- +4	--- <b>+3</b> --- +5 +7	--- <b>+3</b> --- +7 ---	<b>+1</b> +0	<b>+2</b> +3 +1 +6	---	<b>+3</b> +4	<b>+4</b> +3 +5 +2	<b>+2</b> +3 +1 +4 +0	<b>+5</b> +6	---	<b>+1</b> -1	<b>+3</b> +1 +5 -1	---	<b>+5</b> +8	---	<b>+6</b> +9 +3 +12 +0 +10	---	<b>0</b> +3 -3 +6 -6 +9 -1 +12	---	
middle-ground phrase tendency	O	o	o	+	+		+	+	+	+		+	+		o		o		o		
fore-ground phrase tendency	O	o	o	+	o		o	+	+	o		+	+		o		o		o		

Explanation:

-Each column represents a phrase, corresponding to a single line in the score

-o=destabilizing; +=stabilizing

-“W,” “X,” “Y,” and “Z” are “structural fermatas” of increasing lengths, respectively;  
in section I, the bars notated in the score combine the lengths of adjacent fermatas with those of “actual” bars

**Figure 8: *futures unmade*, middleground rhythmic structure and phrasing**

While bar-lengths and densities reinforce each other globally, their behaviors on the phrase level relate in a more antagonistic fashion. While bar-lengths, in alignment with a pitch *cantus firmus*, articulate each phrase’s middleground stabilization/destabilization, densities, in alignment with foreground intervallic dispersion, articulate foreground stabilization/destabilization; this collision is shown in the lower two rows of Figure 8. These two levels’ behaviors were arranged to project and enrich global anamorphic syntax: ground is synchronic and inert, and hence aligned with a stabilizing function, whereas character is destabilizing and

gestural, and therefore destabilizing. Across the whole piece, middleground phrase-tendency reinforces each section's anamorphic "stain:" for instance in section two, middleground phrasing's ubiquitous stabilizing tendency subtly effaces character's primacy; foreground phrase tendency mediates between these competing claims, shifting between them yet "favoring" the primary term (character) at the section's beginning and the stain (ground) at towards its end.

### **C. Behavior**

Behaviors are qualitative identities, as distinct from the quantitative identities of serial procedure. The three main concepts of this essay—character, ground, and contradiction—are themselves behaviors; other important examples include hierarchy, tendency, and stability.

The category of stability, usually implemented as a tendency (stabilizing or destabilizing), is used widely in my compositions. It can govern any parameter or combination thereof, on any foreground or background level.

In terms of pitch, stability/instability could be defined as the size of linear intervals or overall registral compass (small/large, respectively) or degree of presence of center tones versus other tones (dominant/equal); in rhythm stability/instability could be defined as density (low/high), duration (long/short), or, more abstractly, the degree of presence (low/high) of a central density/duration level.

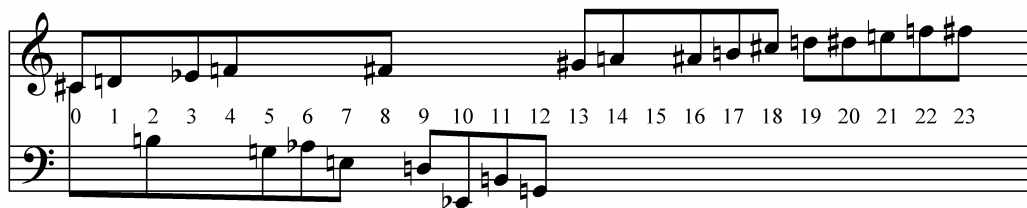
These tendencies often dictate the reading of pitch and rhythmic series: in other words, a qualitative constraint is coupled with a quantitative constraint. For instance, a destabilizing unit must select a serial subsegment whose pitch content has overall increasing intervals and/or decreasing repetition. Generally, these tendencies are enacted in multiple parameters simultaneously for purposes of clarity and weight, which becomes ever-more necessary on higher levels of structure.

### **D. Shape**

Having defined some of the processes through which character and ground are defined, separated, and collided, I will now discuss the shapes which render these processes audible. Works composed since 2009 have generated pitch, rhythm, and

meter by “sampling” subsegments of a single long series—generally more than 15 terms—to generate foreground, middleground, and background.<sup>51</sup>

A work’s series is a microcosm of its greater identity: character, ground, and their contradiction are embodied in and derived from it. Figure 9 shows the pitch series of *the indifferent horizon*. The scalar character’s materials are all drawn from the upper staff, while the gestural character’s materials derive from reading both staves at once; this difference in fact emanates from the more fundamental contradiction between the ground’s blind ascent and the characters’ increasingly insistent attempts to defuse and redirect it. As in most of my works, the overall spiral shape internalizes processes of destabilization (when in prime form) and stabilization (retrograde), which are used on numerous structural levels. In short, the series is a reservoir of volition; each of its subsegments relates to that volition, refining, enriching, and deflecting it.



**Figure 9: pitch series, *the indifferent horizon*, labeled with order numbers**

In being “sampled” to generate foreground, middleground, or background, series are transformed in numerous ways. The selection of subsegments is the chief and most far-reaching mode of transformation; the whole series never appears at once as this would be too structurally stabilizing. The length and location (the latter in terms of order numbers) of the subsegments are the dual parameters guiding the selection process. Both levels of decisions are guided by considerations of harmonic stability and instability, and the former is also guided by considerations of motivic growth and decay (usually related to issues of character presence and depth).

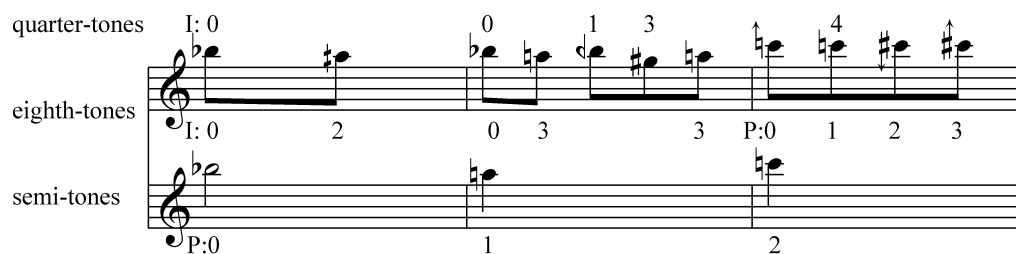
<sup>51</sup> This technique is adapted from the work of Frank Cox; it is discussed in detail in [Cox, 2008a]. However, in my work it functions differently. While in his work the central series functions as a stabilizing anchor for an organic syntax, in my work the central series serves as a fulcrum for a destabilizing anamorphic syntax. More concretely, in my work the “radius” of derivation from the central series is greater. For instance, the generation of *the indifferent horizon*’s scalar material from only the “upper voice” of the central series—with startlingly disjunct perceptual implications on numerous structural levels—would be unthinkable within Cox’s “organic” aesthetic.



The transposition of a given level's subsegments is delimited by central tones on the next highest level, to which any one of the subsegment's tones must be transposed. Additionally, subsegments may draw upon the series's inversion, which alters directional hierarchies, or upon retrograde or retrograde inversion forms, which reverse tendencies of stabilization or destabilization. All of these processes can potentially be used on all structural levels, but are adapted to the specific functional identity of a particular level. In general, higher-level processes tend to emphasize clearer, blunter differentiations.

The second phrase of *futures unmade*, whose pitch content is shown in Figure 10, exemplifies these techniques. The destabilizing middleground is created by bar-level structural pitches progressing through order numbers 0, 1, and 2 of the work's series, which is itself shown in Figure 11. The collision between quantitative (series) and qualitative (destabilizing) constraints is typical of most procedural levels of my work; in this instance, my self-designed rules stipulated that 1) bar-level structural pitches draw upon the semitone prime form of the series between order numbers 0 and 3 and 2) the resulting shape articulates a tendency from stability to instability with respect to the phrase's central pitch (in this case the initial B-flat).<sup>52</sup>

The middleground destabilization is quite simple compared to the foreground's parallel articulation of the same process. In this phrase, quarter- and eighth-tone series are employed simultaneously and are transposed to phrase- and bar-level centers, respectively. The phrase's destabilization is created procedurally in two ways: through a shift from eighth-tone subsegments to wider quarter-tone subsegments and, within the eighth-tone subsegments, through an increase in the length of subsegments.



**Figure 10:** *futures unmade*, bars 3-5, pitches and serial derivations. The upper staff displays foreground pitches, while the lower staff shows each bar's central pitch.

<sup>52</sup> The phrase's length, and hence the length of the possible pitch segment, was decided by similar processes on the next higher level.



**Figure 11: *futures unmade*, pitch series, in prime form, semitones**

Rhythmic series are used in analogous ways, but with simpler transformational vocabularies than those of pitch. Chief rhythmic transformations in my works include inversion, retrograde, and subsegment length/location. Figure 12 gives the rhythmic/metric series of *futures unmade*. Like the pitch series, its overall destabilization-restabilization shape mirrors the work's ground-character-ground sectional form; linear serial read-through processes map each section to its analogous serial region.

The bar-lengths diagrammed in Figure 8 are in fact the result of the intersection between such a read-through process and the middleground tendency of a specific phrase. Destabilization mandates the selection of a subsegment with overall decreasing bar-lengths while stabilization mandates an overall increase. In this way bar-lengths are selected from the serial regions between order numbers 0-2 (section I), 0-12 (section II), and 9-15 (section III); the resulting behavior of bar-lengths in each section corresponds to its anamorphic hierarchy's primary term. Densities,<sup>53</sup> and gesture-lengths<sup>54</sup> are derived from similar read-through processes.

Order Number:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Value:	3	2	4	6	2	9	4	2	6	9	3	2	6	3	1	2

**Figure 12: *futures unmade* rhythmic/metric series**

<sup>53</sup> As the foreground manifestation of density is relatively weak, its series was simplified considerably, and, in conflict with bar- and gesture- lengths, did not include a final destabilization; this heightens rhythmic tension when the latter levels "restabilize" in the final section.

<sup>54</sup> This is defined in terms of the number of impulses (themselves the result of the combination of bar-length and density) between the beginnings of successive gestures.

## E. Phrase

As the phrase is the upper limit of character and the lower limit of ground, it has been prioritized in my recent music. In other words, phrasing is a hinge between character and ground and is the site of their contradiction.<sup>55</sup>

A phrase's internal shape is established through stabilization/destabilization tendencies which are usually enacted simultaneously on foreground and middleground levels (the latter as either sub-bar or bar). While foreground instability, as opposed to stability, is usually defined as the de-prioritization of the middleground *cantus firmus* tone, greater intervallic width or registral compass size, and greater rhythmic density and/or number of impulses per gesture, middleground instability is shorter bar (or sub-bar) lengths and greater intervallic dispersion of *cantus firmus* tones; frequently one or both of these tendencies are reinforced by additional linear tendencies in dynamics and/or registral direction.

The phrase-level's structural priority is established by the bold articulation of phrase-level tendencies, across large ranges. To ensure that each phrase can be grasped as a whole, in-time boundaries between successive phrases are delineated by abrupt anamorphic cuts.

The phrase's hinge function mediates between the contradictory volitions of character and ground.<sup>56</sup> The second of *the indifferent horizon*'s three sections (bars 13-61) is a clear example. Here, ground is a background pitch ascent, and it is mediated by two character-types, G (gestural) and S (scalar), discussed in more detail above. The section is divided into five phrase-groups (beginning in bars 13, 19, 26, 38, and 45), each of which begins with G and ends with S.

While in the piece's outer sections, ground is primary over character, in this section, character predominates. As in the second bar of *spaltung* but on a much more extended time scale, character attempts to solidify its predominance while ground

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<sup>55</sup> A key impetus for this strategy has been the "New Sentence" prose-poetry of Bob Perelman, Ron Silliman, and Barrett Watten. In these texts, each sentence "is more or less ordinary itself but gains its effect by being placed next to another sentence to which it has tangential relevance," ([Perelman, 1993], p. 313) and in this way the sentence is prioritized so as to function as pivot between local and global, between syntactic and semantic. See [Silliman, 1987], pp. 63-93 and [Perelman, 1993] for a theoretical discussion of the "New Sentence."

<sup>56</sup> In addition to its function in finished works, the phrase level has a critical function within the composing process. In works composed since *shards*, events occurring at and above the phrase level have been sketched prior to and independently of local-level detail, in order to heighten the collision between those character and ground (although there are still limited mechanisms through which the contingencies of the micro-level could "feed back" onto higher levels). This bears some similarity to Spahlinger's generation, in *128 erfüllte augenblicke*, of the overall behaviors of his instants prior to working out their details.

becomes an ever-more-resistant stain. The first phrase of the section's third phrase-group (Figure 13) provides a suitable cross-section of these colliding processes.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin (Vn.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. (Bb)), and Piano (Pf.). The score covers bars 26 to 29. Above the Vn. staff, there is a tempo marking '♩=76 becoming agitated'. The score is annotated with red and green boxes and lines. Red boxes highlight specific musical gestures: a box around a measure in bar 27 of the Vn. staff labeled 'ord. PO' and 'mp'; a box around a measure in bar 28 of the Vn. staff labeled 'PSP' and 'p'; a box around a measure in bar 29 of the Vn. staff labeled 'PST' and 'mf'; and a box around a measure in bar 26 of the Pf. staff labeled 'mp'. Green boxes highlight other musical gestures: a box around a measure in bar 26 of the Cl. (Bb) staff labeled 'p' and 'mp'; a box around a measure in bar 27 of the Cl. (Bb) staff labeled 'p'; a box around a measure in bar 28 of the Cl. (Bb) staff labeled 'p'; a box around a measure in bar 29 of the Cl. (Bb) staff labeled 'mf'; a box around a measure in bar 27 of the Pf. staff labeled 'pp' and 'p'; a box around a measure in bar 28 of the Pf. staff labeled 'p'; a box around a measure in bar 29 of the Pf. staff labeled 'mf'; and a box around a measure in bar 26 of the Pf. staff labeled 'mp'. The Pf. staff also has a 'marcato' marking in bar 27.

**Figure 13: *the indifferent horizon*, bars 26-29: a complete phrase; each gesture's function is indicated by coloring: red=stabilizing; green=destabilizing**

In this phrase, the gestural nature of G is manifested for the first time in the piece, while in reaction numerous stains efface this identity. Taking the phrase as a whole—as ground—the gesture character's presence is articulated principally by the alignment of foreground and middleground tendencies (both destabilizing towards greater gestural momentum), the relative length of the phrase (enabling greater accretion of momentum), and the instrumentation/articulation (the piano—inherently “rough” in its articulation, opposed to the “smooth” G—is the primary instrument and its especially “rough” left-hand *marcato* material appears here for the first time). The stain is present on this level through registral positioning (the phrase ascends from the previous (scalar) phrase's position and continues that ascent internally).

Micro-level detail then emerges in the intersection between character development and the middleground constraints outlined above. In this passage, such considerations pertained to the need to hint at G's frenetic final horizon (bars 49-50, reproduced in Figure 1) and yet to create such activity organically out of G's earlier, more “hesitant” statements. For example, the piano right-hand's abrupt starting and stopping—suggesting the not-quite-realized potential for gestural continuity—grew out of these concerns, as did the lower dynamic in the suddenly-dense piano right-hand in bar 29.

## Conclusion

The world is structured on its own displacement....There is a continual need for new forms through which this distance might be converted into a formulation of the immediate present. The present no longer appears likely in the form of an identification; rather, assertion marks the limits that identity can only fill in. For if the world were only what it is, there would be no place for us.<sup>57</sup>

-Barrett Watten

Over the course of my MPhil research, contradiction has become more antagonistic and palpable. The opposing poles of character and ground have refined their individual identities—character in its flexibility and ground in its redundancy—while developing increasingly concrete ways of interacting with their outside.

Compositional techniques have evolved correspondingly. While in works composed before 2010 materials were regarded as static objects and were organized from the outside, in more recent music materials are regarded as dynamic behaviors and are organized based on close attention to their inner volitions. The latter approach is not necessarily looser than the former; rather, its priorities are more closely aligned with my broader aesthetic aims. Additionally, the quantitative rigor of the former approach has not been abandoned; instead, it has been re-approached as an aspect of behavior, for instance, in the use of series as microcosms and reservoirs of character-identity.

For the listener, this heightened state of contradiction enables a dialectical relationship between sound and meaning. Within the fundamental syntactic building block of my music, the anamorphic hierarchy, the primary term's production of meaning is identical to the secondary term's (i.e., the stain's) problematization of that same meaning. This configuration sets up a listening dynamic wherein meaning may only come into existence when created actively, against momentous resistance.

Meaning cultivated in this dialectical fashion can access the Real, the ultimate term in Lacanian theory, which is defined as that which both constitutes and resists syntactic codification.<sup>58</sup> The Real cannot be known directly, but, as Žižek explains, it may be accessed dialectically, through a “metalanguage, which, by its patent absurdity, materializes its own impossibility: that is, a paradoxical element which, in

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<sup>57</sup> [Watten, 1997], p. 151.

<sup>58</sup> [Žižek, 1989], p. 161.

its very identity, embodies absolute otherness, the irreparable gap that makes it impossible to occupy a metalanguage position.”<sup>59</sup>

The nineteenth-century project of “material as subjectivity” was an imperfect attempt to create such a “metalanguage,” crippled by an insufficiently dialectical concept of subjectivity. My research has re-approached the quest for this metalanguage, reconstructing musical subjectivity through the lens of critical theory’s and post-WWII new music’s productivist, dialectical orientation. In fostering dialectical interaction between “subjective” material and its outer limit, ground, my works stretch musical language to the thresholds of “impossibility” and “otherness” which Žižek describes. In this music, meaning is an unending process: it is no longer a reproduction of that which *is*, but becomes a production of that which *is not*.

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<sup>59</sup> [Žižek, 1989], p. 156.

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# time corners

for bass clarinet, trumpet, and trombone

© colin tucker (BMI)  
2009

**time corners** for bass clarinet, trumpet, and trombone, was written in 2009 for ELISION.

The score is transposed: bass clarinet is written a major ninth above sounding pitch.

Duration: 4.5 Minutes

### **Performance Notes**

Arrows affixed to accidentals indicate inflections of up to one eighth-tone in the specified direction:

Accidentals carry to immediately repeated notes.

Vibrato should be avoided except where expressly indicated.

Tremoli, smorzati, and glissandi (and series thereof) should be slurred unless marked otherwise.

### **Bass Clarinet**

The piece uses a four-and-a-half octave range, starting at (written) low C.


Slap tongue: 

### **Trumpet (in C)**

The piece must be performed on a C Trumpet, for whose physical mechanism the pitch material is expressly constructed.

No mutes are required.

Breathy sound/split tones: unstable with little pitch content: 

Normal sound (cancels the former): 

Valve trills are notated as trills; lip trills as tremoli.


‘Rips’ are notated as follows; the embouchure should slide across partials in the specified direction while the valves are depressed, rapidly and irregularly, one at a time.



Some of the piece is notated in a prescriptive tablature notation (cf. the first half of m. 5). The main staff specifies partial numbers in steps between the bottom line (second partial) and the top line (tenth partial). The action of the valves (valve 1 is closest to the player; valve 3 farthest) is notated above. A given valve's numeral indicates that the valve is depressed; a '0' indicates that the valve is open. The smaller staff underneath indicates some of the resulting pitches for courtesy purposes.

**Trombone (Tenor-Bass, B-flat/F)**

A cup mute is required.

Trigger-trill to the nearest available note: 

Some of the piece is notated in a prescriptive tablature notation (cf. the first half of m. 5). The main staff specifies partial numbers in steps between the bottom line (second partial) and the top line (tenth partial). The action of the slide is notated above. The smaller staff underneath indicates some of the resulting pitches for courtesy purposes.

score  
(transposed)

time corners  
for bass clarinet, trumpet, and trombone

colin tucker

Rit. molto-----A Tempo

$\text{♩} = 72$

Bass Clarinet

Trumpet (in C)

Trombone

*f* *p* *poco* *ff* *mp* *mf* *smorz.*

*mf* *mp* *abrasive, convulsive, lurching* *2/0* *7:8* *9:8* *smorz.*

*f* *5:6* *mp* *CUP MUTE* *VI* *III* *IV* *I* *In F* *4:3* *(trigger trill)* *smorz.* *p* *mp* *gliss.* *8:7* *mf* *mp* *In F* *VII* *I* *III* *7:6* *f* *mf* *mp* *7:6* *mf* *poco vib. (slide)* *p* *sustained, restrained, fluid*

*sf* *p* *f* *flz.* *smorz.* *p* *mf* *p* *5:4* *f* *p* *1/0* *2* *3* *(lip trill)* *mf* *mf* *7:6* *mp* *ff* *7:6*

*9:8* *gliss.* *poco vib.* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *poco vib.* *smorz.* *pp* *mp* *p* *f* *p* *dry, neutral, precise*

11

ffp mf p mfp

smorz.

4:3

7:8

5:4

5:4

5:4

3

7:6

smorz.

poco

1 2

mf > p < mf mp > p

mf > p mp

mf > p mp < mf mp mf > p

mp f

17

*mp* *f* *mp* *sf* *pp* *ff* *p* *mf* *f* *ff* *f* *p*

*mf* *p* *mf* *fp* *pp* *mp* *mf* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *p* *f* *mf* *pp*

smorz. *poco vib.*

*mp* *mf* *f* *p* *ff* *mf* *f*

23

*p* *mf* > *mp* < *f* *pp* *ff* > *mp* *ff* *mf* < *f* > *mp* *f* > *mf*

*f* > *pp*

*p* *f* *p*

29

*ff* > *p* *ff* > *p* *mf* > *p* *f* > *mp* *molto ff* > *mf* *mp* < *f* *mp* < *f*

*mp* 7:6 *p* < *mf* > *p* *mf* > *p* *mp* < *mf* *mp* 5:4 < *mf* > *p* *mf* > *p* < *mp* *f* > *pp* < *f* > *pp*

*mf* < *f* > *mp* *p* < *mp* > *p* *mp* *pp* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *f*

poco vib. poco vib. poco vib. poco vib. poco vib.

I IV II V II<sub>1/2</sub>

*f* > *mp*

36

4:3

*mp*

*ff*

*mp* < *mf*

*f* > *p* < *f*

7:6

*mp*

*fff*

9:8

*p* < *f* > *p* < *f*

5:4

*fp*

*pp* < *ff* *mf*

*p*

1/0

smorz. 5:4

*mf*

*p* < *ff* *p* < *f* > *p*

2/0

5:4

*f*

*p*

*f* *p*

*mp*

*f*

*mp*

*f* *p*

*ff*

♩=96

41

4:3

*mp* *ff*

*mp* < *f*

*p*

*mf* > *pp* < *mp*

*pp*

*fff*

*mf*

*f* > *mp* < *fff*

*f* > *mp* < *mf*

9:10

*mp*

*mf* < *f*

1/0

3

*p* < *ff*

7:8

*f* > *p* < *f*

3/0

7 3

*f* > *p*

MUTE OFF

*f*

*mp*

*p*

*f*

poco vib.

*f* *p* < *f* >

48

deliberate yet restrained

52

growing more forceful and relentless

*mp* *f* *p* *ff* *mp* *mf* *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

*p* *f* *mf* *mp*

*p* *mf* *ff* *mp*

*mp* *f* *mp* *f* *p* *ff* *mf* *fff* *f* *ff* *p*

*p* *ff* *mf* *p* *f* *p*

*f* *mp* *f* *p* *mp* *ff* *mp* *poco vib.* *mf*



57

$\text{♩} = 54$

ascend overtones while sustaining low C

7:8

$mf$   $p$   $fff$   $fff$   $mf$   $ff$   $f$

4:3

flz.

5:4

$ff$   $p$   $f$   $mf$   $p$   $f$   $p$   $f$   $pp$   $f$   $ff$   $mp$   $p$   $ff$   $p$

3

oppressively heavy and sustained

7:6

poco vib.

5:6

$mp$   $f$   $mf$   $f$

62

sim.

5:4

4:5

$fff$   $f$   $fff$   $fff$

1 3/0

5:4

$ff$   $p$   $ff$   $mp$   $ff$   $p$   $ff$   $p$   $f$   $p$   $ff$   $p$   $mp$   $mf$   $mp$   $f$   $p$   $ff$

9:8

5:4

$p$   $ff$   $pp$   $poss.$   $fff$

(valve trills rhythmically indep.)

0/1

0/3

11:8

ca. 3 sec.

poco vib.

poco vib.

poco vib.

$mp$   $mf$   $mp$   $mf$   $mp$   $f$   $p$   $ff$

# **shards**

**for solo cello**

**colin tucker (BMI)**

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## Notes on Performance

### Right Hand:

There are seven distinct bow-positions:

molto sul ponticello (msp)

sul ponticello (sp)

poco sul ponticello (psp)

posizione ordinario (po)

poco sul tasto (pst)

sul tasto (st)

molto sul tasto (mst)

At extreme positions (mst/msp), the sound should consist mostly of noise.

and three distinct degrees of bow-pressure:

pesante (pes.)

ordinario (ord.)

flautando (flaut.)

Here, at extreme positions, the sound must clearly contain both noise and pitch.

Bow pressure and dynamics operate independently; in the case of a contradiction between bow pressure and dynamics

(i.e. increasing bow pressure over a diminuendo), bow speed should change accordingly.

When the right hand changes bow position quickly, particularly with higher bow pressure, the resulting noise should be embraced, not “smoothed over.”

*Bow vibrato* consists of slight changes in bow pressure (and possibly also in bow speed) which produce a throbbing sound.

*Jété* is a bouncing of the bow. The number of attacks notated is approximate; nonetheless, broad distinctions between these numbers should be observed.

### Left Hand:

Vibrato is at the discretion of the performer; it should generally be narrow and fast, and should never be used on glissandi or harmonics.

Natural harmonics are notated at sounding pitch.

Mordents are always to the nearest quarter-tone above.

### General Guidelines

Play all pages, in any order. A given page should be played at a constant tempo; this tempo should be the fastest possible tempo at which it is possible to clearly and accurately render all details.

If possible, the piece should be performed more than once during a given concert, with the pages in a different order each time.

Successive pages should be separated by a silence roughly equivalent to the duration of the page played before. During these silences, remain absolutely still.



po psp → po sp → st  
 flaut. ord. pes. flaut.  
 psp → pst sp pes. msp → st sp → st flaut.  
 3 30:28 3 9:6  
*f* > *p* *mf* *ppp* < *f* > *ppp* < *mp* < *ppp* < *p* < *ppp*

ord. po  
 st → msp  
 bow vib. flaut. mst ord. sp  
 flaut. pst  
 ord. po  
 st po  
 3 5:4 8:7 9:8  
*ppp* < *p* < *ppp* < *mf* > *ppp* < *f* > *ppp* < *fff*

First system of musical notation (bass staff, 5/16 time signature). The score includes various dynamic markings and performance instructions:

- Dynamic markings:** *f*, *ppp*, *mf*, *ppp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mf*, *ppp*, *p*, *ppp*.
- Performance instructions:** *po*, *sp*, *pst*, *pes.*, *ord.*, *sp*, *mst*, *pes.*, *flaut.*, *sp*, *pst*.
- Rhythmic markings:**  $5:4$ ,  $4:3$ ,  $4:3$ ,  $8:6$ ,  $3$ ,  $9:7$ ,  $3$ .

Second system of musical notation (bass staff, 4/8 time signature). The score includes various dynamic markings and performance instructions:

- Dynamic markings:** *mf*, *ppp*, *f*, *ppp*, *f*, *p*, *fff*.
- Performance instructions:** *ord.*, *msp*, *jété*, *po*, *st*, *po*, *sp*, *po*.
- Rhythmic markings:**  $3$ ,  $4:5$ ,  $3$ .

maps of infinite disintegration and  
forgetfulness  
series of text scores

Colin Tucker (BMI)  
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## clinamen

for four to eight players

to Pat Allison, Johnny Herbert, Joe Kudirka, Ben Isaacs, and Scott McLaughlin

Agree upon a common pitch in a common octave. All players begin playing this pitch, entering within the first 30 seconds and sustaining that same pitch until one minute into the piece, after which any player can change pitch in the following two ways:

- 1) If a player notices that s/he is playing the “same” pitch (microtonally) as another player, s/he should change pitch towards the nearest “different” pitch.
- 2) A player may also move by an interval significantly larger than the former infinitesimally small interval (but no larger than a whole step). However, each player may do so only one time throughout the whole piece (two times if the piece’s duration exceeds one hour).

Once three or more pitches are sounding, a third pitch motion becomes possible:

- 3) If a player is stuck on an “outer voice” pitch (i.e. the lowest or highest at a given moment), then s/he can move so as to become an “inner voice.”

Pitch changes should be 15-60 seconds apart for a 30-minute version, and proportionally longer for longer versions. When players are in doubt as to their pitch relationships to other players, they should stay on their current pitch longer rather than shorter before changing, so that they are better able to apprehend the given harmonic situation.

Pitch motions should be discrete (i.e. never glissandi) and clear but not over-emphasized; articulation should always be maximally smooth, as should the overall sound quality.

Pauses of any duration may take place provided that no less than three players are playing at a given time (excepting the first and final 30 seconds). Re-entrances should always be on an “inner voice” pitch.

The piece’s duration (at least 30 minutes, and possibly much longer) should be agreed upon beforehand. One minute from the end, all players should “freeze” on their current pitch and then drop out freely within the last 30 seconds.

All instruments must be capable of extremely smooth attacks and sustains; a significant majority must be capable of quarter-tones, if not of finer pitch differentiations.

Players should surround the audience. The sound should fill the space, but should be soft enough that every player can hear every other player.

Colin Tucker  
April 2010

## drift

for five to eight players

Find and designate a registral compass of at least two octaves. In each sub-region of this compass, at least three players must be able to play quarter-tones or finer pitch differentiations.

Begin on the lowest pitch of the designated registral compass. All instruments that are able begin playing this pitch, entering within the first 30 seconds, and sustaining that same pitch until one minute into the piece, after which any player can change pitch in the following two ways:

- 1) If a player notices that s/he is playing the “same” pitch (microtonally) as another player, s/he should ascend or descend to the nearest “different” pitch. Each player should descend on at least half of such changes.
- 2) A player may also ascend by an interval significantly larger than the former infinitesimally small interval (between a minor second and perfect fourth). However, each player may do so only two times per hour.

Once three or more pitches are sounding, a third pitch motion becomes possible:

- 3) If a player becomes positioned on the lowest pitch at a given moment, then s/he can ascend so as to become an “inner voice.”

Pitch changes should be 15-120 seconds apart. When players are in doubt as to their pitch relationships to other players, they should stay on their current pitch longer rather than shorter before changing, so that they are better able to apprehend the given harmonic situation. A single note may be sustained for up to one-third of the duration of the given performance.

Pitch motions should be discrete (i.e. never glissandi) and clear but not over-emphasized; articulation should always be maximally smooth, as should the overall sound quality.

Each player may play at any time when other players’ pitches are within its own registral compass. If a player does not play at the beginning of the piece, her/his entrance should be on an “inner voice” pitch. Pauses of any duration may take place provided that no less than three players are playing at a given time (excepting the first and final 30 seconds). All re-entrances should likewise be on an “inner voice” pitch.

The piece ends when the highest pitch of the designated registral compass is reached. The first player to do so should give a cue, at which point all players currently playing should “freeze” on their current pitch for 30 seconds, and then drop out freely within the following 30 seconds.

All instruments must be capable of extremely smooth attacks and sustains.

Players should surround the audience. The sound should fill the space, but should be soft enough that every player can hear every other player.

Colin Tucker  
June 2010/May 2011

## **simulacrum**

for two to five players

Players should be arranged in a circle; their instruments should be timbrally similar.

Designate a pitch compass—of at least an octave—over which all players can produce a slow, continuous glissando.

All players play an ascending glissando, beginning together on the lowest pitch of the designated compass and ending together on its highest pitch. Each player does her/his best to match, at each instant, the pitch of the player to her/his left.

Primarily, glissando speed should be a function of matching pitches with the designated player; secondarily, it should tend toward the slowest speed at which the glissando can be reliably, evenly executed.

Colin Tucker

July 2010

## snarls and tangles

for five to fifteen players

to the Edges Ensemble

Each player plays a slow, continuous, legato glissando, whose direction may change freely within the following constraints (portions of a glissando in the same direction are hereafter *glissando-segments*):

- 1) Each glissando-segment should continue from the previous glissando's final pitch, in the opposite direction, with minimal re-articulation.
- 2) Each glissando-segment should last between one-and-a-half and five seconds; no obvious durational patterning should emerge (not even the repetition of a single duration).
- 3) A single glissando-segment's speed should be constant, but successive glissandi may be of different speeds, provided that the speeds of all glissandi are between one quarter-tone and one whole-tone per second.

The registral order of players is invariant throughout the piece. All players start from an agreed-upon ordering of a set of pitches, with close spacing (no more than a minor third between pitches). Registrally adjacent players must never "cross voices," nor become more than one octave apart; if either of these thresholds is approached, one or both of the players in question should change direction.

To begin, all players enter together and sustain their given notes for approximately ten seconds before beginning their glissandi. Breaths and changes of bow, string, tessitura, etc. should be as indiscreet as possible.

Dynamics should be soft and constantly adjusting in order to hear neighboring players. Additionally, to facilitate the unusually intense listening required, players should be arranged in a line or semicircle corresponding to this registral order.

Duration is at least fifteen minutes.

**Overall:** Individual "lines"—and relationships between lines—should be fluid, malleable and amorphous: never resting, nor crystallizing.

Colin Tucker  
February 2010

# mesh

for two to four players

to Matt Endahl

Each player chooses a stable and continuous but grainy and spectrally-rich noise, which 1) is distinct from those chosen by other players, 2) can be played over a wide dynamic range, and 3) is identifiably the same sound throughout its entire dynamic range.

The piece consists of alternation between two types of sections: “sustain,” wherein all players sustain their noise at a constant dynamic for approximately 10-30 seconds, after which any one player (always one at a time) may choose to initiate a “transition” by changing her/his dynamic according to the two possibilities outlined below; all dynamic changes are extremely gradual.

If 30 seconds elapse and no player has initiated a transition, then the player who last did so must also initiate the new transition (if three or four players, a player may only initiate two consecutive transitions under this circumstance).

Transitions occur in two ways:

- 1) If a player’s sound is softer than that of another player, crescendo until clearly louder than that player; if louder, diminuendo until clearly softer.
- 2) A player may also move from any dynamic level to “as loud as possible” or “as soft as possible;” both the former and latter may each occur twice during a 20-minute version (proportionally more for longer version; if four players, only once each, for both movements, per player, for a 20-minute version).

Under no circumstances should a player be completely drowned-out. Therefore, the dynamic levels corresponding to “as loud/soft as possible” are potentially highly variable, as these effectively indicate “as loud as possible without drowning out the softest player” and “as soft as possible without being drowned out,” respectively.

Begin exactly together on a “sustain” section, with each player choosing her/his dynamic freely. A designated player performs the first transition, after which players continue the alternation of sustain and transition sections according to possibilities outlined above. The piece should end with a full “sustain” section of 10-30 seconds; the cut-off at the end of this section should be cued by the person who initiated the last transition.

Duration is at least 20 minutes, and possibly much longer.

Colin Tucker

August 2010

## **veil**

for two or more players

Each player sustains a stable and continuous but grainy and spectrally-rich sound—which clearly contains both pitch and noise—at the exact threshold between audibility and inaudibility. Individual players’ sounds must be clearly discrete and in absolutely even balance with each other.

Do not use electricity to produce or process sound.

Begin and end precisely together; duration is at least two minutes.

Visual evidence of physical processes of sound production should be concealed from the audience’s direct gaze.

Where possible, ambient sounds should be minimized within the performance space.

Colin Tucker

July 2010

**the indifferent horizon apathetically rests on the ground,  
devouring everything that looks like something**

**for violin, clarinet in B-flat, and piano**

**colin tucker (BMI)  
2010**



## Notes on Performance

Written in 2010 for *ensemble plus-minus*.

Duration 12.5 minutes.

### Violin:

There are seven distinct *bow-positions*:

molto sul ponticello (MSP)

sul ponticello (SP)

poco sul ponticello (PSP)

posizione ordinario (PO)

poco sul tasto (PST)

sul tasto (ST)

molto sul tasto (MST)

and three distinct degrees of *bow-pressure*:

pesante (pes.)

ordinario (ord.)

flautando (flaut.)

At extreme pressures and positions, the sound should clearly contain both noise and pitch. "Bow pressure accents,"

wherein "pesante" pressure is applied to the onset of a note, are indicated by an "x" on a note's stem.

*Bow vibrato* consists of slight changes in bow pressure (and possibly also in bow speed) which produce a throbbing sound.

### *Circular bow*

The bow is drawn in a circle, moving "vertically" up and down the fingerboard as well as "horizontally." This movement should extend as far up and down the fingerboard as is possible while maintaining some clear pitch content. The rhythm notated above the staff indicates bow changes (downbow to upbow).

*Finger pressure* is indicated by

- ◆ normal pressure
- ◇ lighter pressure, in between "normal" and "harmonic pressure"

A wavy line indicates a "trill" between these two positions.

Endnotes of glissandi are not separately articulated.

## Clarinet

*Smorzato* indicates accents produced with the diaphragm.

*Slap tongue:* 

## Piano

The sustain pedal should be used minimally (and not at all before m. 27); moreover, it should never be held when both hands have rests.

## General Guidelines

The dynamic range is *pppp-fff*; the former indicates the exact threshold of audibility.

During silences, all players' motion should be kept to a minimum.

Arrows affixed to accidentals indicate eighth-tones.

Accidentals carry to immediately repeated notes.

Vibrato should be avoided.

When violin and clarinet "hocket" durationally contiguous notes (particularly from m. 63), the resulting line must sound "legatissimo."

transposed score

**the indifferent horizon apathetically rests on the ground,  
devouring everything that looks like something**

Colin Tucker

**Violin**  
MUTE  
always without vibrato

**Violin Part:**  
 - **Measure 76:** *pppp*  
 - **Measure 77:** *mf* (ord. PSP), *p* (flaut. ST)  
 - **Measure 78:** *ppp* (ST bow vib., gliss.)  
 - **Measure 79:** *pp* (SP), *mp* (ST), *ppp* (ST)  
 - **Measure 80:** *ppp* (ST)

**Vn. (Violoncello):**  
 - **Measure 76:** *pppp*  
 - **Measure 77:** *pppp*  
 - **Measure 78:** *pppp*  
 - **Measure 79:** *p*  
 - **Measure 80:** *ppp*

**Cl. (B♭):**  
 - **Measure 76:** *p*  
 - **Measure 77:** *ppp*  
 - **Measure 78:** *pppp*  
 - **Measure 79:** *pp*, *ppp*  
 - **Measure 80:** *ppp*

4 *sul III*  $\text{♩} = 60$

Vn. *ppp*

Cl. (B $\flat$ ) *p* *ppp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *ppp* *pp*

Pf. *pp* *ppp* *pp* *p*

37/16

7

Vn. *p* *ppp* *ppp*

Cl. (B $\flat$ ) *pp* *p*

37/16

9

Vn. *ppp*

Cl. (B $\flat$ ) *ppp*  $\triangleleft$  *pp* *ppp* *p* *ppp*  $\triangleleft$  *mp* *ppp* *ppp*

Pf. *pp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp*

8-12" sul III (ST) *pp* *ppp* ca. 1" PSP ca. 1" spicc.

7:8  $\downarrow$  5:6  $\downarrow$  15:12  $\downarrow$  8-12"

13  $\text{♩}=76$  suddenly more directional and insistent

Vn. *p* PO

Cl. (B $\flat$ ) *mf p* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *ppp*

Pf. *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *pp*

10:11  $\downarrow$  12:9  $\downarrow$  16:11  $\downarrow$

16

Vn.

Cl.  
(B $\flat$ )

Pf.

$\text{♩} = 48$   
desolate, icy, focused

PSP

bow vib.

4:3

9:11

PST

2"

flaut.  
ST  
sul III

*mp*

*ppp*

*mp*

*ppp*

*mf*

*ppp*

*pp*

*p*

*mp*

19

Cl.  
(B $\flat$ )

Pf.

$\text{♩} = 76$

9:10

3:2

13:12

smorzato

*ppp*

*pp*

*ppp*

*p*

*ppp*

*p*

*ppp*

*mp*

*p*

[illegible]

26  $\text{♩} = 76$  becoming agitated

Vn. *mp* *p* *mf* *p*


Cl. (Bb) *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Pf. *mp* *pp* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

ord. PO PSP PST PO

marcato

4:3 6:5 5:4 5:4 13:10 6:5 3

Vn. 



33

Cl.  
(B $\flat$ )

*pp* *mp* 13:10 *mf* 13:10 *pp* 13:12 *f*

Pf.

*p* 17:20 *mf* 7:5 *f* 9:6 *f* 5:6

*mp* 6:5 *mf*

7

36

Vn.

$\text{♩} = 48$  12-18" *ppp* *p* *pppp*

sul II flaut. ST

ritardando - - - - - 3"  $\text{♩} = 35$

Cl.  
(B $\flat$ )

*p* 7:8 *f* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

Pf.

5:4 3:2

**System 1: Measures 38-41**

**Violin (Vn.):**  $\text{♩} = 96$ . Measures 38-41. Dynamics: *f*, *mp*, *f*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, *mf*. Includes triplets and slurs.

**Clarinet (Cl. (B $\flat$ )):** Measures 38-41. Dynamics: *f*, *mp*, *f*, *p*, *mf*, *pp*. Includes triplets and slurs.

**System 2: Measures 42-45**

**Violin (Vn.):**  $\text{♩} = 76$  (ritardando),  $\text{♩} = 35$ . Measures 42-45. Dynamics: *pp*, *ppp*. Includes slurs and a fermata.

**Clarinet (Cl. (B $\flat$ )):** Measures 42-45. Dynamics: *mp*, *p*, *ppp*. Includes slurs and a fermata.

**System 3: Measures 46-49**

**Violin (Vn.):**  $\text{♩} = 60$ . Measures 46-49. Dynamics: *fff*, *ppp*, *fff*, *ppp*, *ff*, *ppp*, *ff*, *mp*, *f*, *pp*. Includes slurs, accents, and various performance markings (ord. PSP, PST, pes., circ. bow, bow vib., ord., SP).

**Clarinet (Cl. (B $\flat$ )):** Measures 46-49. Dynamics: *f*, *ppp*, *ff*. Includes slurs and a fermata.

49  $\text{♩}=96$

Vn. *ord. SP* *ord.* *circ. bow* *3:2* *ST* *pes. SP* *ord. ST* *4:3* *PO* *7:8* *13:16* *7:6*

Cl. (B $\flat$ ) *smorzato* *6:7* *7:8*

Pf. *ff* *3* *3:2* *ff* *13:16* *7:6*

76  $\text{♩}=76$

*p* *f* *p* *f* *f* *p* *fff* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *mf* *ff*

16 16 16 16 16 16 16 16

54  $\text{♩}=60$

Vn. *circ. PO* *bow* *3* *pes.* *ord.* *21:14* *3* *ff* *mf* *mp* *ff* *pp* *fff* *10:7* *fff*

Cl. (B $\flat$ ) *fff*

16 16 16 16 16 16 16 16

10

hushed, fragile, with utmost inner intensity.  
vn. and cl. always evenly balanced at the  
threshold of audibility.

♩=76

bleached, exhausted, yet still pressing forward

♩=60

61

Vn. flaut. MST sul II 35-50" 14-20" ST 7-9" 15-21" ord. PO sul I spicc. *pp* 20-26" 4-6" flaut. ST 8-12" ord. *f*

Cl. (B $\flat$ ) 35-50" 14-20" 7-9" 6-8" 10-14" 4" 6-8" *pppp* *pppp* *mp* *pppp* *ppp* *ppp* *f* *ppp*

Pf. 35-50" 14-20" *f*

51 16

64

Vn. PSP 3" ST 3" ord. 7-9" (G $\sharp$ ) 3" (C $\sharp$ ) PSP 16-24" 3" ord. SP 12-18" *ppp* *pppp* *ppp* *ffppp* *f*

14 8

65

Vn. PO 2" 25-35" ord. PSP 20-30" *ppp* *pppp* *p*

# **spaltung**

**for solo violin**

**Colin Tucker (BMI)**

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## **Notes on Performance**

### Right Hand:

There are seven distinct bow-positions:

molto sul ponticello (msp)

sul ponticello (sp)

poco sul ponticello (psp)

posizione ordinario (po)

poco sul tasto (pst)

sul tasto (st)

molto sul tasto (mst)

Molto sul pont. should be nearly on the bridge; molto sul tasto should be far over the fingerboard (with sul tasto and poco sul tasto spaced somewhat intermediately between that and posizione ordinario).

Noise issuing from the “vertical” motion of the bow (along the string, as opposed to normal “horizontal” upbow/downbow motion across the string) should be embraced, not suppressed.

### Left Hand:

Do not use vibrato.

Natural harmonics are notated at sounding pitch.

### General Guidelines

Accidentals apply to immediately repeated notes.

Duration 20-23 seconds

**for solo violin**

# Colin Tucker

Musical score for "L'Espresso" by Luciano Berio. The score is written for a single melodic line and a bass line. The tempo is marked as 72-84. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signatures are 5/16, 6/16, 5/16, and 9/16. The score includes various dynamic markings: *mp*, *ppp* sub., *pp*, *mp*, *p*, and *ff*. The melodic line features a series of notes with lyrics: "st pst po pst sp po sp st sp". The bass line includes a triplet and a fermata. The score is marked with a tempo of 72-84.

4

st 7:8 pst mst pst st pst po st pst psp sp pst st po pst psp po sp st msp sp msp po st mst

*f* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *fff*

7:8 7:8 7:8 7:8 7:8 7:6 7:8 5:6

# **futures unmade in the boundlessness of the instant**

**for solo soprano saxophone**

**colin tucker (BMI)**

**© 2011**



## **Notes on Performance**

Arrows affixed to accidentals indicate eighth-tones.

Dynamics range from *pppp* to *fff*; the former is the threshold of inaudibility.

Short slurs indicate tonguing while long slurs (i.e. those running across entire lines and groups of lines) indicate phrase groupings.

Silences are indicated as follows:

Single fermata: 6-8 seconds

Double fermata: 9-12 seconds

Triple fermata: 14-20 seconds

Quadruple fermata: 24-32 seconds

Movement during silences should be minimized; page turns should be avoided. The piece's initial and final silences should be performed with the same intensity as the rest of the piece.

In the *senza misura* bars (38 and 45), notes should be 2-4 seconds long. The single breath-mark should be somewhat shorter than the note it follows; the double breath-mark should be somewhat longer.

Duration is approximately six minutes.

futures unmade in the boundlessness of the instant

Colin Tucker

Sheet music for "futures unmade in the boundlessness of the instant" by Colin Tucker. The score is written for a single melodic line on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) in 16th notes. The tempo is marked as ♩=48.

The score is divided into four systems, each containing a melodic line and a corresponding bass line. The melodic line is marked with various dynamics and articulations, including *pppp*, *ppp*, *p*, and *pp*. The bass line is marked with *pppp*, *ppp*, and *pp*.

System 1 (Measures 1-4): The melodic line begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter note B4. The bass line consists of a series of sixteenth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, G60, A60, B60, C61, D61, E61, F61, G61, A61, B61, C62, D62, E62, F62, G62, A62, B62, C63, D63, E63, F63, G63, A63, B63, C64, D64, E64, F64, G64, A64, B64, C65, D65, E65, F65, G65, A65, B65, C66, D66, E66, F66, G66, A66, B66, C67, D67, E67, F67, G67, A67, B67, C68, D68, E68, F68, G68, A68, B68, C69, D69, E69, F69, G69, A69, B69, C70, D70, E70, F70, G70, A70, B70, C71, D71, E71, F71, G71, A71, B71, C72, D72, E72, F72, G72, A72, B72, C73, D73, E73, F73, G73, A73, B73, C74, D74, E74, F74, G74, A74, B74, C75, D75, E75, F75, G75, A75, B75, C76, D76, E76, F76, G76, A76, B76, C77, D77, E77, F77, G77, A77, B77, C78, D78, E78, F78, G78, A78, B78, C79, D79, E79, F79, G79, A79, B79, C80, D80, E80, F80, G80, A80, B80, C81, D81, E81, F81, G81, A81, B81, C82, D82, E82, F82, G82, A82, B82, C83, D83, E83, F83, G83, A83, B83, C84, D84, E84, F84, G84, A84, B84, C85, D85, E85, F85, G85, A85, B85, C86, D86, E86, F86, G86, A86, B86, C87, D87, E87, F87, G87, A87, B87, C88, D88, E88, F88, G88, A88, B88, 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15

4/8

4:3

11:8

6/8

5:6

4:3

4:3

ppp

p

20

5:6

10:9

*p pp*

21

*pp* *p* *pp*

7:8 6:5 7:6 21:18 5:4 6:5

25

*mp* *pp*

26

*f* *mp* *ppp*

9:8 4:5 19:24

28

4

29

*mf*

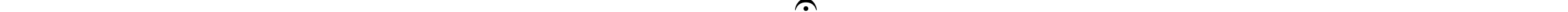
*ppp*

*pp*

7:6♯ 3:2♯

17:18♯ 3:2♯

35



A musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a single measure with a whole note chord consisting of the notes F#, C, and G.

senza misura ,

38

*ppp*

9

39

*pppp*

25:18<sup>F</sup>

15:12<sup>F</sup>

9:8<sup>F</sup>

*mp*

42

*pp*

9:6<sup>F</sup>

*f*

13:8<sup>F</sup>

*p*

*fff*

45

*ppp*

*ppp*

*pppp*

*pppp*

6

46

*f* *mp* *f* *pppp*

13:12 21:18 3 3 5:6

49

*p* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *fff*

10:8 9:6 15:12 5:4

54