

aesthetic meaning is produced not only in text and performance, but also through proxemics, kinesics, dress, gesture, language and numerous other codes.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the semiotics of television alerts us to the visual, aural and sound (music) codes, rather than operating solely with character and dialogue.<sup>33</sup>

My argument is that all of these considerations bridge the gap between music and the other arts. For, as we now know, the sociological critique of culture involves a complex de-coding of the representational and the non-representational, the linguistic and the non-linguistic, the narrative and the formal. Music does not present any special problems in this respect. My optimistic conclusion, then, is that the sociology of music may benefit from what we have learned from developments in other areas of cultural studies, and that our inhibitions about dismantling the 'autonomy' of music may begin to disappear. The papers which follow in this volume constitute a valuable contribution to this task.

<sup>32</sup> Keir Elam, *The semiotics of theatre and drama* (London, 1980).

<sup>33</sup> John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading television* (London, 1978); Umberto Eco, 'Towards a semiotic inquiry into the television message', *Communication studies: an introductory reader*, eds. John Corner and Jeremy Hawthorn (London, 1980), pp. 131-49.

## *The blasphemy of talking politics during Bach Year*

SUSAN McCLARY

### Introduction

The last great Bach Year, 1950 (the bicentennial of Bach's death), inspired the undertaking of many monuments of Bach scholarship we now find indispensable. The *Neue Bach Ausgabe* was initiated,<sup>1</sup> and it was during the course of preparing that new edition that the profound revision of Bach's compositional chronology began to emerge.<sup>2</sup> We now know, for instance, that his cantata composition was concentrated in a very few years, that his production of instrumental music occurred throughout his career, that he was far more ambivalent about his position as a church musician than had previously been recognized.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, our interest in the performance practices of early music intensified at that time, resulting in the proliferation of first-rate performers devoted to carefully reconstructed renderings of Bach's music.

But of all these extraordinary contributions to our understanding of Bach, my favorite souvenir of that last Bach Year remains Adorno's 'Bach defended against his devotees'.<sup>4</sup> In this classic essay, Adorno set forth a

<sup>1</sup> *Neue Bach Ausgabe*, ed. Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Institut, Göttingen, and Bach-Archiv, Leipzig (Kassel and Basel, 1954-).

<sup>2</sup> See Georg von Dadelsen, *Beiträge zur Chronologie der Werke Johann Sebastian Bachs* (Trossingen, 1958), and Alfred Dürr, 'Zur Chronologie der Leipziger Vokalmusik J.S. Bach', *Bach Jahrbuch*, 44 (1957), pp. 5-162.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Robert Marshall, 'Bach the progressive: observations on his later works', *The Musical Quarterly*, 62 (1976), pp. 313-57, and Friedrich Blume, 'Outlines for a new picture of Bach', *Music and Letters*, 44 (1963), pp. 214-27.

<sup>4</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (1967; reprint ed. Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp. 133-46.

model of how Bach's music might be understood in social contexts: both Bach's own and those of subsequent (especially post-war) generations. Unlike the other new directions for Bach scholarship suggested in the 1950s, however, Adorno's insights have had negligible impact on musicology or on the common reception of Bach.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, as 1985 (the tercentenary of Bach's birth) arrived, it became clear that the matters that concerned Adorno had changed very little in the intervening thirty-five years – except, perhaps, to move even farther in directions Adorno would recognize with the ironic satisfaction a paranoid derives from seeing worst-possible scenarios fully realized.

As a scholar classified as a Baroque music specialist, I participated during 1985 in several Bach Year celebrations: panel discussions in which my contributions were modest attempts at resituating Bach in his social, political, ideological context. To my overwhelming joy (again as paranoid confronted with worst-possible scenario), I was told outright by prominent scholars that Bach (unlike 'second-rate' composers such as Telemann) had *nothing* to do with his time or place, that he was 'divinely inspired'; that his music works in accordance with perfect, universal order and truth. One is permitted, in other words, to deal with music in its social context, but only if one agrees to leave figures such as Bach alone. Thus the time seems ripe to take up Adorno's enterprise, to re-examine the ways in which Bach's music can be said to bear the imprint of its social origins, to reconsider the place of Bach's music in present-day culture.

I shall begin by inquiring how and why music is treated differently than the other arts in our culture and also by examining our preconceptions and ideological uses of eighteenth-century music, Bach's in particular. By way of contrast, the second section will present a sketch of Bach's social context and discuss two of his compositions in order to demonstrate the kinds of insights that can be gleaned from socially grounded interpretation. In the final section, I shall consider what is to be gained by dealing with Bach in political terms.

### The Pythagorean dilemma

Why should the act of talking about music – especially Bach's – in a political context be regarded as blasphemous? To some extent, music's history of

<sup>5</sup> See, however, Laurence Dreyfus, 'Early music defended against its devotees: a theory of historical performance in the twentieth century', *The Musical Quarterly*, 69 (1983), pp. 297–322.

reception parallels that of literature and the visual arts in that it was displaced during the course of the nineteenth century to a 'separate sphere', replete with pseudo-religious rituals and attitudes.<sup>6</sup> At the very moment that music was beginning to be produced for a mass bourgeois audience, that audience sought to legitimize its artifacts by grounding them in the 'certainty' of another, presumably more absolute, realm – rather than in terms of its own social tastes and values.

I wish to argue, however, that music has a much longer history of claiming autonomy from social practice – indeed a history that can be traced at least as far back as Pythagoras and the discovery of a correspondence between harmonious tones and numerical proportions.<sup>7</sup> (Later theorists found similar correspondences between triads – the building blocks of the tonality of the bourgeois era – and properties of physical acoustics<sup>8</sup> or attempted to validate compositions on the basis of their apparently mechanical generation from pitch class sets.)<sup>9</sup> In other words, from very early times up to and including the present, there has been a strain of Western culture that accounts for music in non-social, implicitly metaphysical terms. But parallel with that strain (and also from earliest times) is another which regards music as essentially a human, socially grounded, socially alterable construct.<sup>10</sup> Most polemical battles in the history of music theory and criticism involve the irreconcilable confrontation of these two positions.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Jacques Barzun, *The use and abuse of art* (Princeton, 1974); Janet Wolff, *Aesthetics and the sociology of art* (London, 1983); Terry Eagleton, *Literary theory* (Minneapolis, 1983), and *The function of criticism* (London, 1984); and Susan McClary's series, 'Historical deconstructions and reconstructions' in the *Minnesota Composers Forum Newsletter*, especially 'The roots of alienation' (June, 1982), 'Autonomy and selling out' (June, 1983), and 'The living composition in social context' (February and March, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> What we know of Pythagoras' philosophy was transmitted principally through Philolaus, Plato, and Aristotle. See the discussion in Richard Norton, *Tonality in Western culture* (University Park, Penn. and London, 1984), pp. 80–104.

<sup>8</sup> As much as they may differ in specific argument, the two most influential theories of tonality, those by Rameau and Schenker, agree at least in their desire to account for tonality on a non-social basis. See Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Traité de l'harmonie* (Paris, 1722), trans. Philip Gossett (New York, 1971), and Heinrich Schenker, *Der freie Satz* (Vienna, 1935), trans. Ernst Oster (New York and London, 1979). For discussions linking these to the Pythagorean position see Norton, *Tonality*, pp. 22–55, and Susan McClary, 'The politics of silence and sound', the afterword to Jacques Attali, *Noise: the political economy of music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1985), pp. 150–2.

<sup>9</sup> See Allen Forte, *The structure of atonal music* (New Haven, 1973), and David Epstein, *Beyond Orpheus* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

<sup>10</sup> Plato deals seriously in the *Republic* with the ethical dimensions of various kinds of musical practice and considers some to be socially beneficial, others to be pernicious. Major stylistic changes in the history of Western music have frequently been accompanied by justifications indicating that new styles are products of changes in social values. For instance, the polemics of the early seventeenth-century 'seconda prattica' assert that abstract rules of

Clearly, my sympathies are with the latter position. But since I consider the problem to lie in that fundamental difference, I would like to explore briefly why the Pythagorean model, with all its subsequent manifestations, is so seductive.

Music enters through the ear – the most vulnerable sense organ. It cannot be closed or used selectively: one can avert one's eyes from the decor of an elevator but not one's ears from its Muzak. And especially in Western culture, in which the visual and the verbal are privileged as sources of knowledge, sound and music tend to slip around and surprise us.<sup>11</sup> The impact of the phenomenon seems immediate: one appears to experience concretely and intimately whatever the music dictates.

Moreover, music appears to be non-representational, at least as representation is usually construed. Unlike literature or the visual arts (which at least make use of characters, plots, color, and shapes that resemble phenomena in the everyday world and that can be referred to by means of ordinary language), music seems to be generated from its own self-contained, abstract principles. It is obviously much easier to demonstrate the content (both literal and ideological) of stories and pictures than of patterns of tones, for which most people have no verbal vocabulary and therefore no conscious cognition.

In music one enters a strange rarified world in which, for instance, the phenomenon of a db can move one to tears, can appear either to affirm (as though inevitably, absolutely) one's expectations or to shatter one's most fundamental beliefs.<sup>12</sup> Now a db all by itself in the real, extra-musical world signifies nothing. It can only do so by appearing in a highly structured, ordered context – a context dependent on norms, rules, and those apparently self-contained, abstract principles known explicitly only by initiated practitioners.

Thus, on the one hand, we have a priesthood of professionals who learn principles of musical order, who come to be able to call musical events by name and even to manipulate them; and, on the other hand, we have a

harmony no longer govern the new music, but rather considerations of text and passionate expression influence its composition. See Monteverdi's foreword to his *Fifth book of madrigals* (1605) as it was glossed by his brother, Giulio Cesare, in *Scherzi musicali* (1607) in *Source readings in music history*, ed. Oliver Strunk (New York, 1950), pp. 405–12. Schoenberg's move into 'atonality' was understood by him at times as a new abstract order, but at other times as a self-conscious rejection of bourgeois values. See Carl Schorske's account in *Fin-de-siècle Vienna* (New York, 1981), pp. 344–64.

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Don Ihde, *Listening and voice: a phenomenology of sound* (Athens, Ohio, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, the discussion of the function of the db in Schubert's Impromptu, Op. 90, No. 1 in Susan McClary, 'Pitches, expression, ideology: an exercise in mediation', *Enclitic*, 7 (1983), pp. 76–86.

laity of listeners who respond strongly to music but have little conscious critical control over it. Because non-professional listeners usually do not know how to account intellectually for how music does what it does, they respond either by mystifying it (ascribing its power to extra-human sources – natural or implicitly supernatural) or by domesticating it (trivializing or marginalizing it, asserting that it does not really bear meaning).

Neither priest nor consumer truly wants to break the spell: to reveal the social grounding of that magic. Thus the priesthood prattles in its jargon that adds a metaphysical component to the essence of music and abdicates responsibility for its power; and listeners react as though mystically – not wanting to attribute to mere mortals the power to move them so. For if one recognizes the power of music to manipulate through unknown means, one at least wants to believe that human hands are not working the controls. Or, conversely, if one is working the controls, one most understandably wants to deny responsibility, to displace it elsewhere. Both musician and layperson collude in this mystification, both resist establishing connections between the outside, social world and the mysterious inner world of music.

If one feels comfortable and identifies with what is being articulated in a particular kind of music, one is likely to be happy ascribing to it universality and extra-human truth. It is only when one is dissatisfied with that music and its implicit social agenda – when, for instance, one's own voice is being silenced by its prestige and its claim to universal autonomy – that the music's ideological constructedness will become an issue: a *political* issue. In other words, advocates of dominant culture tend to take refuge in a neo-Pythagorean position (that is, 'we didn't make this up: this is simply the order of things'). Opponents to reigning order, however, rightly seek to deconstruct its social ideology.

Jacques Attali, in his book *Noise*,<sup>13</sup> develops a means of deciphering socio-political agendas in apparently self-contained music by focusing on the dialectic between order on the one hand and violence on the other. Music must have some degree of order: otherwise it reduces to undifferentiated noise. But it must also have some elements that deviate at least occasionally from that order, or else there is no semblance of motion, no interest, no art. Different repertoires arrange themselves variously on a continuum between pure order and pure noise, depending both on the values of the society within which they are produced and also on those of the musicians who compose or even perform the music. By understanding as ideological constructs both the norms of a repertoire and also the devia-

<sup>13</sup> Originally published as *Bruits: essai sur l'économie politique de la musique* (Paris, 1977).

tions against those norms in particular compositions, one can begin to discern the most fundamental principles of social order of a period as well as individual strategies of affirmation and opposition.

One can also begin to distinguish between two very different groups of people who participate in music: (1) those who seek to immerse themselves in what they wish to regard as the pure order of music in order to escape what they perceive as the chaos of real life and (2) those who turn to music in order to enact or experience vicariously the simulacrum of opposition to the restrictiveness of real life (with 'real life' represented by those abstract though socially grounded norms). The ways in which one composes, performs, listens, or interprets are heavily influenced by the need either to establish order or to resist it.

We find ourselves today embedded in a society that is very anxious to secure for itself order in the face of potential or actual violence, in the face of pluralistic claims of the right to cultural production. Our theories of music (the means by which institutions train musicians) try to account for all events in a piece of music as manifestations of self-contained order, rather than as a more complex dialectical relationship between conventional norms and codes on the one hand and significant particularities and strategies on the other. And, consciously or not, our performance practices for the most part are designed to produce literal, note-perfect, reassuring but inert renditions of virtually all musics, whether originally affirmative or oppositional.

The music that dominates the concert repertory today is that of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment: the music that was first shaped in accordance with the social values of the stabilizing middle class.<sup>14</sup> This music appears (at least on some levels) to present itself as harmonious, perfect, organic, unified, formally balanced, capable of absorbing and resolving all tensions.<sup>15</sup> In this way, it is very much unlike either the music produced in the seventeenth century (which celebrates in its fragmented structures, its illegitimate dissonances, and in its ornate, defiant arabesques the disruptive, violent struggles of the emerging bourgeoisie against the norms of the church and the aristocracy)<sup>16</sup> or in the nineteenth century (which dramatizes the conflicts between the subjective self and the con-

<sup>14</sup> See Susan McClary, 'The rise and fall of the teleological model in Western music', to be published in *The paradigm exchange* (Minneapolis, 1987), and Norton, *Tonality*, pp. 169–230. Compare Terry Eagleton's account of the rise of the novel as a similar means of securing cultural hegemony for the English middle class in *The rape of Clarissa* (Minneapolis, 1982).

<sup>15</sup> See Susan McClary, 'A musical dialectic from the Enlightenment: Mozart's Piano Concerto in G Major, K. 453, movement II', *Cultural critique* 4 (Fall, 1986), pp. 129–69.

<sup>16</sup> See McClary, 'Politics', pp. 154–6.

straints of bourgeois society).<sup>17</sup> In the music of both the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries the ideological dimensions are far more evident, because their symbolic enactments of social antagonisms are to a large extent the message.

But, in fact, no less ideological are the 'classics', which pretend (at least on some levels) to be manifestations of perfect, absolute, universal form and truth. Surely the overt defiance of eighteenth-century convention that begins in Beethoven means to be unmasking precisely this claim. And even within what we frequently like to perceive as the pure order of eighteenth-century music itself, the tension between order (indeed, competing claims to legitimate order) and deviation – if not outright violence – is readily apparent if we permit ourselves to hear it.<sup>18</sup>

### Bach's music as social discourse

This is the case even with the great, universal Bach, whose music is so widely thought to transcend the conditions of his time, place, career, and personality. However, once we understand each of the styles Bach appropriated as an articulation of a set of social values, then we can begin to detect details in his celebrated stylistic synthesis that connect his particular eclectic mode of composition with his thorny social and professional relationships and even with his situation with respect to the broader political context.

To begin with the larger picture, Bach's collected works could only have been produced by someone occupying a de-centered position with respect to acknowledged, mainstream musical cultures. As a German, he belonged to a society that had long been culturally colonized – by the music of the church and later, in the secular realm, by Italian opera and the musical manifestations of French Absolutism.<sup>19</sup> Others of his contemporaries

<sup>17</sup> See Theodor Adorno, 'Spätstil Beethovens', and 'Schubert' in *Moments musicaux* (Frankfurt, 1964), pp. 13–36; Morse Peckham, *Beyond the tragic vision: the quest for identity in the nineteenth century* (New York, 1962); Rose Rosengard Subotnik, 'Adorno's diagnosis of Beethoven's late style: early symptom of a fatal condition', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 29 (1976), pp. 242–75, and 'The historical structure: Adorno's "French" model for the criticism of nineteenth-century music', *19th Century Music*, 2 (1978), pp. 36–60; and McClary, 'Pitches'.

<sup>18</sup> See McClary, 'Musical dialectic' and also the discussion of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, below.

<sup>19</sup> See Christoph Wolff's article on Bach, *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London, 1980), I, pp. 785–840, for a presentation of Bach's career that is sensitive to social contexts. See also Barbara Schwendowius and Wolfgang Dömling, eds., *Johann Sebastian Bach: life – times – influence* (Kassel, 1976), trans. John Coombs, Lionel Salter and Gaynor Nitz (Hamburg, 1977).

aligned themselves with one or another of the dominant options and wrote more or less systematically within its genres and for its market.<sup>20</sup> But Bach chose to retain his marginalized position, to appropriate all available musical discourses while clinging fiercely to his own German heritage, and to forge perhaps not so much a unified totality as a set of eclectic hybrids.

To have thus flown in the face of each of his spheres of influence required a certain kind of personality. Bach's career was mapped on the same forcefield of attractions and ambivalences as his style collection: never willing to commit himself entirely to any single context and its attendant ideology, he continued to shuttle among them, creating antagonisms with superiors while acting out possible means of reconciliation among these various contradictions only within his music.<sup>21</sup>

Seen against this social backdrop, the music itself ceases to appear as the pure mathematical order often suggested by theorists. For the styles Bach assembles are not simply different with respect to surface mannerisms: each has its own peculiar quality of moving through time. To combine in a single composition the on-rushing goal orientation of the Italian opera or concerto with the more sober, static, contrapuntal ideal of the German Lutheran repertory and the motion-arresting graces of French dance is to produce at times a highly conflicted procedure.<sup>22</sup> Yet Bach's genius lies in his ability to take these components that are highly charged – both ideologically and with respect to dynamic musical impulse – and to give the impression of having reconciled them.

### Examples

I would like now to demonstrate how this synthetic procedure is manifested in two of Bach's compositions: the first movement of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 and Cantata 140, *Wachet auf*. My approach differs fundamentally from those of mainstream music theory which, because it is in search of deep-structural universals, disregards the idiosyncracies of pieces – or regards them as surface difficulties to be explained away, to be reduced back to the norm.

This is not to say that I am uninterested in norms. Since signification in

<sup>20</sup> Handel, for instance, adopted far more fully the genre of Italian opera and later altered his style to fit the changing tastes of English audiences.

<sup>21</sup> A very high proportion (indeed most) of the surviving documents written by Bach are connected with disputes with authorities. These are collected in *The Bach reader*, ed. and trans. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel (New York, 1945).

<sup>22</sup> See the discussion below of Bach's cantata *Wachet auf*.

music is in part a product of the socially invested meanings of the individual elements themselves, both of these presentations will require that their components be discussed to some extent in the abstract: it is only up against the norms and semiotic conventions of a style that the strategies of an individual piece can be perceived as significant. Thus the reconstruction of both the norms and the semiotic codes upon which a piece relies is essential.<sup>23</sup> But inasmuch as every piece of music assembles and problematizes very different elements of the shared semiotic code, the interpretive process is by definition both ad hoc (it derives its strategies from the specific demands and features of the individual composition) and dialectical (it strives to account for particularities in terms of the norms they affirm or oppose).

### 1. *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, first movement*<sup>24</sup>

#### a. *Tonality*

On the most basic level, this concerto is a tonal composition (as are most of Bach's pieces). Tonality is, in short, a set of structural and syntactical procedures that emerged in Western music during the course of the seventeenth century and that underlies the concert music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>25</sup> It is so familiar to us that we often accept it as 'the way music is supposed to go', though its career of rise and decline happens to articulate through musical terms the course of the European bourgeoisie.<sup>26</sup>

Tonality as a procedure relies on the interaction between at least two mutually dependent levels: a background progression and surface strategies. Each informs the other and makes the other meaningful. The background progression is responsible for giving the impression of long-term

<sup>23</sup> We are fortunate in that there existed in the eighteenth century an area of inquiry that strongly resembles semiotics, known today as the *Affektenlehre* or doctrine of the affections. Theorists such as Bach's contemporary, Johann Mattheson, in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739), trans. Ernest Harriss (Ann Arbor, 1981), systematically codified both the various signs available for constructing representations of the affections and also the ways in which they could be combined in composition.

<sup>24</sup> The *Concerts avec plusieurs instruments* (French name, Italian forms, German dedication) were presented in autograph to the Margrave of Brandenburg in 1721. Bach had written them, however, between 1718 and 1721 for performance by his own ensemble at Cöthen, where he was employed. The fifth of them is thought to have been the last of the set to be composed.

<sup>25</sup> See Christopher Small, *Music – society – education* (2nd ed. rev., London, 1980), especially chapters 1, 3 and 4.

<sup>26</sup> See Norton, *Tonality*, and McClary, 'Rise and fall'.

coherence. Normally it begins in a home-key called the tonic, proceeds through a series of other keys (each of which is articulated heavily by a cadence), and returns at the end to re-affirm the tonic. The surface activities in a piece of tonal music are concerned with sustaining dynamic tension between the points of arrival that punctuate the background progression. This is largely accomplished by means of a complex harmonic syntax that continually implies what the next cadence in the background ought to be – while deferring the actual arrival until the composer sees fit to produce it.

This process is intensively teleological in that it draws its power from its ability to make the listener desire and finally experience the achievement – usually after much postponed gratification – of predetermined goals. It also seems rational, in that the harmonic procedures are always regulated and controlled by the constraints of tonal harmonic convention. The social values it articulates are those held most dear by the middle class: beliefs in progress, in expansion, in the ability to attain ultimate goals through rational striving, in the ingenuity of the individual strategist operating both within and in defiance of the norm.

In Bach's early eighteenth century, there were several different dialects of tonal procedure. The music of the German Lutheran sphere made use of tonal procedures in some respects (especially the harmonic strategies of implying and postponing goals),<sup>27</sup> but this repertory had other priorities (for instance, long-term structures based on traditional chorale melodies rather than on strictly 'logical' abstract background progressions) that resisted total conversion to tonal procedures. The French musical establishment under Louis XIV recognized all too well the destabilizing, exuberant, subversive character of tonality and tried to prevent its infiltration; the braking quality of French Baroque music (so peculiar to our tonally-trained ears) is the result of its attempt to appropriate the rational power of tonality while constantly draining off its energy.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> There had been several moments of Italian influence in Germany before this time. In the early seventeenth century, Praetorius employed the polychoral Venetian style, Schein adapted the affective extremes of the madrigal to the sacred motet, and Schütz experimented with these as well as with monody and *stile recitativo* in the context of Lutheran church music. Influence of the later seventeenth-century Italian *bel canto* style is evident in the music of Buxtehude and others.

<sup>28</sup> While French musical style was not of particular concern in Italy, the flamboyant, noisy Italian style was a prominent political issue in France, where it was heatedly discussed and often even banned. See Robert Isherwood, *Music in the service of the king* (Rochester, 1973), for a discussion of the connections between musical institutions and politics in the French court. For contemporary French polemics comparing Italian and French musical styles in terms of a noise/order dichotomy, see François Ragueneau, *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français* (Paris, 1702), and Le Cerf de la Viéville, Seigneur de Freneuse, *Comparaison de la musique*

The dynamic procedures just described are most characteristic of Italian music. Bach came into contact with the Italian musical language in the 1710s by way of the fashionable Vivaldi concertos being circulated throughout Europe,<sup>29</sup> and, to a great extent, he adopted it as his principal tongue. Yet (like many who write or speak primarily in a second language) his strategies continually treat tonal procedures as a construct, always under scrutiny, always being informed by the properties of the native tongue.

The opening movement of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 qualifies as a tonal composition. Its background progression opens in a key it unambiguously defines as its tonic (D Major), proceeds through a number of other keys (in order: A Major, B Minor, and F# Minor), then returns to re-establish the tonic key, thus achieving tonal closure. And throughout, its surface harmonic syntax is unrelentingly devoted to directing the ear to the next goal, instilling desire in the listener for attainment of that goal, and playing with (teasing and postponing, gratifying) the expectation of imminent closure. I will deal with Bach's more unusual strategies in fuller detail below.

#### b. *Concerto grosso procedure*

The movement's formal structure likewise is indebted heavily to the model Vivaldi developed and made popular. The concerto grosso involves two principal performing media: a large, collective force (the concerto grosso – literally, the 'big ensemble') and one or more soloists. These two forces enact metaphorically – and as a spectacle – the interactions between individual and society.

The fact that this genre developed in the early eighteenth century is not surprising, given that it so systematically addresses the tensions between the dynamic individual and stable society – surely one of the most important issues of the increasingly prominent middle class. By contrast, the medium favored by the sixteenth century was equal-voiced polyphony in which the harmony of the whole was very carefully regulated. The seventeenth century saw the emergence of solo genres (sonata, cantata, opera) that celebrate individuality, virtuosity, dissonance, and extravagant dynamic motion. In the eighteenth century, most musical genres testify to a widespread interest in integrating the best of both those worlds into one in

*italienne et de la musique française* (Paris, 1705), selections of both translated in *Source readings*, ed. Strunk, pp. 473–507.

<sup>29</sup> Bach studied Vivaldi's collection of concertos, *L'Estro armonico* (Amsterdam, 1712), shortly after they were published. He not only made arrangements of several of these pieces for organ and wrote many Vivaldi-style concertos himself, but he applied its formal principles to almost every other genre with which he was concerned.

which social harmony and individual expression are mutually compatible. The concerto, the new formalized opera aria, and the later sonata procedure all are motivated by this interest.

The standard Vivaldi-style concerto grosso movement begins with the presentation by the large group of a stable block of material, the ritornello. A ritornello represents a microcosm of the entire movement: it defines the tonic and principal thematic material, introduces at least a moment of instability in its middle, and then returns to the stable tonic and closing material to conclude. True to its name ("the little thing that returns"), it reappears throughout the piece to punctuate points of arrival in the background progression, thus throwing the unfolding structure into high relief. Such movements also end with a restatement of the ritornello, which articulates broadly the re-establishment of tonal and thematic order.

In a concerto grosso, the soloist enters between statements of the ritornello. This soloist is almost invariably a virtuosic exhibitionist, the individualism of which flaunts the collectivity of the larger ensemble. It is the active agent in the piece – it is primarily responsible for dynamic motion, for destabilization, the striving toward and achievement of each successive goal (which the large group greets and punctuates with a ritornello).

The convention itself, then, comes with an agenda attached. Given the high value placed on closure in eighteenth-century style, we already know prior to any particular piece (1) that the group will represent stability and the soloist, individual mobility; (2) that the two forces will operate dialectically – with the soloist providing movement, desire, and noise, the group acknowledging and appropriating the soloist's achievements; (3) that regardless of the oppositional tensions between the two in the course of the piece, the tonic key area and the group ritornello will have the last word – thus containing or absorbing the excesses of the soloist; and (4) that individual expression and social harmony will finally be demonstrated to be compatible.

The first movement of Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 shapes itself in accordance with these principles: it begins with a full-ensemble ritornello, alternates ritornello fragments with materials from the soloists in the body of the movement, and concludes with a complete statement of the opening ritornello (Ex. 1).

But the movement starts to present its own problems when the soloists enter. It begins as though it is going to be a concerto for solo flute and violin, but it soon becomes clear that there is a darkhorse competitor for the position of soloist: the harpsichord. Because today we are so accustomed to keyboard concertos, our senses are perhaps dulled to what

Ex. 1: Schematic overview of movement [\* = missed cadence or failed closure]

mm. 1–9	mm. 9–19	mm. 19–20	mm. 20–9	mm. 29–31	mm. 31–9	mm. 39–42
<i>Ritornello I</i>	Soloists	<i>Rit. IIa</i>	Soloists	<i>Rit. IIb</i>	Soloists	<i>Rit. III</i>
<i>D Major</i>	DM to AM	AM	AM	AM	AM to Bm	Bm
mm. 42–58	mm. 58–61	mm. 61–101	mm. 101–2	mm. 102–21	mm. 121–5	mm. 125–36
Soloists	<i>Rit. IV</i>	Soloists	<i>Rit. V</i>	Soloists	<i>Rit. VIa</i>	Soloists
Bm to DM	DM*	DM, F#m, AM	AM	AM to DM	DM*	DM
mm. 136–9	mm. 139–54	mm. 154–219	mm. 219–27			
<i>Rit. VIb</i>	Soloists	<i>Harpsichord cadenza</i>	<i>Rit. VII</i>			
DM*	DM	[DM]	DM			

this emergence of the harpsichord as a soloist signified in terms of the norms in Bach's day. And since this use of the harpsichord turns out to be one of the most unusual and most critical elements in the movement, a word on the conventional early eighteenth-century functions of the harpsichord is in order.

### c. Harpsichord

Harpsichords are almost invariably present in Baroque ensembles, but they normally play a service role. They are part of the continuo section, along with a melodic bass instrument, that provides the normative harmonic and rhythmic foundation for the group. Baroque ensembles cannot do without the continuo, but it usually blends in with the background like a custodian that, in insuring continuity, permits the expressive liberties of the soloists. Yet it is frequently the composer or group leader – the brains of the operation – who occupies the position of harpsichordist. Thus as self-effacing as the role may seem, the harpsichordist is often a Svengali or puppet master who quietly works the strings from behind the keyboard.

Anyone who has served as an accompanist knows the almost complete lack of recognition that comes with that position. As an active keyboardist, Bach was very familiar with this role and – if the narrative of this piece can serve as an indication – with its attendant rewards and frustrations. For in this concerto (in which he would have played the harpsichord part

himself),<sup>30</sup> he creates a 'Revenge of the continuo player': the harpsichord begins in its rightful, traditional, supporting, norm-articulating role but then gradually emerges to shove everyone else, large ensemble and conventional soloists alike, out of the way for one of the most outlandish displays in music history. The harpsichord is the wild card in this deck that calls all the other parameters of the piece – and their attendant ideologies – into question.

*d. Discussion*

The premises of the styles within which Bach has chosen to operate (tonality and concerto grosso procedure) presuppose both the simulacrum of dynamic motion and ultimate reconciliation, closure, collective order. The specific characters in Bach's narrative are:

(1) the large ensemble and its ritornello, which is confident (note the self-assured arpeggiation of the opening), unified, slightly smug (the repetition of each note of the unison arpeggio yields a quality of complacency or self-satisfaction), and self-contained (Ex. 2);

Ex. 2: Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, mm. 1–9

*Allegro*

Flute

Solo violin

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Violone

accompagnamento

Cembalo concertato

<sup>30</sup> The scoring for the concerto is unusual in that it requires only one violin part instead of the normal two. Bach ordinarily played viola with his group, but if he were occupied with the virtuosic harpsichord part, there would be one string player missing from his standard ensemble. See Friedrich Smend, *Bach in Köthen* (Berlin, 1951), p. 24.

3

5

5

5 6 6 6 6 7



## Ex. 2: (cont.)

Musical score for Ex. 2 (cont.), measures 7-12. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a harpsichord part with a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The upper staves (flute and violin) are mostly silent, with some notes appearing in measure 11. The lower staves (viola, violoncello, and violone) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and some rhythmic activity. The harpsichord part is marked with a '7' above the first measure and has figured bass notation below it: 6, 6/5, 6/5, 6, 6/5, 6, 7/5.

(2) the conventional soloists – the flute and violin, which are marked by eighteenth-century semiotics as somewhat sentimental (Ex. 3: note the elaborate ornamental filagree of mm. 13–16, the conventional sighs of mm. 20–1) and yet dynamic enough to accomplish modulations to other keys;

(3) the harpsichord, which first serves as continuo support (see Ex. 2) then begins to compete with the soloists for attention (Ex. 4a), and finally overthrows the other forces in a kind of hijacking of the piece (Ex. 4b).

I use the word 'overthrow' because the harpsichord's solo emergence is written so as *not* to appear as an orderly event in the planned narrative. The ritornello seems to know how to deal with the more well-behaved soloists, how to appropriate, absorb, and contain their energy. But in the passage just prior to the cadenza (the extensive harpsichord solo), Bach composes the parts of the ensemble, flute, and violin to make it appear that *their* piece has been violently derailed. They drop out inconclusively, one after another, exactly in the way an orchestra would if one of its members started making up a new piece in the middle of a performance. Their parts no

## Ex. 3: mm. 9–22

Musical score for Ex. 3: mm. 9–22. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a flute part with a melodic line and a violin part with a similar melodic line. The harpsichord part is highly active, playing a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The lower staves (viola, violoncello, and violone) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and some rhythmic activity. The harpsichord part is marked with a '9' above the first measure and has figured bass notation below it: 6, 6/5, 6/5, 6, 6/5, 6, 7/5.

Musical score for Ex. 3: mm. 11–22. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a flute part with a melodic line and a violin part with a similar melodic line. The harpsichord part is highly active, playing a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The lower staves (viola, violoncello, and violone) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and some rhythmic activity. The harpsichord part is marked with an '11' above the first measure and has figured bass notation below it: 6, 6/5, 6/5, 6, 6/5, 6, 7/5.

Ex. 3: (cont.)

Musical score for Ex. 3 (cont.) on page 30. The score is written for a grand staff (treble, alto, and bass clefs) and consists of five systems. The first system begins at measure 13 and includes a fermata. The second system begins at measure 15 and also includes a fermata. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, triplets, and dynamic markings such as *p*.

Musical score for 'Talking politics during Bach Year' on page 31. The score is written for a grand staff (treble, alto, and bass clefs) and consists of five systems. The first system begins at measure 17 and includes a fermata. The second system begins at measure 19 and includes dynamic markings *f* and *pp*. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings.

## Ex. 3: (cont.)

Musical score for Ex. 3 (cont.), measures 21-28. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a flute part (measures 21-28), a solo violin part (measures 21-28), a violin part (measures 21-28), a viola part (measures 21-28), a violoncello part (measures 21-28), a violone part (measures 21-28), and a cembalo part (measures 21-28). The flute and solo violin parts are melodic, while the other instruments provide harmonic support. The cembalo part is particularly active, with many sixteenth notes.

longer make sense. They fall silent in the face of this affront from the ensemble's lackey, and all expectations for orderly reconciliation and harmonic closure are suspended.

The cadenza is extremely unusual in several respects. First, it is presented by the wrong instrument: initially the piece appeared to be a concerto for sentimental flute and violin, yet the cadenza is delivered by a frenzied continuo instrument. Second, it occupies a full quarter of the movement's entire length. Most cadenzas at the time would have been a very few measures long – a slightly elaborate prolongation and preparation before capitulation to the ritornello and the final resolution. Third, sustaining a cadenza of this length requires extraordinary ingenuity. Recall that if the soloist's pace should slacken, the ensemble could leap in (theoretically in any case) and impose closure. Thus in order to maintain necessary energy the harpsichord part must resort to increasingly deviant strategies – chromatic inflections, faster and faster note values – resulting in what sounds like a willful, flamboyant seventeenth-century toccata: in its opposition to the

## Ex. 4a: mm. 47–8

Musical score for Ex. 4a: mm. 47-8. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a flute part (measures 47-8), a solo violin part (measures 47-8), a violin part (measures 47-8), a viola part (measures 47-8), a violoncello part (measures 47-8), a violone part (measures 47-8), and a cembalo part (measures 47-8). The flute and solo violin parts are melodic, while the other instruments provide harmonic support. The cembalo part is particularly active, with many sixteenth notes.

Musical score for Ex. 4a: mm. 48-55. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a flute part (measures 48-55), a solo violin part (measures 48-55), a violin part (measures 48-55), a viola part (measures 48-55), a violoncello part (measures 48-55), a violone part (measures 48-55), and a cembalo part (measures 48-55). The flute and solo violin parts are melodic, while the other instruments provide harmonic support. The cembalo part is particularly active, with many sixteenth notes.

Ex. 4b: mm. 151-5

151

Flute

Solo violin

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Violone

Cembalo

152

153

154

Cembalo solo senza stromenti

ensemble's order, it unleashes elements of chaos, irrationality, and noise until finally it blurs almost entirely the sense of key, meter, and form upon which eighteenth-century style depends (Ex. 5a). Finally, it relents and politely (ironically?) *permits* the ensemble to re-enter with its closing ritornello (Ex. 5b).

Ex. 5a: mm. 196–214

196

Cembalo

197

198

199

200

201

202

203

204

Ex. 5a: (cont.)

205

206

207

208

209

211

213

Ex. 5b: mm. 215-19

215

Cembalo

217

## Ex. 5b: (cont.)

Musical score for Ex. 5b (cont.), starting at measure 219. The score is for a concertino in D major, BWV 1049. The instruments are Flute, Solo violin, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, Violone, and Cembalo. The Flute part begins with a fermata. The Solo violin, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Violone parts play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Cembalo part provides accompaniment with chords and a bass line. The score ends at measure 224.

On the surface, closure is attained; but the subversive elements of the piece seem far too powerful to be contained in so conventional a manner. We are relieved at this closure (the alternative seems to be madness) but surely also somewhat troubled by its implications. The usual nice, tight fit between the social norm, as represented by the convention of concerto procedure, and specific content is here highly problematized. Certainly social order and individual freedom are possible, but apparently only so long as the individuals in question – like the sweet-tempered flute and violin – abide by the rules and permit themselves to be appropriated. What happens when a genuine deviant (and one from the ensemble's service staff yet!) declares itself a genius, unconstrained by convention, and takes over? We readily identify with this self-appointed protagonist's adventure (its storming of the Bastille, if you will) and at the same time fear for what might happen as a result of the suspension of traditional authority.

Bach thus articulates very powerfully precisely the dilemma of an ideology that wants to encourage freedom of expression while preserving social harmony. The possibility of virtual social overthrow, and the violence implied by such overthrow, is suggested in the movement, and the reconciliation of individual and social hierarchy at the end – while welcome – may seem largely motivated by convention. To pull this dramatization back within the limits of self-contained structure and order may seem to avoid the dilemma, but it does so at the expense of silencing the piece. For Bach is here enacting the exhilaration as well as the risks of upward mobility, the simultaneous desire for and resistance of concession to social harmony.

2. *Wachet auf*<sup>31</sup>

The shaping principles of both tonality and concerto (and their attendant ideologies) are operative in Cantata 140 as well. But because the cantata is tied to a clear extra-musical, liturgical tradition, Bach also has available to him in the writing of the cantata an explicit semiotic code of conventional signs and associations. It is thus possible to become far more specific with regard to signification in the cantata than in the strictly instrumental concerto. Yet Bach's compositional process never is reducible to the assembling of ready-made meanings. As is the case with all of his pieces, meaning is produced by virtue of particular choices and contextual juxtapositions. I would like here to address a cluster of issues that are engaged by Bach in the cantata: national identity, orthodoxy/Pietism, and gender construction.

a. *National identity*

Bach had access to three distinguishable national styles, each with its own social priorities, codes, ways of understanding and organizing the world. The Italian style had been associated with virtuosity and theatricality since the early seventeenth century. Its practitioners had developed carefully during that period (1) a code by which various flamboyant emotion-types could be constructed and (2) the goal-oriented motion described above in the section on tonality. The French, by contrast, had produced most of

<sup>31</sup> The cantata is designated for the twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity – an occasion that occurred but twice (1731 and 1742) during Bach's mature career. It is thus thought to have been written in 1731 and probably repeated in 1742. The chorale on which the cantata is based, 'Wachet auf', was written by Philipp Nicolai in the late sixteenth century. The librettist is unknown. See Alfred Dürr, *Die Kantaten von Johann Sebastian Bach* (Kassel, 1971), pp. 531–5, and also the *Norton critical scores* edition of the cantata, with commentary by Gerhard Herz (New York, 1972).

their officially recognized music in the context of Louis XIV's absolutist court. Much of it was self-consciously anti-Italian: in particular the emotional dimension of Italian music was regarded as excessive and the on-rushing quality of motion as dangerously close to chaos.<sup>32</sup> In this rarified world in which Platonic order and regimented dance ruled, music was restrained both in its expressivity (for the sake of *bon goût*) and in its characteristic quality of motion. Whereas the aim of Italian music was to sustain tension as long as possible, continually deferring relaxation to moments of orgasmic release, the French constantly drained off excess tension, often once or twice per measure, leaving only enough energy to provide a modicum of movement.

German music in the eighteenth century was heavily influenced by both Italian and French modes of composition. Several waves of Italian style had washed over Germany since the early seventeenth century, and each left a kind of hybrid behind in its wake.<sup>33</sup> French music had likewise been imported, especially by the nobility who aspired to emulate the example of Versailles.<sup>34</sup> What remained constant and recognizable in German music was the traditional tie to the Lutheran liturgy. Regardless of the stylistic surface of this music, to the extent that it incorporated chorale melodies it was still identifiably German.

Moreover, the dedication to chorale-based composition resulted in other, more specifically musical characteristics. For instance, if one was committed to utilizing a sixteenth-century, pre-tonal chorale as the structural underpinning for a movement, the formal demands of the chorale's cadential patterns had to be adjusted to the demands of conventional tonal background progressions – or vice versa. One had to decide whether to abide by the ways of God (as represented by the chorale's archaic – or 'irrational' – characteristics),<sup>35</sup> to follow the ways of Man (as represented by Italianate

<sup>32</sup> See n. 28.

<sup>33</sup> See n. 27.

<sup>34</sup> According to his son, C.P.E., while Bach was a student in Lüneburg he had some access to the Francophile ducal court in Celle and became familiar with the French style there.

<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Bach's Cantata No. 77, *Du sollt Gott, deinen Herren, lieben* (Leipzig, 1723). The underlying pre-existent material in the opening movement is the traditional chorale, 'Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot' ('These are the Holy Ten Commandments'), a modal chorale that is organized irrationally with respect to tonal norms. To compound the difficulty, Bach sets the chorale as a complex canon (a pun on law). The law of God – the old, pre-Enlightenment law – thus circumscribes many times over the movement's procedure. And while it abides by this law, in musical terms it sounds almost arbitrary in its unfolding. For the old law, it seems, is not compatible with the new eighteenth-century bourgeois tonal procedures that we tend to hear as absolute, timeless, and universal. If the movement makes us uneasy, this is no accident. It is meant to demonstrate how far removed our sense of propriety is from God's and to call the believer back from the false security of secular reason to the unfathomable truth of God. The arias that follow in the

tonal convention), or to try to bring about a reconciliation. And the composers of the German church had retained their taste for complex polyphonic counterpoint, in part because the sixteenth-century motet repertory continued to be used in Lutheran services well into the eighteenth century, in part because of a greater commitment to community (as opposed to Italian unimpeded individual – soloistic – progress), and in part because of an implicit, multileveled metaphysics still fashionable among certain of the German intelligentsia.<sup>36</sup> This penchant for imitative layering gave German music a richer, more ponderous quality of motion that becomes obvious when one compares, say, a concerto of Vivaldi with a concerto by Bach written in the 'Italian style'.<sup>37</sup>

A German composer had the option of pursuing these various styles side by side or meshing them in relatively unproblematic ways.<sup>38</sup> Bach often calls attention to the separate implications of the various components of which he makes use and then seems to overcome the dichotomies in order to fashion a world (always centrally German) in which aspects of each style can co-exist. The first movement of *Wachet auf* is a case in point.

The movement is framed as an Italian concerto, with a self-contained orchestral ritornello that opens, punctuates, and concludes the structure (Ex. 6). Yet the tonal motion within the movement (between statements of the ritornello) is determined by the cadential demands of the pre-existent German chorale melody, 'Wachet auf'.<sup>39</sup> This means that the on-going progressive characteristics of the concerto must be made compatible with the repetitive, relatively static AABA structure of the tune. Bach's solution

cantata are humble pleas for God to teach us His ways. This cantata presents an unusual strategy for Bach in that he stresses incompatibility of his sources rather than enacting his more typical synthesis.

<sup>36</sup> The collection of sixteenth-century motets *Florilegium portense* (compiled 1603) remained in use in Leipzig, for instance, during Bach's tenure, and Bach became especially drawn to this archaic style in his last years. See Christoph Wolff, *Der stile antico in der Musik Johann Sebastian Bachs* (Wiesbaden, 1968) for a detailed study of Bach's complex relationship with archaic styles.

<sup>37</sup> The first movement of Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 is an excellent example of a composition that utilizes Vivaldi's formal model but that renders it far more complex by means of permutations and imitative overlapping among the four soloists. The concerto-like first movement of the Sonata in B Minor for flute and harpsichord, BWV 1030 becomes so convoluted in its contrapuntal overlap that the linear narrative of the Vivaldi model threatens to break down altogether.

<sup>38</sup> Handel, for instance, made use of all the national styles with which he had had contact, but he rarely proceeded by juxtaposing self-consciously his various semiotic systems for the sake of forging new meanings – with socio-political implications – from that juxtaposition.

<sup>39</sup> The chorale was first published in 1598 and was incorporated (unlike many hymns composed after the canon was established) into official hymnals. It is extremely regular with regard to melodic contour, formal patterning, and cadential articulation – thus there is no musical dilemma inherent in fusing it with eighteenth-century tonal procedures.



satisfies both dimensions while managing to comment on each and even to make the apparent non-fit thematically meaningful.

Ex. 6: Schematic outline of *Wachet auf*, movement 1

mm. 1-17	17-53	53-69	69-105	105-17	117-24	124-7
<i>Rit. I</i>	Chorale, lines 1-3	<i>Rit. II</i>	Chorale, 4-6	<i>Rit. III</i>	Chorale, 7	<i>Rit. IV</i>
<i>E♭M</i>	<i>E♭M</i>	<i>E♭M</i>	<i>E♭M</i>	<i>E♭M to B♭M</i>	<i>E♭M</i>	<i>E♭M</i>
mm. 127-34	135-56	156-60	161-89	189-205		
Chorale, 8	Extended alleluia	<i>Rit. V</i>	Chorale, 9-11	<i>Rit. VI</i>		
<i>E♭M</i>	Gm to Cm	<i>CM</i>	<i>A♭M, Cm, E♭M</i>	<i>E♭M</i>		

The movement also bears, especially at the beginning, essential references to French music – indeed to the original contextual functions of the stylistic borrowings. For the piece sounds initially as though it is going to be a French overture, a genre developed for the ceremonial entrances of the Sun King to his entertainments<sup>40</sup> (Ex. 7). Two details mark the beginning in ways that illustrate Bach's intentions: (1) while French overtures, like most processional genres, are normally in duple meters, this one is in a *triple* meter and (2) the piece is in *E♭*, the key of *three flats*. This, then, is music for the entrance of a king – but of the Trinitarian King, which is, in fact, the subject of the chorale and cantata text.

As befits French style, the opening four measures are grand but also rather deliberate and static. They move, in other words, like a French piece. Now Bach seems willing on occasion to simulate briefly the quality of motion characteristic of French music. But even in his French-style dance suites, he quickly becomes impatient: once the French reference has been made, he modulates rapidly into the more congenial Italian on-rushing quality of motion.<sup>41</sup> This affective modulation has extremely interesting

<sup>40</sup> For further reading on the impact of Louis' personal imagery on the politics of representation and the absolutist state, see Louis Marin, *Le portrait du roi* (Paris, 1981), to be published in translation by University of Minnesota Press. Louis XIV appropriated many of the signs formerly associated with theological authority and suited them to his own use. Here Bach reverses the process and appropriates Louis' images back to theology, but this reversal underscores how close the two semiotic systems were at the time.

<sup>41</sup> This modulation from French rigidity to Italianate exuberance occurs repeatedly in Bach's most French genre, the dance suite. For instance, in the Partita in D major for harpsichord (the most self-consciously French of the entire set) virtually every movement operates according to this principle. The opening 'Ouverture' couples a French overture beginning and an Italian concerto continuation; the 'Courante' commences with the regular braking action of Louis' favorite court dance but soon converts to impetuous Italian motion; and the 'Sarabande' takes an extravagant courtly gesture and teaches it to flow. I know of very few movements by Bach in which he maintains a French quality of motion after he has referred to it.

Ex. 7: mm. 1-4

1. Chorale

Oboe 1, 2

Taille

Violin 1, Violino piccolo

Violin 2

Viola

Soprano, Horn

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Continuo

ideological implications, for Bach is, in effect, continually setting up a rigid aristocratic structure in order to transform it into the dynamic mobility with which he seems to identify.

The Italian ritornello of this German-chorale movement, then, begins as though it will be a French overture; but another motive enters in the fifth measure – syncopated, scattered, and halting at first (Ex. 8a), then increasingly capable of continuous motion until it leads to a quintessentially Italian spill-over (Ex. 8b), contained only at the very end by the return of the dotted French rhythms which brake the energy and conclude (Ex. 8c). And, of course, the French/Italian ritornello as a whole serves as the

## Ex. 8a: mm. 5-6

Musical score for Ex. 8a, measures 5-6. The score is in G minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. It features five staves: Oboe, Taille, Violin, Viola, and Continuo. Measure 5 begins with a forte dynamic. The Oboe and Taille parts play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Violin and Viola parts play a similar pattern, while the Continuo provides a steady bass line. Measure 6 continues the pattern, with a forte dynamic indicated below the staff.

## Ex. 8b: mm. 9-10

Musical score for Ex. 8b, measures 9-10. The score is in G minor and 3/4 time. It features five staves: Oboe, Taille, Violin, Viola, and Continuo. Measure 9 begins with a forte dynamic. The Oboe and Taille parts play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Violin and Viola parts play a similar pattern, while the Continuo provides a steady bass line. Measure 10 continues the pattern, with a forte dynamic indicated below the staff.

## Ex. 8c: mm. 16-17

Musical score for Ex. 8c, measures 16-17. The score is in G minor and 3/4 time. It features nine staves: Oboe, Taille, Violin, Viola, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Continuo. Measure 16 begins with a forte dynamic. The Oboe and Taille parts play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Violin and Viola parts play a similar pattern, while the Continuo provides a steady bass line. Measure 17 continues the pattern, with a piano dynamic (*p*) indicated above the Violin staff. The Soprano part has a vocal line starting with the syllable "Wa".

introduction that ushers in the true musical king of this cantata: the traditional German chorale melody.

The alternation of static, regal processional music with exuberant, on-rushing mobility remains characteristic of the entire movement. A similar effect is drawn from the superimposition of the monolithic, cantus-firmus presentation of the chorale melody and the imitative commentary of the remainder of the choir, though the semiotic associations are different: the chorale stands for the timeless voice of orthodox tradition, while the chattering counterpoint represents human response (Ex. 9).

In the terms of the text, the advent of the Trinitarian King is announced, and the sleepers awake and rush excitedly to join the procession. And Bach makes use of all these various elements from his various codes in order to produce a particular quality – that of moving repeatedly from the stasis of the regal or the timeless to the excited goal-oriented expectation of the human congregation and on to a tantalizing foretaste of synthesis or reconciliation.

On one level, the movement is a set of relatively autonomous microcosmic distillations, one nested inside the next, of the cantata's overall plot:

Ex. 9: mm. 17-25

17

Oboe

Taille

Violin

Viola

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Continuo

Wa - - - chet auf,

Wa - chet

6/4 2 5 7/5 6 6/4 3

20 1.

ruft uns die

auf, wa - chet auf, ruft uns die

Wa - chet auf, wa - chet auf, ruft

Wa - chet auf, wa - chet

6/4 2 7 6 6 5 6 6/4 2

Ex. 9: (cont.)

23

Stim - me - ruft uns die Stim - me

Stim - me, ruft uns die Stim - me

Stim - me, ruft uns die Stim - me

auf, ruft uns die Stim - me

$\frac{6}{8}$   $\frac{5}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{6}{4}$

the ritornello, the triple-phrased A-section of the chorale setting, and the movement as a completed structure all present on different levels the regal beginning, the rushing forward, and the reconciliation. On still a higher level (since final narrative closure – the longed-for union – is deferred until the end of the cantata), this movement converts into a huge opening gesture for the whole multi-movement complex. The architectural plan of the cantata follows the same phenomenological progression as the various layers of the first movement, with this part serving as a grand, French overture, the middle chorale-based movement concerned almost exclusively with the exploration of on-rushingness, and the closing chorale presenting final arrival, absorption into a timeless Lutheran orthodoxy that transcends and contains all the properties (French, Italian, German) that went into its accomplishment (Ex. 10). After hearing such a piece in which

so many interlocking levels all finally achieve closure, who could fail to believe in the overdetermination of salvation? In the specifically German plan of salvation?

Ex. 10: Overview of cantata

1. Chorale Fantasia \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Chorale-based movement  
[2. Recit.] 3. Duet I \_\_\_\_\_ [5. Recit.] 6. Duet II  
7. Chorale

The cantata enacts a synthesis of all available national styles in such a way as to appropriate them all and put them in the service of an expressly Lutheran agenda. The monad that contains the whole world is located, significantly, on German soil.

#### b. Orthodoxy/Pietism

One of the principal ideological disputes with which Bach was continually entangled was that between the more orthodox strains of Lutheranism versus the pietistic.<sup>42</sup> While this split is no longer of pressing interest to us, it did affect Bach's career directly (and, quite frequently, uncomfortably), and it informed his compositional choices.

Very briefly, orthodox congregations were more concerned with collective worship, with doctrine, with the traditional liturgy and hymnody. Elaborate 'art music' (performed by special choirs and instrumentalists and incorporating complex, often secular, styles) was included in services for the 'greater glory'. By contrast, Pietism focused on the personalized relationship between the individual and God. The intervention of elaborate, professionally performed music in that relationship was considered distasteful. Instead, Pietists preferred either straight congregational singing or else, in the context of devotionals, songs in which the lyrics dealt in sentimental – sometimes even erotic – terms with the one-to-one empathy between the Soul and Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

Much of Bach's church music attempts a reconciliation between these two

<sup>42</sup> For more on orthodoxy and Pietism, see Friedrich Blume, *Protestant church music*, trans. in collaboration with Ludwig Finscher *et al.* (London, 1975), Section II, pp. 125–316. For a detailed study of Bach's particular theological situation, see Günther Stiller, *Johann Sebastian Bach and liturgical life in Leipzig* (Berlin, 1970), trans. Herbert Bouman, Daniel Poellot, and Hilton Oswald (St. Louis, 1984).

<sup>43</sup> The chorale 'Wachet auf' is one of the most famous of the personalized Jesus hymns. It is one of the few hymns of Pietist leanings to be canonized in the mainstream chorale tradition, and thus it already suggests the possibility of reconciliation between the orthodox and mystical within itself. See Blume, *Protestant*, p. 140.

positions. On the one hand, most of it clearly falls in the orthodox camp by virtue of its complexity and theatricality, a fact brought to his attention repeatedly by displeased employers of Pietist leanings. But, on the other, he had an insatiable taste, as did many of the writers of cantata libretti, for the vivid, personalized imagery of Pietism. Indeed, the cantata as a *genre* represents a strange fusion between the opera-inspired techniques welcome only in orthodox contexts and the obsessions with Mystical Union, pain, and sentiment that might have seemed repugnant to many of the orthodox. To a Baroque poet or composer, however, this fusion offered an irresistible combination: virtuosity *and* extravagant emotional expression.

The libretto for *Wachet auf* is concerned with integrating both orthodox and pietistic approaches to faith. The structure of the text pursues two parallel strands: the opening, central and concluding movements (which all utilize the traditional chorale melody) address the collective response to the announced advent, while the two Soul/Jesus duets that separate these chorale-based movements involve the individual Christian's response. As we have seen, the collective strand first contains the heralding of the Bridegroom's coming, then the rushing forth of the guests to meet Him, and finally a stable, collective chorale celebrating the arrival. The duets first articulate the Soul's passionate longing for that advent (in explicit bride/groom imagery) and then the mutual bliss of the Union, followed by the concluding chorale in which the congregation, the individual Soul, and Christ are all unified. Both orthodox and Pietist visions of salvation are satisfied. The two camps are thus demonstrated to be mutually compatible. If Bach could not effect such a solution in real life, he could at least enact it through his creative imagination.

### c. Gender

Questions concerning the construction of gender rarely enter into discussions of music.<sup>44</sup> The absence of a feminist critique in music is not necessarily owing, however, to an anti-woman bias.<sup>45</sup> Until there exists some way

<sup>44</sup> By 'construction' I mean the modes developed in our musical traditions for representing men and women. I am thus assuming that while the sex of an individual is a biological given, the ways in which we understand gender are socially defined and transmitted by – among many other means – music. One of the profound musical achievements of the seventeenth century was the invention of a vocabulary by means of which women characters in operas could be portrayed. That vocabulary is an ideological construct, and it is informed by (male) attitudes of what women are, how they behave and feel, and so forth. Both the code itself and its uses in particular compositions can tell us a great deal about how gender was (and is) socially shaped.

<sup>45</sup> For accounts of how and why American musicology has resisted criticism see Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating music* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), and Rose Rosengard Subotnik, 'The role of ideology in the study of Western music', *Journal of Musicology*, 2 (1983), pp. 1–12.

of dealing with music in general as a social discourse, gender will remain a non-issue. In this, it is treated no differently than any other matter one might wish to examine critically or ideologically.

The Soul/Jesus duets, however, raise some interesting questions in connection with gender that I would like to discuss. The convention of casting the individual believer as female, incomplete and longing for satisfaction and fulfillment from the divine male, is ancient and Bible-sanctioned. As was mentioned above, it was resurrected and exploited extensively in Pietist poetry concerned with the Mystical Union between the Soul as Bride and Christ as Bridegroom, and it provides one of the two narrative strands of *Wachet auf*.

I am not interested here in bringing charges of 'sexism' against Bach as an individual. He clearly was a product of his time, shaped by attitudes toward religion, politics, and gender then prevalent. It is, however, interesting to note the ways in which Bach brings the musical apparatus of his day to bear on the construction of gender, especially in the first duet.

The duet operates on the conceit that the Soul, unable to perceive Christ's presence or his responses, longs impatiently for him, continually asking when he will arrive. The Soul is presumably gender-free (male souls are also supposed to long in this manner for Christ's coming, after all), yet the musical images Bach uses mark it as specifically female, or as femininity is frequently construed in his – and our – culture, in any case. Put quite simply, the Soul here is a nagging, passive-aggressive wife, insecurely whining for repeated assurances of love and not hearing them when they are proffered (Ex. 11).

Ex. 11: Movement 2, mm. 8–18

## Ex. 11: (cont.)

10

Wann kommst du, mein Heil, wann  
kom - me, dein Teil, ich kom-me, dein Teil,

7<sup>b</sup> 6 5 5 6 5 6 7  
5 2

13

kommst du, mein Heil, mein Heil? Ich -  
ich kom-me, dein Teil, dein Teil,

6 4 6 6 5 6 7 6 4 6  
5 2

16

war - - te mit bren - nen-dem Ö - le; wann  
ich komme, ich komme, ich komme,

7<sup>b</sup> 6 5 6 4 7 6 5 4 6 5 6  
5<sup>b</sup> 4 3 2

One might counter that this is, in fact, the way we *all* are with respect to the Patriarch, that this is a universal condition. Yet underlying Bach's musical metaphors is an analogy: just as a husband patronizingly puts up with a complaining mate because he knows that her insecurity stems from her emotional dependence, so God tolerates (uni-sex) us and our frailties.

Interestingly, though not really surprisingly, men listening to this duet tend to situate themselves differently with respect to its dialectic than do women. In class discussions I have discovered that the men unself-consciously identify with the male character (with Christ!) and sneer at the Bride's tiresomeness. And the women realize that they are supposed to identify with the Bride but resent the pleading insecurity with which she is portrayed.

That Bach was simply drawing on the stereotypes of female behavior familiar to him and deriving a kind of down-to-earth, homey realism from what was taken to be 'shared truth' – at least among the men in his day – is not in question. Indeed, that is precisely the point. Bach's music is indelibly marked with the concerns and conventional social constructs of his time and place. It is not universal, nor does it represent pure order. Like any product of human social discourse, it is subject to critique – even feminist critique.

## Bach reception

Far from appearing universal, Bach's audacious synthesis of all available cultures – with Germany at its center – was not likely to have pleased many of his contemporaries, not even most Germans. Perhaps not surprisingly, he was canonized as representing pure order only after the codes on which his semiotic strategies had relied and their accompanying social contexts had become inactive.<sup>46</sup> Universality was achieved only at the expense of specific, concretely articulated meaning.

The strategy of defining one's own ideology as pure, non-social order clearly is empowering; but it is not entirely advantageous, not even to the artists who most obviously benefit from it. For, as we have seen, such absolutist redefinitions remove whatever was being articulated within the

<sup>46</sup> Bach's music was known to a few connoisseurs in subsequent generations. Van Swieten, for instance, introduced his music (primarily the fugues) to both Mozart and Beethoven, but it was the skilled craftsman and pedagogue in Bach that they admired. By the time Mendelssohn resurrected the *St Matthew Passion* in 1829, the contexts within which Bach had composed it had long vanished. For more on the reception of Bach's music before the Mendelssohn revival, see Gerhard Herz, *Essays on J.S. Bach* (Ann Arbor, 1985), pp. 1–124.

music in terms of signification and convert the composition – or even the repertory as a whole – to the status of icon. If all is perfect order, pure and simple, then no compositional choice can *mean* anything, except by virtue of a kind of closet metaphysics: as evidence of something beyond, which is the source of all perfection.

As is the case with most composers, Bach both revealed his project – throughout his career juxtaposing these widely divergent, ideologically antagonistic styles – and concealed his political agenda in seeming just to be writing notes. His ‘devotees’, however, by taking very seriously the claim to autonomy and by having lost access to the codes through which Bach revealed his meanings, have flattened him out into pure order.

Many factors have had a hand in this recasting of Bach as icon: the German nationalists of the early nineteenth century who wanted covertly to colonize the world culturally by means of ‘absolute music’ (that is, German music with the ideology camouflaged);<sup>47</sup> those nostalgic for periods of strong religious authority;<sup>48</sup> music theorists who derive their rules and norms from the study of his music;<sup>49</sup> the objectivists and combinatorialists of abstract expressionism who claim Bach as their forerun-

<sup>47</sup> The first biographer and advocate of Bach, J.N. Forkel (1802), makes no secret of his nationalistic agenda: ‘This undertaking [Bach’s biography] is not only of the highest advantage, in every respect, to the art itself, but must contribute more than any other of the kind to the honor of the German name. The works which John [sic] Sebastian Bach has left us are an invaluable national patrimony, with which no other nation has anything to be compared.’ Forkel continues at some length in this vein. See the translation by ‘Mr. Stephenson’ (1808) in David and Mendel, eds., *The Bach reader*, p. 296. There is, of course, nothing inappropriate in the promotion of one’s national cultural treasures – it is frequently on that basis that canons are constructed. The problem enters only when this interest becomes suppressed.

<sup>48</sup> See Adorno, ‘Devotees’, especially pp. 135–6, for a treatment of this mode of reception.

<sup>49</sup> Much of Bach’s music was originally designed at least in part for pedagogy: the *Orgel-Büchlein*, the *Well-tempered Clavier*, the *Clavier-Übung*, and the *Art of Fugue* all have obvious educational dimensions. And it was as a teacher, a lone transmitter of the old style of rigorous compositional technique, that Bach was noted in his day and in the generations that followed. (See n. 46.)

But gradually, as familiarity with the codes within which Bach’s music operates has eroded, his compositions have been seen not as instances of reconciled tensions but as order, pure and simple. Thus the chorale settings, which to Bach presented the challenge of taking traditional modal melodies and ‘rationalizing’ them through tonal harmonic syntax, are taken as paradigms of tonal propriety. We take these pieces, in which modal patterns frequently force Bach to resort to outlandish strategies in order to make us believe in their tonal logic, and we teach students that this is how tonality works – without any recognition of the dialectical strain inherent in the genre. Similarly Bach’s fugues have been reduced to formula, to structural analysis, and to chord labeling, thus obscuring once again the extraordinary tension between his determination to integrate the old-fashioned multi-leveled polyphonic style with the new on-rushing Italian procedures.

ner;<sup>50</sup> the recording industry that peddles ‘authenticity’ while sacrificing interpretation to the demands of efficient sound engineering;<sup>51</sup> and performers whose sensibilities have been formed by vastly different cultures and who have no familiarity with – and, indeed, no interest in – Bach’s socio-historical context.<sup>52</sup> The result is a politically neutralized cultural figure whose whole opus signifies greatness while none of the events in particular pieces can be said to mean anything at all.

Why do we still need to locate perfection, universality, extra-human truth in this music at the expense of stifling it? What is our sense of the history of the bourgeoisie that we want to cling to its early documents as ‘divinely inspired’ (a bizarre aspiration, to be sure, for secular humanism), that we do not want them to have been constructed by *us*, that we want our regulations to have extra-human authority – yet to have no god per se onto whom to place the responsibility? In today’s crisis of liberal humanism, we appear especially to be trying to hold onto the shreds of evidence for the universal truth-content of bourgeois ideology. And eighteenth-century music seems to offer the best source because it hides its social agenda inside what appear to be pure, self-contained patterns of tones.

Bach’s music is especially marked in our culture as a repository of *truth*. Its particular authority is, to be sure, partly owing to its expressly religious

<sup>50</sup> See, for instance, Schoenberg’s essay from 1950 on Bach, in *Style and idea*, ed. and trans. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), pp. 393–7. The essay opens as follows: ‘I used to say, “Bach is the first composer with twelve tones.”’ In the same collection, see also ‘New music, outmoded music, style and idea’, pp. 116–18 and ‘National music (2)’, p. 173. I by no means intend to criticize Schoenberg for this self-interested appropriation. Indeed, like Adorno (‘Devotees’, p. 146), I see this self-empowering reinterpretation as the path away from cultural stagnation. But a new ‘misreading’ is past due.

<sup>51</sup> The proponents of ‘authentic’ performance practice in Adorno’s day were frequently inept performers located in university musicology programs – thus his sarcastic comments in ‘Devotees’, pp. 142–6. In the last fifteen years, however, technically proficient performers have begun to participate in early music, and a wide range of highly polished, elaborately produced recordings are now available. In certain respects, new versions of old music have become the current vanguard, satisfying the demand for novelty and thus replacing the need for new music. Many talented young musicians, who in another time would have been composers, devote their efforts to reconstructing this year’s definitive, new and improved *Messiahs*. ‘Authenticity’ has become a marketing catchword in this new mass culture industry, with virtually every recording of Baroque music announcing in big letters its particular claim: authentic instruments, authentic score, authentic acoustical setting, or whatever. What often (though not always – see below, n. 60) gets obscured by the obsession for technical and technological perfection is careful interpretation of the music itself. Adorno’s statement, p. 144, concerning adequate interpretation remains a powerful guideline.

<sup>52</sup> Some of the leading proponents of ‘authentic’ early music performance are keenly aware of the necessity of understanding the music within its original social context. See especially Nicolas Harnoncourt’s *Musik als Klangrede* (Salzburg and Vienna, 1982). See also Richard Taruskin, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, Nicholas Temperley, and Robert Winter, ‘The limits of authenticity: a discussion’, *Early Music*, 12 (1984), pp. 3–25.

subject matter. Much, for instance, is made of Bach's habit of dedicating his music to the Glory of God (though the same people who find great significance in Bach's dedications respond quite differently to the same gesture when delivered by the rock star, Prince).<sup>53</sup> But there is plenty of sacred music available that is not regarded with the same reverence. Why Bach?

As Adorno pointed out in his essay, Bach's music participates fully in musical procedures that are primarily products *not* of a medieval, ritualistic society but of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment bourgeoisie.<sup>54</sup> To be sure, this music abounds with self-conscious archaisms and references to earlier traditions; but the parts that we treasure most – the ones that appear to grant us tastes of what we like to consider universal transcendent truth – are those constructed by means of virtuosos, individualistic defiant techniques of the Italian Baroque: the techniques Bach learned from Vivaldi concertos.

Yet at the same time that this music shapes itself in terms of bourgeois ideology (its goal orientation, obsessive control of greater and greater spans of time, its willful striving, delayed gratification and defiance of norms), it often cloaks that ideology by putting it at the service of an explicit theology. The tonal procedures developed by the emerging bourgeoisie to articulate their sense of the world here become presented as what we, in fact, want to believe they are: eternal, universal truths. It is no accident that the dynasty of Great (bourgeois) Composers begins with Bach, for he gives the impression that *our* way of representing the world musically is God-given. Thereafter, tonality can retain its aura of absolute perfection ('the way music goes') in its native secular habitat. This sleight of hand earned Bach the name 'the fifth evangelist',<sup>55</sup> and his gospel informs and legitimizes the

<sup>53</sup> Prince always includes a statement such as 'All thanks 2 God' on his record jackets along with the other acknowledgments. He seems to mean it, even though those unfamiliar with the fusion of physical and divine forms of ecstasy characteristic of Gospel traditions (and, one might add, of Lutheran Pietism) tend to regard these as blasphemous.

<sup>54</sup> 'Devotees', pp. 135–9.

<sup>55</sup> Blume includes this term among others in his attack on theologized notions of Bach in 'Outlines', p. 217. Blume's secularizing of Bach perhaps went a bit too far in denying Bach's commitment to the church, but it succeeded admirably in stimulating a new wave of scholarship that attempts to relocate Bach in his Lutheran setting without undue mystification. Herz 'Toward a new image of Bach', (originally from the 1970 issue of *Bach*, reprinted in his *Essays on Bach*, pp. 149–84) is a direct attempt at refuting Blume's 'Marxism', and Stiller's *Bach and liturgical life in Leipzig* likewise readdresses these issues in great detail. The old mystified Bach lives on, however, in Wilfrid Mellers, *Bach and the dance of God* (New York and Oxford, 1981).

The question is not whether Bach was a believer, but whether his faith caused his music to possess some extrahuman aura. It seems to me quite inescapable that Bach was (among many other things) a Christian; but regardless of how strong his belief, his music remains a human, social construct.

remainder of the German canonic tradition, especially the music of the prelapsarian Enlightenment (that is, the time when we had it all together rationally, before we began to destroy it with self-indulgent romanticism).

### Bach in today's cultural politics

I would now like to invert my title: to address the blasphemy of talking about Bach in a context concentrating primarily on political issues in the current musical scene. Why bother with Bach if one is aware of issues concerning ideological reproduction, if one recognizes the suffocating effect the canon has on those whom it marginalizes? Is it not hypocritical or cowardly to pretend, on the one hand, that one's allegiances are to various forms of post-modern performance and to continue, on the other, to lavish time and energy on the canon?

The fact is that Bach does not go away simply because one refuses to talk about him. Culture is not produced in a vacuum but in a social context with a tradition that, for us, very prominently contains Bach. By turning away to alternative, contemporary forms and leaving him exclusively to his devotees, one may inadvertently contribute to the canon's stranglehold – to the implicit claim by the mainstream that '*we* have truth and universals while *you* only have noise and fads'. Only if those claims, those dominant modes of composition and of reception are scrutinized critically can Bach be perceived in a perspective that permits the music of today to exist on an equal methodological footing.<sup>56</sup>

Let me return for a moment to Adorno and his attack on Bach's devotees. While much of his analysis of ideological tensions in Bach's music and in the reception of that music is extremely insightful and useful, it is difficult fully to endorse his position on how we ought to regard Bach and how we ought, in light of Bach, to proceed. For Adorno is still operating within and on behalf of the autonomous German canon, which he continued to regard as a repository of truth.<sup>57</sup> Adorno's autopsy of Western

<sup>56</sup> By this I do not mean necessarily that Bach and (say) Prince are of equal value, but simply that both need to be critically evaluated in terms of their social contexts, functions, and agendas, that neither is exempt from scrutiny.

<sup>57</sup> Virtually all of Adorno's program is concerned either with discerning the truth articulated in German music from Bach (the fountainhead, as we have seen, of German national music) through Schoenberg or attacking other musics, whether jazz (see 'Perennial fashion – jazz', *Prisms*, pp. 121–32) or Stravinsky (see *Philosophy of modern music*, trans. Anne Mitchell and Wesley Blomster (New York, 1973)).

This concentrated obsession with German culture is understandable, given his own social context, but it presents obstacles to the generalization of his insights. In working with Adorno, one must attempt both to reconstruct the intellectual/political environment



culture and his strategic stance of resignation offer few options and little room to maneuver for the post-World War II artist, especially those (such as blacks and women – indeed, non-Germans) whom he consistently excluded from cultural production. His discussion of Bach seeks on the one hand to relocate Bach's compositional enterprise in a social context but, on the other, to wrest him from the degradation of social reception for the sake of his music's autonomous truth-content.

My problem with current Bach reception is not simply that the devotees have got it all wrong or even that we are spending too much of our finite energies on a repertory 275 years old (though both of those considerations do, in fact, motivate me to some extent), but that the way in which our society regards Bach serves as an obstacle and blinder to new contributions to culture. Thus we must *confront* Bach and the canon and resituate him in such a way as to acknowledge his prominence in musical and non-musical culture while not falling victim to it.

What I am suggesting here is deconstruction as a political act. It is not coincidental that most deconstructive enterprises have centered on classic texts of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, for, as we have seen, these are the texts (and the musical repertoires) that most powerfully articulated the social values of the emergent bourgeoisie under the guise of universal rationality, objectivity, truth.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, so powerful and successful were these articulations – with their hidden ideological underpinnings – that they still shape the ways in which we understand the world and our place as individuals within it.

My proposed project would involve at least three levels. The first is the deconstruction of the canon. For until we can perceive the artifacts of the eighteenth century as human constructs, created in particular social contexts and for particular ideological interests, we cannot, in a sense, be free to produce our own articulations of our own times and interests. The claim to transcendental truth that attaches to Bach and Mozart especially will continue to undercut our efforts until we can begin to define all these various kinds of artistic production as social practice. This program is not intended to reduce Bach's achievement. Indeed, the more one knows about his social and working conditions and the musical codes within which and against which he produced meaning, the more one ought to

within which he formulated his statements and to distill a general methodology that can be applied to repertoires excluded by Adorno.

<sup>58</sup> See, for instance, Eagleton, *The function of criticism* and *The rape of Clarissa*, deconstructing respectively the institutions of criticism and the novel in eighteenth-century England, and also Jacques Derrida, *Of grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore and London, 1976), pp. 95–316, deconstructing notions of writing in Rousseau.

admire his endeavor, for the compositional choices and inflections in his music will become significant in the sense of *producing socially grounded meaning*, rather than significant as antiquarian relics that have value simply by virtue of possessing 'aura'.

Second, these reinterpretations need to be put into practice. So long as the performances of Bach to which we are subjected are of the pure-order, brain-dead variety, what I have been talking about cannot, in fact, be perceived.<sup>59</sup> In order to make audible the daring syntheses of opposing ideological forces in his compositions, the performer has to be aware of the faultlines in the pieces (that is, how to identify the various components, to be able to render them so as to make their individual qualities of motion heard), and then to *appear* to transcend them by sheer force of will and ingenuity. To play pieces in manners that make accessible the kinds of interpretations suggested above is to contribute insight both into Bach as a human being with desires and frustrations and into the social tensions of his day; to be more responsive to the notation as indicative of highly inflected, significant choices; and to produce a more dramatic, musically compelling reading than is usual.<sup>60</sup> To be sure, those who seek in Bach's music their principal refuge of order become highly indignant with such readings which reintroduce the violent element into his compositions. The greatest blasphemy of all is to perform Bach's music such that it speaks its encoded story of order and noise. But I would contend that *not* to articulate audibly the violent dimensions of music so strongly marked with deviation and resistance – to reduce it to orderliness – is to practice a more pernicious form of violence: *forceable silencing*.

Finally, I would propose the age-old strategy of rewriting the tradition in such a way as to appropriate Bach to our own political ends. Just as Renaissance mannerists justified their subjective excesses by appealing to principles of ancient Greek theory,<sup>61</sup> so each group since the early nine-

<sup>59</sup> Adorno's descriptions of a selection of Bach's fugues in 'Devotees' are excellent recipes for exciting, dialectical performances, though I know of no recording that seems informed by them. One has to play the fugues oneself in accordance with Adorno's interpretations in order to hear them as he describes them.

<sup>60</sup> There are performers of Bach's music who are extremely dynamic and in whose performances one can hear enacted the strains to which Adorno points. These include (among others) Gustav Leonhardt, Franz Brüggen, Nicolas Harnoncourt, and the Kuijken. For remarkable presentations of the extravagantly theatrical side of Bach's production, listen to Edward Parmentier, a young American harpsichordist.

<sup>61</sup> For instance, Nicolo Vicentino, in his *Lantica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* (1555), tried to legitimize his use of prohibited chromaticism and dissonances by appealing to the chromatic and enharmonic genera of Greek theory, hitherto empty categories in Renaissance musical practice. Vincenzo Galilei, in his *Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna* (1581), sought to replace what he regarded as the decadence of contrapuntal polyphony with popular-song style by making use of Aristotle's descriptions of Greek music.

teenth century has found it necessary to kidnap Bach from the immediately preceding generation and to demonstrate his affinity with the emerging sensibility.<sup>62</sup> My portrait of Bach presented earlier clearly exhibits characteristics of the post-modern eclectic, of the ideologically marginalized artist empowering himself to appropriate, reinterpret, and manipulate to his own ends the signs and forms of dominant culture. His ultimate success in this enterprise can be a model of sorts to us all. In actively reclaiming Bach and the canon in order to put them to our own uses, we can also reclaim ourselves.

<sup>62</sup> See the Schoenberg references in n. 50 and also the description of Bach by Wagner in David and Mendel, eds., *The Bach reader*, p. 374. This latter is clearly also a self-portrait of Wagner himself (in his own mind the never-sufficiently-appreciated nineteenth-century genius/artist); yet it is strikingly more consonant with my post-modern eclectic Bach than are the objectified, orderly versions of Bach favored by the editors of *The Bach reader*.

*Music, domestic life and  
cultural chauvinism: images of  
British subjects at home in India<sup>1</sup>*

RICHARD LEPPERT

Culture is supposed to assume concern for the individual's claim to happiness. But the social antagonisms at the root of culture let it admit this claim only in an internalized and rationalized form.

Herbert Marcuse, 'The affirmative character of culture' (1937)

In this essay I wish to examine the mediating role played by two of the arts, music and painting (or drawing), in the racial estrangement that gradually developed in India between the native peoples and their conquerors, the British, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Specifically, I shall address myself to a small number of paintings and drawings with musical subject matter set in domestic surroundings, produced by European artists active in India who painted immigrant British sitters (to whom I will hence refer for convenience as Anglo-Indians).

'The great endeavour of all commercial states, is to draw the productions of other countries to its own center', wrote Alexander Dalrymple in 1711 in *Observations on the present state of the East India Company; and on the measures to be pursued for ensuring its permanency, and augmenting its commerce* (p. 6). Chartered by Elizabeth I in 1600, by the reign of Charles II the East India Company held rights to 'acquire territory, coin money, command fortresses

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