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~REVIEWS~

Kevin Korsyn, "Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence," *Music Analysis* 10 (1991): 3–72.

Joseph N. Straus. *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition*. Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1990. ix, 207 pp.

Revising Revision

I

> the strongest and the fiercest Spirit
> That fought in Heav'n; now fiercer by despair.
>
> —Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2.44–45

> More than ever, contemporary poets insist that they are telling the truth in their work, and more than ever they tell continuous lies, particularly about their relations to one another, and most consistently about their relations to their precursors.
>
> —Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*[1]

What has made Harold Bloom's agonistic theory of poetic influence so popular? It is not a pretty thing. At its core is bleakness—a view of human nature founded on jealousy, territoriality, resentment, and of human relations founded on corrosive rivalry, contention, strife. "Revisionism," the forcible recasting of what is received, is his announced subject, "and revisionism, in personal life, in society and its institutions, in religion, and in the arts and sciences and all the academic disciplines, is a fierce process, however that process conceals itself in the codes of civilization."[2] Bloom is in the company of Machiavelli, of Nietzsche, of Freud, indeed of all who have seen human beings chiefly as obstacles to other human beings.

Bloom agrees with other recent critics that literature is self-referential. Texts are "intertextual"; they refer not to the world at large but to other texts. "There are *no* texts," he goes so far as to assert (for the moment sounding very much like a deconstructionist), "but only relationships *between* texts."[3] Yet where deconstructionists see intertextuality as unbounded and

[1] New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, 10.

[2] Harold Bloom, *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), vii.

[3] *A Map of Misreading*, 3.

indeterminate, and give themselves up with gusto to the hermeneutic of infinite regress, Bloom's intertextual criticism "has succeeded in returning poetry to history,"[4] if not a history with which music historians will necessarily care to identify. For Bloom, a poem is nothing more or less than a deadly locking of horns, one particular human being's struggle with "strong" precursors, the ones who inspire feelings of inadequacy, of guilt, of "belatedness."

The history of literature—meaning the fallen literature of our sorry post-Enlightened, quasi-Alexandrian "late, late Romantic" age (as Leonard B. Meyer has called it)[5]—is for Bloom a history of appalling fathers, who have said everything, and sulking sons, obsessed at once with history and with themselves. Once again Freud is invoked, this time in the guise of family romancer. Poets—"strong" poets—begin as Oedipus and end as Laius. Success as a poet is achieved by parricide. The weapon of deliverance is contrary paraphrase: "To live, the poet must *misinterpret* the father, by the crucial act of misprision, which is the re-writing of the father."[6] The meaning of any poem is thus determined by its family ties: in the case of a strong poet, the meaning lies in the poem's distorting, opportunistic, perverse relationship—what Bloom has so famously christened "misreading"—to previous poems.

The whole theory, in short, is a celebration of strength—a strength revealed not in forbearance or magnanimity but (as Bloom says Nietzsche says) *only in fighting*. "Poetic strength," Bloom alleges, "comes only from a triumphant wrestling with the greatest of the dead, and from an even more triumphant solipsism." He has constructed, like Nabokov if for vastly different reasons, a "willful little pantheon" (as John Updike called Nabokov's),[7] Bloom's peopled only by those who have rapaciously ingested the threatening ghosts of their predecessors and metabolized them. "How is it / I extract strength from the beef I eat?" asks Whitman, one of Bloom's strong poets, in a solipsistic untitled verse from *Leaves of Grass* that happened to be set (as "Walt Whitman") by Ives, himself no stranger to the anxiety of influence, as he acknowledged time and again by vehement denial. It is precisely the question to which Bloom's theory provides an impressively fine-tuned if repellent answer.

Thus the misreading strong, and only they, may defeat their belatedness and keep the history of poetry going. Like any elite, such artists are of course "infrequent." (Bloom recognizes only two consistently strong poets in English in the twentieth century, Wallace Stevens and Thomas Hardy.) Even "great poets," he maintains, "may fail of continuous strength," though if they are great they cannot fail continually (strength being the only measure

[4] Frank Lentricchia, foreword to *The Breaking of the Vessels*, by Harold Bloom (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), x.

[5] "A Pride of Prejudices; Or, Delight in Diversity," *Music Theory Spectrum* 13 (1991): 241.

[6] *A Map of Misreading*, 19.

[7] Introduction to Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), xxiii.

of greatness). "And major innovators," he contends, "may never touch strength at all"—for Bloom could not care less about style or compositional technique or *their* histories.[8]

This last proviso will set many a musicologist's teeth on edge, for musicology has from the beginning been concerned primarily with style, with compositional technique, and with something it calls structure, none of which play any significant role in Bloom's theory. Strong composers have been defined musicologically as the protagonists of technical innovation—"*change* and *novelty*," in Leo Treitler's oft-quoted words, being "the principal subjects of [music] history"[9]—and their works have been parsed and evaluated on the basis of formal and technical aspects that are taken musicologically to be their content. What academic music critics look for—what they find—is stylistic and formal integrity; what is most admired is a tandem of complexity and coherence. Bloom is primarily concerned with modes of meaning habitually ignored by norm-seeking musicology, if not banished altogether as "extramusical." In his antiformalism he quotes Emerson, an alter ego: "For it is not meters, but a meter-making argument that makes a poem,"[10] to which he adds, in his own voice, "To say that a poem is about itself is killing."[11] He revels in complexity, but it is a complexity that transcends and specifically denies the integrity of texts.

The model of influence musicologists have generally assumed is quite at variance with Bloom's. Theoretical formulation has been rare, but we have tended to uphold the model Bloom has tried to efface, of which the locus classicus is a celebrated essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," by T. S. Eliot—the "abominable Eliot" Bloom so furiously despises. It is a decorous model, centering not on uncontrollable belligerent contest but on voluntary benign submission, described by Eliot as the poet's "surrender of himself . . . to something which is more valuable."[12] Some*thing*, not someone—all have made the same willing sacrifice, and when one great artist influences another, it is a handing on of that higher, wholly impersonal thing known as tradition. Not that everything handed on is tradition: tradition to Eliot is what a musicologist (wittingly or not aping Tovey, for whom it was two words) will call "the mainstream."[13] Follow something else and you are not traditional but derivative.

Thus the slight squeamishness that often attaches to musicological attributions of personal influence, and also, perhaps, the paucity of theorizing on the subject. It is thought to be something of secondary account where important composers are concerned, not worthy of much attention—gossip,

[8] All quotations from Bloom in this paragraph and the one above it are from *A Map of Misreading*, 9.

[9] "History, Criticism, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," *19th-Century Music* 3 (1979–80): 204.

[10] *A Map of Misreading*, 20.

[11] Bloom, *Figures of Capable Imagination* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 140.

[12] Frank Kermode, ed., *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich and Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 40.

[13] Donald Francis Tovey, "The Main Stream of Music" (1938), in *The Main Stream of Music and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 330–52. "My title," Tovey wrote, "is a metaphor which is useful so long as it is not overworked."

really. "It is by no means always clear what purpose the mention of a given influence is intended to serve," John Platoff (a rare theorizer) has recently cautioned, "or how it relates to any larger argument."[14] For Harold Bloom there is no larger argument, except to open the same argument out onto a more general revisionary terrain. We musicologists tend to instruct our young carefully in "what conditions must be fulfilled to demonstrate the existence of an influence,"[15] and these tend to be the same conditions—similarity and access—that govern the adjudication of plagiarism. Bloom does not require the first condition[16] (indeed he despises it as "weak") and disavows all interest in the second (mere "source study").[17]

Besides, musicologists habitually mix the notion of influence with that of model. Platoff submits Daniel Heartz's citation of Gluck's *Alceste* as a model for act 3 of *Idomeneo* (supported, though with less specificity, by previous writers including Dent, Schrade, and Jahn) as an instance of influence. But of course a model is something freely chosen, or at least wittingly embraced, and (though there are well-known exceptions) usually something admired.[18] The emulation is deliberate if not actually grateful. The relationship, while often competitive, is not primarily adversarial.[19] Influence, especially in Bloom's formulation, arises out of just the opposite conditions. An influence is unwanted and inescapable.[20] What influences an artist is not what he loves but what he fears; his engagement with his ancestors is a compulsion born of an envious antagonism so strong that it is unconscious or masked as the love it may once have been. Its result is as often an absence as a presence. Artists are thus in no position even to know, much less to acknowledge, who or what has influenced them.

The nature of Bloom's theory makes unconsciousness of influence an implicit certainty, virtually a requirement. As he describes it, an artist's

[14] John Platoff, "Writing About Influences: *Idomeneo*, A Case Study," in *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Leonard B. Meyer*, ed. Eugene Narmour and Ruth A. Solie (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1988), 43.

[15] Ibid.

[16] "Poetic influence, in the sense I give to it, has almost nothing to do with the verbal resemblances between one poet and another" (*A Map of Misreading*, 19).

[17] "An ephebe's best misinterpretations may well be of poems he has never read" (*The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1973], 70).

[18] Cf. Leonard B. Meyer's theory of "Choice, Influence, and Covert Causalism," as set forth in *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 142–49. By defining influence as the creation of a "new option" or "a viable alternative," and insisting on (free) choice as "the central issue," Meyer appears to endorse the assimilation of the notion of influence to that of model, hence its virtual elimination.

[19] A theory of musical modeling has been most rigorously enunciated with respect to the traditions of the late middle ages. See Howard Mayer Brown, "Emulation, Competition, and Homage: Imitation and Theories of Imitation in the Renaissance," this JOURNAL 35 (1982): 1–48; Leeman L. Perkins, "The L'Homme Armé Masses of Busnoys and Okeghem: A Comparison," *Journal of Musicology* 3 (1984): 363–96; J. Peter Burkholder, "Johannes Martini and the Imitation Mass of the Late Fifteenth Century," this JOURNAL 38 (1985): 470–523; and, for a contrary view, Rob C. Wegman, "Another 'Imitation' of Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé*—and Some Observations on *Imitatio* in Renaissance Music," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 114 (1989): 189–202.

[20] "No poet, I amend that to no strong poet, can choose his precursor, any more than any person can choose his father" (*A Map of Misreading*, 12).

creative personality is something feral: remorseless, aggressive, wholly selfish—all id, one is tempted to observe. So like the id it is encased in more acceptable modes of awareness that "conceal" the artist's true attitudes and appetites "in the codes of civilization" through repression, sublimation, the whole panoply of Freudian defensive mechanisms. An artist's own testimony, it follows, is the least reliable indicator as to his real creative forebears, the ones whose work he has perversely reinscribed, except insofar as disavowal, betokening anxiety, may arouse suspicion ("for poets rightly idealize their activity; and all poets, weak and strong, agree in denying any share in the anxiety of influence").[21] The critic's task is to penetrate the defenses and bring the repressed, anxious-making relationship to light by divining and analyzing the artist's "misreadings." In the psychoanalyst's office such treatment could be called therapeutic, but out in the open with public reputations at stake it has to be called adversarial (and it has been denounced as such). The critic refuses to collude with the artist's ego; he wants to smoke out the id.

Charles Rosen, another rare author who has theorized about musical influence, exemplifies what may be the common assumption among musicologists: that composer and critic are allies, equally committed to and cooperating in elucidation. Detecting a similarity between the beginnings of Brahms's E♭-Minor Scherzo for piano, op. 4, and Chopin's Scherzo in B♭ Minor (and another between the two trios), Rosen infers a process: "Having steeped himself in Chopin's style in order to absorb a now canonic conception of the virtuoso piano scherzo, Brahms displays the thematic reference at the opening in order to signal the presence of imitation." Chopin, on this view, was a model, not an influence, and Brahms, "a master of allusion," flaunted him like a trophy. Rosen even interprets Brahms's famous squelch about echoes of Beethoven's Ninth in his First Symphony ("Any ass can see that") as evidence that he "generally intended his references to be heard." Thus for Rosen it was "surprising" to discover that "Brahms claimed to have known no Chopin when writing the E♭-Minor Scherzo."[22] Yet for Bloom, the claim is no surprise: it is the telltale, indispensable symptom of true influence, "the giving that famishes the taker."[23] More surprising is how Rosen reported the story of Brahms's denial, which came by way of William Mason's memoirs: he tucked it away in a footnote, and never thought to reconsider his premises in its light.

II

> If you leave out any [pieces] at all [from op. 76] I should prefer it to be the A major, for although its middle movement is charming, it is too reminiscent of Chopin, and the beginning is too insignificant for Brahms—if you will excuse my saying so!
>
> —Clara Schumann to Brahms, 7 November 1878[24]

[21] *A Map of Misreading*, 10.

[22] All quotations in this paragraph to this point are from Charles Rosen, "Influence: Plagiarism and Inspiration," *19th-Century Music* 4 (1980–81): 93–94.

[23] *A Map of Misreading*, 11.

[24] *Letters of Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms, 1853–1896*, ed. Berthold Litzmann (New York: Vienna House, 1971), 2:38.

What, then, is the appeal of this prickly theory? Why has it now begun to penetrate the discourse of musicology? For one general—not very appealing—thing, it is distinctly intimidating. Bloom claims to have seen through a veil (the "codes of civilization") to an underlying reality. By so radically opposing the mitigating codes, which everyone recognizes as codes, to the fierce reality that he asserts, he makes things difficult for opponents. To resist a Realpolitik is to court accusations of (at best) "noble idealization" or (at worst) complicity in a cover-up.[25] And to decry a cult of strength is to look weak.

Methodologically, Bloom's theory is as well insulated as the Freudian theory from which it borrows so heavily. If similarity is evidence of influence, but dissimilarity can be evidence of a stronger influence; if a poet's direct allusion, not to mention his open assent or avowal, can be evidence of his susceptibility, but the absence of an allusion and his denial can be evidence of a stronger susceptibility—then just what can disprove the theory? Nothing can: as a theory it is breezily "verificationist," and if it pretended to scientific status it would of course be laughed right out of court. But it is not science. It is connoisseurship, "a purely personal activity," Bloom has told an interviewer, having "exactly the same status as lyric poetry or narrative writing."[26] Everything depends on the quality of the performance, on its persuasiveness and its heuristic benefit. "Whether the theory is correct or not may be irrelevant to its usefulness for practical criticism, which I think can be demonstrated," he says—though he cannot resist adding that he takes resistance to his argument as its confirmation.[27]

Bloom's own encyclopedic performances are grandly virtuosic and impressive. Yet even more strategic for the theory's prestige and its spread has been the celebrated "map of misprision," first sketched out in *The Anxiety of Influence* and given fullest form in the more lucid, less lyrical sequel, *A Map of Misreading*, from which I have taken most of the quotations adduced above.[28] This handy tabular summary of complex deductions from the author's fundamental idea has been widely appropriated—against what Bloom has declared to be his wishes—as a tool to guide application, turning theory into method. It provides a set of flamboyantly esoteric terms or categories (the so-called revisionary ratios) by which to test and measure the exact relationship between a poem and the poems it anxiously misreads. The ratios are six in number, arranged in three dialectical pairs according to a model derived from another esoteric source, the exegetical tradition of Jewish gnosticism known as Kabbalah. Each ratio is provided with a counterpart in classical rhetoric (the familiar "tropes" or figures of speech) and in psychoanalytic theory (the psychic defenses, mechanisms of anxiety), and each is directly allied with a category of poetic imagery. Thus multiple points of hermeneutic access to any poem are vouchsafed, and multiple means of precise comparison suggested, in keeping with the overriding idea that

[25] *A Map of Misreading*, 30.
[26] Imre Salusinszky, *Criticism in Society* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 49.
[27] *A Map of Misreading*, 9–10.
[28] The map itself is on page 84, surrounded by a lengthy commentary that recapitulates and reduces much of the argument in the earlier book.

criticism does not interpret single texts but interrelates them. The map, in short, is a tour de force of erudite synthesis. It is hard not to be seduced by its elegance, by its impassioned terminology, and of course by the lure (notwithstanding Bloom's disclaimers)[29] of so eminently applicable an instrument: hence its contagion.

As to what it specifically offers students of music, one can quote the author of what is up to now the most thorough application of the map of misprision to musical texts. "My appropriation of Bloom," writes Kevin Korsyn,

> does fulfil . . . many needs: it integrates musicology [i.e., music history], theory and criticism, giving us a method of critical evaluation that is both historical and analytical; it accommodates the paradoxes of influence showing originality and tradition, continuity and change in dialectical relation. Even if one rejects the idea of an organic work (as deconstruction advocates), it provides a model for analysing compositions as relational events rather than as closed and static entities.[30]

What is promised is nothing less than a way out of the formalist impasse that so many have deplored, the stranglehold of what Korsyn calls "modes of music analysis [that] repress the imagination, fleeing from art towards an illusory objectivity" (p. 14). He wants to explore not only "structure" but meaning, yet he resists methods that merely assimilate musical meaning to literary paraphrase ("imposing meanings external to music," as he puts it on page 67). All of this he purports to accomplish by mapping out a new conceptual space for analysis, substituting for formalist methods a "new rhetorical poetics" based on an intertextual paradigm. The focus of study becomes the revisionary relationship between works and their precursors rather than the autonomy of individual compositions. While the methods of traditional analysis are by no means rejected—Korsyn invokes Schoenberg, Schenker, and Tovey, among many others—they are significantly "misread."

The focus on revision will restore historical perspective, the very thing most current analysis ignores or else misappropriates.[31] Musical meaning (or expressive content) is to be construed in terms of the revisionary strategies, on Bloom's analogy with the classical tropes, and in line with his dictum, quoted by Korsyn, that "the meaning of a poem can only be a poem, but another poem, a poem not itself" (p. 13). Works may be evaluated in terms of the relative strength of their misreadings, thus furnishing the promised critical dimension.

The crucial justifying task is to supply musical figures or gestures that may substitute for Bloom's verbal tropes as analogues to the six revisionary ratios. (This Korsyn calls his own "strong misreading" of Bloom.) Korsyn evolves

[29] In *Agon* he warrants that "I neither want nor urge any 'method' of criticism. It is no concern of mine whether anybody else ever comes to share, or doesn't, my own vocabularies of revisionary ratios, of crossings, of whatever . . . because I don't wish to privilege any vocabularies, my own included" (p. 38).

[30] Korsyn, "Towards a New Poetics," 61. Further references to this source will be made in the text.

[31] For ghastly examples of misappropriation, see Alan Street, "Superior Myths, Dogmatic Allegories: The Resistance to Musical Unity," *Music Analysis* 8 (1989): 77–124, esp. 98–101.

these analogues in the course of a model analysis comparing Brahms's Romanze, op. 118, no. 5, with its alleged "central precursor-text," Chopin's Berceuse, op. 57. The Brahms/Chopin nexus was practically foreordained, not only by Brahms's well-established reputation as a revised anthology of his predecessors,[32] but also because his anxious relationship to Chopin had been unwittingly suggested (via Mason) by Rosen, whose article furnished Korsyn with his starting point. By choosing (or, as Bloom would put it, being chosen by) the feared Chopin's Berceuse as precursor to his Romanze—and choosing a title that connotes the genre of quest narrative—Brahms makes the piece a representation of his own quest for authentic selfhood, a dialectic, Korsyn says, that can be accomplished in music "only if it is mediated through the anxiety of influence, that is, only if the music of other composers is used in one's own piece to represent threats to the self" (p. 67).

After briefly surveying the surface similarities that prompt the linking of the two pieces (which Korsyn, with Rosen and others, accepts as allusions, meant to be heard), Korsyn proceeds to the more interesting differences, in which Brahms asserts his authentic self by repressing Chopin, and in which his piece asserts its uniqueness by misreading the Berceuse. Here is where the six revisionary ratios—the strong misreadings, the moves to overmaster—come into play.

1. The way Brahms saturates his variations theme with an incidental motive from Chopin's, and, further, extracts his method of linking variations from the same motive, is assimilated to the revisionary ratio Bloom called *tessera* (literally, a shard), coordinated in the map of misprision with the trope of synecdoche (part for whole or whole for part). Brahms in effect fully executes what Chopin only casually implies, showing on two levels (motive as extracted from theme, theme as extracted from the variations set) how the part can serve to represent the whole. (Korsyn, at once misreading Bloom and Schenker, relates this rhetorical trope to the motivic replications between levels in a Schenkerian graph, and, less speculatively, to Christoph Bernhard's writings on "figures," which were among Schenker's central precursor-texts.)
2. The way Brahms frames his D-major middle section (where the overt allusions to Chopin are found) with sections in F major, thus subverting the tonal stability of the precursor, is assimilated to *clinamen* (literally, a swerve), Bloom's ratio associated with irony (and with Freud's reaction-formation). In the context that Brahms creates for it, Chopin's very limited diatonic scope "says 'tonal stability' but means 'tonal instability' " (p. 35), since the two keys have no established functional relationship. Brahms's swerve from the precursor calls invidious atten-

[32] Indeed, Brahms has figured in most Bloomian applications thus far: see Elaine R. Sisman, "Brahms's Slow Movements: Reinventing the 'Closed' Forms," in *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. George S. Bozarth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); and John Daverio, "Brahms, Mozart, and the Anxiety of Influence," an unpublished paper (1988) to which Korsyn refers in a footnote. Korsyn himself has followed up with another study of Brahms and Chopin, as yet unpublished.

tion, as well, to its consistency, recasting Chopin's simplicity as limited vision. Brahms reflects, through his belated maturity, on the impossibility of recapturing the bliss of infantile undivided consciousness that the Berceuse naively symbolizes (in characterizing which Korsyn refers to several recent theories of musical temporality in relation to states of consciousness). The allusion to the Berceuse thus becomes simultaneously an invocation and a negation of its idea. Brahms has in effect killed the precursor, because having heard his antithetical misreading, we ourselves (according to Korsyn) lose the innocence of our response to Chopin.

3. The way Brahms ends his Chopin-saturated middle section, with a liquidation rather than a closure, is assimilated to *kenosis* (emptying-out), associated with metonymy, which puts an attribute in place of a thing. Here, all that is left of Chopin is some trills. Kenosis is also coordinated with the psychic defense of undoing, or regression; and Brahms here undoes the transition that had introduced the middle section, regressing to a reprise of the opening.
4. The way Brahms condenses the reprise, and yet intensifies his veiled appropriation of a motive from Chopin through a quickened melodic sequence in triple octaves, is assimilated to *daemonization*, associated with the trope of hyperbole, exaggeration (here, the quickening intensification immediately preceding the long-delayed full closure) and the defense of repression (here, the condensation, which "forgets" its former self, and particularly the modulatory moves that had led to the overt allusion). In his discussion, Korsyn curiously ignores Bloom's complementary association of daemonization with litotes, the trope of understatement, which might also apply to this very quiet and reticent ending in which the Chopin motive, but for the hyperbolic sequence, is returned to the inner voices.
5. The ambiguous nature of Brahms's intertextual relationship to precursors (nobody having ever really figured out, for example, whether "any ass can see that" meant proud acknowledgment or apprehensive irritation, identification or estrangement) is assimilated to *askesis* (self-curtailment), associated with metaphor and with sublimation. Korsyn sees this ambiguity as a recognition of separation from the precursor and as the predominant revisionary ratio in the Romanze, covering the whole piece. "Chopin" here stands metaphorically for the "otherness" of the past, which Brahms felt more keenly and dialectically than his less historically reflective, less self-conscious contemporaries.
6. The way Brahms's coda expires with a last whispered and radically concentrated recollection of the Chopin-saturated middle, alluding primarily to its cadential gesture, is assimilated to *apophrades* (return of the dead), associated with the trope of transumption (or metalepsis), meaning discontinuity, a leaping-over of middle terms. Transumption also implies an upward revision, and here the close of the middle section is promoted to close the whole piece, taking on a formerly missing stability. The associated defense is projection/introjection, a fantasy of the future or a casting-off of the past. Korsyn, prompted by the asymmetry of the reprise and what he perceives as unrealized

> registral implications, opts here for futurity, to which Brahms has entitled himself by virtue of his successful combat with the precursor, and his mature refusal of the latter's regressive enchantment.

Thus the strong misreading: the meaning, and the value, of Brahms's Romanze are found in its re-visioning of a work by Chopin. The Brahms that is truly Brahms is the Brahms that is not Chopin. His presence can only be located in the other's absence; it has no independent essence. His strength is his power of exclusion. Along the way, a piece by Reger (*Träume am Kamin*, op. 143, no. 12) is adduced and unsurprisingly dismissed as a weak misreading of the same precursor-work. Reger does not successfully exclude Chopin, and to the extent that he departs he only weakens. There is no Reger that is truly Reger.

The foil does clarify the argument, but writing Reger off as a poor man's Brahms is nothing new. And that signals what seems to me the weakness in Korsyn's application, at this stage of his work: unlike Bloom (whose work on influence arose out of his earlier Romantic revivalism, itself a militantly revisionist program), Korsyn evinces no revisionary impulse. His "new poetics" mainly reconfirms conventional judgments. The reconfirmation, meant to justify the new methodology, obviates the need for it. Further, like many analysts with a point to prove, Korsyn is inclined to ignore salient aspects of the pieces he treats while in pursuit of the arcana he regards as more pertinent to his agenda. (Never once does he mention, for example, the persistent, never fully resolved harmonic tritone D–G♯ that occurs every fourth bar in Brahms's middle section; to be sure, the G♯ does proceed to A, but to regard it as wholly normal on that account seems at least half-blind.)

Even more unlike Bloom, but very much like an old-reading musicologist, Korsyn seeks the "compelling logic and unity" in the pieces he analyzes (p. 21), even describing the essential compositional "problem" in the Berceuse as the endowing of a set of variations with these apparently obligatory values. (The "problem" could just as well have been posited from the opposite perspective, as that of securing maximum fantasy and diversity in a piece constrained by an ostinato.) The analyst, perhaps truer than he imagines to the traditions of his métier, has not rejected the comforting autonomy paradigm in favor of the risky "relational event." Though he clearly understands what intertextual references are for Bloom, for Korsyn they are (if I may inject a new trope, that of oxymoron) essentially attributes.

Compared with Bloom's example, moreover, most of Korsyn's applications of the revisionary ratios, while ingenious and elegantly formulated, are somewhat predictably vague and "gestural." As usually happens when music and language are compared on language's terms, the music makes an ineffectual, indeed deficient impression. Possibly out of his very eagerness to persuade, Korsyn holds back from the kind of assertive specificity that can antagonize through presumption. "I recognize the dangers of imaginative wildness," he assures the reader, "and will avoid them" (p. 14). So, he evidently thinks, one has to talk to musicologists; but had Bloom done similarly, he would have gained neither his notoriety nor his disciples.

As a programmatic exemplification of a method, finally, the study suffers from overkill. The need to apply all six ratios for the sake of demonstration

makes the author (in his words) "an extremist in an exercise" (p. 47) and freights the poor Romanze, after all a rather slight composition, with an extravagant load of import. The implication that the ratios may always be applied as desired might seem to signal the premature onset of a familiar dogmatism. Read more sympathetically, Korsyn's application underscores the artificiality of the method, the exposure of which is only honest—far more honest, indeed, than the usual analytical claim that meaning and structure are immanent properties awaiting discovery. If meaning inheres in the relationship between the parts of a text, and in the relationship between texts, it also inheres in the relationship between the text and the critical performer. It is not discovered but made; analysis *is* artifice.

Maybe it is premature to speak here of a "new poetics," but Korsyn claims no more than an "initial swerve" toward a new paradigm. At the least, he presents a responsible exposition of Bloom and a painstaking attempt to apply Bloom's ratios. Any musicologist reading Korsyn's essay will come away with an accurate picture of the theory and some idea of its possibilities. Many will be impressed with Korsyn's demonstrations, especially those of the tessera and the clinamen, which effectively integrate standard analytical procedures into the Bloomian operation, giving assurance that the new poetics may accommodate what to a musical professional will seem a competent engagement with musical particulars, and yet subsume that engagement within a project more humane than what we have been used to.

III

> My music, produced on German soil, without foreign influences, is a living example of an art able most effectively to oppose Latin and Slav hopes of hegemony.
>
> —Arnold Schoenberg, "National Music" (1931)[33]

> Yes, I too like to admire great men, but only those whose works I do not understand.
>
> —Georg Christoph Lichtenberg[34]

If with his intensive dissection of a single revisionary relationship Kevin Korsyn has produced the most thorough application of Harold Bloom's theory of poetic influence to music, the most comprehensive musicological project to invoke Bloom up to now is Joseph Straus's *Remaking the Past*, which epitomizes and extends with many examples a thesis the author has been developing in lectures and articles for about a decade. Although Straus would classify himself a music theorist, and although the book's argument unfolds through a series of analyses, what he has produced is actually a work of revisionist history, addressing an important historiographical crux: the problem of neoclassicism in the musical culture of the twentieth century.

[33] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 173.

[34] Quoted in Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 31.

Neoclassicism a problem? But yes, in many senses of the word. Its origins are obscure, its definition elusive, its purposes unclear, its implications—to many, and for many reasons—monstrous. Above all it has posed a problem to those who wish to see a clear evolutionary line in the music of our century, for it seems so profoundly antithetical to the music that preceded it—not only the music of late romanticism, but also (and especially) the radical New Music of the early twentieth century. The neoclassical tendency has seemed a "right deviation" (Adorno spoke of a "retrogression into the traditional"),[35] intolerable to a historiography that celebrates innovation. Historians simply have not known what to do with it.

While few historians today subscribe to overtly teleological or deterministic models, smacking as they do of pre- or post-Enlightened totalitarianism, loose conventional parlance continues tacitly to endorse such notions, if with a face-saving simulacrum of irony. "Progress" may be out, but "progressive" is still a viable term, and it still connotes value. It still saves reputations. We have had "Brahms the Progressive" since its publication in 1947 (it was written in 1933), and now we have "Bach the Progressive," "Britten the Progressive," and even "Dufay the Progressive." "Conservative" remains a pejorative that must be countered if the figure to whom it is applied is seen as having value.[36]

The central evolutionary problem is compounded by one of asserted legitimacy. Unlike tonality, atonality (the kind that survived) has one father. This has given rise to a cult of personality, has intensified polarization, and has lent the historiography of twentieth-century music a characteristically post-Romantic Caesaristic mode that has long been under siege but will not capitulate until those who have cast themselves as the victorious father's dynastic heirs have relinquished their power bases. Hence music history—once its narrative has reached the Napoleonic age, the age of the musical Caesars—has held fast to collective biography. The cast of characters is still divided into sheep and goats, strong and weak, rebels and conformists, and its central myth still hopelessly confuses all these categories by attempting to marry the Permanent Revolution to the Great Tradition.

Neoclassicism has been accommodated to this narrative in ways we have recently begun to see more clearly, thanks to their thematization by minoritarian and feminist culture critics. It has been constructed as an "other," concomitantly reduced and totalized, and variously marginalized from the mainstream as a pusillanimous nostalgia, a reaction-formation, a temporary war-scare.

[35] Theodore W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 5.

[36] The trick is usually done by constructing covertly teleological models in the small, tracing some selected style characteristic between a pair of arbitrarily posited poles, the one representing a *prima prattica*, the other a *seconda*. In Schoenberg's "Brahms the Progressive" (*Style and Idea*, pp. 398–441) the selected style characteristic is phrase-structure; in Robert L. Marshall's "Bach the Progressive" (*Musical Quarterly* 62 [1976]: 313–57) it is rhythmic variety; in Leo Treitler's "Dufay the Progressive" (in *Music and the Historical Imagination* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989], 215–41) it is an especially notional feature of the music: mode-disposition in a polyphonic context.

The problems with this view of the thing have long been obvious. The essential neoclassicizing impulse preceded the Great War—which only makes it the more inexplicable and inexcusable to linearists. The putative regression may be alternatively represented as a "normal" (that is, evolutionary) outgrowth of a different continuous principle—a counter mainstream—on the "other" side of a great dialectical divide.[37] In any case, the deviation lasted far too long to be written off as a fad or a scare. Worst of all, it had its own Caesar or anti-Caesar at the helm, who, following his deathbed conversion, is now safely canonized and installed in an honorary niche on the right side of the track, his legacy now read as embodying a teleology all its own.

Straus revises neoclassicism by adopting Bloom's notion of the strong misreader. If it can be shown by means of this theory that composers who all at once began resorting to forms long since outdated and harmonies long since outgrown were doing so in a spirit not of nostalgia or Eliotic submission, but of contention, then the regressive deviation would disappear. If, following the famous second paragraph of *The Anxiety of Influence*, "poetic [and musical] history . . . is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets [and composers] make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves" (p. 5), then a properly linear narrative can be salvaged. All is one again, and the strong are all together again, swimming with the tide.

Beyond the opportunistic appropriation of this one Bloomian notion, though, Straus's argument has only the most paradoxical relationship to the theory it purports to invoke. Is Straus then a strong misreader in his turn? So he might wish to argue, and so he has been read;[38] but having examined both the theory and a scrupulous musical application in some detail, we are positioned to dismiss that plea. A strong misreader irrepressibly represses the old to produce the new. Straus co-opts the new theory of influence to retell very old tales. Bloom is simply irrelevant to Straus's methods and purposes, the main purpose being the neutralization—indeed the dematerialization—of the "right deviation" so that its claims against the master narrative can be canceled.

Bloom's irrelevance is apparent even in the preliminary paraphrase of his ideas, which Straus attempts to reduce to four propositions. This is the third:

> The struggle between new poems and their precursors takes the form of misreading. Later poets willfully misinterpret their predecessors in a process analogous to repression in Freudian psychoanalytic theory.[39]

[37] This view was explicitly postulated in German historiography shortly before the First World War and has been revived in the German historiography of the last two decades. See August Halm, *Von zwei Kulturen der Musik* (1913) (3d ed., Stuttgart: Klett, 1947); Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Athenaion, 1980), trans. J. Bradford Robinson as *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989). For an expert summary of this dialectic and an inspired adumbration of its relevance to the future historiography of twentieth-century music, see Karol Berger, review of *A Book About Stravinsky* by Boris Asaf'yev, trans. Richard F. French, *Journal of Music Theory* 28 (1984): 294–302.

[38] Alan Street, review of *Remaking the Past*, *Tempo*, no. 179 (December 1991): 31–32.

[39] *Remaking the Past*, 12. Further references to this source will be made in the text.

Repression, though, is no more an act of will than the other psychic defenses. They are, all of them, necessary and unconscious maneuvers of self-preservation. And if one understands this much, one will understand that the revisionary ratios are similarly involuntary. That is exactly why Bloom calls them misreadings. The artist does not apply them. His anxiety causes them. (Hence the poets' invariable denial that there is such a thing as anxiety of influence—or even influence—let alone that they misread their predecessors.) This insight was not Bloom's alone. It can also be found in the familiar modernist dictum (Cocteau's?) that an original artist has only to copy something in order to demonstrate his originality. It goes back further yet, to such of Bloom's acknowledged misread forebears as Nietzsche and Emerson.

Further, with respect to the notion of a text as a relational event, Straus paraphrases as follows: "For Bloom, the meaning of a poem resides in its relations with other texts and, ultimately, with the entire world of literary language" (p. 13). But Bloom's whole project is explicitly directed against those who would generalize influence in this way. He says that poems are words "that refer to other words, . . . and so on, into the densely overpopulated world of literary language."[40] His aim is to trace particular lines of influence within that world; "Criticism," rings the last sentence in his "Manifesto for Antithetical Criticism," "is the art of knowing the hidden roads that go from poem to poem."[41]

Straus's strong reader, then, is a controller and a lumper. Bloom's is a resister and a splitter. They could hardly be more antipodean. And that is because, *mutatis mutandis*, Bloom's is a metaphor for the composer and Straus's is a metaphor for the academic analyst. The reason for the confusion is familiar to anyone who knows the intellectual traditions out of which Straus arrived at his misprision of Bloom; for academic analysts do in fact habitually if untenably identify their activity with composition. This bias informs the whole of Straus's book.

It will therefore occasion no surprise to discover that Straus jettisons Bloom's revisionary ratios and substitutes his own; that these so-called revisionary ratios do not measure the relationship between particular works but define general style characteristics and technical procedures amounting to an asserted common practice; or that while he discusses all kinds of relationships between new music and old, in only two cases out of more than two dozen does Straus discuss what Bloom would recognize as an instance of influence, anxious or not.

The identification of analysis with composition is explicitly asserted in chapter 2, "Analytical Misreadings," in which the analytical writings of several important twentieth-century composers (but mainly Schoenberg, whose influential didactic works contain a wealth of pertinent material) are directly

[40] Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 3; quoted by Straus on page 13.

[41] *The Anxiety of Influence*, 96. Even Korsyn undervalues this most crucial (and attractive) aspect of Bloom's work, quoting Paul de Man's attempt, in reviewing *The Anxiety of Influence*, to assimilate the book's message to the infinite regress of deconstructionism as if it were the "wider implication of Bloom's model" rather than a defense against its particularism ("Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence," 47).

assimilated to the models of compositional practice outlined as "revisionary ratios" in chapter 1. Chapter 3, "Recompositions," describes Schoenberg's arrangements of Bach and Handel, Webern's of Bach, and Stravinsky's of Bach, Tchaikovsky, and "Pergolesi." (The irrelevance of this chapter to the question of influence is self-evident, even to Straus; we are not asked to imagine Pergolesi as Laius at the crossroads.) Chapter 4, "Triads," considers the way Berg, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky have handled traditional harmonic configurations. No mention is made of individual precursor-texts or even precursor composers. Nor do they figure in chapter 5, "Sonata Forms," which describes adaptations of that genre in the work of Stravinsky, Bartók, and Schoenberg. Chapter 6, "Six Emblematic Misreadings," treats three familiar quotations (Beethoven's "Heiliger Dankgesang" in Bartók's Third Piano Concerto, Bach's "Es ist genug" in Berg's Violin Concerto, *Tristan* in the *Lyric Suite*); one unfamiliar quotation (the statue scene from *Don Giovanni* in the graveyard scene from *The Rake's Progress*); and two relationships that could conceivably be called revisionary on Bloom's model: the opening "Hymne" from Stravinsky's Serenade in A is related to Chopin's second Ballade (a genuine surprise and a fruitful discussion); and the first movement of Schoenberg's Third Quartet is related to the corresponding movement of Schubert's Quartet in A Minor, op. 29. A final chapter, "Middleground Misreadings," discusses quasi-tonal coherence in "post-tonal" music by Stravinsky, Bartók, and Schoenberg, but again names no precursors.

The strategy of ignoring precursors and admitting to a discussion of influence not only models but quotations and even arrangements (the last being the musical counterpart to parodies or satires), is consistent with Straus's conceptual swerve away from Bloom. But for the two exceptions noted, Straus casts the past as either depopulated or passive—an object. His "willful" remaker, fully conscious and unworried, is at all times firmly in the driver's seat; his "post-tonal usages" are always granted an easy, indeed an automatic, victory over the tonal practices they suppositionally, and impersonally, confront. Where is the anxiety? There is no contention between rival subjects, no need for psychic defense. There is, in short, no fight at all.

What actual revisionary ratios (or "strategies of reinterpretation," as Straus rechristens them) does his controlling subject wield upon the passive object? Straus identifies eight, but I will limit discussion to the first two, for they are the true subject matter of the book, accounting for the vast preponderance of its argument. The first is *motivicization*, whereby "the motivic content of the earlier work is radically intensified" (p. 17). Here, of course, Straus invokes the dynastic father, whom he will name in the second chapter as the author of the strategy. Schoenberg henceforth displaces Bloom as the author's authentic preceptor.[42]

[42] To forestall complaint that I am suppressing those places in the book where Straus does invoke Bloom's categories, I hereby list them. Clinamen (the swerve) appears once (p. 134) and is assimilated to Straus's "generalization," to be discussed below, and to "centralization," defined as the placement of harmonic or contrapuntal events that may occur only incidentally in tonal practice at the structural center of a "post-tonal" piece. Kenosis (emptying-out) is invoked twice (pp. 57, 152), equated with an all-purpose antiromanticism (as in Stravinsky's "stripping" Chopin's Ballade "of expressive excess" by abstracting its directed tonal motion into a

Motivic saturation ("working with the tones of a motive") is indeed a Schoenbergian sine qua non, since it is that which maximizes self-reference—the *Zweckmässigkeit* that gives the musical art its autonomous *Zweck*, to trace Schoenberg's idealism back to its Kantian roots. It is also what constitutes the special *Inhalt* of *die heil'ge deutsche Kunst* and keeps it *deutsch und echt*, distinct from all its dialectical rivals. Finally, it is the lifeline to tradition that is presumed to maintain the possibility of musical intelligibility in the absence of degree functions and directed harmony. It is what made an atonal practice theoretically viable and legitimate. A large part of the central evolutionary myth of twentieth-century music narrates the growth "in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" of "contextually established motivic associations" to the point where they "come to dominate the structure" (Straus, pp. 22, 23).

Motivicization has also given analysts (Schoenberg prominent among them) plenty to do, which may be one reason why it has been valued so highly. Straus's chapter 2 illustrates the way in which Schoenberg sought justifying precedents for his compositional practice in earlier German music, mining the music of Brahms the Progressive for motivic atoms, which he promoted, ignoring harmony or voice leading, as primary agents of musical unity. This bias is convincingly related, in chapter 3, to Webern's atomistic orchestration of the six-part Ricercar from Bach's *Musical Offering*, a more actively interventionist "analytical misreading."

Fair enough, but can the practice be generalized to the point where it not only characterizes Schoenberg and his pupils, but can fulfill Straus's criterion for a revisionary ratio, that is, a *universally shared* musical technique whereby "composers in the first part of the twentieth century, despite their superficial stylistic dissimilarities, [remade] earlier forms, style elements, sonorities, and musical works"? It can, Straus maintains, according to his second "strategy of reinterpretation," straightforwardly called *generalization:* "A motive from the earlier work is generalized into the unordered pitch-class set of which it is a member. That pitch-class set is then deployed in the new work in accordance with the norms of post-tonal usage" (p. 17).

Motives have uncontroversially been part of compositional concept and practice since the eighteenth century. (As analytical premises they have been controversially posited as far back as chant.) Pitch-class sets, while a fairly recent analytical construct (and despite initial formulation in the context of twelve-tone music), name a musical universal.[43] But the operation Straus

characteristic tonal deadlock), and assimilated, once again, to "generalization." Apophrades (return of the dead) is invoked three times (pp. 73, 134, 141), not in terms of its mechanism but in terms of one of its effects as Bloom describes it, that of making it seem as though "the later poet himself had written the precursor's characteristic work." Straus uses the term merely as an encomium, to laud the remaker's triumph over the passive object. (Bloom, meanwhile, associated apophrades with a transparency to the precursor born of mature, if solipsistic, security—but then restimulating anxiety!) The other three revisionary ratios are never invoked. The crudity of these appropriations is epitomized in Straus's strange notion of causality: "Clinamen, through the specific musical revisionary strategies by which it is worked out, frequently leads to what Bloom calls *apophrades*" (p. 134).

[43] Coinage of the term *pitch class*, as well as *set* in the present usage, is attributed to Milton Babbitt's 1946 doctoral dissertation, "The Function of Set Structure in the Twelve-Tone

calls generalization, whereby the concept of motive is identified with that of unordered pitch-class set, may be precisely dated to the year 1963, when Allen Forte published his first "set-theoretic" analysis of an atonal composition. Inevitably, a work of Schoenberg's, his *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke*, op. 19, was chosen for the demonstration.[44]

What Straus calls "the norms of post-tonal usage" were formulated in this context. They depend on assumptions—such as the inversional equivalency of sets, a back-transfer from serial theory—that, while implicit to a degree in Schoenberg's and Webern's "atonal" motivic practice (the only atonal practice that was preserial), were obviously alien to the earlier common practice. There is no reason to assume them to be operative for composers whose concepts and methods were formed outside the preserial orbit. Moreover, only in the rationalistic American twelve-tone theory that occupies a much more recent place in the asserted dynastic succession is the idea implicit that a motive (or "compositional set") could be abstracted to its "total interval content" expressed in terms of "interval classes" (of which there are only six owing to inversional equivalence), and still remain a motive—that is, a compositional apriority.

For Schoenberg, the idea of motive implied a gestalt, a contour or shape; a motive, in other words, was for him (and for everyone else before the "set-theoretic" conceptual innovations of Babbitt and Forte) primarily a configuration of pitches, not pitch classes.[45] Indeed, Schoenberg's concept or

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System" (only awarded the degree by Princeton in 1992), which circulated for a decade in typescript before seeing its way piecemeal into print (beginning with "Some Aspects of Twelve-Tone Composition," *The Score and I.M.A. Magazine* 12 [1955]: 53–61). The term *pitch class* was apparently first published in Babbitt's article "Twelve-Tone Invariants as Compositional Determinants," *Musical Quarterly* 46 (1960): 246–59. The word *set* was first applied to an unordered collection of fewer than twelve pitch classes by George Perle in *Serial Composition and Atonality: An Introduction to the Music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962); see Janet Schmalfeldt, *Berg's Wozzeck: Harmonic Language and Dramatic Design* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 247 n. 20.

[44] "Context and Continuity in an Atonal Work: A Set-theoretic Approach," *Perspectives of New Music* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1963): 72–82. In this initial formulation, what Schoenberg called motives are termed "compositional projections" of the "universal" twelve-tone set or aggregate, later simplified to "compositional sets." A year later the method was further generalized and formalized and applied to a composition of Webern's (the fourth of the Five Pieces for String Quartet, op. 5): "A Theory of Set-Complexes for Music," *Journal of Music Theory* 8 (1964): 136–83.

[45] Further on this point with reference to Schoenberg see Paul Lansky's article "Pitch-Class Consciousness," *Perspectives of New Music* 13, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 1975): 30–56, which proceeds from an analysis of "Vergangenes," the second of the Five Pieces for Orchestra, op. 16. The author begins by complaining that the "analytical use" of such abstracted notions as pitch class, interval class, and the like, "without the interposition of a method of interpretation, or abstraction, may . . . have the effect of posturing uninterpreted musical ideas as full-blown structural objects," and goes on to note with some asperity the tendency of noncomposing analysts to "imagine that the rhythmicized pitches of a composition can be so meaningless as to allow their pitch-class abstraction to suffice in an explanation of their musical significance" (p. 31). Neither Lansky nor any other composer could have predicted that such a move might not only be "postured" as an explanatory maneuver but actually touted (by noncomposers) as a compositional method. "If one steps back into abstracted considerations derived without respect to such concerns" as "the ways in which pitches represent pitch classes, and the ways pitch classes abstract pitch," he warns in conclusion, one cannot "describe any kind of musical sense

doctrine of "developing variation" was downright inimical to the equation of motive with pitch-class set (as defined by specific interval-class content), because it not only allowed but relied on intervallic transformation as a vehicle of that elaborative technique whereby "*different things* can arise from *one thing*."[46] The converse of Straus's ratio of generalization (indispensable to his analytical practice)—namely, that any recurrently isolable pitch- or interval-class set is entitled to be considered a motive—is thus without historical footing. And so, therefore, are Straus's "norms of post-tonal usage." Even without raising the usual caveats regarding the epistemology of "segmentation" (that is, deciding what pitch-class sets to isolate for purposes of analysis), the relevance of the analyst's concepts and methods to those of the composers for whom he presumes to speak, hence the relevance of his analyses to their compositional practice, is placed severely in doubt.

Straus addresses all questions of relevance, and of proper range of application, in a purely pragmatic way: "Pitch-class set theory provides consistent ways of discussing and relating sonorities of any size or structure in any musical context." All that this means, really, is that the theory offers a way of ignoring size, structure, and context. The last is the crucial worry. "Recent work in music theory has begun to reveal surprising similarities of structure between so-called neoclassical and so-called progressive music," Straus writes (p. 3). But this was inevitable: both "neoclassical" music and "progressive" music are composed of pitch-class sets, as is any other kind of music. The high degree of abstraction implicit in Straus's "generalization" paradigm insures that similarities of the kind he posits can be "revealed" ad libitum. The paradigm, in other words, is precisely a means not of discovering but of *generating* pitch-structural affinities, both within the individual composition and between compositions regardless of "style." An analyst committed to a value system that privileges motivic saturation will certainly want to bring these similarities to light. Straus's second "strategy of reinterpretation," then, is not a compositional method at all, but an analytical machine that levels distinctions and produces an adventitious homogeneity regardless of what is fed into it.

These are familiar objections, embodied by now in a sizable literature.[47] There is no need to rehearse them at any great length here so as to point up yet again the circularity of Straus's methodology or the factitiousness of its

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or progression"; instead, "an understanding of the qualities of musical uniqueness will continue to be suppressed in favor of generalizations" (p. 56). Again, from his composer's perspective he fails to imagine that such suppression and such privileging of generalization, far from the inadvertent analytical flaws he envisions, might be altogether premeditated and essential ploys for constructing revisionist history.

[46] "For a Treatise on Composition" (1931), in Schoenberg's *Style and Idea*, 266. Furthermore, Schoenberg wrote, "repetition is the initial stage in music's formal technique, and variation and development its higher developmental stages" (p. 265). The primitive identification of motives and pitch-class sets effectively precludes arrival at the higher stages.

[47] See William E. Benjamin, review of *The Structure of Atonal Music* by Allen Forte, *Perspectives of New Music* 13 (1974): 170–90; idem, "Ideas of Order in Motivic Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 1 (1979): 23–34; Pieter C. van den Toorn, *Stravinsky and "The Rite of Spring": The Beginnings of a Musical Language* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 207–11; idem, "What Price Analysis?" *Journal of Music Theory* 33 (1989): 165–89.

revelations. Nor would I ordinarily be eager to raise commonplace intentionalist objections to a method that by now has proved to be of some practical value as an inductive discovery tool.[48]

But Straus makes an openly intentionalist and historiographical appropriation of the method, thereby raising the stakes. By casting set-theoretic operations, under the rubric "generalization," as a revisionary ratio, a composerly strategy of reinterpretation, he declares his "norms of post-tonal usage" to be historical norms of composition. He is in fact the first set-theoretic analyst ever to make the claim explicitly. Bartók and Stravinsky are thus assimilated to Schoenberg—a Schoenberg who is himself anachronistically construed—to define a chimerical "twentieth-century common practice" (p. 17) that recuperates and even reinforces the old evolutionary master narrative. The revisionary ratio arises entirely out of an analytical prejudice, one largely confined by now to a dwindling strain of composers and theorists who persist in upholding the wistful creed that "there is one main way of doing things."[49] What Straus has in effect done is to rewrite Webern's *Der Weg zur neuen Musik*, reviving an old sectarian viewpoint at a time when its claim to universality has been properly discarded, along with all the other historical determinisms that have so bedeviled our unfortunate century.

It is perhaps unnecessary, even bathetical, to remark at this point that nothing could be further from Harold Bloom's purposes than defining a common practice. So why was he ever invoked? Such a tendentious misappropriation of his name, of his theory, and of their joint prestige, raises disturbing questions. One has to wonder whether a misprision of this magnitude, on the part of a fairly well established scholar, could be altogether ingenuous.

These questions come to a head in chapter 3, when Stravinsky's arrangement of Bach's canonic variations on "Vom Himmel hoch" is compared, on the one hand, with his own *Pulcinella* and *Le Baiser de la fée*, and, on the other, with the Bach arrangements of Schoenberg and Webern. "For most of his life," Straus observes in conclusion,

> Stravinsky avoided a direct confrontation with the classical mainstream, preferring instead to focus on weaker, more susceptible predecessors like Pergolesi and Tchaikovsky. Through them he would comment on common-practice styles without dealing directly with the true giants of those styles. His turn to serialism, however, marks a new willingness to enter into direct dialogue with the inheritors of the tradition and, through them, with their great contrapuntal predecessors, especially Bach. Stravinsky's turn toward serialism and his late recompositions of Bach and Wolf [the latter actually an orchestration] thus have a common source. In both, Stravinsky confronts the musical mainstream and shows remarkable ability to remake his predecessors in his own image. (p. 70)

[48] See especially James M. Baker, *The Music of Alexander Scriabin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986); and Richard Taruskin, review of same, *Music Theory Spectrum* 10 (1988): 143–69.

[49] Charles Wuorinen, interviewed by Cole Gagne in Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras, *Soundpieces: Interviews with American Composers* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 394.

Beyond the patronizing implication that Stravinsky became a "strong poet" only upon embracing serialism, what gives offense here is the complacent perpetuation of creaky shibboleths: the impudent identification of *the* classical mainstream with an ad hoc and insularly German tradition (Bach and Wolf, the latter suddenly a giant), and the stale parochial propaganda that casts the New Vienna School and its self-defined legatees on American campuses as the exclusive custodians of this mainstream.[50] It is understandable that Schoenberg might have wished to go on fighting World War I with slogans such as the one that stands as epigraph to this section. For an American scholar of Straus's generation to go on affirming these things is worse than provincial.

What is ignorant, first, is the notion that Tchaikovsky and Pergolesi, Stravinsky's demonstratively embraced models, were in fact his objects of contention. That is not a misreading of Bloom, that is sheer incomprehension. The Bloomian question would be, with whom was Stravinsky contending behind the Eliotic mask? But that is unimportant. Momentously ignorant is the evident unawareness of Stravinsky's role, three decades or more before the "confrontation" Straus interprets, in the so-called *retour à Bach* that had such a powerful impact on the music of the 1920s,[51] not excluding German music, and not excluding Schoenberg, in whom it definitely aroused anxieties (or have we repressed der kleine Modernsky?) precisely because it paradoxically portended "the degermanization of music."[52] Stravinsky, not Schoenberg, was touted as "the Bach of today," a hubris that has infuriated German chauvinists, at home and in America, ever since.[53] Straus's forgetting of this episode, if that is what it is, is symptomatic of his programmatic

[50] Straus writes, "Throughout his life Stravinsky was preoccupied by and deeply anxious about his relationship to what he called 'the German stem' " (p. 6). Yet by the time Stravinsky was ready to write about it, he had managed to survive the stem and felt reassured. Straus misses the irony in Stravinsky's reference, elsewhere in the same passage from *Dialogues and a Diary*, to "progressive-evolutionary standards"; he identifies the "German stem" not so much with the tellingly out-of-order list of composers that supposedly constitutes it ("Bach–Haydn–Mozart–Beethoven–Schubert–Brahms–Wagner–Mahler–Schoenberg") as with the teleological critical stance that "evaluates solely in terms of where a thing comes from and where it is going" (Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues and a Diary* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963], 14).

[51] Here, too, there were specific "confrontations," not just a generalized stylistic masquerade: for example, Stravinsky's appropriation of Bach's Clavier Concerto in D Minor (BWV 1052) in the first movement of his Concerto for Piano and Winds, described in detail in my essay "The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past," in *Authenticity and Early Music*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 169–80—though as modeling this is no more to be construed as anxiety of influence than the arrangements Straus describes.

[52] Jean-R. Bloch, "Une Insurrection contre la sensibilité," *Le Monde musical*, September 1924; quoted in Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music from the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), 135.

[53] Edwin Evans, "Igor Stravinsky: Contrapuntal Titan," *Musical America*, 12 February 1921; quoted by Messing on page 134. Messing calls Evans's comparison "without precedent," yet five years earlier an article on Stravinsky by his Clarens neighbor C. Stanley Wise had included a comparison between the thirty-four-year-old composer of *The Rite of Spring* and "old John Sebastian Bach with his marvellous grasp of counterpoint and delight in setting himself to solve musical puzzles, his never-ceasing experiments in harmony, his domesticity and personal simplicity"—all of which were qualities soon to be canonized in the "neoclassic" ideology ("Impressions of Igor Strawinsky," *Musical Quarterly* 2 [1916]: 250).

neglect of contexts and circumstances. It annuls his attempt at revising neoclassicism.

IV

> Wagner's music was not only the best and most significant of its age . . . but it was also the music of 1870 Germany, who conquered the world of her friends and enemies through all her achievements, not without arousing their envy and resistance.
>
> —Schoenberg, "National Music"[54]

> When the First World War began, I was proud to be called to arms and as a soldier I did my whole duty enthusiastically as a true believer in the house of Habsburg.
>
> —Schoenberg, "My Attitude Toward Politics" (1950)[55]

> Today I have discovered something which will assure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years.
>
> —Schoenberg to Josef Rufer, 1921 or 1922[56]

> So if at the climax of contrapuntal art, in Bach, something quite new simultaneously begins—the art of development through motivic variation—and in our time, at the climax of art based on harmonic relationships, the art of composing with "twelve tones related only to each other" begins, one sees that the epochs are very similar.
>
> —Schoenberg, "National Music"[57]

The contexts and circumstances Joseph Straus so studiously ignores offer a rich vein of irony for today's historians and metahistorians to savor. "It was the first time in my career that I lost, for a short time, my influence on youth," Schoenberg complained, adding that "this took place between 1922 and 1930."[58] The reason? "Schönberg is a romantic; our young composers are classic."[59] The German master's complicated response to these divagations and perfidies conditioned the most crucial and influential vicissitude of his career—which, for all the ink that has been spilled over it in the course of seven decades, remains virtually uninterrogated by historians. Dodecaphony has been explored and elucidated from a technical perspective like no other musical innovation in this (or perhaps any) century. As a cultural phenomenon it has not yet begun to be investigated. Such a conspicuous failure betokens reluctance, anxiety, fear of discovery.

Even the most recent studies of Schoenberg dogmatically minimize his own postwar turn—nationalistic and reactionary, alien and antagonistic to "Weimar culture" but oddly akin to Stravinsky's aristocratic Franco-Russian

[54] *Style and Idea*, 172.

[55] Ibid., 505.

[56] Josef Rufer, *The Works of Arnold Schoenberg: A Catalogue of His Compositions, Writings, and Paintings*, trans. Dika Newlin (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 45.

[57] *Style and Idea*, 171.

[58] Arnold Schoenberg, "How One Becomes Lonely" (1937), in *Style and Idea*, 52.

[59] Paul Landormy, "Schönberg, Bartók, und die französische Musik," *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, May 1922; quoted in Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, 126.

bias[60]—and the concomitant, albeit unexpected, neoclassicizing strain in his own works of the twenties. The enduring power of the modernist (r)evolutionary mythology has put these questions off-limits. Thus, Ethan Haimo launches a laudably meticulous and illuminating technical summary of Schoenberg's path to serialism with a gratuitous disclaimer:

> Schoenberg was not engaged in a superficial recycling of classical forms; he was not interested in mere thematic formalism. (Had he been, he could have written classical forms in his contextual period.) On the contrary, although they are cast in seemingly traditional moulds, the forms of the Wind Quintet are quite revolutionary.[61]

There is a tradition for these non sequiturs. Three decades ago Donald Mitchell asserted the existence of "a wide gulf, indeed, between Stravinsky's special sense of the 'past' and Schoenberg's no less special sense of 'immediate tradition.' "[62] Glossing this in the Stravinsky centennial year, Alan Lessem maintained that "if Schoenberg does call into service older form types—sonata, rondo, theme and variations—it is not because he considers them to be 'ideal' . . . but because he sees in them usages which should not be dispensed with until the novel and more difficult aspects of his musical language are better understood."[63]

But the sense of tradition apparent in Schoenberg's works of the twenties is no longer immediate. Like Stravinsky's, it has been put at an ironic distance by the very same end run around an "immediate tradition" that had met with disaster. Haimo's squeamishness is understandable in light of what is by now a lengthy history of attack from the musical left, epitomized in Boulez's infamous squib (recently put back in circulation in a new translation),[64] and also in Adorno's equivocating attitude toward Schoenberg's twelve-tone music. Yet it need not imply endorsement of the "Schoenberg is Dead" position to expose the tendentious and tautological nature of Haimo's defense, beginning with the groundless insinuation of the words "superficial," "mere," and "seemingly" as a tactic for prejudicially dichotomizing the

[60] See the famous fawning letter of 1924 to Prince Max Egon zu Fürstenberg, the Donaueschingen patron; Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 108–9. Only a year before his death in America, Schoenberg reaffirmed his lifelong "superfluous" monarchism (*Style and Idea*, 506).

[61] *Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey: The Evolution of His Twelve-Tone Method, 1914–1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 108. "Seemingly traditional moulds" also characterizes the Suite for piano, op. 25, the Septet Suite, op. 29, and many other works of the period.

[62] *The Language of Modern Music* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), 105 (originally published in 1963).

[63] "Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Neo-Classicism: The Issues Reexamined," *Musical Quarterly* 68 (1982): 538. Lessem offers in support a quotation from an unpublished essay by Schoenberg entitled "Old Forms in New Music": "If comprehensibility is made difficult in one respect, it must be made easier in some other respect. Difficult to comprehend in new music are the chords, the melodic intervals and their progression. Therefore a form should be chosen that will on the other hand reduce difficulties by providing a familiar type of unfolding."

[64] "Schoenberg is Dead," in Pierre Boulez, *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, ed. Paule Thévenin, trans. Stephen Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 209–14.

radical ("quite revolutionary") and the retrospective. Take out the amulet-words and Haimo's first sentence becomes false on its face.

As to tautology: if Schoenberg "could have written classical forms in his contextual [that is, "free atonal"] period," then by the same spurious token he could have written progressive, nonthematic forms in his early twelve-tone period (say, up to the *Begleitungsmusik*, op. 34). He did neither, for (not to put it past him) it simply would not have occurred to him to do otherwise than he did, given the historical contexts in which he worked. To imply that formal procedure and compositional method may be mixed and matched at pleasure is another faux-naïf dichotomy. As Haimo devotes his book to demonstrating, the classical forms—with their sectional demarcations and their significantly transposed repetitions—were an essential crucible for working out the twelve-tone discipline; put another way, the development of the twelve-tone method was one of the many coetaneous classicizing tendencies that arose during the first unsteady postwar decade.[65]

The unforeseen metamorphosis of dodecaphony into the scientistic formalism that rose to sudden dominance in the decades following the world's next big conflagration confirms diagnosis of dodecaphony as neoclassicism, despite the vehement disavowal of neoclassicism on the part of the new generation of dodecaphonists. Boulez's stentorian proclamation of Schoenberg's demise is a perfect Bloomian paradigm: the killing of the father and the opportunistic misreading of his legacy, enabling the composers of Boulez's and Babbitt's generation to inherit and rationalize the later Schoenberg's neoclassical technique while at the same time claiming the earlier Schoenberg's patrimony. The misreading has been well ratified in post-World-War-II academic historiography, newly epitomized by the works of Joseph Straus and Ethan Haimo, in which the serial "discovery" is staunchly represented as the outcome of a straight evolutionary line—perfectly sequent and eminently trackable—rather than as a clinamen, a swerve. The extraordinary privilege accorded serialism as standard-bearer of "the classical mainstream," despite its enormous and obvious break with mainstream composing methods, is a case—a "classic" case, indeed—of victors' history, impressive enough in its day finally to intimidate der alte Modernsky and wring from him the self-pitying if inveterately devious confessions (such as the one discussed in note 50) that the victors and their heirs so love to parade.

But if we are interested in writing history rather than recycling hoary propaganda, we must deconstruct the dear old dualism that casts Schoenberg and his school in heroic opposition to the right deviation, and (so far from assimilating the deviation to the "mainstream") learn to see what happened in Vienna as a part of the general swerve. If there is an assimilation to be made, its dynamic has got to be the opposite, the harder, one.

[65] Lessem's sustained attempt, in "Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Neo-Classicism," to distinguish Stravinsky's neo- from Schoenberg's unprefixed classicism is typical special pleading, vitiated by Messing's historical critique of the terms in his *Neoclassicism in Music*. For yet another example of the double standard whereby Schoenberg's *Selbstbildnis* is uncritically accepted while Stravinsky's is aggressively deconstructed, see Mathias Hansen, "Arnold Schönbergs Kompositionsverständnis und seine Auseinandersetzung mit neoklassizistischen Tendenzen in den zwanziger Jahren," *Jahrbuch Peters* 3 (1980): 66–85.

Whatever it was, moreover, the swerve toward (neo)classicism was no agon with the three Bs, let alone "Pergolesi." It conforms to the Bloomian mold at least insofar as it entailed wrestling with threatening fathers, not with benign great-grandfathers. Harold Bloom has spoken to an interviewer of "Hart Crane, with his palpable assertions of Whitmanian influence, but with the poetry's enormous and not-so-covert struggle against the abominable Eliot."[66] J. Hillis Miller, commenting to the same interviewer on Bloom's self-alignment with the "mythological" tradition of criticism associated with Northrop Frye, has observed:

> The real precursor for Bloom is T. S. Eliot: anybody can see that. It's not Frye at all. Part of the strategy of his interview is to name it as Frye, *because that's an easy person to be obligated to*. The real person he was obsessed with at the beginning, and continues to be obsessed with, is the man he calls "the abominable Eliot."[67]

It is in this spirit that we ought to be reading Stravinsky's autobiography and conversations, and even (nay, especially) such writings of Schoenberg as "Brahms the Progressive." We should be taking it as axiomatic that acknowledged debts are the easy, discountable ones. We should assume that, just as he concealed his extensive appropriations from folklore in *The Rite of Spring* by confessing to a single one, Stravinsky (like Schoenberg, like the rest of us) confessed his easy debts precisely in order to hide the hard ones. If he tells us that his earliest works were "suspiciously Debussyist" in the eyes of his teacher, it is to conceal his early provincial ignorance of Debussy and his enormous debt to Rimsky-Korsakov. If he tells us (verbally, quotationally, and by dedication) that he was influenced by Debussy in *Zvezdoliki*, it is to conceal his formative, painfully unrequited love of Scriabin, whom he denigrates more vehemently than any other precursor except Wagner, and for the same reason. If, later, he magnifies Tchaikovsky and appropriates Handel, it is to obscure and put off the pressing Verdi. If, later still, he claims kinship with Schoenberg and Webern, it is because his music continued, perhaps not so covertly, to swerve away from them, back to the Russia long ago renounced.[68]

If Schoenberg insisted on telling us (and himself) that "my teachers were primarily Bach and Mozart," and that "I also learned much from Schubert and Mahler, Strauss and Reger too. I shut myself off from no one," it was precisely so as to shut himself off from the Debussy who (as Milhaud was so delighted to notice) crowds his way into *Pierrot lunaire* as soon as the voice part is sung rather than melodramatically declaimed—and it is indeed refreshing to notice this after reading Schoenberg's gloating (if acute) remark

[66] *Criticism in Society*, 50.
[67] Ibid., 238; italics added.
[68] See my "Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles* as Russian Music," in *Music Theory and the Exploration of the Past*, ed. Christopher Hatch and David Bernstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

that "Debussy's summons to the Latin and Slav peoples, to do battle against Wagner, was indeed successful; but to free *himself* from Wagner—that was beyond him."[69]

But then, what the abominable Eliot was to Crane and to Bloom, the dread mage of Bayreuth was to everybody, and dread only grew as historical conditions changed. "Brahms the Progressive," which could as easily have been titled "Wagner the Pedant," should be read as a document of its time, when all the world was recoiling from the horrors perpetrated by Wagner's self-designated heirs.[70]

Just as Wagner was everybody's appalling father, so Bach was everyone's handpicked *vecchio genitor*—not a begetting forebear but a begotten one.[71] Once again, overt modeling—and this is surely the Bloomian theory's best precept—is to be read as a displacement from the real anxiety of influence. This central displacement, with its many analogues and corollaries, constituted the essential swerve in the history of classical music in the early twentieth century. Yet for the most part music historians and analysts have been content to treat the avowals of great composers not as testimony but as oracles. Their claims of kinship have been accepted at face value and even reified into unquestionable historical facts; skeptical investigations have been decried.[72]

Here is where Bloom is potentially of greatest use to us. His analysis of the way poets make poetic history can be our guide, however, only if we are sensible to its corollary: they *make* history, but they do not *write* it. That remains our job.

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Anne Walters Robertson. *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis: Images of Ritual and Music in the Middle Ages.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. xix, 565 pp.

The Huguenots nearly made Anne Walters Robertson's book impossible. In 1567, the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis was occupied by a group of Protestants, and its library was pillaged and dispersed. Despite the endeavors

[69] All quotations in this paragraph are from "National Music" (1931), in *Style and Idea*, 172–74.

[70] The point holds whether one takes as "its time" the year of the essay's publication (1947) or that of its first draft, which was read as a radio lecture in 1933, the year the Nazis came to power.

[71] See my "Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology," *19th-Century Music* 16 (1992–93), forthcoming.

[72] See, on Stravinsky, Claudio Spies, "Conundrums, Conjectures, Construals; or, 5 vs. 3: The Influence of Russian Composers on Stravinsky," in *Stravinsky Retrospectives*, ed. Ethan Haimo and Paul Johnson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 76–140. "Brahms the Progressive," of course, has spawned by now a whole critical tradition. Like Bloom, I find reassurance in the vigor with which many of my hypotheses as to Stravinsky's stylistic debts and specific influences have been rejected (see in particular Pieter van den Toorn, "Taruskin's Angle," *In Theory Only* 10, no. 3 [October 1987]: 27–46), and feel confident that Stravinsky would have disapproved of them even more strongly and confirmingly.