

INTRODUCTION

Musical form and cultural life have begun to recognize and speak to each other in recent years, owing in part to the initiatives of performing arts organizations and universities. Opera, especially regional opera, is booming. “Opera studies” is a growing and exciting field. Concert halls have had more difficulty rejuvenating their audiences and have responded with creative (and sometimes desperate) programming. The preconcert lecture, a rarity only a decade ago, is now more the norm than the exception. To be sure, the *ur*-preconcert lecture tended to offer a kind of pop-analysis, recalling in its economy and focus the opening monologue of a flight attendant: “Three minutes into the exposition you will hear a noise; this is normal.” But as programming has become more context oriented, so have these verbal introductions to the music. Similarly, in the university, the academic discussion of music has begun, belatedly, to blur disciplinary boundaries. Literary scholars write about music; musicologists are concerned with culture, politics, and society.

This book is an essay in the cultural history of music. It attempts to make good on a practice I have been increasing—in both extent and conviction—in my courses in European cultural history in recent years (as well as in a good number of preconcert lectures and symposia). This is the discussion of music as a key genre in the history of cultural and aesthetic form, and equally as a significant existential component in the history of cultural life. The case for music as a dimension of history, and therefore as a concern of professional historians, seems still to require special pleading. Cultural and intellectual historians have become comfortable in engaging linguistic and visual texts—primary sources, so to speak—from the fields of philosophy, literature, painting, and film. Cultural history’s engagement with music, however, seems inhabited and inhibited by two taboos.

First, music is routinely judged a genre too formal to admit discussion by “nonspecialists”—synonymous with nonmusicologists. Technical aspects of musical structure and notation discipline (in both senses of the word) discussion and combine with the substantial problem of music’s unreproducibility, in print, by means other than musical notation. Readers may recall director Milos Forman’s depiction, in the film *Amadeus*, of Antonio Salieri’s technical ability to hear, quasi-literally, Mozart’s music and be moved to tears by glancing momentarily at a score. Such ability—residing as it does at the height of musical literacy—becomes dubious in itself if it obviates the actual hearing that embraces music’s contingency on performance. Performance involves both physicality and otherness—the otherness of someone else’s rendering.

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Famously, the only version of *Don Giovanni* that Johannes Brahms was interested in “hearing” was the version that traveled from the score through his head; we can be grateful that he grudgingly consented to hear, literally, Gustav Mahler’s performance in Budapest in December 1890, a conjunction that arguably changed music history.

In recent institutional memory, musicologists have kept the technical bar high and have thus borne substantial responsibility for their own closed shop. Their reason was more profound than the existence or authority of music’s technical aspects alone. The ascent of abstract formalism in musicology follows a historical curve, which might be worth comparing to the rise of analytical (as distinct from and often opposed to continental) philosophy, especially the mode known as logical positivism, which formed in 1920s Vienna and made its way to England and the United States. Logical and musicological positivism both reacted strongly—perhaps too strongly—to the historically evident (but not historically necessary) tendencies of culturally based arguments to evolve into blueprints of cultural exceptionalism and ideology. Nineteenth-century German philosophy, music, and musicology helped build national and ultimately fascist ideology. Thus, the wish to isolate aesthetic and logical discourses from ideology (and ultimately from fascism) helped determine the intellectual and political values of philosophy and music departments in American universities during and after the Nazi period, at a time when their faculties were enriched and reoriented by numerous distinguished émigré scholars. On the music side, the understanding of music as a mode of cultural discourse was largely banished. Music as a mode of mathematics seemed ideologically safer. In the case of nineteenth-century music, the association of music and nationalism combined to exclude even the music itself from the academic canon. Nineteenth-century music returned slowly, first declared safe by and for formalists, and then engaged by contextualists as well.

Ironically, the irredentist contextualists tended to look for a scholarly example to an émigré thinker who had always defended, indeed insisted on, cultural analysis: Theodor Adorno. As a pianist, theorist, and onetime student of Alban Berg in Vienna, Adorno’s formal credentials were impeccable. As a philosopher and first-generation scion of the so-called Frankfurt School of critical and social theory, Adorno helped articulate the school’s founding principle that a social science cannot be nonreflexive, in other words, that social and cultural analysis always takes the form of a dialogue between a culturally embedded analyst and the object-world of his or her analysis. No human subject resides outside of culture, nor does any object not found in nature. Music’s cultural context becomes the source of its critical potential.

The hegemony of postwar formalist musicology may be now in question, and a “new musicology,” perhaps no longer so new, is committed to cultural analysis. Adorno remains partly responsible for this turn. But in a situation rich with multiple and painful ironies, Adorno’s mode of analysis claimed a

foothold in American musicology in the 1980s through the prolific work of the German musicologist Carl Dahlhaus. Dahlhaus rigorously retraced the nineteenth-century musical and cultural ground that Adorno had marked out. Dahlhaus's imprimatur seemed to render Adorno respectable. Subsequently, when the second wave of contextual critical models entered musicological discourse in the 1980s and 1990s, importing concerns of political, gender, and feminist analysis while at the same time interrogating the boundaries between art music and popular music, the discursive and professional barriers they faced turned out to be more malleable.

But this conundrum remains largely restricted to music departments. More likely than not, my history students and colleagues are not aware of these histories, debates, and trends in the relevant scholarship. And my historian colleagues, aware of them or not, have not been as receptive to the musical dimensions of history as the musicologists have increasingly been to historical contexts.

Thus, the second problem facing the integration of music into history and the humanities, and emotionally intertwined with the first reason for music's relative absence, is the perception that nineteenth-century bourgeois music—the music engaged in this book—traverses and survives the twentieth century as an increasingly elite and socially marginal form. Here, Adorno has been of little help. If Adorno increased the cultural and critical capital of modern music and of musical analysis, he lost just as much ground with his infamous opposition of progressive and regressive music, and their implied associations with progressive and regressive listeners. Adorno confused regressive listening with regressive music. Though he by no means spared some members of the modernist canon from the side of the regressive (Wagner and Stravinsky are the key examples here), he reserved the hell-circle of the regressive mostly for “popular” music—most specifically, jazz. So “classical music” has endured a double exile: from other genres of cultural and aesthetic production, and from the democratic legitimacy of the “popular.” Bizet's *Carmen* may be analogous in both accessibility and mystery to Manet's *Olympia*; it does cost more to attend an opera than to go to a museum. It does not cost more to go to *Carmen* than it does to hear the Dave Matthews Band live (to draw an example from my own family discussions). Moreover, material economies may be independent of the mental economies of regressive and progressive listening. Nietzsche and Don Jose's opinions notwithstanding, a routine performance of *Carmen* can be a pretty regressive affair.

When I ask students to listen, often for the first time, to any one of the works under discussion in this book, they often approach it with a benign but generous curiosity. Many will have had no exposure to such music at all. This estrangement results in part from the removal of “classical music” from the vocabulary of basic bourgeois taste and cultural legitimacy (no great intellectual loss, if perhaps a significant financial loss for musical institutions) and in part

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from the disappearance of “music appreciation” curricula from secondary schools (a far greater loss). At the same time, increasingly large numbers of students who have no inherited or otherwise assumed cultural connections with this music are heartened to discover and engage the cultural embeddedness of the music. The discovery is especially rewarding for those who play instruments themselves and who have achieved significant technical and interpretive competence. Their curiosity often evolves into a series of questions: why is this music so intense (Why is it so self-important)? What is it trying to do? Increasingly, these questions seem to me instinctively and uncannily precise. They coax toward articulation a sense of historical specificity and difference that young players and listeners sense instinctively through the music. They sense, on the one hand, that the music remains discursively and emotionally relevant to listeners today; on the other, that the music and its implied habits of listening do the cultural, historical work of another era.

This book attempts to explore such questions historically. What *was* this music “trying to do”? What was it trying to do aesthetically, culturally, politically? So to interrogate the cultural history of music implies as well the importance of music to cultural history. At the same time, I want to take seriously the fact that the question is most often asked in the present tense: what is the music trying to do? The present tense suggests two things. We hear the musical works as occurring in the present with a present (in both senses of the word) agenda. When we then reinsert them into their historical contexts, they still retain a trace of contemporaneity, and through that trace we can follow our own ways of linking past and present. There is a key difference between the transhistorical and the ahistorical. The sequence of reception may be described as follows: a musical work is heard to be trying to accomplish something; we question what it was trying to accomplish at a given time, or we question the extent to which we understand, share, or indeed wish to recuperate that agenda.

This agenda involves the making of subjectivity. The music engaged in this book gains formal and cultural importance for its capacity to organize subjectivity. Moreover, insofar as music can be understood to possess a quality of simulated agency, it would appear to achieve a condition of subjective experience for itself. Thus, a language of subjectivity becomes hard to distinguish from an experience of subjectivity, a convergence that historians after Foucault have marked with the term “discourse.” Discourse can be defined as the exchange of meaning. It adds action and materiality to thought and language. Music becomes possible and, indeed, privileged as a discourse of subjectivity when both music and subjectivity become understandable and understood as modes of cultural exchange, debate, and understanding.

What is “subjectivity”? I would like to account briefly for my reliance on this term by arguing for its distinction—historical and theoretical—from two other, related terms of discourse: on the one side, the discourse of “the self,”

selfhood, and the individual; on the other side, the discourse of “the subject” itself. In my usage of the term “subjectivity” as both a theoretical and historical category, subjectivity does not denote a *property* of the subject, in either sense of the word property—that of quality and that of ownership. Rather, I want the term to denote the *life* of the subject, conceived in such a way as potentially to produce an internal critique of the category of “the subject,” a category that I also believe often to be inadequately interpreted against its historical contingencies and existential realities. Subjectivity thus marks, in my usage, the subject in motion, the subject in experience and analysis of itself and the world. This is a predicament at once redolent of contingency yet inherently critical of self-understanding in terms of a fixed position.

The modern idea of the subject has an intellectual history that distinguishes itself from the history of the idea of the self, selfhood, or the individual. I understand these latter articulations to posit the rights and the body and physical life, as argued in the classical liberal discourse of individual integrity and freedom, from John Locke to John Stuart Mill. Selfhood is thus understood as a property of the body, which at the same time is entitled to own physical property. In Locke’s optimistic view, the body with rights houses a potentially open and infinite mind. In Mill’s melancholic inheritance of the liberal tradition, the body with rights must indeed be protected—not only from harm but from any intervention it may deem coercive. Thus individualism—the political and economic autonomy of the possessive body—comes to impede what Mill calls individuality.

The “subject” and its genealogy posit a more ambiguous relationship between the world and the self, and consequently between power and freedom, authority and autonomy. It proceeds via the Cartesian argument of the subject as the cogito, the thinking agent, who thinks about him/herself in relation to the world. The history of philosophy can be understood to move this understanding of the subject, along with the privileging of epistemology over ontology, from Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Hume, to Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, to modern phenomenology (in particular Husserl) and then to post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory, especially that of Jacques Lacan. (Freud offers a nodal exception here, as he depends both on this continental tradition and on Mill’s liberal one. On the one hand, the charting of the unconscious and the id augments and, indeed, explodes the contingency of the subject on culture and ideology. On the other hand, the normativity of the functioning ego posits political responsibility as the equivalent of mental health.)

Kant’s so-called Copernican revolution in philosophy involves his repositioning of the subject from a state of contingency to a state of autonomy; thus, the “transcendental subject” of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which produces the possibility of knowledge of the world. As Ernst Cassirer stressed, however, Kant’s transcendental subjectivity is immediately distinguished from the ever popular notion of subjectivity and of the subjective as synonyms for the indi-

vidual and the arbitrary. In Cassirer's summary, Kant's "concept of the subjective expresses a foundation in a necessary procedure and a universal law of reason." Subjectivity means the capacity to reason, universal across the human species and thus built on an ethical as well as epistemological foundation.¹ This universal foundation can therefore be understood as a displacement of the dynamic of contingency on which baroque subjectivity rested. Early Romantic thinkers such as Herder and Humboldt strove to redefine the Kantian universal in terms of culture; in doing so they reemphasized the contingency of subjective formation and thus the "subjected" quality of subjectivity.

Post-Kantian philosophies of the subject continue to rearticulate this assumption of contingency, whereby the autonomy of the subject becomes increasingly an epistemological and cultural fiction, as the subject as thinking agent is contingent on culture. This tradition's seventeenth-century *démarche* provides its location in a baroque contradiction, in which the subject's autonomy remains at odds with its subjection to a power outside of itself. The word itself incorporates the ambiguity, deriving from the Latin *subjectum* (and the Greek *hypokeimenon*) or "lying under." In this context, the subject fuses with the subjected, as in the category of the monarch's subject. The constant element in the varied meanings of the "baroque" (of which more below) is the inability to resolve this contradiction. The emancipation of the subject is thus equivalent to the desire of modernity. Modern claims of emancipation from the baroque contradiction involve the subject becoming transparent to itself, enclosed within itself, and hence divided into subject and object. The subject creates visible and analyzable objects out of the world.

Through the claim of transparency, Enlightenment epistemology privileges the observing subject, thus repeating and reinforcing the privileged subject that the baroque had defined in terms of power. Politically, this claim of transparency risks the transformation of pure subjects into pure objects, objects of surveillance and / or objects of control. Freedom becomes the power to subvert: this is the problem of both the Lockean and the Hegelian state.

The critique of transparency constitutes perhaps the main complication, the main subversion, in the history of Western philosophy. It is possibly as old as Plato. It complicates the production of the subject at the same time as it impedes the subject's investiture with power and ideology. As a critique of baroque power, of Enlightenment epistemology, and of their persistent, if often unintentional alliance, the modern critique of transparency is at least as old as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau stands as possibly the most pained and the

¹ Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Work*, trans. J. Haden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 151. Two recent anthologies that examine legacies and developments in the European philosophy of the subject are James D. Faubion, ed., *Rethinking the Subject: An Anthology of Contemporary European Social Thought* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), and Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy, eds., *Who Comes after the Subject?* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

most abiding critic of the pre-Kantian Enlightenment, an Enlightenment whose principal delusion involves its repetition of baroque claims of knowledge and power. The critique of transparency decenters the subject, whose epistemological legitimacy depends on its transparency to itself. The knowledge that calls itself postmodern questions its own authority in developing a vantage point on the world. If the analyzing agent is itself of the object-world, how can it claim analytical distance from its objects of analysis? In recent years, scholars have moved these questions onto concrete grounds in the politics of difference. In such relations of power, the empowered and the subaltern are constituted differently, but both are constituted as subjects and objects. In the epistemological organization of all these cases, the postmodern claims a position in relation to the modern that repeats the position taken earlier by the modern in relation to the claims of Enlightenment.²

Rousseau, the modernist critic of Enlightenment claims, was a musician, composer, and musical theorist. Put more urgently, Rousseau required and depended upon music to think subjectivity, to understand subjectivity as itself an aesthetic discourse, a mode of art. Rousseau thus attempted to formulate a modern discourse of subjectivity in reliance on music. Rousseau posited music's ability to think subjectivity in a way that would resist articulation and representation, and therefore to resist its investiture as ideology and power. In doing so, Rousseau posited music at the core of the philosophical, political, and indeed aesthetic discourse of subjectivity. The problem was that he was ahead of the music of his time (and the music he wrote himself proved inadequate to his critical agenda). So whereas Rousseau has survived at the foundation of the modern discourse of subjectivity, with the cultivation of subjectivity the goal of his educational as well as political theory, the presence and urgency of the musical correlative have tended to drop out of discussion.

I understand subjectivity as a mode of first-person experience resistant to the articulation or representation implied by the category of the subject. As the experience rather than the position of the "I," subjectivity displaces the paradigm of an autonomous subject facing an outside world in favor of a lived experience that is inherently contingent on culture. Subjectivity is thus a mode of experience where self and world are difficult to distinguish. Subjectivity resides at the borders of autonomy and integration, and must be allowed culturally, politically, and discursively to live there. The endless work of subjectivity involves the constant renegotiations of the boundaries between self and world, with the world and history continuously reappearing in the texture of the self in the form of language, other cultural practices, and received ideas and ideologies. Subjectivity is a matter not only of and for philosophy, but of

² For a compelling intellectual history of the critique of Enlightenment thinking as a critique of visual ideology, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

politics, psychology, and art. In fact it makes the most sense to me to think of subjectivity as an art, and therefore as a mode of being most knowable through art.

To my own thinking, the most valuable contemporary account of that middle ground between self and culture that I am calling subjectivity was adumbrated by the British psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott. Winnicott's 1971 book *Playing and Reality* offers an account of the development of early childhood subjectivity through play, conceived as a dialogue between the developing self and the world. The book itself developed from an earlier essay on the phenomenon of the "transitional object," the random object such as a blanket or toy through which the child negotiates his or her place in the object-world. Winnicott's argument rests throughout on what he calls the paradox in the infant's use of the object. According to that paradox, neither the baby nor the analyst will (or should) think to ask the question "Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?" "The important point," Winnicott asserts, "is that no decision on this point is expected. The question is not to be formulated." "The location of cultural experience," to cite one of Winnicott's chapter titles, "is in the *potential space* between the individual and the environment." Culture and subjectivity cannot be understood to originate inside, outside, or anywhere, or indeed to originate at all.³

The theory of subjectivity that Winnicott places, literally, in the protected sphere of the nursery has analogous importance in the history and theory of modern subjectivity as a discursive phenomenon. A subjectivity that is culturally contingent must also be allowed by that very cultural context to develop. Thus, liberal theory, the theory of the autonomous subject that possesses an attribute of subjectivity—is unconvincing for its assumption that subjectivity is, precisely, under the protection of a preexisting subject. The individual's capacity for subjectivity must indeed be understood to be contingent on the integrity and safety of the body; in this respect Winnicott's nursery is indeed valid as a metonym for society at large. But the safe body, the body with rights, does not produce subjectivity. This is precisely the insight that produced the melancholy of Mill's rethinking of liberal politics in his 1859 essay *On Liberty*: the individual construed and protected by the liberal state as a body with rights will not necessarily produce individuality, will not easily experience a rich mental life.

The articulation of subjectivity occupies much of modern philosophy and intellectual history and does so, clearly, in ways more extensive and more intricate than I can outline here. But philosophy holds no monopoly on the question of subjectivity. "Everywhere I go," Freud said, "I find that the poet has been there before me." The contingency of philosophy and intellectual

³ D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1971), pp. xi–xii, 11–12, 100, and passim.

history on culture, including aesthetic culture, constitutes a large-scale reinforcement of the subject's contingency on culture.

The modern articulation of subjectivity relied importantly on music. That is to say that modern music—form and experience, production and reception—participated in the making of subjectivity. Modern subjectivity relied concomitantly on the argument that music has the capacity to organize subjectivity. This capacity is both formal and cultural. The argument for music's formal capacity to organize subjectivity is based on two properties that I consider fundamental to the cultural production and experience of modern music. I will call them the two fictions of modern music because they ascribe capacities of consciousness and agency to music, unwarranted ascriptions from a commonsense point of view.

The first fiction holds that music can and does speak in the first person. Music is therefore heard to bear and express subjectivity. If the music itself says "I," then we have a hypothetical answer to Edward T. Cone's famous question "If music is a language, then who is speaking?"⁴ But the answer is not Cone's. In question is not the subjectivity of the composer or of anyone outside the music itself. The subjectivity is of the music itself, which according to the same fundamental fiction has the capacity of memory, a sense of past and future, and a language for their articulation. Musical subjectivity cannot therefore be absorbed into the subject-positions of the composer or the listener.

Also, I intend this assertion of the fiction of music's first-person voice as an amendment to the important and now well-known assertion of the narrative capacities and tendencies of nineteenth-century music.⁵ The first-person voice I am interested in operates in the present tense; it negotiates with the world in real time. Rather than narrating, therefore, it shares with its listeners a discovery and presentation of the self as a performative act. Presentation in the sense of becoming present runs parallel to production and distinct from "representation," in the same way that production remains distinct from "reproduction." Music's self-consciousness resides in the fiction that the music listens—to itself, its past, its desires.

This is the second and related fiction: that music listens. The fiction of music as a listening subjectivity implies that the subjectivity inscribed in musical utterance is immediately a mode of intersubjectivity. I stress intersubjectivity rather than intertextuality to conform to my argument that the music is understood to listen, think, and therefore also to remember and to refer. As a result, there is a mutuality between the aesthetic viability of a music's subjectivity and the cultural, political, and indeed aesthetic possibility of subjectivity

⁴ Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974).

⁵ Here the key recent work is Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

and intersubjectivity in modern life. The pun in “listening to reason” grasps these mutualities: listening to music takes place at the same time as music (invested with the fiction of subjectivity) listens and reasons; listening in order to reason, to learn the (political) art of subjectivity.

The validity of reason depends on its distinction from instrumental reason. Instrumental reason, the practice whereby subjects make other subjects into objects, is Adorno’s main cognitive, political, and ethical demon, occupying and defining the dark side of Enlightenment. According to this distinction, reason involves the continuous negotiation of difference, otherness and others, without reifying others into objects. Reason, construed as a necessary foil to and critique of instrumental reason, parallels precisely the construal of subjectivity as a critique of “the subject.” Adorno identified his study *Philosophy of Modern Music* as “an extended appendix” to his and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.⁶ At the same time, I would argue, Adorno failed to make the crucial distinction between subject and subjectivity. He respects and loves only those objects that speak for and from his own subject position, which includes rigorous critique to be sure but is redolent as well of the tastes and ideology of the central European bourgeoisie. As a result, his cultural and social analysis of music contextualizes from within the history of the bourgeois subject rather than the history of subjectivity, which may be just as bourgeois a phenomenon but which is also more consistently self-critical and self-questioning. Adorno thus valorized music that he identified with, excluding from his canon not only jazz and Stravinsky but also, for example, Benjamin Britten, whose opacity (to Adorno) earned him the badge of “triumphant meagerness.”⁷ Adorno too quickly dismissed musical subjects that were also musical “others” to himself and his identifications. It follows that my own cultural history and cultural analysis of music parts company from Adorno at the same time as it acknowledges Adorno’s work as its indispensable foundation.

If music is heard and understood to feel and think, then it is understood as a mode of subjectivity more than as an object, an “art object,” or indeed a “work of art.” In this context it is worth invoking and insisting on the inflection of the words “art” and “work” as processes and verbs rather than fixed entities and nouns. Whether the “work of art” should be considered as an object or as an action is a key debate in modernist aesthetics. When, in a famous exchange between modernist art critics, Clement Greenberg asserted that a work of art should be understood as an act, Harold Rosenberg replied by asking how an act could be hung on a wall. The context of music would not have afforded so glib a rejoinder; a musical work is not reducible to a representative object—score, recording, or other. A musical work remains a

⁶ Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. A. Mitchell and W. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), pp. xiii–xiv.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

function of performance, with the veracity (to leave alone the “authenticity”) of every performance a font of debate. But in the plastic and visual arts as well, when the aesthetic object is unquestionably present, aesthetic significance is not necessarily a function of the object. Ironically, it is in the field of modern European art history, where the status of the art object may seem least debatable, that the cultural analysis of art and the interpretation of objects as formal and contextual acts had already developed. A century ago, the historian of art, religion, and culture, and occasional anthropologist Aby Warburg initiated a style of scholarship that can be described as the cultural history of images, which provides a key model for what I want to call the cultural history of music.

Warburg understood aesthetic import as an encapsulation of desire: cultural desire, inhabited by form. In art, culture desires to work through the power of the demons of history and nature. Warburg’s scholarship focuses on Renaissance and Reformation Europe, which he innovatively considered as a single field. His principal theme was “the survival of antiquity”: namely, the relevance of previous cultural battles between order and chaos. In his early, student work on Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*, Warburg argued that “the representation of motion always reflects a search for an antique source.”⁸ In Botticelli’s painting, motion appears in accessory forms, namely the garments and hair of the principal figures. Painterly form thus joins with cultural desire, namely the desire to produce the future by finding and wrestling with the past. The realization of that desire is aesthetic, meaning that it is articulated as feeling and as form. Warburg called it *Denkraum*: literally, the space for thought. Like Winnicott, Warburg understands subjectivity spatially. For both Winnicott and Warburg, though, spatial form presupposes cultural specificity.

Music was first anointed as a privileged discursant of subjectivity by German Romantic theorists, intellectual siblings of Herder and Humboldt, including Hoffmann, Wackenroder, Tieck, and, a generation later, Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer’s central assertion that music possessed the ability to personify human will rather than merely represent it proved a decisive influence on Wagner and Nietzsche. But this philosophical continuum took as its musical correlative a specific musical and cultural moment, focused on Beethoven and on the symphony, and granted it a transcendental imprimatur and the status of an absolute. “Absolute music,” as I will argue in chapter 2, is an ideology formulated by Wagner and retroimposed on the early Romantic period, its philosophers of art, its composers (principally Beethoven), and its music (prin-

⁸ Gertrud Bing, editorial foreword to Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1999), p. 81. Warburg’s 1893 thesis, *Sandro Botticelli’s Birth of Venus and Spring: An Examination of Concepts of Antiquity in the Italian Early Renaissance*, appears on pp. 89–156 of this volume.

cipally the symphony). The “absolute” fuses and perhaps confuses a category of autonomy with one of authority, thus reinstating the baroque contradiction. The music (together with its theorists) that argues for and as a discourse of subjectivity does so, I will argue, with specific historical and cultural contexts and contingencies in mind. It does so as well from the vantage point of a discursive practice deemed abstract rather than absolute, in other words, autonomous by reason of its distance from the world of representation. Its analytical urgency is a function at once of its inhibitions and its suspicions with regard to the world of representation and power. My analysis of musical subjectivity proceeds initially from Mozart through Mendelssohn, then attempts to locate its persistence in those aspects of Wagner that contradict his own ideological imperialism, and seeks finally to locate its survival in the post-Wagnerian recovery from musical and other ideologies.

Informing my discussion is a pair of terms that continue to be embraced and feared by historians and music historians: the baroque and the modern. These terms denote both historical periods as well as cultural, political, and aesthetic styles but remain available and relevant to later periods as elements of cultural vocabularies and ideology. Through the production of subjectivity, modernity distances itself from baroque subjection without falling into the Enlightenment trap of transparency. Here music is key. The resistance to baroque power entails an emancipation from the power of representation, and representation is associated closely with the visual world. Baroque culture involves the power of visibility, which also means the tendency of visibility to metastasize into visual ideology. The critical drive of music involves the critique of the assumed authority of the visual and visible worlds.

In his durable study of fifty years ago, Carl Friedrich assigned “the age of the baroque” a dual historical template.⁹ Baroque politics, involving the establish-

⁹ Carl Friedrich, *The Age of the Baroque* (New York: W. W. Norton and Sons, 1952). More recently, Robin Blackburn has proposed the dialectic of power and harmony to describe the baroque. His cogent summary is worth citing:

One term for evoking the ethos and aspirations of early European colonialism is “the baroque.” This word, originally referring to a misshapen pearl and then applied to tortuously elaborate demonstrations in scholastic logic, became attached to the discrepant, bizarre and exotic features of post-Renaissance culture. It was finally adopted to evoke those principles of *power and harmony* which would reconcile such discordant elements. The baroque appears in a Europe confronting Ottoman might and discovering the material culture of Asia, Africa, and America. It is first sponsored by the Jesuits, the Counter-Reformation and the Catholic monarchs and courts in an attempt to meet the challenges of the Puritans, though subsequently some Protestant monarchs also adopted aspects of the baroque. . . .

Since the baroque had a special link to the Counter-Reformation, it loomed larger in Catholic than in Protestant countries, and everywhere it was associated with royal and aristocratic display, focusing on a utopia of harmony, a cornucopia of abundance and a diorama of elegance. The baroque favoured a sanitized and controlled vision of civil society. While the baroque as spectacle retained a link to the world of colonial slavery, it exhibited a public entrepreneurship,

ment of modern state power in Europe, he dated to the half-century between 1610 and 1660. Baroque culture, harder to define and to enclose, he assigned two full centuries: 1550–1750. He described both categories according to the dialectic of power and insecurity. It is, I would suggest, the very reliability of power and insecurity that continues to render unreliable any further attempts to pin down the baroque. Baroque politics strives for wholeness in an age of anxiety, becoming more reactionary as holism eludes the grasp of power and its ambitions. Insecurity produces movement and indeed violence.

Baroque culture and politics emerge from the Reformation and post-Reformation breakdown of a unified sacred cosmology provided by European Christianity. Subjection persists, but in the name of whom? Modernity, particularly modern subjectivity in its distinction from subjection, establishes legitimacy when the question is no longer asked.

The problem is that the question continues to be asked. The baroque returns, like Hamlet's father. The category of the modern usually signifies either the true or the false claim of emancipation—from nature (via industrialization), from religion (via secularization), or from unearned authority (via political reform or revolution). Religion remains present. Power remains undistributed. And that intermediary period of alleged transition between the baroque and the modern, namely, the age of enlightenment, can be understood as a crucible of their unresolved juxtaposition rather than as the procurer of an emancipatory modernity. Baroque politics and baroque style juggle absolutism with excess but tend to fold the subversive or emancipatory power of excess back into the service of absolutism. Similarly, what is modern has the capacity to reify its emancipatory potential into new forms of tyranny. This is the dialectic of enlightenment as argued by Adorno and Horkheimer.

By “modernity” I mean a sense of the present that is held to be both tied to and emancipated from the past. Modernist agendas, within and outside the arts, are often described in terms of a claimed break with the past. Both the claim (when it is actually made) and its historiographical rehearsals are largely unconvincing. Some forms of modernism have no doubt claimed radical newness, the result of which is a quick modulation into ideology. But those modernisms that have insisted on self-awareness as a fundamental criterion have considered the relationship to history as a primary dimension of that self-awareness and self-critique. These modernisms, as discourses of forward-mindedness or futurity, have also paid close attention to history. Their sense of

the positive face of mercantilism, which contrasted with the private enterprise that was the driving force behind the New World's civil slavery. (See Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery* [London: Verso 1997] pp. 20–21.)

See also my discussion in chapter 1, “The Ideology of the Baroque,” in *Austria as Theater and Ideology: The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), and in “The Materiality of the Baroque,” in *Intellectual Traditions in Movement* (Amsterdam: ASCA Press, 1998), pp. 179–90.

the present can be described according to the psychoanalytical principle of “repetition with difference.” Difference is the hallmark of the modern: difference from the past, difference between persons and between cultures—differences, in both cases, we might hope as historians and as citizens, where dialogue is encouraged rather than foreclosed.

The modern project of subjectivity, in which music plays a key part, involves the critique of baroque power along with its dissemination through visual means and visual culture. Music offers at least a nonvisual and sometimes an antivisual discourse; its non- or antivisuality accrues a coherent critique of baroque power and baroque representation. The critique of visual ideology gained momentum as well as methods in the agendas of the Reformation. As has often been argued, the Elizabethan, or more accurately Shakespearean, theater of the word was one initiative whereby text outpaced image for an engagement with reality. This kind of critique engages the Protestant/Catholic divide and indeed adopts a Protestantizing energy but it does not necessarily take sides in a clear fashion. In late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, the displaced authority of Catholic and Protestant ideologies continues to define geopolitical and cognitive, cultural, and political styles. Historically, subjectivity is a Protestantizing trope, even when it is pursued by Catholics. Enter Mozart.

Mozart takes on the baroque world and its regimes of power with intricate engagements of Catholic and Protestant referential worlds. At once Catholic and anti-Catholic, Mozart sets a new, aural regime of musical engagement against the visually conceived and represented worlds of the Catholic baroque. Although his project unfolds as music—or as music drama—it makes use of Protestantizing tropes and gestures that it shares with forebears and contemporaries such as Shakespeare and Rousseau. Mozart’s musical discourse of subjectivity can be heard most clearly in his juxtapositions of solo instruments with orchestra and in his operatic characterizations. The parallel ways in which solo instruments and individual operatic characters engage their musical and dramatic contexts argue for a basic similarity between music with and without explicit dramatic correlatives. A character such as Figaro combines explicitly a political, emotional, and musical education into a musical and dramatic idiom capable of exploring and expressing subjectivity and intersubjectivity. With the characterization of Don Giovanni, Mozart and Da Ponte move from realism to myth in the drive to define the stakes of musical and psychological modernity with the most ambitious attention to historic and political reality. For them, and for this book, that move involves the return of the baroque. In *Così fan tutte*, Mozart and Da Ponte add to their intricate *mise-en-jeu* of subjectivity and theatricality an explicit scene of instruction, steering their cultural analysis into the orbit of Rousseau.

The case of Beethoven is still more intricate. A Catholic, like Mozart, Beethoven engenders a more structural paradox in the pursuit of a Protestantizing

musical aesthetic that becomes codified as “absolute music.” (As said, I will take issue with this category in chapter 2.) But Beethoven’s Protestantizing aesthetic is vexed, indeed even contradicted, by his desire to share in the perks of the old regimes of aristocratic privilege and baroque representation. The conflicts and ambiguities of the baroque and the modern remain present, perhaps surprisingly so, in Beethoven’s work and context. Chapter 2 is on Beethoven, his Catholic origins, his aristocratic pretensions, and his musical ethic of bourgeois emancipation. Heroic style, in the later Beethoven, may not be disentangleable from a disavowal of psychic and cultural complication.

Mendelssohn’s musical subjectivity engages, through metaphors and other modes of underarticulation, the complicated Jewish-Protestant negotiations of his family history. At the same time, they combine to form a fragile symbiosis of both style and conviction, contingent on a historical moment that does not itself last. Mendelssohn’s interreligious and multicultural mediations are explicitly and stylistically refined, with precisely that disavowal of the heroic gesture that reduces his stock for posterity. If Mendelssohn portrays intellectually and musically the fragile success of an intercultural subjectivity, Schumann portrays its entrapment in history. Indeed, Mendelssohn’s fragile musical discourse recalls Walter Benjamin’s image, after a Paul Klee drawing, of the angel of history, pausing and hovering long enough to observe the past before being blown into the future.

That future, from the standpoint of 1850, belongs to Richard Wagner. The book’s central chapter focuses on ideology and ambivalence in Wagner. I consider Wagner a kind of black hole of the nineteenth century and of nineteenth-century studies, because the work is so important as an event and so fascinating and seductive as an aesthetic behemoth. Wagner moves music into an ideological space, in my terms, by transforming its idiom from one of subjectivity to one of identity. If subjectivity can be abstracted as an “ $a = a$ ” equation, or more precisely an “ a becomes a ” equation, then identity can be described as an “ $a = b$ ” equation, or more precisely an “ $a = b$ ” equation disguised as an “ $a = a$ ” equation. In other words, a principle of identity asserts the identity of two unequal things. When the strongest polarity of identity definition is national identity, as it is in the Wagnerian and mid-nineteenth-century German contexts, then subjectivity is held to be identical with the nation if it is to be considered viable at all. Music becomes explicitly national (that is, German) with a long list of attributes, avowals, and disavowals. At the same time, and indeed within as well as outside Wagner’s oeuvre, musical subjectivity either follows into dominant ideologies of identity, such as nationalism, or strives to maintain a critical integrity as an articulation of subjectivity. The latter initiative persists within the Wagnerian oeuvre as its mark of ambivalence. There is, moreover, an analogous formal ambivalence at stake in Wagner’s music. This is the tension between a music produced and heard as formally autonomous—Wagner used the term “absolute”—and a music pro-

duced as a mirror of nature, or a mimetic duplication of some extramusical world. In the case of Wagner the concern is with his systems of related leitmotifs and their possible construction of a music of pictures. For Adorno, the music of pictures flattered the regressive listener, amounting to the double insult of the claim to mythic totality at the level of the disposable commodity. In this case, the dialectic of subjectivity and identity is echoed in the stylistic tension between musical language, which attempts to address and understand a world outside of itself, and a system of musical pictures, which disavows externality. As Adorno argued, form and ideology cannot be separated in Wagner. The result is what might be called a crisis in musical integrity.

Wagner successfully engineered a mythical status for his own work; a principal function of myth, unlike history, is to foreclose on boundaries. The “Wagner effect” lies beyond the fact that he is both brute and sage, but in the fact that the boundary between these is maddeningly hard to draw. There is an overriding ambiguity in Wagner between the brute and the sage, between the founder of a viable and potent modern racism and the craftsman not only of great art but of an art that contains passionate energies of cultural and self-critique. Wagner’s beauty remains perhaps always seductive and dangerous but not always cruel. As an event, the brute Wagner wins. In that light, the chapter on Wagner seeks to hold Wagner and Wagnerism accountable for the mid-century crisis of modernity and hence for the assault of ideology on subjectivity. At the same time, it holds Wagner interpretation accountable to the legacy of ambiguity that Wagner produces and that he demands in response.

Chapters 5 and 6, which follow the one on Wagner, ask “Is there life after Wagner?” They chart musical languages of the recovery of the modern from the Wagnerian ideologies of nationhood, cultural homogenization, and aesthetic totalization. I turn first to the genre of the requiem mass (Brahms, Verdi, Dvořák) to ask how the voice of the people is posited in contradistinction to the voice of the nation. I return to opera to investigate how gender and nation claim reconstitution in non-Wagnerian terms—in other words, without simply repeating the ideologies on other national and gendered grounds (Debussy, Bartók, Janáček). Though the material considered here stretches well into the twentieth century—as late as 1926 with *The Makropoulos Case*—the concerns and stylistic idioms both speak in terms redolent of the nineteenth century.

The concluding chapter is also posed in the form of a question, but this one goes unanswered, in any case more unanswered than the question in chapter 6. It asks how the understanding of nineteenth-century music as a language of subjectivity impacts the conceptualization of twentieth-century music. It seeks no more than to pose the contours for the discussion of how twentieth-century music engages the psychoanalytic mapping of the unconscious. I work on the assumption, which I believe can be and has been argued historically, that twentieth-century discourses of subjectivity incorporate the Freudian topographies of the unconscious. The resulting question is what this new ground

of subjectivity does to and with music's position as a language of subjectivity. Wagnerian claims remain most active here: specifically the claim that music can become a language of the *articulated* unconscious, the unconscious rendered conscious. This claim contradicts Freud's definition of the unconscious as the realm that resists articulation. Freud explicitly, notoriously, disavowed any sustained engagement between psychoanalysis and music. Mahler agonized over the question of music and the unconscious. Schoenberg increasingly shut it down. If Freud was right about the unavailability of the unconscious, then Schoenberg was right, too, about its inadmissibility to musical articulation. Does Schoenberg's revolution shut down subjectivity at the same time as it seeks to shut down ideology?

As Wagner had done with *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Schoenberg wrote an autobiographical opera in *Moses und Aron*. Moses's (read Schoenberg's) opposition to Aaron recapitulates the modern musical tradition's opposition to visuality, representation, and their excesses. Moses and Aaron become allegories of the modern and the baroque. But in rejecting visuality and ideology, Moses disavows music itself and, finally, loses the faculty of language altogether. The verdict is still out on the issue of Schoenberg's similar culpability. Whether or not Schoenberg shut down a music of subjectivity is perhaps the unanswerable corollary to the more reliable proposition that Schoenberg, out of respect for the unconscious, shut down its depiction in music. But that is an issue for a book on the twentieth century.