Musicology and fiction

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As an aspect of human life and culture—frequently, as an overwhelmingly pervasive and problematic aspect—music has found its way into novels, plays, poems, and other forms of imaginative fiction. Musical facts (and fancies) can be found in Homer’s epics as well as the tales of aboriginal peoples; in Dante’s Commedia as well as Hindu and Arabic poetry; and in novels by Dickens, Dostoevskij, and James Joyce as well as science-fiction stories and television screenplays. Entire dramas have been devoted to real-life musicians: Puškin’s Mocart i Sal’eri is a case in point, Peter Shaffer’s Amadeus another. Other fictions describe imaginary composers and performers: consider Thomas Mann’s Doctor Faustus and Marcia Davenport’s Of Lena Geyer. (We shall return to Davenport, Mann, and Shaffer below.)

A large number of historical, scientific, and speculative studies deal in some sense with both music and fiction. A majority of these studies have been written from imaginative-literary perspectives. Whether Homeric verse was actually sung; why Dante referred to certain Gregorian chants; or which operas and street songs are mentioned in Ulysses—investigations of these kinds mostly map music onto fiction, rather than the other way round. A much smaller number of studies have been written from musicological
perspectives. How a given poem or play has been set to music; in what ways a Mozart opera may have been influenced by literary traditions; or where (and why) text-painting appears in particular Renaissance motets or Baroque oratorios—investigations of these kinds mostly map fiction onto music. The Modern Language Association’s massive bibliography as well as a great many other reference works continue to catalog studies primarily written by and addressed to littérateurs. RILM, on the other hand, catalogs studies primarily written by and addressed to musicologists.

Prior to the 1980s, musicologists mostly either ignored fictions or looked down their nose at them, instead devoting themselves exclusively to musical “facts”. Nevertheless, the number of studies devoted to musicological issues and works of imaginative literature is substantial. Several outstanding monographs have already served generations of scholars, and new contributions continually appear in print. Even if studies devoted exclusively or even primarily to opera, song, choral compositions, text-painting, and programmism are eliminated from consideration, the remaining books and articles comprise an important part of musicology’s intellectual history.

The present article is devoted to exploring several issues associated with musicological investigations into imaginative literature, especially those pertaining to reception and formal organization. Most of the fictions discussed at any length have won acclaim either as canonical masterpieces (e.g., Shakespeare’s sonnets), or as popular successes (e.g., Ruth Rendell’s novel A judgement in stone), or as models for what can and should be done in specialized forms of fiction (e.g., Bruce Sterling’s and Lewis Shiner’s science-fiction story Mozart in mirrorshades). Most, too, have received at least a little attention in musicological publications.

As Calvin Brown is said to have observed, there is no really satisfactory way to “classify” the different possible relationships between fiction and music. In the pages below I move, insofar as possible, from “earlier” to “more recent” as well as from the “general” to the “specific”, beginning with factual and culturally situated references to music in selected works of imaginative literature, before then proceeding—as Steven Scher has suggested—by way of evocative references and devices to structural and stylistic parallels and principles between fiction and music. Scher has himself cautioned 

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11 In recent years RILM abstracts of music literature has also incorporated references to a great many publications devoted to imaginative literature, cultural studies, and so on. RILM no longer covers unilaterally “musicological” publications, which is one of many reasons it has proven so useful to scholars in a variety of fields.


13 Scher has himself cautioned

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scholars against drawing “easy analogies” between music and fiction. On the other hand, as Thomas Campbell has pointed out, “such analogies can prove useful if they are carefully delineated.” I agree. In addition to identifying and evaluating useful analogies throughout the pages that follow, I have attempted to construct a few of my own.

During the later 19th and early 20th centuries, the infant discipline of musicology increasingly defined itself in terms of primary sources and positivist methodologies. Western art music, especially German art music, became the sine qua non for scholarly study, in large part because this kind of music was understood as most perfectly created and preserved in writing rather than through performance or in terms of extra-notational commentary. As early as 1885 Guido Adler went so far as to dismiss musical biography for having “forced its way into the foreground” of a profession grounded in notational science rather than speculation. Even the “oral traditions and socialized performances” associated with folk and popular music were for decades accepted as “legitimate” only after they have been transcribed and reworked into books and articles: as such—as “forms to be dissected”—they could then be “placed in a library in a format that is deemed to be knowledge.”

As the discipline of musicology evolved it modeled itself to some extent on the somewhat better established, yet equally “modern”, equally self-conscious disciplines of political and social history. As Monika Otter has observed, “History as scholarly inquiry concerned with archival research and documentation is only about two centuries old.” Furthermore,

the mental habit of regarding historiography as a transparent medium with no literary substance of its own, a self-efficacating text that simply shows things “as they really were” (“wie es eigentlich gewesen”), derives from nineteenth-century historicism.... To classical, medieval, and early modern Europeans, history was not a separate academic discipline, but a subsection of rhetoric (as was poetry and what we would call fictional narrative).

For a variety of reasons, early-20th-century musicologists often did not concern themselves with “history” in the broader sense of that term. Instead, the centuries-
old assumption that history was itself “a branch of literature” was gradually replaced by an assumption that history, literature, and musicology are freestanding intellectual organisms, separate trees with separate disciplinary roots, branches, and intellectual-ecological habitats. And this, in contradistinction to Hans Robert Jauss’s contentions that the (re)emergence of historical fiction in the early 19th century abolished “the classical separation between res fictae, the realm of poetry, and res factae, the object of history”, thereby transforming “poetic fiction” into “the horizon of reality” and “historical reality” into “the horizon of poetry”.

Rather than merge methodologies and interests with those of historians, sociologists, or other scholars, musicologists largely consecrated themselves exclusively to “the study of musical phenomena”, which they perceived as “existing in splendid isolation” from other human activities. What John Kimmey has called an “historical/systematic dyad” eventually developed. Traditionally, historical musicologists (some would say, “real” musicologists) have concerned themselves with the sources, documents, and practices associated with the evolution of European art music, while systematic musicologists (including ethnomusicologists) have taken pretty much everything else “musical” as their purview. Meanwhile, theorists (perhaps Kimmey should have used the term “triad”) have increasingly devoted themselves to diagrams, charts, and even—in the publications of Hans Keller—“wordless functional analyses”. In contradistinction to the scientific and mathematical methods adopted by music historians, systematists, and theorists (who, to a considerable extent, still strive to eschew subjective judgments), journalists and popularizers have often “emotionalized” the effects of music on actual men and women.

A few individuals, however, have long inveighed again an exclusively positivist musicology, especially one fixated on “analysis” rather than other modes of criticism and assessment. Joseph Kerman, for example, has maintained that musicology tends to make information into an end in itself, rather than treating facts as “steps on the ladder” to “a general field theory of [musicological] criticism.” As early as 1965, Kerman used a then-recent anthology of musicological position papers as a stick to beat many of his colleagues:

Someone has spoken about the growth of American musicology from infancy to adolescence; the metaphor is irresistible. Yet as many readers have noticed with a twinge, only Mantle Hood’s essay on ethnomusicology [published in the anthology in question] conveys the sense of horizon, excitement, experimentation, and just plain kicking around that one associates with even the most docile adolescents. Has historical musicology somehow skipped this phase? I hope instead we are still in its infancy. The

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23 Ibid., 198–204.
critical profile [proposed elsewhere in Kerman’s essay] for American musicology would supply some of this excitement. It would neither replace nor slight our traditional scholarly pursuits, but would on the contrary help [fill the] gap between the scholar and the general public.27

Although exclusively positivist researches and several varieties of analysis still flourish, at least in certain circles, Kerman has lived to see the field of musicology transformed in a variety of ways. In the process of transformation, more than a few musicologists have embraced their own brands of self-assertiveness and “just plain kicking around”. Entire volumes, for example, have been devoted to “gay” musicology—a development no one would have predicted 40 years ago.28 Early–21st-century musicology seems to be redefining itself in terms of interdisciplinary investigations into interrelated musical and cultural issues.

In the process, music scholars have become critics as well as fact-finders: students of emotion as well as cerebration, of pleasures and pains as well as precise measurements and descriptions. Referring in 1995 to “current trends in music scholarship”, Pieter Van den Toorn singled out Leo Treitler as exemplary of (inter)disciplinary redefinition, especially because of Treitler’s insistence that musicology “acknowledge more fully and openly the mundane social and political attitudes that … lie just beneath [music’s] surface”—and this, even when “the prevailing winds would seem to favor an objective knowledge of observation and fact processed in detached and impersonal tones.”29 Redefinition has not solved all problems, of course, nor will it. Even among specialists, interdisciplinary approaches to certain issues have proven themselves “both a blessing and a curse”, in part because scholars “still often talk past each other” and “overarching coherence” is seldom arrived at.30 Nevertheless, the search for what Lawrence Kramer has called “postmodern musicology” continues.31 One aspect of this search has been an increased willingness for musicologists to explore the extra-musical. Including imaginative literature.

The question remains: What can fiction—which is to say, the study of fiction—do for musicology? What can novels and poems teach us about music? One answer to these questions is: nothing at all. As Kevin Korsyn puts it, playing Devil’s Advocate in the guise of an individual “who can converse intelligently about literary theory, art history, [or] film studies”: Isn’t music “just something you do? You play it, compose it, listen to it? Why, then, would anybody want to talk about it?”32 (Sometimes, instead of simply talking about music, musicology seems increasingly to be concerned with “talk[ing about talking about music]”.)33 Furthermore, fiction is “false”, deceptive. Nor is it music,

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27 Kerman, “A profile for American musicology”, 8. Other scholars agree with Kerman, at least to the extent of questioning analysis as a royal road to musical understanding. Gary Tomlinson, for example, has also urged musicologists to give fuller consideration to contextual elements “beyond the work itself, indeed beyond musical works in general”. Gary Tomlinson, “The web of culture: A context for musicology”, 19th-century music 7/3 (April 1984) 360.

28 See, for example, Queering the pitch: The new gay and lesbian musicology, ed. by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994).


30 Michael J. Kramer, “The multitrack model: Cultural history and the interdisciplinary study of popular music”, Music and history: Bridging the disciplines, 221.

31 See Lawrence Kramer, Classical music and postmodern knowledge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) passim.


33 Ibid., 34.
especially the European instrumental art music canonized by previous generations of musicologists in the form of a self-contained system of “purely” structural coherences.

On the other hand, aren’t music and fiction both aural arts? Certainly poetry is aural—although, as Karl Precoda has suggested, prose fiction is a post-aural art form, written to be read “on” the page instead of out loud. Whether contextually “poetic” or “prosaic”, the sounds of certain words and phrases sometimes suggest their own meanings: Poe’s “tintinnabulation”, with its evocation of bells, is a case in point; so is Tennyson’s “murmuring of innumerable bees.” Too, trumpet flourishes are linked acoustically to their uses: as calls to battle, say, or as proclamations of royal personages. The simplest spoken sounds are capable of evoking or even becoming music itself as well as conveying meaning: Wallace Stevens, a poet “obsessed with sound”, sometimes treated syllables as if they were “physical” phenomena—and this, even though his fictive Peter Quince suggests that “music is feeling, then, not sound.”

To separate music and fiction altogether from each other seems silly. Simply to lump them together, however, seems equally silly. An example: As a poetic device, onomatopoeia has nothing necessarily to do with music, just as the timbres and volumes of musical instruments have nothing necessarily to do with extra-musical circumstances. Nor does music necessarily tell stories. Instead, as Carolyn Abbate and others have suggested, narrativity should be understood “not as the normal condition of music, but as something anomalous.” Or, in the opinion of Vera Micznik, degrees of narrativity separate the style and works of Beethoven (less narrative) from those of Mahler (more narrative).

Along quite different lines, Russell Reaver has claimed that what “the aural effect of literature” actually has “in common with music” manifests itself as an “interruption of our line of logical expectation” in order to facilitate “a heightened awareness of life” as “being” or “existence.” In this sense, music can be considered “philosophical” and even “spiritual”—which means that, in some sense, it must also be “literary” (although not necessarily “fictional”). Or, as German aestheticians such as Ludwig Tieck and Franz Grillparzer put it centuries ago, music aspires to “ultimate” accomplishments beyond those of the other arts. In every other sense, though, music is finally, only itself. As Reaver himself puts it,

The sequence [of musical events, as in the events of a story ultimately] depends on the inner dynamisms of music itself, on its expectations of movement in tonalities and

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34 Karl Precoda, in a personal communication with the present author.
36 Mervyn Nicholson, “The slightest sound matters: Stevens’ sound cosmology”, *The Wallace Stevens journal* 18/1 (spring 1994) 63; italics in the original. “Peter Quince at the clavier” is quoted by Nicholson on this and subsequent pages.
37 Nor has onomatopoeia altogether remained in favor with littérateurs, one of whom recently described attempts to “imitate environmental sounds” in both fiction and music as “dead metaphor”. See James Guetti, *Word-music: The aesthetic aspect of narrative fiction* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1980) 1–41 passim.
40 J. Russell Reaver, “How musical is literature?” *Mosaic* 18/4 (fall 1985) 2.
41 Ibid.
rhythms.… Since music—even program music—never has the literalness of literature, music and literature cannot be compared example for example as though a literary phrase must mean the same as a musical phrase.43

In spite of music’s independence from the other arts, or even its purported supremacy over them, musicologists are sometimes required to enter the realm of imaginative literature, just as littérateurs sometimes have to enter into the realm of music. Just as it is necessary to know something about A midsummer night’s dream in order to perform, or even listen intelligently to, the orchestral works of composers as different from one other as Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Sergej Prokof’ev; so, to produce many of Shakespeare’s plays “authentically”, it is necessary to know something about the role of song in Elizabethan drama. For these and other reasons, many musical reference works boast articles on “Shakespeare.”44 But Shakespeare’s plays and poems are unusual insofar as the history of musicology is concerned. Few references to “poetry”, “drama”, “the novel”, and similar fictional forms “overall” can be found even in contemporary musicological dictionaries.45 As Robert Morgan reminds us, many musical scholars, “at least in the United States, seem uncomfortable when confronted with larger questions of intentionality, social and psychological context, or supra-musical influence”—and thus remain “stubbornly formalistic.”46 No one can understand Mozart auf die Reise nach Prag without knowing what Don Giovanni is about. Nevertheless, a great many Mozart scholars seem to understand Mozart without even having heard of Eduard Mörike’s novella.47 (We shall also return to Mörike below.)

Discussions of “supra-musical influences” exist, of course, and have for decades. Consider Calvin Brown’s groundbreaking Music and literature, written during the 1940s in “hope that it might open up a field of thought which has not yet been systematically explored”: the various interrelationships between imaginative literature and music.48 Consider too the second edition of Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, which, in spite of certain conservative nationalist and methodological tendencies implicit in much of its contents, boasts an excellent article on “music and musicians in fiction”—one that ranges from Homer, the Brothers Grimm, and Thomas Mann to discussions of “fictive music”, “the lyric”, and “musical anecdotes”.49 Moreover, and for most of a century, musicological periodicals have published occasional articles about “musical” novelists or poets, or about the appearance of musical figures or issues in imaginative literature.50

43 Russel Reaver, “How musical is literature?”, 2–3; italics added.
45 See, for example, Musicology: The key concepts, ed. by David Beard and Kenneth Gloag (New York: Routledge, 2005), which excludes most musical-literary subjects.
46 Quoted in Peter J. Rabinowitz, “Circumstantial evidence: Musical analysis and theories of reading”, Mosaic 18/4 (December 1985) 160. See also Robert Morgan, “Theory, analysis, and criticism”, Journal of musicology 1/1 (1982) 15–18. Morgan’s words were written more than a quarter century ago; American scholars, I am convinced, have long since caught up with their European counterparts.
48 See Brown, Music and literature.
50 Three examples, identified in chronological order of publication, must suffice: Vilma Raskin Potter, “Poetry and the fiddler’s foot: Meters in Thomas Hardy’s work”, The musical quarterly 65/1 (January 1979) 48–71; Eric Valentin, “Mozart in der französischen Dichtung”, Acta mozartiana 30/4 (1983) 71–74; and Daniel Herwitz, “The cook, his wife, the philosopher, and the librettist”, The musical quarterly 78/1 (spring 1994) 48–76. Herwitz’s article deals with interrelationships between Italian literature, the story of Don Juan, Da Ponte’s libretto for Mozart’s opera, and
Finally, an increasing number of interdisciplinary publications are being devoted to “music and…” subjects, such as “music and nationalism”, “music and cultural values”, and “music and the media.” The time seems ripe for an overview of past and present investigations into interrelationships between fiction and music.

Fictions may (or may not) be “musical”. If “musical”, however, are they necessarily “unusual”? Or do “musical” fictions merely “prove the rule”: viz., that imaginative literature has, for the most part, little to teach musicologists? Three authors—Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, and Thomas Hardy—produced imaginative literature that has been read as “musical” in one way or another. A few of their poems illustrate certain of the possibilities and limitations inherent in examining fiction as a source of musicological fact.

In his verse, including portions of his celebrated Canterbury tales, Chaucer often refers music. Although he names no contemporary composer in his writings and mentions only one theorist, Boethius (whose treatise on music he himself translated), Chaucer demonstrated his considerable musical knowledge primarily through a “large and varied assortment of figures of speech based on music”, especially those of everyday experience.

Consider the opening of the “Pardoner’s tale”, which describes “syngeres with harpes” and

... a compaignye
Of yonge folks that haunteden folye,
As riot, hazard, stywes, and taverns,
Where as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes
They daunce and playen at dees both day and nyght,
And eten also and drynken over hir myght ...

(Adolescents, it seems, have long been beer-addled pop-music fans.)

Furthermore, Chaucer’s knowledge especially of Guillaume de Machaut’s literary and musical output unquestionably influenced his own verse. Chaucer’s Book of the Duchess, for example, “is dependent upon no [fewer] than four of Machaut’s narrative dits for its general subject matter; and hundreds of specific lines can be traced to Machaut” in this and other of Chaucer’s poems. In comparing The parliament of fowls
and the “Miller’s tale” with the music and verse of Machaut’s Je puis trop bien, Thomas Campbell has identified links between words and music, including: (1) a reluctance “to resolve ambiguities or to justify the presentation of disparate, even exclusive, solutions to a problem”; (2) a preference “for the simultaneous, rather than the serial, depiction of related events”; and (3) a preference “for concatenation, where several perspectives, situations, or scenes are deftly nestled beside, or inside, one another.” In other words, Chaucer’s poetry incorporates “literary” processes analogous to “musical” dissonance, polyphony, and cadences. Like Machaut’s Je puis, several of Chaucer’s poems—or so Campbell argues—approximate the separate medieval systems of musique naturelle (poetry) and musique artificielle (music) in that they “respond to or decorate one another, while simultaneously remaining independent.” Thus, in the “Miller’s tale,” the complexities of the several overlapping plots are suddenly resolved and “climax together… within twenty short, snappy lines” that call to mind “simultaneous, separate [musical] themes which occur in parallel, but not harmonic relationship.” Thus, within Chaucer’s poetry, music functions as an organizational metaphor, not merely as an experiential and cultural metonymy.

Like many of Chaucer’s poems, several of Shakespeare’s sonnets deal explicitly with musical issues. Consider no. 128, which describes a girl playing a keyboard instrument and begins:

How oft, when thou, my music, music play’st,
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
With thy sweet fingers when thou gently sway’st
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand

In Renaissance sonnets and sonnet sequences, music was often linked with sexuality and gender. Throughout Shakespeare’s poem, music serves as a metaphor for heterosexual love—more specifically, as a synecdoche (the “trope par excellence of reduction”) for jealousy. In line 1, for example, the poet lays claim to “his” music (the girl); and in lines 5–6 he envies the “nimble jacks” who kiss her hand. Helen Vendler begins her description of the “metaphor of music” present throughout this sonnet with an introductory reference to the “tonic note” of the poet’s “opening sigh”; she also observes that the poem as a whole “exists to amplify the sense through which, by synecdoche, the

55 Ibid., 77–78.
56 Ibid., 83.
57 Ibid., 86.
58 According to John Benson, who wrote in 1640, as well as many subsequent scholars, Shakespeare’s first 126 sonnets were addressed originally “to a male”, with “masculine pronouns [changed] to feminine” and titles introduced “which directed sonnets to the young man to a mistress”. Even if true—and more than one scholar has contested Benson’s claim—sonnet no. 128 falls historically into another group of poems. See Margreta de Grazia, “The scandal of Shakespeare’s sonnets”, Shakespeare’s sonnets: Critical essays, ed. by James Schiffer (New York: Garland, 2000) 89.
59 Quoted from The unabridged William Shakespeare, ed. by William George Clark and William Aldis Wright (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1989) 1304. Other editions may differ in spelling or punctuation.
lady can be called the lover’s music”—and this largely in terms of two “erogenous zones”: lips and fingers.

Clearly Shakespeare’s sonnet is “about” music, even if it may not be as “contrapuntal” as some of Chaucer’s verse. To what extent, however, is it factually reliable in terms of musicological information? Students of Renaissance performance practices would probably consider sonnet no. 128 a poorly written—or, at best, an eccentric—description of how an actual virginal works. In line 2, for example, Shakespeare seems to confuse the wooden soundboard of the instrument (the poet’s metaphorical rival in love) with its wooden keys, either by mistake or through “a kind of metonymy” in which wood is associated with the poet’s rival. In line 3 Shakespeare describes the girl as swaying unnecessarily from side to side—although “sway’st” may also refer to control or mastery exercised by that rival. In line 5 he seems to confuse “jacks”, the quills that pluck the strings, with the keys the lady depresses to work the jacks. (Or does he? Shakespeare’s description takes into account the optical illusion of keys rising, instead of being struck, to “kiss” the girl’s hand. It is also possible, as David Crookes has done, to read Shakespeare’s reference to jacks metaphorically, in terms of a “ceremonial greeting to a superior.” And so on. In the last analysis, however, sonnet 128 has little or nothing to teach us about actual music-making, save in the realms of poetic license and imagery.

Another reading of this poem, however—this one proposed by Fred Blick—links sonnet no. 128 with other portions of Shakespeare’s literary output by way of esoteric internal references to the Pythagorean tradition of “mathematical” music. According to Blick, the locations within Shakespeare’s cycle of both sonnets 8 and 128 (those most explicitly devoted to musical issues) reveal the poet’s awareness of “the general Pythagorean philosophy of numbers” also cited in act 5, scene 1, of The merchant of Venice. Since the number “128” calls to mind vis-à-vis “8” the ratio of a given tone to another tone precisely four octaves lower (128:8::16:1); since, too, “four octaves was the range of the virginal in Shakespeare’s time”; and, finally, since another of the sonnets (no. 141) employs a pun on “base” (i.e., physically and morally “low”) and “bass”: therefore—or so Blick’s argument concludes—Shakespeare’s sonnet “conjures up the image of a fortunate keyboard “tikled” erotically by the fingers of the Dark Lady [herself a “base” figure] in the presence of the unhappily envious poet.” For John Hollander, aspects of sonnet no. 8 also suggest the realm of musica speculativa: of “sympathetic vibrations” as

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62 Vendler, The art of Shakespeare’s sonnets, 546–47.
63 Renaissance commentaries on contemporaneous sonnets, including Petrarch’s, associated certain “rhetorical situations” with “male competition”. Kennedy, “Petrarchan textualty”, 163.
64 Hollander, The untuning of the sky, 136.
65 See David Z. Crookes, “Shakespeare’s sonnet 128”, Explicator 43/2 (winter 1985) 14–15. Crookes also refers to Richard II, act 3, scene 3, and provides a diagram showing “how an individual virginal-key operates” mechanically.
67 Blick, “Shakespeare’s musical sonnets”, 161–62. The “Dark lady” is one of three “characters” in the poet’s sonnets and is first introduced in sonnet no. 127.

well as the “three-part polyphony of the familial unit” described as “sier, and child, and happy mother” mentioned in line 11.68

If Shakespeare’s sonnet can be more perfectly understood in terms of insights into musical instruments and Pythagorean arcana, Thomas Hardy’s “Lines to a movement in Mozart’s E-flat symphony” can perhaps be better understood in terms of scansion and melody. At first glance, however, “Lines” appears to lack any meaningful musical content. For one thing, only its title mentions “music” (a Mozart symphony); the poem itself—the first of its four stanzas is reprinted below—seemingly has nothing to do with music in general or Mozart in particular:

Show me again the time
When in the Junetide’s prime
We flew by meads and mountains northerly! –
Yea, to such freshness, fairness, fullness, fineness, freeness,
Love lures life on.69

To complicate things, the very existence of a poem about “art” music flies in the face of statements by several of his biographers that Hardy only enjoyed “folk” tunes.70 In point of fact, Hardy knew more than a little about classical music.71 Furthermore, Robert Gittings has suggested that “Lines” constituted “an attempt [by Hardy] to fit words to Mozart’s well-known symphony in E-flat, the minuet and trio movement.”72 If Gittings is correct, a musicological puzzle would appear to be embedded in Hardy’s imaginative-literary text, with the title providing a clue to its solution.

Of the four canonical works in that key,73 no. 39, K.543, would appear the most plausible link with Hardy’s “Lines”, if only because that symphony has always been the most frequently performed of Mozart’s “E-flat” symphonies. Unfortunately, the poem cannot in any way be made to “fit” (whatever that might mean) the minuet-and-trio movements in any relevant Mozart symphony, including K.543. Instead, according to Colin Boone, the poem incorporates distinctive rhythmic patterns derived from the principal theme of the second (or “Andante”) movement of Mozart’s symphony no. 19, K.132.74 Although not entirely convincing, Boone’s argument makes sense. Compare, for example, Hardy’s first line, which Boone reads as:

Show-- / --- / me-a / gain-the / time-- / --
with the opening measures of Mozart’s melody:

Example 1: Mozart, symphony no. 19, andante, mm. 1–6 (first violin part)

Each syllable or hyphen in Boone’s reading indicates a beat in Mozart’s tune; each diagonal slash indicates the end of one measure and the beginning of another. In order to make this first example work, however, one must ignore the tie at the beginning of measure 3. Similarly, Boone maintains that lines 4–5 can be read (with some alterations) as

Yea-- / to-such / freshness- /-fairness / full-ness / Love lures life / on--

These lines recall subsequent portions of Mozart’s tune:

Example 2: Mozart, symphony no. 19, andante, mm. 13–19 (first violin part)

The fact that Hardy called his poem “Lines to a movement”, rather than “Lines to a minuet” (as Gittings erroneously implies), also argues for the andante in question. Finally, we should remember that Hardy was under no compulsion to follow Mozart’s metrics precisely.

Coincidentally, perhaps, Mozart’s andante is an unusually long and complicated composition. Its reputation too is unusual: Alfred Einstein considered it “full of spiritual unrest and rebellion”, while Luigi Della Croce and Neal Zaslaw have described it as “exceptional” and so “personal” as to call for replacement within K.132. In addition, the opening of Mozart’s melody “reproduces the incipit of a Gregorian Credo”, while its later phrases reproduce part of “a popular German Christmas carol, Joseph lieber, Joseph mein”. Although symphonies were sometimes performed during church services, the presence of similar “liturgical” references in the subsequent, “all-too-worldly” minuet-and-trio suggest an “ironic or parodistic” (rather than “sacred”) interpretation. Did Hardy agree with any of these experts? Was he even aware of the facts they cite? Probably not.

What ultimately makes most of Chaucer’s, Shakespeare’s, and Hardy’s fiction musicologically significant is not references to or incorporations of particular compositional strategies, instruments, mathematical ratios, or tunes. Instead, and for

73 Boone, “Hardy’s poem Lines to a movement in Mozart’s E-flat symphony”, 67–68.
74 See The variorum edition of the complete poems of Thomas Hardy, ed. by James Gibson (London: Macmillan, 1979) no. 388 (p. 458).
75 Nor may Boone’s thesis help littérateurs read Hardy’s poetry. In Calvin Brown’s opinion, employing musical notation to “explain” English verse is “in general more of a nuisance than a help”. Calvin Brown, “Can musical notation help English scansion?” Journal of aesthetics and art criticism 23 (1965) 333.
77 Zaslaw, Mozart’s symphonies, 233–34.
78 Ibid., 83.
many readers, the principal musical value of fiction involves reception. Like hundreds, possibly thousands of other literary works—and not only essays, articles, and reviews, but novels, plays, short stories, and so on—the poems examined above tell us how their authors and contemporaries “heard” music. In other words, all “musical” fiction may be grist for reception-oriented musicological millers.

Today, for instance, every student of Mozart’s 19th- and early 20th-century reputation turns to reviews of performances preserved in magazines and newspapers, as well as to portraits, scores, and other form of cultural documentation. The same students might also turn—and, increasingly, are turning—to Søren Kierkegaard’s Enten/eller, Friedrich Nietzsche’s Der Fall Wagner, and Romain Rolland’s Jean-Christophe for additional information and insights. Although Nietzsche mostly uses Mozart as a stick for Wagner-beating (at least in his later writings), and although Rolland is better known for his opinions about Beethoven, all three authors have more than a few things to say about how their contemporaries and themselves understood and enjoyed ‘their’ Mozart.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is an especially interesting figure insofar as imaginative fiction and reception issues are concerned, because an unusually large number of novels, plays, and short stories mention him and his music. More than a few of these fictions revolve upon the composer’s real or imagined personality or social circumstances: Mozart as prodigy, profligate, or pauper. In Mozart auf die Reise nach Prag, for example, Mörike depicts the composer as good-natured, sensual, and somewhat absent-minded, a man fascinated by beauty of all kinds: at once an embodiment of Biedermeier domesticity and a proto-Romantic critic of late–18th-century Europe’s stifling social order. In Marrying Mozart, on the other hand, Stephanie Cowell depicts her protagonist as a rebellious, aloof, and sexually compelling youth. Mörike addressed his novella to a small, highly sophisticated readership, one sympathetic to subtle ironies and romantic inflections; his knowledge of the composer’s music informs much of his

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81 For a general review of musical reception, especially insofar as 1980s European musicology is concerned, see Rezeptionsästhetik und Rezeptionsgeschichte in der Musikwissenschaft, ed. by Friedheim Krummacher and Hermann Danuser (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1991).
84 Reprinted in English in The case of Wagner / Nietzsche contra Wagner / Selected aphorisms, trans. by Anthony M. Ludovici. The complete works of Friedrich Nietzsche 8 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964). Der Fall Wagner was originally published in German in 1888.
86 Rolland’s Beethoven-Bild has recently received attention from German musicologists. Among other studies, see Stefan Hanbeide, “Die Beethoven- Interpretation von Romain Rolland und ihre methodischen Grundlagen,” Archiv für Musikwissenschaft 61/4 (2004) 255–74; and Maria Hülle-Keeding, Romain Rollands visionäres Beethovenbild im Jean-Christoph (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997).
87 A very few of these fictions, including works by Hermann Hesse, are identified and described in Carol Wootton, “Literary portraits of Mozart,” Mosaic 18/2 (fall 1985) 77–84. See also Erich Valentin, Die goldene Spur: Mozart in der Dichtung Hermann Hesses (Augsburg: Die Brigg, 1966); and Paulina Salz Pollak, “The influence of Mozart’s The Magic Flute on Hesse’s Steppenwolf,” Proteus 8/2 (fall 1991) 50–56. Other surveys, similar in certain respects to Wootton’s, ignore Hesse in favor of Mörike, Puškin, and Shaffer’s Amadeus. See, for example, Gerhard Vom Hofe, “Mozart-Bilder in der Literatur,” Mozart: Ansichten, ed. by Gerhard Sauder (St. Inberg: Röhrig, 1995) 101–27.
MOZART.

A POEM,

BY C. D. BRADLEE,

1883.

One hundred twenty and seven years ago, at Salzburg-town,
A lovely babe was born, Mozart by name, whose great renown
In all after years a true grace and holy joy did bring;
And thankful hearts around that blessed name do closely cling;
And throughout all the world a music grand is strangely felt,
That will bind all human hearts by one harmonious belt;
And make all years, as only one, by strains so soft and grand,
That come to every shore with love, as by Divine command.

MOZART, when he was only four, played on the clarichord,
And minuets performed, with great, and strong, and strange accord;
And when but seven, at sight, he hardest music read and played,
And notes, and tunes, and chords, at once his nimble will obeyed;
When only twelve, a dedication-piece by him was given
For those who raised a church to teach the orphaned young of Heaven;
And when thirteen years of age, indeed, an order he received
Greater than could be dreamed, or for a moment be believed.

As an "Archbishop's Director," he nobly, truly stood,
A master-mind, and leading soul, in every changing mood;
And at sixteen he was, by all throughout the world confest
The leading perfect artist, under the severest test;
At twenty-three the "Imperial Court" their plaudits gave,
And for their own especial use his mighty powers did crave;
As "Royal Composer," by law, he from that time was known;
And thus his splendid fame to highest, noblest heights had grown.

Idomeneo was the greatest work that bore his name
He ever gave the waiting world; a kindling light, a flame,
A great, uplifting, holy grace, that made us all rejoice;
And called right proudly forth, at once, the world's applauding voice;
And at twenty-four this striking piece found, from him its birth,
And onward rolled, with holy, gracious sweetness, round the earth;
Whilst other great and mighty works he gave unto us all,
That, with sweet and sacred beauty, on happy hearts do fall.

Nearly ninety-two years ago, December fifth, they say,
This mighty, noted man went home, and found eternal day!
No, no! for, in truth, he lives, and will live forevermore;
His works in mystic, golden chains, will bind him to our shore;
Henschel and Carl Zerrahn, and many more, his notes will take,
And, by their mighty, wondrous skill, his soul again will wake.
And Mozart thus will truly live, and daily bless the heart,
And through all other gifted souls a saving grace impart.

Fig. 1: C.D. Bradlee, Mozart: A poem (Boston: privately printed, 1883).
Brown University Library.
story. Cowell’s larger readership probably consists mostly of “true romance” enthusiasts, and she employs tropes from that genre as well as from historical novels of several kinds. She has little to say about music, however.

Other fictions deal primarily with one or more of Mozart’s compositions. “After K452” by Richard Howard and “Mozart’s D major string quartet K.593, 2nd movement, mm. 53–56” by Arthur Margolin are cases in point. (Die Zauberflöte, Don Giovanni, and the Requiem have been much more frequently fictionalized.) Musicologists may not care for Howard’s and Margolin’s poems, however, because neither actually mentions “music”—and this, in spite of the fact that Margolin’s effort was published in Perspectives, a professional, peer-reviewed journal. Still other novels and stories about Mozart belong to the literary genre 19th-century fantasist Charles Renouvier dubbed uchronias: “alternate” histories of imaginary futures. Imagine that Mozart moved to England in his youth and lived there into his sixties, where he composed an opera entitled Susan and Michael but never wrote a Requiem: this is the premise of Bernard Bastable’s novel Dead, Mr. Mozart. Bastable’s book is primarily a crime thriller, whereas Mozart in mirrorshades—as we shall see below—combines distopian uchronia with pointed social satire.

Comparatively few and far between, early–19th-century fictions often praised Mozart for moral as well as musical qualities. This made sense for several reasons—chief among them the fact that, prior to the last one hundred years or so, only a handful of Mozart’s works were performed with any frequency. As Leon Botstein has explained, his subject’s reputation was transformed during the late 1800s and early 1900s, when Mozart was perceived as an “ideal candidate for aesthetic renewal” because of his innocence, stylistically “sweet” compositional style, universal appeal, and psychological profundity. These qualities eventually led to what Botstein has epitomized as “an almost unbearable excess” of late–20th-century “Mostly Mozart” broadcasts, festivals, and recordings.

Botstein supports his arguments largely with references to musical journalism and the opinions of musicologists and conductors, including such “antique” authorities as Eduard Hanslick and Richard Strauss; he eschews fiction in favor of belles lettres as a source of information. Nevertheless, novelists and poets have also helped remake Mozart in their own images. Consider the poem published in 1883 by Boston’s C.D. Bradlee, which refers to the composer as a “perfect artist” and possessed of “a great, uplifting, holy grace” [fig. 1]. Richard Specht, who later edited Der Merkur, published an early–20th-century tribute of his own: twelve “Mozart poems” epitomizing and exalting individual operatic characters [fig. 2]. By World War I, in other words, Mozart as international musical superstar had “arrived”.

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92 Bernard Bastable, Dead, Mr. Mozart (New York: St. Martin’s, 1995).
94 Ibid., 13.
95 C.D. Bradlee, Mozart: A poem (Boston: privately printed, 1883). The author thanks the trustees of Brown University Library for permission to reprint in facsimile this unique document.
96 Richard Specht, Mozart: Zwölf Gedichte, illus. by Heinrich Lefler (Wien: M. Munk, ca. 1910). The volume is unpaginated.
Mein Stanzel, komm zu mir, hierher, ganz nah. 
Dank schön. So bist bei mir und so ist's gut,
Und jetzt sei't ruhig. Und, gent, du darfst nicht weinen — 
Das hält ich jetzt nicht aus — mir tut's zu weh!
Siehst: ich bin ja ganz ruhig. Und weiß doch wahr,
Mit mir ist's aus. Schau meine Hände an,
Wie abgezehrt sie sind und blau und faser —
Ich glaub', ich könnte die Octave nicht spannen —
Und schau' nur, Stanzel, wie die Haut mir trocknet
Und wie die Haare spröd und brüchig sind —
Und wie mir das Gesicht verändert ist:
Ich fürchte' mich fast vor meinen eigenen Augen,
Sie sind so wild und sehen so stark und glühend,
Als hätten sie was Schreckliches gesehen —
Und haben's auch vielleicht... doch das sind Träume... 

Ich fürchte' mich jetzt so oft. Nicht vor dem Tod:
Der ist mir lieb und Freund und singt mir vor —
Das schöne, was ich weiß, hab ich von ihm... —
Doch manchmal fürchte' ich mich, ganz ohne Grund... —
Es schüttelt mich vor Angst — und auch vor Joren
Und Schmerz, daß ich schon jetzt, gerade jetzt
Davon soll, da ich ruhig leben könnte,
Jetzt meine Kunst verlassen, da ich nicht mehr
Der Mode Sklave, nicht von Spektatanten mehr
Gefesselt, frei und unabhängig sein
Und sagen könnte, was das Herz mir eingibt, —
Das alles weiß ich selber erst seit jetzt,
Seit ich gemeint, das Leben macht mich frei... —
Nun tut's der Tod — — und alles nehm' ich mit,
Und wenige wissen, wie ich wirklich bin... —
Renn's nicht mehr zeigen... 

Doch! Ich kann's ja! Stanzel,
Jetzt darfst mir meine Blätter nicht mehr weigern —
Gib sie mir hier — sonst würd's zu satt! Du mußt!
Hab's ja gesagt: das Requiem wird für mich,
Und jener graue Vater war Freund Hein —
Mein Freund, der mir heut' macht viel vorgeprüft... —
Denn weißt: heut' macht's mir geträumt... vielleicht auch
War's gar sein Traum, ich glaub' nicht, daß ich schlief — —
Hat mir geträumt, daß ich im Garge läge.

Fig. 2: Richard Specht, Requiem from Mozart: Zwölf Gedichte
(Wien: M. Munk, ca. 1910).
In 1956, to cite a more recent example, W.H. Auden published his *Metalogue to “The magic flute”*. An assessment of the composer’s character as well as his music, Auden’s *Metalogue* reflects its author’s expert knowledge of 18th-century opera and verse: it was Auden who, together with Chester Kallman, wrote the libretto for *The rake’s progress*. In one passage Auden facetiously summarizes a century and more of *Mozart-Rezeptionsgeschichte* in terms of national identities, with a little mid–20th-century Existentialism thrown in:

> We know the Mozart of our fathers’ time
> Was gay, rococo, sweet, but not sublime,
> A Viennese Italian; that is changed
> Since music critics learned to feel estranged;
> Now it’s the Germans he is classed amongst,
> A Geist whose music was composed from Angst,
> At International Festivals enjoys
> An equal status with the Twelve-Tone Boys.97

(Or possibly, as Botstein has suggested, a position of cultural superiority—rather than mere equality—insofar as Schoenberg’s and Webern’s 21st-century reputations are concerned.) In another part of his *Metalogue*, Auden brings the story of *Die Zauberflöte* up-to-date, costuming its cast as American academics. The Queen of the Night, for example, is presented as “A highly paid and most efficient Dean / (Who, as we all know, really runs the College).” Sarastro—the poet’s “voice”—finds himself “Teaching the History of Ancient Myth / At Bryn Mawr, Vassar, Bennington or Smith”.98 Pamina, in the meantime, works as a fact-checker for *Time* magazine, while her graduate-student husband acquires “manly wisdom as he wishes / While changing diapers and doing dishes”—a suburban adaptation of Tamino’s Trials by Fire and Water.99

Of importance especially to the post-1970s Mozart reception has been the success of *Amadeus*, Miloš Forman’s film adaptation of Shaffer’s stage play.100 Auden’s Mozart, who “indulged in toilet humour with his cousin” even as he “created masterpieces by the dozen”, anticipates Forman’s film portrait and, in this, anticipated a thousand Salzburg gift-shop souvenirs. Because it presents the composer as a “wild and crazy guy”, free-spirited and sexy (even as it preserves and reinforces his status as creative culture-god), *Amadeus* transformed Mozart into a pop icon, a composer of movie music and cell-phone ring tones.101 Thanks to Forman and other Hollywood film-makers, compositions such

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98 Auden, “Metalogue”, 175.
99 Ibid., 175–76.
101 Although they have little to do with imaginative literature, “classical” ring tones have become important to students of postmodern culture. As Erkki Pekkilä explains, “a high-pitched musical fragment from a Mozart symphony”, when employed as a ring-tone—today a downloadable source of musical information—transforms its users and listeners into “creators or conveyers of new cultural signifiers”. Erkki Pekkilä, “A theme (and world) of one’s own: The semiotics and ownership of cell-phone ring tones”: a paper presented at the 17th congress of the International Musicological Society, Leuven, and summarized in *IMS 2002: 17th International Congress. Programme abstracts*, the congress program (Leuven: Alamire Foundation, 2002) 166.
as *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* and portions of the *Requiem* have become almost as familiar in pop-culture circles as certain songs by Irving Berlin and the Beatles.  

The various ways Mozart’s career and creations have been described, distorted, or speculated upon in post-*Amadeus* imaginative literature also exemplify aspects of the composer’s emerging postmodern reputation and influence. Consider three recent Mozart fictions: the bizarre “alternative” *Künstlerporträt* of Sterling’s and Shiner’s *Mozart in mirrorshades*; Rendell’s *A judgement in stone*, with its sophisticated and ironic references to *Don Giovanni*; and the academically precise playfulness of *The Mozart forgeries*, a “caper novel” by Daniel Leeson.  

*Mozart in mirrorshades* satirizes the retroactive corruption of a lost and lovely past by an unspeakably awful “present”. For its authors, Mozart’s status as postmodern media “star” personalizes a tale of endless “alternative” Europes ready and waiting to be looted by late-capitalist American corporations. Before the end of the story the young musician manages to secure a green card and escapes to the United States, where one of his pop tunes has already reached “number five on the *Billboard* charts! Number five!”  

The very existence of science fiction “about” classical music suggests that “pop culture” is becoming a synonym for “culture”. Unlike many other recent fictions, Sterling’s and Shiner’s story has even been evaluated in a professional musicological periodical.

*A judgement in stone*, on the other hand, draws upon the stern justice meted out in *Don Giovanni* as well as upon Mozart’s reputation as a “classy” composer, one that up-to-date, well-to-do people ought to—and often do—listen to. The Statue that confronts Da Ponte’s fictional libertine is transformed by Rendell into “a stone that breathed”; housemaid Eunice Parchman. An illiterate, lower-class servant, Eunice murders her sophisticated employers the Cloverdales (husband George, wife Jacqueline, daughter Melinda, and adopted son Giles) because they live a life of pleasure she can neither understand nor sympathize with. Rendell coordinates Eunice’s fictional butchery with a televised broadcast of Mozart’s *dramma giocoso*. Thus, as a van driven by Joan Smith, Eunice’s partner in crime, enters the Cloverdale’s drive, we “hear” the Don singing “O guarda, guarda” (Look, look!). A few minutes later, Jacqueline—who declines to accompany her husband into the kitchen, where Eunice and Joan are preparing to kill the entire family—settles “back against the sofa cushions” as act 2 begins with the quarrel between Leporello and the Don: “Ma che ho ti fatto, che vuoi lasciarmi?” (But what have I done to you that you wish to leave me?). In the kitchen, as Eunice and Joan shoot George in the neck with a shotgun, we hear in the background, “O, taci inguisto core” (Be silent, treacherous heart). Although it predates *Amadeus* by seven years, *A judgement in stone* is perhaps even more critical of social stereotypes associated with music than
Mozart in mirrorshades. Throughout Rendell’s pages, gendered depictions of power are consistently inverted: It is the Cloverdales, men and women alike, who are “feminized” in terms of their cultivated tastes, while Eunice, their murderer, is “masculinized” in terms of her appearance, strength, and unshakable Philistinism.

Finally, The Mozart forgeries. Reminiscent of situations scattered throughout detective stories from the 1960s to the present day, Leeson’s novel pursues to the bitter (hypothetical) end the problems inherent in faking and selling not mere copies of extant Mozart manuscripts, but newly “created” 21st-century holographs of the clarinet quintet, K.581, and clarinet concerto, K.622. Filled with musicological facts, including the titles of actual reference works, The Mozart forgeries also mentions such real-life musicologists as J. Rigbie Turner, recently of The Morgan Library and Museum; some of the novel’s most exciting scenes are set in or near Sotheby’s and Christie’s actual New York auction houses. Leeson is not only himself a Mozart expert but a storyteller who entertains us with his expertise. His novel remains one of a very few contemporary fictions to have been acclaimed in the professional musicological press.

With the exception of a few novels, including Davenport’s and Leeson’s, “musical” fictions have mostly been written by musical amateurs. This is not to argue, however, that educated and even expert musical opinions are rare in fiction. Aldous Huxley’s Antic Hay, for instance, contains a scene adapted from a review of Mozart’s G-minor string quintet, K.516, written in 1922–23, when Huxley served as music critic for the Westminster gazette. The celebrated fifth chapter of E.M. Forster’s Howard’s end wittily “reviews” an imaginary performance of Beethoven’s fifth symphony as well as masterpieces by Brahms, Debussy, and Elgar. “Coordination”, another of Forster’s stories, even includes Beethoven as a character. Finally, Willa Cather’s Song of the lark—the story of a Great Plains farm girl who becomes a celebrated singer—includes conductor Theodore Thomas, singer Lilli Lehmann, and other real-life musicians into its cast of characters. The song of the lark, however, penetrates farther into music than do Forster’s and Huxley’s fictions. So does Davenport’s Of Lena Geyer. Thea Kronborg, Cather’s protagonist, is modeled on Olive Fremstad, a Swedish-born Wagnerian soprano raised...

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110 See, for example, Leeson, “The miracle of the Mozart manuscripts”, Musical America 111/1 (January 1991) 23–25.
111 An especially interesting review of The Mozart forgeries, written by D.W. Krummel, appeared in Notes 61/3 (March 2005) 777–78. See also, The clarinet 32 (June 2005) 76.
114 See E.M. Forster, Howard’s end, ed. by Alistair M. Duckworth (New York: Bedford; St. Martin’s, 1997) esp. 42–52. Forster’s novel was originally published in 1910.
117 In spite of the importance of music within her novels and short stories, Cather “recognized fully her own limitations where music was concerned”. Edith Lewis, Willa Cather Living: A personal record (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953) 48. Although she took piano lessons as a child, Cather “was more interested in what her teacher could tell her about other things, especially his European past, than she was in playing the instrument itself. Richard Giannone, Music in Willa Cather’s fiction (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968) 4. Cather’s real-life interest in her foreign-born teacher suggests Thea’s interest in Andor Harsanyi’s invented background and knowledge of poetry.
in Minnesota; other characters and incidents recall Cather’s own Nebraska girlhood. In addition to exploring the possibilities of musical biography in her conjoined Thea-Fremstad heroine, Cather attempts at least once in The song of the lark to “reproduce the emotional effect of the Wagner operas upon the printed page.” Of eight short stories published by Cather between 1915 and 1920, four portray “artists who live by their voice[es], whose singing is their work” in life. One of these stories, A Wagner matinée, has been called “the most poignant account of Wagner’s music jarring awake dormant feeling” in American women filled with “fin de siècle ferment.”

Perry Meisel approaches The song of the lark and other fictions from a quite different but equally interesting perspective. For him, Cather’s novels, including The song of the lark, “dramatize in thematic as well as rhetorical ways” the same “loops or crossings” he perceives “at work in electric blues and rhythm and blues”: chiasmi (in the language of classical rhetoric) that reveal the problematic paired illusions “of deep mind and open space, interior and exterior, inside and outside, dandy and cowboy, East and West.” In other words, as Thea travels from rural Colorado to Chicago (and back), she dramatizes—as do the blues and rock ‘n’ roll—certain key conflicts in America’s cultural and social development.

Of Lena Geyer is also exceptionally “musical”, especially insofar as it embodies its author’s intimate personal knowledge of composers, performers, and works associated with the operatic stage. Davenport’s novel is full of precisely phrased musical history, including descriptions of Vienna at the turn of the last century and of the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Herself the daughter of celebrated diva Alma Gluck, Davenport contributed columns about music to The New Yorker magazine and published a well-known biography of Mozart. Yet surprisingly few musicologists have taken her seriously. True, Davenport distanced herself from certain autobiographical aspects of her novel, asserting that Geyer was not her mother and reducing Guido Vestri, Geyer’s fictional conductor, coach, and lover, to the significance of “a wooden Indian” who “leaks sawdust.” In explaining how she struggled to complete her book, however, Davenport confessed that, unless she “could recreate the authenticity of the several years between 1908 and 1915 when Maestro [Arturo Toscanini] at the Metropolitan made operatic history that has no parallel, there [would have been] no novel.” (Of Lena Geyer also includes Gustav Mahler among its personnel.) Even Joseph Horowitz, who sought out almost every existing source of information about the impact of Toscanini’s conducting on American culture, scarcely acknowledges Davenport’s existence in his “culture god.”

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120 Giannone, Music in Willa Cather’s fiction, 99.
123 See Davenport, Mozart (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932).
126 Ibid., 217.
study. And this, even though descriptions of a "fictional" Vestri caused a furious real-life Toscanini to exclaim, "It is not me, not at all. Vergogna! Shame on you!" One feels the Maestro may have protested too much.

Save, perhaps, for some of Chaucer’s poetry and for Hardy’s "Lines", none of the imaginative literary works discussed above appears to incorporate anything essentially or especially "musical" in its organization or style. Even if Meisel is correct and Cather’s fiction in some sense "works" like rock and the blues, The song of the lark is far more "about" music than of it. Can fiction be put together "like" music? If so, how? Four pairs of works, each composed of a fiction and a musical composition, appear to share formal, expressive, or stylistic similarities: Gabriel Josipovici’s Goldberg: Variations and Bach’s eponymous masterpiece; Eduard Mörike’s Mozart auf die Reise nach Prag and Don Giovanni; Jane Austen’s Pride and prejudice and Mozart’s piano concerto no. 9, K.271; and Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus and Beethoven’s sonata op. 111. A fifth work of fiction, Toni Morrison’s Jazz, can be read in terms of the musical as well as more broadly cultural traditions that inform its contents and textures.

For centuries, speakers of English have used the word “form” to refer to shapes as well as boundaries, collections, populations, and regulations; “form” is also understood as suggesting a "style of expressing the thoughts and ideas in literary or musical composition, including the arrangement and order" of their “different parts”. For Carl Dahlhaus, musical form involves structural coherence on a large scale—the overall coherence, for example, of a sonata movement rather than the significance of particular chords, key changes, timbres, or tunes within it. In this sense musical form seems to exist independently of individual composers or styles. Melodies and modulations, for example, may come and go, but the “sonata idea” (to borrow a phrase from William S. Newman) persists—if not forever, at least for quite a while. On the other hand, musical coherence may exist outside of, or in addition to, formal traditions and patterns. A piano piece may be called “sonata” but have nothing to do with so-called “sonata form”.

In describing his own evolution as an author of imaginative literature, Gabriel Josipovici has already answered the first question posed above (“Can fiction be put together ‘like’ music?”) with a qualified “yes.” What’s more, in Goldberg: Variations he

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127 See Joseph Horowitz, Understanding Toscanini: How he became an American culture-god and helped create a new audience for old music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987). Horowitz mentions Davenport twice (ibid., 153 and 187n); on both occasions, however, he acknowledges her only at second-hand.


130 Among a host of publications in which he considered formal aspects of musical compositions, see Carl Dahlhaus, Between romanticism and modernism: Four studies in the music of the later nineteenth century, trans. by Mary Whittall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) passim.

131 See, for example, William S. Newman, The sonata since Beethoven (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), as well as other volumes and editions of Newman’s “History of the sonata idea”.

132 See Gabriel Josipovici, “Music and literary form”, Contemporary music review 5 (1989) 65–75. I write “qualified”, because “Music and literary form” was published in 1989, Goldberg: Variations in 2002. Nevertheless, Josipovici seems always to have taken seriously the musical possibilities of fiction. Among other things he explains that Stravinsky was the ‘presiding genius’ over his own (Josipovici’s) first novel, which he constructed out of dialogue and lists instead of narrative prose. Josipovici’s realization that such a thing was possible called to his mind Stravinsky’s “recognition of the musical possibilities” inherent in ignoring conventional Russian syntax when setting Russian verse to music. For Stravinsky, this “was one of the most rejoicing discoveries of my life. I was like a man who suddenly finds that his finger
answers the second question (“If so, how?”) by way of demonstration. As Werner Wolf has explained, Josipovici’s novel embodies more than “structural analogies between textual and musical form.” Instead, it constitutes

one of the most remarkable additions to the field in which fiction attempts to meet music…. [It] not only discusses music, as countless other authors before [Josipovici] have done, mostly on the basis of fictional biographies of musicians and composers… but also aspires to the condition of music … in a much subtler way and moves beyond a merely plot-related concentration on music.

Here is a work of imaginative literature that, at least to some extent, can be “read” (listened to) as if it were a piece of music: Johann Sebastian Bach’s Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen, BWV 988, popularly known as the “Goldberg variations” (after Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, musician to one of Bach’s patrons, Count Keyserling of Dresden).

In its division into thirty chapters, for example, Josipovici’s novel resembles Bach’s composition—itself made up of 30 variations, as well as a binary theme or “Aria” presented before the variations begin and repeated after they end. Even the novel’s absence of “theme”—there is no “aria”—is analogous to a musical puzzle pointed out recently by Peter Williams. If Bach’s “thirty movements” are variations on a given theme, Williams asks, “why is [that theme] never heard again or even hinted at … until it is repeated, sans difference, at the end of the entire cycle?” Does Josipovici’s novel even have a theme? If so, what is it? In part paraphrasing Stephen Abell, Wolf insists that “there is not a single chapter [of Goldberg: Variations] that cannot in some way be related” to “creative capacity”, and hardly any chapters “in which emotional human relations do not play a role.” Josipovici, however, does not anywhere identify either of these “themes” (or single two-part theme) as such. Nor are all of his chapters as unmistakably concerned “thematically” with creativity or human relations as Bach’s variations are constructed upon a common fundamental harmonic progression that begins

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\begin{align*}
&\begin{array}{c}
&\text{Example 3: Harmonic foundation of Bach’s “Goldberg variations”, mm. 1–8}
\end{array}
\end{align*}
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can be bent from the second joint as well as from the first” (quoted in “Music and literary form”, 67). Later, Josipovici also explains that other works were influenced by particular compositions, including a performance of Harrison Birtwistle’s The triumph of time (ibid., 69–70).


135 Ibid., 294–95.

136 In full, and in the original German: Clavier Übung bestehend in einer Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen vors Clavicimbal mit 2 Manualen. See Peter Williams, Bach: The Goldberg variations (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 3–4. Like Bach’s Count, Josipovici’s Mr. Westfield asks his own Goldberg to “read to him till dawn or else till I am sure he is asleep, whichever is the first”, Josipovici, Goldberg, 1.

137 For a general discussion of fiction in terms of variations form, see Brown, “Theme and variations as a literary form”, Yearbook of comparative and general literature 27 (1978) 35–43. This intriguing article suggests that both Eve’s morning song to Adam in John Milton’s Paradise lost, as well as the whole of Robert Browning’s Ring and the book, are in certain ways analogous to musical theme-and-variations form. Wolf, on the other hand, compares only Bach’s individual variations to Josipovici’s individual chapters.

138 Williams, Bach: The Goldberg variations, 35.

Finally, Bach’s variations are arranged in ten groups of three variations each, with every third variation a canon.140 No such subdivisions are present in Josipovici’s novel, even though some of its chapters are called “canons”.

On the other hand, aspects of Josipovici’s fiction point unmistakably and imaginatively toward certain of Bach’s variations. The greater length, stylistic stance, and unusual “sectionality” of chapter 16, for example, suggests the greater length, ceremonial rhythms, and sectional divisions of Bach’s sixteenth variation. It is precisely this chapter that alludes in its “plot” to the historical origins of Bach’s Musikalisches Opfer, BWV 1079. Just as Bach was asked to improvise on a musical theme provided him by Frederick the Great, so Josipovici’s protagonist Samuel Goldberg is asked to improvise on a verbal theme: “A man who had enough wanted everything…. As a result he was left with nothing. Treat this not as a morality but as a tragedy.”141 Wolf epitomizes this scene as “a mise en abyme” that comprises “a complete imitation of the form” of Bach’s variation, itself a French overture.142 Explicit references to appropriate musical materials and processes also occur throughout Josipovici’s novel. Among these is a discussion of fugue—itself, perhaps, a kind of verbal fugue—in chapter 18, which suggests at least something of the contrapuntal structure of Bach’s 18th variation. Wolf has argued that a verbal text “can never really be musicalized”.143 Nevertheless, Josipovici makes numerous gestures toward a kind of fictive “musicalization”.

Mozart auf die Reise nach Prag refers to Don Giovanni in several places, but Mörike never claimed to have modeled his novella on Mozart’s opera. According to Raymond Immerwahr, however, Mörike’s “unique achievement”—which in large part resides in a fictional “evocation of creative genius in another art” (i.e., music)—embodies certain “formal principles” evocative of Mozart and his age.144 Furthermore, “in each of the [novella’s] two climactic sections, the crux of the narrative is Mozart’s creation of music for Don Giovanni: in the one the rustic wedding dance, in the other the music of the statue and of infernal retribution.”145 Immerwahr finally insists that a “two-peaked structure was… imposed upon Mörike by the musical subject of his novella”, modeled upon the four halves of Mozart’s two acts.146

The first two sections of [the novella] present Mozart in his encounter with the rococo, showing how it wastes his human resources but bears splendid fruit in that part of his musical creation which was adaptable to rococo style. The last two sections present the Mozart whose warm humanity transcends the limits of the rococo and whose tragic genius transcends human comprehension. The balance of gaiety and tragedy, harmony and conflict… is symbolized within each part in a pair of thematic images: spilling liquid and spontaneous growth, the artfully nurtured tree and the symmetrically

140 See Williams, Bach: The Goldberg variations, 41–42 and elsewhere for tables and charts of organizational materials and principles in Bach’s composition.
141 Josipovici, Goldberg, 112.
142 Wolf, “The role of music in Gabriel Josipovici’s Goldberg: Variations”, 300; italics in the original.
143 Ibid., 298. Interestingly enough, Wolf begins his lengthy article with a quotation from Walter Pater: “All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.” Ibid., 294.
145 Ibid., 106.
146 Ibid.; italics added.
ordered fountain, solid handicraft and agrarian cultivation, consuming fire and icy cold.\textsuperscript{147}

Like other students of “musical” fiction, Immerwahr considers themes and motifs. Unlike many of his colleagues, however, he seems more interested in “spirit and structure.”\textsuperscript{148} In other words, he moves from structure and motif (liquid, tree, fountain, and so on) to overall “style” and sensibility. For Wallis Field, on the other hand, particular “colour relationships and symbolism” provide a way of uncovering Mörike’s underlying “symmetry of themes and form.”\textsuperscript{149} Field’s discussion suggests a fugal analysis that begins with the locations and harmonic characteristics of the novella’s subjects, counter-subjects, and episodes. Immerwahr’s suggests a Schenkerian reduction from which details have been removed, rather than located, in order to reveal an underlying “line”. Incidentally, no one seems to have read Mozart auf die Reise nach Prag in terms of musical form per se, but Immerwahr himself published another, quite different interpretation of Mörike’s masterpiece.\textsuperscript{150}

All this aside, can fictions like Goldberg: Variations and Mozart auf die Reise nach Prag actually help us understand music? The answer would seem to be no, at least not insofar as Josipovici’s and Mörike’s literary relationships with Bach’s and Mozart’s scores are concerned. If, however, one thinks of music as more or other than “scores”, the answer would seem to be yes. Our perception and reception of music involves a great deal more than music “itself”. As Nicholas Cook has suggested, music and especially (but not exclusively) musical performances should be understood as scripts rather than texts.\textsuperscript{151} Scores may exist in splendid isolation from everyday experience, but music heard, felt, and thought about does not and cannot. Cook’s arguments call to mind drama theorist Baz Kershaw’s assertion that “no item in the environment of performance,” even what happens “off-stage”, “can be discounted as irrelevant.”\textsuperscript{152} Just as every performance contributes to the reception of a given composer or conductor or soloist, so every reading—and reader—contributes, consciously or unconsciously, to new ways of understanding a given literary device or character or cultural circumstance. Many post-structuralist critics would agree that reading is itself a form of “performance.”\textsuperscript{153}

Robert Wallace has argued that Jane Austen’s novels share what he calls “general stylistic achievements” with Mozart’s music, especially with certain piano concertos, and that both kinds of works can better be understood in terms of each other.\textsuperscript{154} For Wallace, Mozart and Austen employ the same or similar “essential forms” of expression;

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 120.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 118.


\textsuperscript{152} Baz Kershaw, The politics of performance: Radical theater as cultural intervention (New York: Routledge, 1992) 22.

\textsuperscript{153} What is sometimes called “reader-response criticism” has a lengthy history. See, for example, Louise M. Rosenblatt, Literature as exploration (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1938). Nevertheless, such criticism is sometimes claimed by poststructuralist theorists as a method of their own.

\textsuperscript{154} Robert K. Wallace, Jane Austen and Mozart: Classical equilibrium in fiction and music (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983).
As a consequence, their compositions and fictions resemble each other as exemplars of "classical equilibrium". In effect, Wallace postulates a sophisticated pedagogy that uses fiction to "explain" music. And vice versa: Wallace argues that we may be able to learn more about either music or fiction (or particular works of music or fiction, or the epochs in which they were created) if we compare them with one another.

More specifically, Wallace suggests that Mozart's works tend to remain "within boundaries" and "close" to home keys, just as Austen's characters tend to "remain indoors, seldom venturing out—or far—for travel". If "home" and "indoors" are analogous to a "home key", the shift in locale from Longbourne to Netherfield in chapter 7 of *Pride and prejudice* may be said to resemble (as Wallace suggests) the harmonic transition from tonic to dominant in the opening movement of Mozart's E-flat major piano concerto, K.271. In presenting and defending these analogies, Wallace pays comparatively little attention either to the music Austen owned and probably played, or to musical references in her novels. He appears less interested in content than in structure, and less interested even in broad-based structural principles than in his readers' appreciation of "essential" expressive devices and stylistic gestures.

Taken at face value, some of Wallace's assertions are musicologically problematic. He implies, for example, that Mozart's harmonies seldom or never wander far from home. But how far is "far"? In Mozart's C-minor concerto, K.491, the first movement wanders all the way from that key to F-sharp minor, about as far around the circle of fifths as tonal music can go. Again: if chapters 1–10 of *Pride and prejudice* are compared in functional-harmonic terms to the first movement of Mozart's E-flat concerto, the "modulation" from Longbourne to Netherfield takes place much too late to match the analogous portion of Mozart's exposition. Wallace, however, readily admits both that Austen "did not consciously model her works on the structure of Mozart's", and that "many Mozart concertos would have served about as well as K.271" insofar as his discussion of *Pride and prejudice* is concerned.

In other respects, Wallace is perhaps more "musicological" (as well as more interdisciplinary) than many of his colleagues. He does not merely refer to compositions, but reproduces examples from them on his pages and discusses those examples as a professional musicologist might. As a teacher of music and fiction, Wallace asks whether the kind of juxtapositions we often find on parallel time charts of the arts [can] be given more precise meaning” by avoiding “influence studies”; he encourages his students to

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155 Ibid., 2, 5.
156 Ibid., 45.


compare works “as isolated art objects” even before they turn to “the history of style in the separate arts.”

Whether Mörike strove in Mozart auf die Reise nach Prag to suggest the alternating emotional currents of Don Giovanni is uncertain, although his novella is certainly “about” Mozart and his opera. Thomas Mann, on the other hand, openly acknowledged that he modeled—or remodeled—his Doktor Faustus on Beethoven’s sonata in C minor, op. 111. Mann’s several musical fictions, including the novellas Der kleine Herr Friedemann and Tonio Kröger, have several times been examined in light of Wagnerian leitmotiv, and dodecaphonic compositional techniques. In his earlier works, “love-deaths” were themselves a kind of leitmotif for Mann. At the climax of his novella Tristan, for instance, Gabriele plays fragments of Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde—including the “Liebestod”—on the piano; a day later “her condition worsens, and, like Hanno after the exertions of his improvisation in Buddenbrooks, she dies.” Later, Mann sometimes positioned musical modernism in juxtaposition with cultural decline: Much of chapter XXII in Doktor Faustus, for example, is devoted to a detailed explanation of Arnold Schoenberg’s twelve-tone technique, while the novel’s concluding chapters chart the catastrophic results of German nationalism under Hitler. At the same time Faustus also consists of a series of carefully constructed fictional “themes,” “keys,” and “modulations,” articulated by means of mostly unambiguous sectional divisions, some of which mirror (as well as refer to) both the sonata-allegro form of Beethoven’s op. 111 first movement and the theme-and-variations form of his second.

Several kinds of evidence bear witness to Mann’s extraordinary juxtaposition of fictional and musical materials. First, in chapter VIII of Doktor Faustus, Mann has Wendell Kretzschmar, one of his minor characters, deliver lectures on Beethoven’s sonata and other late works. So vivid is Kretzschmar’s lecture that portions of it have been reprinted in musicological reference works. Second, fragments from that lecture


164 Walter Frisch, German modernism: Music and the arts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) 196.

165 Again, see Saffle, “Text as music / Music as text”, passim.

166 See, for example, The Beethoven companion, ed. by Thomas K. Scherman and Louis Biancolli (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972) 1051–55. Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune refer in passing to Kretzschmar’s lecture (although they misspell the character’s name); they also mention the op. 111 sonata as “provok[ing] a particularly moving passage” in Mann’s novel “that is meant to reveal its effect on the state of mind of the German avant-garde” prior to World War II.
are reproduced not merely “elsewhere” in Faustus, but mirror in their locations and uses analogous passages from Beethoven’s sonata. One of these fictive-musical fragments is the German word Wiesengrün (“meadow green”), which calls to mind the middle name of Frankfurt School cultural critic and musicologist Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno. We know Adorno helped Mann write Faustus, because Mann says so in a second book: his Story of a novel. The passage is worth reproducing in its entirety, because Mann rarely revealed his often ironic and subtle aesthetic intentions as straightforwardly as he does here—and because one of his intentions in Faustus was, unmistakably, Beethoven’s sonata:

Adorno sat down at the piano and, while I stood by and watched, played for me the entire Sonata opus 111 in a highly instructive fashion. I have never been more attentive. I rose early the following morning and for the next three days immersed myself in a thorough revision and extension of the lecture on the sonata, which became a significant enrichment and embellishment of [chapter 8] and indeed of the whole book. Third, Beethoven’s sonata has two movements; the lecture refers to “Wiesengrün” in that the three syllables “Wie-sen-grün” are conjoined with the motif C–G–G in the second movement of Beethoven’s sonata:

Adagio molto, semplice e cantabile

Example 4: Beethoven, sonata in C minor, op. 111, 2nd movement, mm. 1–2

This motif, together with its conjoined musical-fictional implications, serves as the “theme” for an interlocked series of “variations” that comprise most of the second half of Mann’s novel. It is here (in chapters XXVI–XLVII and epilogue), too, that most of the references to both the word “Wiesengrün” and Beethoven’s motif appear.

A great many other structural similarities and devices link sonata and novel. Among them is a long-term “modulation” associated with the youth and early manhood of Mann’s protagonist Adrian Leverkühn. This modulation, which mimics the I–V/
X–I harmonic organization of classical sonata movements,\(^{69}\) takes place in the novel’s first half as Leverkühn at first embraces (in chapters III–IX or “exposition”) and then abandons music (in chapters X–XVII or “development”), only to return to it after his university studies in theology are over (in chapters XVIII–XXIV or “recapitulation”). Furthermore, Mann’s fictional “first movement” is separated from the second by a “document” (chapter XXV) that stands outside the rest of the novel’s unfolding story: an account of Leverkühn’s encounter, real or imagined, with the Devil. Interruptions in the opening chapters resemble the breaks in mm. 2 and 4 of Beethoven’s first movement, while narrator Serenus Zeitblom’s high-flown literary style is suggestive of “antique” (i.e., French overture) gestures in Beethoven’s introduction (mm. 1–16). Finally, overlapping stories of lost love and innocence echo aspects of Beethoven’s second movement, with its references to “heav-en’s blue, lov-ers’ pain, fare-thee well.”\(^{70}\)

In conclusion, Toni Morrison’s \textit{Jazz}.\(^{7}\) This novel poses special problems, because there is no musical “form” in jazz—at least, not insofar as widely accepted sectional divisions, prescribed modulations, and the like are concerned. There is, however, a \textit{social} form of jazz (or, rather, several such forms), and throughout Morrison’s novel they are often expressed in terms of gender as well as class and race. And there are jazz \textit{styles}. As a genre, jazz is widely understood and enjoyed as a collection of variegated and often individualistic gestures and tropes: rhythmic patterns, performance practices, chord progressions, and so on. A talented performer can “jazz” anything, even though that “anything”—a familiar popular song, perhaps, or a chord progression—may not itself “be” jazz. And style is elusive: no question about that. Scholars appreciate Beethoven’s contributions to the \textit{sinfonia caracteristica} tradition,\(^{72}\) but none of them has yet written a second, equally accomplished “Pastoral” symphony. Nor has anyone put Charlie Parker’s distinctive spin on a stylistically analogous but otherwise new performance of \textit{Koko}.

According to Tracey Sherard, Morrison’s novel is about the blues and black women’s narratives.\(^{73}\) For Sherard, the medium or form through which the blues as a “specifically female cultural form” of music is disseminated is the phonograph record.\(^{74}\) Jon Panish emphasizes race rather than (or in addition to) gender. In his discussions of still other jazz novels, including \textit{The horn} by John Clellon Holmes, Panish emphasizes the “primary performer/audience nexus” that comprises “the slowly dissipating [black] saxophone legend Edgar Pool, the ‘horn,’ and two white hipsters.”\(^{75}\) Jurgen Grandt, on the other hand, argues that Morrison’s novel employs narrative strategies of style and structure similar to those in another \textit{Jazz}: a novel by Czech author Hans Janowitz.\(^{76}\) Finally,

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\(^{69}\) See Leonard Ratner, \textit{Classic music: Expression, form, and style} (New York: G. Schirmer, 1985) 217–47 passim. Ratner’s emphasis on keys rather than themes as defining 18th- and early–19th-century sonata practices is crucial to understanding both sonata-form traditions and ways in which sonata form may be appropriated in works of imaginative literature.

\(^{70}\) Mann, \textit{Doctor Faustus}, 54.


\(^{72}\) See F. E. Kirby, “Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ symphony as a ‘sinfonia caracteristica’”, \textit{The musical quarterly} 56/4 (October 1970) 605–23.


\(^{74}\) Ibid.


for Dirk Ludigkeit, Morrison’s novel is “above all an experiment in narrative designed to reconfigure the relationship between the text and the reader”, based on “patterns of adaptation created in black music”.  

Ludigkeit’s observations have perhaps the greatest immediate relevance for musicologists, because they examine Morrison’s fiction as if it were music. Ludigkeit likens the novel’s narrator to a “jazz performer” who him/herself introduces three main characters (the “ensemble”), and he epitomizes “the City in 1926” as a setting that “determines the course of events [in Jazz] in much the same way that the harmonic structure of a tonal musical composition proscribes the possibilities for melodic variations.” Finally, rather

like the leader of a collectively improvising ensemble, the narrator structures the performance to allow shifts in emphasis, foregrounding first one, then [“than” in the original] another of the voices within the collective…. These shifts in focus are sometimes condensed into subtle variations even within longer passages to highlight different interpretations of the same events … an extension of improvisational technique … [recalling] a variation of basic call-and-response techniques … prominent in African music.  

In short, Morrison’s Jazz is not merely multi-formal in that it can be read in terms of musical, social, and technological practices. Nor is it necessarily altogether “original”, in that aspects of its dense and lively African-American story may have been adapted from (or, at the very least, resemble those of) a European model. Instead, Jazz is metafictional in that it can be read in terms of narratives that enclose other narratives, as a jazz performance encloses—but does not necessarily shape or “standardize”—a wealth of melodies and musical devices. For critics such as Grandt, Ludigkeit, and Sherard—as well as for novelists such as Holmes, Janowitz, and Morrison—jazz music itself provides us with new ways of understanding musical form, social as well as musical. Which is to say, it provides us with ways of understanding how musical style functions outside music or in addition to it, as well as ways of exploring metastructural issues through musical-fictional representations of race, class, and gender.

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178 Ibid., 176.
179 Ibid., 176–77.