CHAPTER ONE

Locating Stance

This book grew out of my long-standing dissatisfaction with a certain type of aesthetic explanation that is common in the humanities and humanistic social sciences. In a wide range of fields, scholars frequently explain the meanings or expressive effects associated with a particular text, performance, item, or practice by pointing to its formal techniques, devices, or features. Such an explanation has its merits, of course. It is unquestionably the case that the musical, literary, visual, or performative details matter a great deal in expressive culture,[1] and much of the lives of musicians, writers, artists, and performers is spent in training the body and mind to provide fine and precise control of their expressions. But no matter how sophisticated such explanations may be, they have, I have always felt, left out something important. A wide variety of books and articles could be used to illustrate the problem with such analyses, but an example from my own recent experience will serve the purpose as well.

Recently, I was writing a lecture on the Beatles for a class in rock music history. Casually checking to see how other scholars had taught about issues of music and meaning in that band's songs, I read the passage on "Yesterday" in Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman's valuable textbook *American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MTV* (2003). Starr and Waterman identified a range of features in the piece that contribute to the sense of wistfulness and despair that the song evokes, but one bit of the analysis struck me as something my students would find particularly compelling. "The ascending gestures in the melody," they write, "always depict the receding past ('all my trouble seemed so far away,' 'I'm not half the man I used to be,' and so forth), while the immediately following descending gestures always bring us back down to earth in the present ('Now it looks as though they're here to stay,' 'There's a shadow hanging over me,' etc.)" (257). Clearly, the tight correspondence of the meanings of the words with

the shape of the melody contributes to the song's evocative power. I was pleased to discover this neat observation and planned to emphasize it in my lecture. A songwriter as well as a scholar, I have not used text/tune relationships in my own songs as much as I would like, and finding this passage got me thinking that I should take fuller advantage of them in my own music. But as I began to think more fully about this analysis, a skeptical voice started its familiar nagging. "Yes, that feature clearly matters in the music," it said, "but something is wrong. You could use that same device in a similar context in one of your songs, but it wouldn't produce quite the same effect. Do formal techniques simply *evoke* meanings or effects? You are missing something important."

Well-known theoretical themes in folklore scholarship from the second half of the twentieth century have been driven by such doubts. The standard ethnographic critique in folklore studies would question if the meaning imputed to the text is present in the experiences of the people in the community that make and listen to it and (among folklorists who study music as well as ethnomusicologists) if the imputed formal technique is present in their local music theory. The related contextualist critique would argue that formal techniques, devices, or features have their meanings only when placed in textual, situated, or cultural contexts. The familiar performance critique would argue that to understand meaning we must attend, not to abstracted texts, but to their distinctive enactment in performance.[2]

Such perspectives are valid, even foundational, for contemporary scholarship; indeed, I have often pursued such lines of criticism in my own work (e.g., Berger 1999). Expanding on Starr and Waterman's discussion to address these concerns, however, did not assuage my sense of dissatisfaction. In this instance, for example, I wasn't concerned with the ethnographic critique. I grew up with "Yesterday." I knew that the meanings ascribed to the tune fit with my experience and that I was a reasonably typical member of this music culture. I also knew that this kind of text/tune relationship was often used by songwriters in British and American popular music. Addressing the contextual critique, I observed how the themes spoke to issues of gender in post-war culture and the history of themes of romantic loss in popular song, and I highlighted these links in my lecture notes. To speak to performance-oriented concerns, I returned to the recording and transcribed and analyzed the ways in which Paul McCartney's phrasing and timbre contributed to the distinctive blend of sadness and wistful despair in the piece. If I could have quickly acquired a live performance of the tune, I would have tried to examine how the interactions among the members of the ensemble or between the band and the audience might have contributed to its evocative power.

But even as I was including these ideas in my notes, the skeptical voice returned. "By transcribing additional performative details," it said, "you have enriched the text that you are analyzing. This is a good thing, but you haven't solved the problem. Would any performance that entailed these features be guaranteed to evoke the meaning that you are after? If not, don't tell me you need to transcribe even more details, because I will come back with the same critique. Interpreting the details of performance is a valid response to performance theory's criticism of textualism (text-oriented research),[3] but it doesn't respond to my charge. It only results in a reductio ad absurdum. You can keep accounting for performative details till the cows come home and still have no guarantee that the devices and techniques you have identified will produce the experienced meanings and aesthetic effects that you imputed to them." I thought I could see where this was going—a reception-centered critique. Scholars who do reception-oriented research very rightly hold that texts never fully specify their meanings and that processes of reception inevitably contribute to the experienced meaning of expressive culture.[4] There is no response to this critique, beyond the valid point that interpretations are always interpretations of texts, and therefore the analysis of form must be a necessary part of interpretation if we are to understand how expressive culture achieves its effects. But my skeptical inner voice never said that the analysis of formal techniques, devices, or features wasn't important; it only said that such an analysis was missing something important.

That hard-to-identify, important thing always seemed to me to be missing from many types of analysis across a range of disciplines and intellectual traditions. Speaking in impressionistic terms, one might say that many analyses of expressive culture seem like they have more to do with features than people. But this can't be the problem, it would seem, because form is one of the main things (though certainly not the only thing) that people love in expressive culture. Musicians and listeners revel in sonic textures, painters and their audiences bathe in light, and poets and their audiences caress syllable, cadence, and rhythm. This is exactly what is missing: not form, but form as it is taken up by producers or receivers of expressive culture; not just light, sound, or word, but light, sound, or word as it is grasped by the brush, bow, or pen, by the eye or ear, by the social person in a social world—the way that the eye of the painter or viewer of the painting "palpates" the landscape or canvas, to use Maurice Merleau-Ponty's arresting, almost disturbingly accurate terminology ([1964] 1968:131). No matter how formally sophisticated, any analysis that neglects such palpations will produce oversimplified and unsatisfying readings of expressive culture. To address this problem, I believe, we need to carry forward the ethnographic,

performative, contextual, and audience-centered critiques that have animated scholarship since the 1950s. Such a project must attend to the irreducible stratum of practice that is deposited in products of expressive culture even as that practice constitutes them, and is retained in those products even after the producer's hand has left her object. As phenomenological thinkers have long argued, such a project must likewise understand reception, not merely as a bestowing of meaning upon texts, performances, items, or practices of expressive culture, but as a process of grappling with texts, performances, items, or practices—an engagement with them that produces meaning and experience even as it is an openness to what is already there.[5]

The core problem with explanations of meaning or aesthetic effect based solely or primarily on the analysis of formal techniques, devices, or features is that they treat the form/meaning connection as causal and definitive and that they view the reception of expressive culture as a mere registering of what is there. Often unintentionally, such work represents expressive culture as a piece of textual or performative machinery that evokes or produces meanings or effects for anyone properly enculturated to understand its code. Here cultural context may be seen as doing the work of enculturation and processes of reception as receiving or decoding the meanings that are there in the text, but the operation of the expressive machinery is still a thing itself whose mechanics exist in their own domain. Indeed, it is that domain that formal analysis sets out to explore, and in the constitution of that domain, the caress of the hand and the palpations of the eye are excluded.

Even when the scholar is able to identify particular formal techniques that everyone would agree play some role in the evocation of meaning, such features never exist by themselves. On the contrary, they must be applied by the producer of the text, and that application can be clumsy or smooth, subtle or obvious, done with a wholehearted enthusiasm or with the fingers pinched firmly over the nose. Likewise, those engaged in reception may grasp the technique easily or with difficulty, with an eye keen on finding flaws or with a generous heart, with pleasure at a well-loved technique or annoyance at a tired cliché. Such qualities of production or reception inflect the meaning of the underlying technique, even—or especially—when the presence and rough meaning of that technique are unquestionable. In other words, even when formal techniques, devices, or features do produce agreed upon effects of aesthetics or meaning for those in a particular social world, the connection between technique and effect is never a mechanical and causal one. On the contrary, subjects have complex *relationships* with items of expressive culture and their techniques, devices, and features; such

relationships are both social and agentive, and, most importantly, they inflect the subject's overall experience of meaning. Accounting for such relationships is crucial if we are to come to terms with the complex reality of experiences of expressive culture. Such phenomena as facility or clumsiness, subtlety or obviousness, enthusiasm or reluctance have, of course, been noted by scholars in the past. What is needed is to see these qualities, not as free-floating meanings or unproblematic features of the text, but as products of the relationship between the person and the text, performance, practice, or item of expressive culture.

Using ideas from phenomenology, the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce, or the anthropology of emotions, scholars from a range of fields have taken up the issues raised by these relationships. This book seeks to offer a distinctive approach to this topic by examining an element of lived experience that I will refer to as *stance*. I will provide a formal definition of the term later, but in a strictly preliminarily fashion we can understand stance as the valual qualities of the relationship that a person has to a text, performance, practice, or item of expressive culture. Stance, I hope to show, is frequently the pivot of meaning, the point around which turn the interpretations of expressive culture. This book is grounded in the fields of ethnomusicology and folklore studies. Though it is not a work of philosophy, this book draws on ideas from key thinkers from the phenomenological tradition of continental European philosophy—primarily Edmund Husserl (the founder of the movement), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (a path-breaking mid-century thinker best known for his work on embodiment), and Samuel Todes (a more recent philosopher who has profoundly advanced Merleau-Ponty's approach)—and I hope to show one way in which phenomenology can be useful to those interested in music, folklore, and expressive culture in general.[6] A number of scholars in anthropology have employed ideas from phenomenology to get at issues of meaning, and those in the subfield of the anthropology of emotions have used other intellectual apparatuses to explore related topics, particularly the cultural basis of affect.[7] Though I am not an anthropologist, I see myself as a fellow traveler with them. In examining stance, my focus here is on structures of lived experience and the culturally specific ways in which people make meaning by fitting expressive forms into the context of those structures.[8]

This chapter provides an initial sketch of the notion of stance. The next two chapters deepen the discussion, examining in close detail some of the ways in which stance shapes meaning in the production and reception of expressive culture. Chapter 2 explores some basic structures of stance and takes a first look at the way stance is maintained in time. Chapter 3 focuses on the expression of stance in social interaction. In addition, it furthers the

analysis of stance and time to show how stance ties the immediate situation of events and performances to the broadest scale of a person's life. Turning to even wider contexts, the last chapter shows the relevance of stance for the politics of expressive culture and issues of power in social life. The ideas of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Todes animate the entire text, and explicit discussions of particular concepts from their work are threaded throughout. Husserl's notion of intentionality is discussed in this chapter. Merleau-Ponty's work is examined in chapter 3; while Todes's ideas inspired some of the discussion in this chapter, they are explored most fully in the final chapter. Less important to this book than phenomenology but still crucial, the classical formulations of practice theory (particularly as found in Giddens [1976] 1993, 1979, 1984; Bourdieu 1977) have shaped the entire text; explicit treatment of those ideas takes place mostly in chapter 4.

Stance Illustrated through an Extended Example

In the music cultures with which I am most familiar, the form of stance that is easiest to see is the stance that a musician has on the piece that he or she (let us say, she) is performing. While the notion is applicable to genres quite different from music and to cultures far beyond the United States, I will begin this chapter with a hypothetical example set in an American conservatory. Starting with a discussion of a performance by a fictional undergraduate pianist, my plan, here, is to introduce stance in its most familiar form, broaden the analysis by illustrating how stance applies to practices of music composition and listening, and conclude with a discussion of Husserl that suggests why stance is a necessary feature of all experiences of expressive culture. That discussion will also allow a formal definition of stance to replace the preliminary one touched on above.

Before we can get a fix on stance in musical performance, we need to get perspective on the thing that is being performed—the musical composition. In a wide range of Western music cultures, the musical piece is conceived of as a preexisting compositional entity that is enacted in performance. Of course, if we compare Western art music from the common practice period with that of the contemporary avant-garde or musics in the rock and jazz traditions, it is clear that there are a wide variety of ways in which dimensions of sonic form are fixed in advance or left open in performance. Likewise memory, written notation, or forms of technology are used in differing ways to store the composition, and the line between composition and performance can be drawn in differing ways as well. This has been illustrated by Bruno Nettl's groundbreaking study of improvisation (1974) and more recent research by scholars such as Deena Weinstein

(1993), R. Keith Sawyer (1996), myself (1999), and many others. For all of their differences, however, many Western music cultures share a notion of the "composition" or "piece of music" as a preexisting entity. Inquiring into the nature of the composition would immediately launch us into the most complex terrain: Is the composition an ideal object as a Platonist would suggest? A conceptual or data structure, as cognitive scientists imagine it? A text in the Derridean sense? A set of embodied practices, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty or David Sudnow (1978) might hold? A supernatural agent, as understood by the belief systems of varying cultures and religious communities? Though the question of the being of the composition is a fascinating and profound one, I will set this topic aside for now and simply observe that, for traditions that understand the composition as an entity existing before the performance, the musician will clearly have a relationship to that composition as she plays it—whatever its ontological status. This relationship is the most straightforward form of the notion of stance.

In a performance of a Chopin piano piece by an undergraduate piano major, for example, those familiar with the Western art tradition hear the notes and their durations as "the composition" and hear the timbre and the fine details of dynamic and rhythm as "the interpretation."[9] Audiences familiar with this tradition literally *hear* the performer's facility or clumsiness with the work's technical demands, literally hear a loving attention to detail, a misunderstanding of nineteenth-century harmony, or a creative approach to traditional material. In such a context, the performer's approach to the performance of the piece is a form of stance. Indeed, if stance were nothing more than the style of performance, it would not be a new idea, although even conceptualized in the most traditional fashion there is great complexity in this form of stance, and its dynamics are crucial for meaning and expressive effects. For example, because the notion of interpretation is so fundamental to Western art music, listeners familiar with a performer can distinguish between her typical style of interpretation and her enactment of that interpretation at a specific concert. Indeed, when a particular interpretation is carefully worked out in advance—for example, "I always employ a dramatic crescendo in bar 56, add a rhythmic accent on the second note of each of the ascending arpeggios in the sequence, and play the cadential chord in such a way that I get a rich, ringing tone"—that interpretation takes on a composition-like status for those who know the performer well.[10] As a result, in any individual performance, the performer will have a relationship to both the composition and her customary interpretation, that is, a stance on the composition and a stance on the interpretation. Before a solo concert, for example, our pianist might think, "I usually use a rhythmic accent on the second note of

each arpeggio, but tonight I will use a dynamic accent in order to emphasize my ongoing exploration of Chopin."[11]

Such stances need not always take the form of a plan worked out ahead of time, and even when they do, they take their fullest form only when enacted in performance. For example, after the concert the pianist may realize, "I was off my game. Those dynamic accents were too weak to be heard." That stance plays a key role in the interplay between the musician and the audience and is often crucial in their experiences of meaning should also be clear, as should the complexity of these dynamics. Between the performer and the audience, there may be deception (the performer: "I am sick of Chopin, but no one could tell because of my subtle use of accents"), penetrating interpretation (a professional critic: "She clearly hates this piece; her dynamics are so flat tonight"), or naive misinterpretation (another professional critic: "What an exquisitely loving performance"). It is worth emphasizing here that because the performer's stance is a stance *on* the composition, and because, as we have seen, the idea of what counts as a composition is dependent on culture, what counts as stance will always be dependent on culture as well. In Western art music, stance will be manifest in timbre, dynamic, and rhythm.[12] In a performance of Javanese gamelan music, for example, where the skeletal melody is often articulated only in variation, stance may be manifest in note choice as well. However the composition/performance line is drawn, though, it should be clear that the performer of preexisting compositions has a relationship with the piece that she plays and that this relationship has a complex role in the performer's and audience's experiences of meaning. Throughout, I will refer to the performer's relationship with any entity understood as a preexisting composition as *performative stance*. The term applies to genres well outside of music, as storytellers, actors, those who take part in rituals, and anyone who enacts a preexisting course of action will have a performative stance on the steps that have been laid out for them.

The notion of "relationships" alluded to above needs a firmer theoretical grounding than I have developed in the discussion so far, but for the moment I want to take performative stance as a starting point and suggest that there is also a stance relationship between the composer and the piece, the listener and the piece, indeed between every person in every role in the production or reception of any form of expressive culture. To illustrate this strong claim, I will explore a hypothetical example of a very particular assignment in an undergraduate music class. This example brings up an issue that I mentioned earlier, the ontological status of the composition, a fascinating topic that I do not pretend to consider fully here.[13] Rather, my goal is to conjure up a set of situations that will be familiar to many readers and

easily accessible to those with no formal background in music; in so doing, I hope to help readers locate stance in their own experience and prepare the way for a more formal definition.

Imagine a music theory or composition course in which a professor asks her students to compose a short piece of music with a very specific set of restrictions: use four voices and diatonic harmony, do not employ parallel perfect motion, use pivot chords for key changes, and so forth.[14] Let's call these requirements the assignment's "formal rules." To these limitations, the professor adds what we might call a "procedural rule," specifically the stipulation that the student must compose the piece in her head. She can have no access to either an instrument or manuscript paper as she composes; she may commit the piece to the page only when it is complete, and she can make no revisions during the transcription process. Such a pedagogical technique isn't omnipresent in introductory level classes, but it certainly isn't inconceivable. (My reasons for adding the procedural rules will become apparent shortly.) Now in a class of forty students, ten or fifteen may hand in scores that completely conform to all of the professor's rules and therefore receive an A+. There is no doubt that the professor, when reading the assignments, will be able to tell if each student's piece has followed the formal rules of the assignment. But even when considering only those students who have handed in perfect assignments, an experienced professor can tell the difference between those A+ students who have assimilated the formal rules with ease and produced smooth, fluid compositions and those who have colored within the lines, so to speak, but have had to resort to clumsy moves to prevent a transgression of the assignment's formal restrictions. Imagine that for the A+ students, the professor not only gives a letter grade but also provides prose comments describing her reading of the piece. "Clever; I like the way you handle the key change in bar five." Or, "A bit too clever, we didn't need three key changes in bar eight, and the large leaps in the tenor are awkward; don't try to show off until you have the basics." Or, "In your piece entitled 'Composition Study 5,' you are really in control of the voicing leading, but the differing sections of the piece don't really hang together; they feel disjointed and distracted. I wonder if you would rather be in some other class."

While this example is not a typically folkloristic one, its elements conform nicely to the analytic tools of folklore studies. The ideas about melodic contour, harmonic rules, tropes of musical rhetoric, even the equal-tempered tuning system assumed but never specified by the professor can be understood as expressive resources. As the student imagines the melody and the bass line and starts to fill in the inner voices, she grapples with these resources—sustaining the sounds in imagination well or poorly, finding

smooth and clever ways of avoiding parallel perfect fifths, or resorting to awkward but legal leaps to keep the music within the rules. She borrows a pretty harmonic move from Chopin and another from the Beatles and wonders if her professor will catch the reference. The point here is that while the embodied performance in the pianist example seems to be very different from the example of seemingly disembodied composition, they share a common *structure of experience*: in both situations, we have a person engaged in a complex relationship with an item of expressive culture, and the quality of that relationship is crucial for experiences of meaning. We can refer to the form of stance suggested in this part of the example as *compositional stance*.

But what does it mean, exactly, to say that a composer has a relationship with a piece of music? When we considered the example of our performer, the composition was understood as a preexisting entity, reified in the score and having a mind-independent reality. But when we speak of composition, and particularly mental composition, we may seem to posit an entity of such pure fantasy, an entity so completely dependent on the work of a sustaining mind, that it is hard to understand how a person could have a relationship to it. Clearly, the composition is dependent on the mind of the composer: if she were to drop dead, the composition would die with her.[15] But the composition, while dependent on the composer to sustain its existence, has a limited and partial autonomy. If this were not the case, composition students would not have to struggle to solve problems in voice leading, mystery writers would not worry about writing themselves into a corner, and playwrights would not have to rely on deus ex machina to solve their plot problems. None of this is to say, of course, that musical compositions have inherent meanings or to deny that perception plays a fundamental role in shaping the form of the composition in experience. Nor is this to say that that partial autonomy is an autonomy from social life. It is to say, though, that entities in imagination have a limited autonomy from the imaginer, and that limited autonomy, though sustained by her acts of imagination, serves to both constrain and enable the ultimate shape of the imagined experience.[16]

Giving a level of autonomy to compositions might seem to run counter to the ethnographic, performative, and audience-centered perspectives alluded to above. With their emphasis on the importance of culture, embodied practice, and interpretation, scholars in these traditions tend to be suspicious of any theory that seems to impart a Platonic or ideal quality to items of expressive culture, because such qualities sever expressive culture from its basis in practice and social life. The intuitions behind these suspicions are valid, but they shouldn't force us to miss the opportunity for new

insights that are there if we proceed carefully. On a basic level, we should consider accepting this claim about the partial autonomy of entities in imagination because the claim accurately describes our experience. Composing a verse or visualizing a figure I want to draw, I experience the imagined words or figure as a thing; I experience it as something in "my imagination" and perhaps as mine. I do not, however, experience it as "me" or as possessing a total flexibility.[17] If every day in January I spend five minutes visualizing a blue apple, and then every day in July I visualize a green apple, it would be a lie to say that I experienced green apples in January.

Perhaps more importantly, acknowledging the limited autonomy of entities in imagination does not deny the social and bodily ground of imagination; indeed, it allows us to better account for that grounding. My discussion here is inspired by the insights of Samuel Todes's *Body and World* ([1990] 2001). Advancing Merleau-Ponty's ideas on embodiment and subjectivity ([1945] 1981), Todes shows how our constant need to balance in the earth's gravitational field and our negotiation with physical objects are the fundamental, preconceptual bodily processes that allow the physical world to present itself to us. Todes refers to these basic forms of bodily grappling as "poise" and shows that parallel processes of poised constitution operate in imagination as well. Our experience of imagined sounds, images, or ideas emerges through a kind of mental poise that both constructs and sustains them. Of course, unlike physical objects, imagined entities are dependent for their being on the person who imagines them. Given that dependence, however, imagined entities take on a limited autonomy, and Todes presents a sophisticated argument to show that imagination and conceptual thought in general arise from our preconceptual, bodily engagement with the world.

I will return to a more detailed discussion of Todes's phenomenology at the end of chapter 4, but for now we can use the example that we have been exploring to see the bodily and social nature of imagination. Considering our composition class once again, it is evident that the musical rules and rhetorical tropes are historical artifacts and that the references to Chopin and the Beatles come from a culturally specific repertoire. The orientation toward the future audience of the professor illustrates the embedding of these imaginative processes in a social world. Likewise, the time-scale of the tempo, the very notion of harmonic and melodic interval, and the strictures of overtone, timbre, sonority, and blend all emerge, not from a realm of free-floating imagination, but from an imagination rooted in a body that interacts with a sonic world. And even if the composer imagined high notes that no singer could sing or timbres that even no synthesizer could produce, these very auditory impossibilities would be impossibilities arising

out of and in relationship to a contingent physical reality. Far from denying the social and practice-based components of composition, acknowledging the partial autonomy of entities in imagination puts those components in sharp relief. If entities in imagination were completely mind-dependent quicksilver, then there would be no way that we could work *on* them or have a relationship *to* them. We would simply *be* them. But when we acknowledge these entities' partial autonomy, an autonomy derived secondhand from the world and from our consistent efforts to sustain them, then there is something there to have a relationship with and a stance on.

In our composition example, the composer initially has a stance on the expressive resources, generic restrictions, and compositional procedures of her community and the rules set down by the professor's assignment. They are what precede composition and allow it to take place. But as the composition is emerging, every note stipulated develops a partial autonomy, and the composer develops a relationship to that piece as it is being created. In our example, this is attested to by the professor's comments on the piece. What the professor is describing is her reading of the student's relationship to the expressive resources that she employs ("You are really in control of the voicing leading rules we worked on this semester . . .") and the piece as a whole (". . . but the differing sections don't really hang together; they feel disjointed and distracted. I wonder if you would prefer to be in some other class"). Later, we will need to explore in more detail the issue of the communication of stance between differing actors. For now, the key point is that the complex unity of the text and the stance, rather than the text alone, is the fullest source of experiences of meaning.

Comparing the student composer and the Chopin performer, we can start to become more explicit about this notion of relationships. In both examples, the relationship that the hypothetical person has to an item of expressive culture results from her grappling with that item. That grappling is a form of social practice (in the sense of activity, not practice in the sense of rehearsal), and it works in two different ways. On the one hand, that grappling is a production of music in the sense that the composer creates a new piece where none had been before (specifying a series of notes and their durations) and that the performer creates a new performance where none had been before (embodying that composition in movement and sound). On the other hand, that grappling is also a constitution of the music in experience. Producers of expressive culture never fly blind, merely producing their creations without experiencing them; on the contrary, they bring their creations into experience even as they are creating them, and these processes of production and constitution are locked in a complex and very intimate dialectic.

This is obviously true for the composer in our example; merely "hearing" the piece in imagination, keeping the fantasized notes and chords in her head as she writes, is part of the fundamental challenge of the assignment. However, this is also true for composers who write with instrument at hand. To compose a piece at the keyboard or fretboard is as much a question of careful listening—is as much an attempt to hear, keep track of, and judge each new melody or chord—as it is an attempt simply to fix a series of notes. Likewise for the performer, auditory perception is intimately enmeshed with bodily action. Only in the most extreme situation is the feedback loop of bodily motion and auditory perception severed, and then only partially; when a performer can't actually hear what she is playing (as is the case, for example, in certain situations in which American popular musicians perform), she will typically replace the sound in perception with imagined sounds in order to keep herself on track.[18] *Most importantly, qualities of emotion, style, and (speaking most generally) value in this productive and constitutive grappling inflect the meaning of the music.* Such qualities are the central theme of this book. In the composition example, the teacher's comments to the A+ student are not oriented to just the techniques that the student employs, but to the quality of her grappling with those techniques, the expressive resources she has received from her culture, and the strictures imposed by the piece as it emerges. Likewise, when the performer plays the Chopin piece with smooth facility or awkward clumsiness, we see a similar grappling to produce and constitute the music, and the quality of that grappling inflects its meaning or aesthetic effects for both the performer and the audience.

One final example will round out this initial sketch of stance and point us toward its broadest dimensions. Imagine an end-of-the-semester concert in which student pianists play pieces from the composition class. The meaning of the music for any audience member on that evening in early May certainly depends on the formal devices of the piece and its performance. But because perception is not merely a registering of what exists in the world but is an agentive process (a process actively carried out), the listener, like the composer and the performer, will have a relationship to the music. In other words, while the listener in the Western art tradition does not produce the music in the sense that the composer and performer do, her role is like theirs inasmuch as she actively constitutes the music in her experience through perceptual practices. I will refer to the affective, stylistic, and valual qualities of these practices, as performed by audience members, as *stance in the practice of reception,* or *audience stance.*[19] Listening at the concert, our hypothetical audience member follows the melody or gets lost; she feels uncomfortable with the material because it is from another tradition or

proudly identifies with it because she thinks of it as her music; she highlights the missed notes because she is jealous of her sister the pianist or attends to the clever key changes because she is proud of her roommate the composer. These qualities of audience stance obviously inflect experiences of meaning. If unable to follow the melody, the listener may simply experience the piece as tedious and uninteresting, or as exciting and challenging, a spur to explore new musical possibilities and an icon of the world's limitless horizons. Hearing the piece as the music of the other, she may experience the careful voice leading as typical of the pretentious convolutions of Western culture or as an exotic pleasure to be savored. In any case, it is not the techniques or features themselves that bear meaning in our listener's experience of the music but a complex gestalt of form and stance.

It is worth emphasizing here that, as with performative stance and compositional stance, stance in the practice of reception is deeply shaped by culture. The foregoing passage may have led the reader to see audience stance as a strictly individual affair. It is true that listeners have a measure of control over their ability to follow a melody or hear a piece of music as foreign or familiar; however, social context clearly plays a key role here as well. For example, one's ability to follow a particular dimension of musical structure depends to a great extent on one's past experiences with musics that employ such structures and one's musical training, both formal and informal. Likewise, whether one hears music as foreign or familiar—and the kinds of valences one attaches to such foreignness or familiarity—depends deeply on one's past social experiences, the ideas about music and identity in one's social world, and the larger political discourses within which one's thought is embedded. Both the production and reception of expressive culture can be understood as forms of *social practice* in the sense of that term elaborated in the classical formulations of practice theory—an activity that is actively achieved by the person and at the same time fundamentally informed by situated and larger-scale social context (Giddens [1976] 1993, 1979, 1984; Bourdieu 1977). I will explore ideas from practice theory more fully in chapter 4, but for now it is important to see that acts of production and reception are practice in the sense that they always have both agentive and social dimensions.

The social nature of listening runs deep, and this becomes apparent in new ways when we recognize that listeners frequently grapple with what they believe to be the composer's and performer's stances. Thus, our audience member may actively focus her attention on the voice leading to hear critically the composer's skillful or clumsy handling of the style's restrictions, or attend to the dynamics and rhythm so that she can experience more fully the performer's loving or disaffected embrace of the composition. For

a listener familiar enough with the tradition to make these distinctions, her overall experience of meaning will emerge as a rich, multilayered unity of meanings, a gestalt of gestalts. This includes a gestalt composed of the listener's experience of what she hears as the valual and affective qualities of the composition (the expressive resources it involves, the piece as a whole) combined with her interpretation of the composer's stance on the piece; that unity is synthesized with the listener's experience of the performer's stance on this composition in general and this particular performance; finally, that complex is synthesized with the listener's own stance on the piece in general and this particular listening event. As I suggested in the earlier discussion of deception, penetrating interpretation, and miscommunication in the Chopin performance example, the composer's and performer's stances are not unproblematically registered in the listener's experience. On the contrary, they must be grasped by the listener to play a part in her experience, and the attempt to grasp those stances is part of the relationship with the music that the listener constitutes. Indeed, in many music cultures, much of the composer's or performer's work comes in crafting and enacting stances that she anticipates will be heard by the listener, and much of the listener's experience is oriented toward finding those stances in perception.

Of course, listeners unfamiliar with the Western art tradition may not be able to identify the expressive resources/composition/interpretation/performance boundaries as they occurred in this particular, culturally specific production process, thus misunderstanding or completely failing to recognize the stances of the composer or performer. But whether or not the audience member's interpretation of those stances is an accurate reading of what happened in earlier stages of the production process, and whether or not she listens for anyone else's stance at all, one thing is certain: listening to music isn't merely a registering of what is there. On the contrary, the listener always has a relationship to that music. She grapples with its sound and constitutes it in experience, and the valual and affective quality of her grappling—that is, her stance—plays a key role in the overall experience of the meaning of the music for her.

While various phases of this example involve dynamics specific to the tradition of Western art music, I hope that there has been enough variety in these situations to point toward underlying commonalties that may have broad relevance. Certainly, the differences among these examples are great: composition as production in imagination, performance as embodied enactment of a preexisting composition, and listening as perceptual practice. But if we look closely, the commonalties are equally striking. In all three cases, we see a person actively grappling with an entity that is independent from her and bringing that entity into experience. Whether the person is

engaging in perception or imagination, that grappling is social and bodily, and the style with which the person grapples with that entity shapes and inflects her experience of its meaning. Further, that grappling often looks back and forward across the production process to anticipate or recover the grappling of others: the composer emerges from a social context and orients her compositional process to the anticipated probing ear of the teacher; the performer looks back at the composer and forward to the listener; the listener looks back to the composer and the performer, and perhaps forward to the possibilities of future music events. Comparing the Western art music example with other types of expressive culture (e.g., Newfoundland balladry, Turkish rug weaving, the African American dozens, the central Italian *passeggiata*), we can begin to appreciate the range of expressive media and production processes that may exist. Fundamental commonalties, however, remain. All forms of expressive culture involve some material (words, sounds, material objects, practices) that is shaped and formed. Whatever the person's role in that shaping or forming, the person's experience of that material never comes about through a mere registering of shape and form, but involves a social and agentive relationship with that material that emerges when she grapples with that form and brings it into her experience. The affective and valual quality of the person's engagement with such material is stance. Meaning is always more than even an interpretation of shaped materials, but is a gestalt of such materials with stance.

Intentionality of Consciousness as the Ground of Stance; A Formal Definition of Stance

The discussion so far has, I hope, provided a general sense of what is involved in stance. We can give a firmer grounding to this idea if we explore Husserl's notion of the intentionality of consciousness. Before we do so, however, we need to understand some of phenomenology's basic premises. In the interest of brevity, my discussion will elide some of the differences that exist among the various strands in the phenomenological tradition and will somewhat simplify a few of the difficult issues that these thinkers explore. I hope, though, that I can illustrate the fundamental insights that are widely agreed upon in the tradition and, if not prove that stance is a necessary feature of experiences of expressive culture, at least suggest why that contention might be supportable.

The phenomenological tradition begins with the work of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and his desire to find an absolutely certain grounding for knowledge. Seeking a radically fresh start to traditional philosophical

problems such as the relationship of the subject to the world and of appearance to reality, Husserl argued that we must begin our inquiries by taking an unprejudiced look at the only material we can bring to bear upon such questions—our experience. Setting our philosophical assumptions about the ontological status of experience within an "epoché" (set of brackets), we must, he argued, return anew to experience and describe in a rigorous and unprejudiced manner what we find there.[20] In everyday talk, we often use the word *experience* to refer to something flimsy, personal, and subjective, something standing against the real physical world; however, when we suspend that assumption and return to lived experience, we find that experiences of the physical world, strictly as experience, retain their objective character. I do not experience the table before me as a mental construct that I must later judge in an act of thinking as a valid representation of the real object in the physical world; to the contrary, I directly experience the table as a mind-independent entity. Discovering that the realm of objective reality retains its objectivity strictly as lived experience, Husserl's phenomenology sees the epoché's brackets, not as a temporary thought experiment that comes before the real philosophical work, but as a stripping away of philosophical misunderstandings that allows us to see the nature of experience for what it is. As a result, the epoché's brackets are never to be removed.[21]

The notion of the epoché clears the way for the description of experience, but scholars in the phenomenological tradition are not content to only describe specific, individual phenomena. To the contrary, phenomenologists seek broad insights and fundamental structures of experience that might be the ground upon which secure knowledge can be anchored. The primary structure that phenomenology discovered is referred to as the "intentionality of consciousness." First introduced by Franz Brentano and given a radical new interpretation by Husserl, *intentionality* is at the very heart of the tradition. The term has a different meaning in phenomenology than it does in everyday usage. It does not refer to having a goal or plan and then later enacting it in behavior (though, as we shall see, the phenomenological notion of intentionality is connected to meaning). On the contrary, to say that consciousness is intentional is to say that consciousness never exists by itself. Consciousness, Husserl showed, is always "consciousness *of* something," ([1913] 1962:223). Even a small amount of reflection will reveal the truth of this observation. No matter how hard we look, we can never find an experience of consciousness by itself. Whatever type of experience we seek to examine, we always find that it is an experience of something—an idea, a feeling, a judgment, the body, an object in the world. The very certainty of the intentionality of consciousness may at first glance lead us to regard this discovery

as trivial, but its significance is enormous. Rather than seeing consciousness as an entity outside the world that bestows meaning upon it, as idealism does, or as a mental copy of the real physical world, as in realism, phenomenology's intentionalist perspective understands consciousness to be in the world and in direct contact with the world.[22]

At this point, introducing two of Husserl's specialized terms, which he took up from ancient Greek, will help to further the discussion. The term *noesis* refers to the acts by which consciousness engages with its objects and constitutes them in experience (e.g., perception or imagination), and *noema* refers to the objects thus engaged (such as physical objects or fantasies). Noesis is carried out in different "noetic modes," and each mode corresponds to a different type of noema. Perception, imagination, memory, judgment, and anticipation are examples of noetic modes, while things in the world, fantasies, memories, judgments, and anticipations are their corresponding objects.

As is frequently the case in philosophy, the most powerful insights emerge when considering the problem of perception, and by exploring the rich interplay of noesis and noema here, we can begin to see the relevance of these themes for the notion of stance. Discussing Husserl's description of intentionality in *Ideas 1,* Erazim Kohák emphasizes that the importance of intentionality is not just "*that* experience has an object, but, so to speak, *how* it has an object. In an earlier work [*Logical Investigations*], Husserl describes intentionality as the 'act character' of perception" (1978:121). This act character is the critical issue here. Perception is not a mere registering of what is there in the world; it is an active engagement with that world. It is fundamentally a form of practice in the practice theory sense of the term and is shaped by the practitioner's goals and social experiences.

The act character of experience is directly tied to meaning. Wherever one turns within the epoché, one does not find brute things but, to use the phenomenological language, things as meant—entities that present themselves to one as already experienced in types and categories. The thing before me is not a desk per se until I constitute it as a desk in my act of resting objects on it, or, in Kohák's example (51–53), a sailboat is not an entity completely independent of any subject; it is constituted as a sailboat by acts of sailing—by the pulling of ropes, the adjustment of the mast, and the tacking of the bow into the wind. This view likewise differs from forms of philosophy that see perception as a pure bestowing of meaning. On the contrary, I cannot sail a desk or write on a billowing sail. Perception is an openness to what is there in the world, a revelation of both its mind-independent qualities and its possibilities for engagement and use by the subject. This is directly implicit in the notion of intentionality and was suggested in the earlier discussion of

imagination in the music composition example.[23] As we saw there, if noema (even fantasies) were nothing but mental quicksilver, they would simply dissolve in the godlike meaning-bestowing act of the noesis. Likewise, if perceptual noesis was only a registering of what is there in the world, qualities of objects like "to-be-written-upon" and "to-be-sailed" would disappear, because these qualities are only qualities *for* a subject. Indeed, to-be-written-upon or to-be-sailed make sense only as to-be-written-upon *by a subject* or to-be-sailed *by a subject*.[24] Beginning with the discovery of the intentionality of consciousness, phenomenology ultimately reveals the mutually constitutive relationship between the person and the world.[25]

These ideas speak directly to the earlier example and lay the groundwork for the notion of stance, though one final piece of terminology needs to be introduced at this point. In the earlier music class example, composition, performance, and listening can easily be understood as forms of intentional engagement with a piece of music. Since they are ways of bringing a piece of music into experience, we therefore might be tempted to think of them as noetic modes. The problem here is that noetic modes are understood in phenomenology to be universal modalities of experience, universal ways in which a person engages her object. As I suggested in the passages preceding the music conservatory example, contemporary scholarship has clearly shown that the stages in the production process of music making are nothing if not culturally variable. What counts as composition, performance, and listening varies substantially across cultures. As a result, I suggest that composition, performance, and listening in the world of Western art music (or any other stage or role in the production process of any expressive form) should be thought of as *noetic sub-modes,* culturally specific forms of intentional engagement.[26] The corresponding noema of these noeses would the object of expressive culture thus engaged (in the music school example, "Composition Study 5").

Beyond the fact of their cultural specificity, noetic sub-modes differ from noetic modes in two important ways. First, noetic sub-modes often combine two or more noetic modes. As we have seen, the performance of American popular music in a nightclub setting often involves not just perception of the music that is being made, but also imagination of those parts that are inaudible in performance. Many forms of composition span perception and imagination as well, with the composer both imagining new parts in her mind's ear and creating new parts on an instrument. Second, noetic sub-modes overlay their noetic acts with valences, usually ones that serve broader ends. In the music appreciation classes of traditional Western music departments, focused listening is prized, and individuals are encouraged to actively disattend to all but the music sound before them. In

contrast, composers in the tradition of John Cage and adherents of certain cultures of meditation disdain the focused attention on isolated musical sounds and encourage an openness to the complete auditory environment.

To say that noetic sub-modes are culturally specific is not to posit a world of discrete cultures, each with a fixed repertoire of ways of engaging with expressive forms. Cultures are, of course, reifications, mental shorthand for describing the partial sharing of practices among or between groups of social actors, and as such they are internally heterogeneous, porous at their boundaries, variable over time, and always at least potentially open to reinterpretation by the agency of their practitioners. Thus, while actors do receive repertoires of noetic sub-modes from their social surroundings, an individual actor will often employ multiple noetic sub-modes (multiple ways, for example, of composing, performing, or listening to music), and that actor may choose to experiment with the boundaries and strictures of the noetic sub-modes that she has received. However varied, emergent, and subject to agency such practices are, though, they will always emerge in response to a particular cultural context, and in this sense are "culturally specific." For all these differences, noetic sub-modes share one thing in common with noetic modes: both are ways of engaging with objects or other subjects and making them emerge in experience.

Grounded in intentionality, the notion of noetic sub-modes not only applies to music but to experiences of all forms of expressive culture. In our music examples, we have already seen how the noetic sub-modes of an individual genre are culturally specific. Even more differences emerge when we consider genre and culture together.

The genres of the *passeggiata* (Italian ritual promenade) and American improvisational theater, for example, have no noetic sub-mode that corresponds directly to composition. Consider the passeggiata first. A popular pastime in Italy and other Mediterranean countries, the passeggiata is held on a daily or weekly basis during the temperate months and occurs in both cities and small towns. In the event, children, adults, and senior citizens performatively stroll up and down an area designated for the practice, displaying their refinement through clothing, comportment, and gait, and observing the performances of others. While culturally specific and finely crafted styles of walking can be found in the Central Italian passeggiata discussed by folklorist Giovanna P. Del Negro (2004), individual gaits do not have the sharply bounded, formal identity for promenaders in the passeggiata that pieces of music do for conservatory pianists. The noetic sub-modes in this genre of performance are "strolling" and "watching the strollers," and the noema of these noetic acts are the

individual, specific performances of each particular event. Only in Monty Python's well-known "Ministry of Silly Walks" sketch or in those acting classes where students are asked to create specific gaits for their characters do we see something like the composition of "a walk." Likewise, R. Keith Sawyer's work on American improvisational theater highlights a form of performance whose preexisting units are games and rules, not scripts of words and actions (1997). In the improvisation known as "dubbing," for example, two groups of actors develop a single humorous scene; one group of actors is on the stage, and the other is offstage. The offstage actors improvise dialog based solely on a general situation provided by the audience (such as "two people at a bar"), while the actors on the stage perform the actions for the scene but are not allowed to speak. Unlike composition in Western art music, the preexisting limits on the conduct of the actors in the noetic sub-mode of "improvising a dubbing scene" are only a few general rules, the situation the audience stipulates, and the tacit knowledge of the typical situations of American culture. I will develop my discussion of compositions, rules, and other types of culturally specific objects of attention in the next chapter. For now, though, one point is critical. While one can search out sets of similarities and differences across the various noetic sub-modes of differing cultures and their genres, there is only one structure here that is universal and necessary: the person intentionally engaged with an object in socially informed practices of constituting experience. Within the broad framework of intentionality, modality, and culture, there is an endless space of difference.

This structure provides a secure foundation for the notion of stance. If intentionality refers to the engagement of the subject with her object, then stance is the affective, stylistic, or valual quality of that engagement. Stance is the manner in which the person grapples with a text, performance, practice, or item of expressive culture to bring it into experience—a student composer's bland use of sophisticated formal techniques, an audience member's earnest effort to hear harmonic moves that she imagines speak to the greatness of her tradition, an eager young model's enthusiastic attempt at jaded fashion runway indifference, or a seasoned painter's loving optic caress of the landscape.

Because intentionality is a necessary feature of all lived experience, stance is as well. Indeed, it is the very universality of intentionality that guarantees its relevance to all forms of expressive culture. This is not to say that stance is always the focus of attention or is given the same significance in all cultures. As I will suggest in chapter 4, participants in some cultures of performance may foreground the text and background the stance through which it is constituted, while the opposite may be true in other

cultures. At the extreme are situations in which the goal of performance is to obscure or even eradicate stance. In some types of optical, abstract, or conceptual art, for example, the artist seeks not to display her stance on the process of painting or creating sculptures, but to lose her identity and reveal what are understood as objective shapes and forms. Likewise, many types of aleatory music (music that uses chance processes to generate sound) are created by composers who seek to silence their own voice and open their listener to what they see as the power of mathematical randomness, ambient sound, the divine, or the universe in general. Performers from a variety of religious traditions see their actions as a conduit for supernatural or divine entities, and in such situations stance can be given a variety of meanings. It can be seen as an important element of performance, but the agency to whom stance is attributed may be a spirit or ancestor, not the performer; here, the performer may be valued inasmuch as she is able to serve as a gateway for the expression of the perceived supernatural's stance. Alternatively, a performer's stance may be seen as a valuable and unique gift bestowed upon her by the divine. On the audience's side, the energetic individual striving to apprehend the actions of a supernatural entity in performance may be valued in a particular social world, or it may be a self-abnegating openness to the presence of such entities in the performance that is sought in a given culture.

None of these situations involve stanceless experiences. All experience involves the engagement of subject and object, and the valual quality of that engagement is stance. In composing a piece of aleatory music, for example, the composer still defines chance procedures for creating sound, and the very desire to absent herself from the composition process constitutes a stance upon that process. Where such music is understood by the audience as having nothing whatsoever to do with a composer—is understood strictly as an expression of the universe or of God—the listener's experience is not a pure unification with that sound. On the contrary, her experience of the music is constituted in perception, and stance is the affective or valual quality of those constitutive acts. Indeed, a listener's self-abnegating openness to the sound of an aleatory composition is precisely a kind of stance. This is not to say that an openness to the world is impossible or to criticize the ideologies of particular music cultures. One may listen to music with the goal of finding a certain kind of experience or with a more self-effacing openness; likewise, composers may seek to communicate a uniquely personal vision through their music, or they may instead try to create a context that affords listeners the opportunity to discover for themselves the intense power that sound can hold for humanity. But regardless of local ideologies of performance, the intentionality of

consciousness assures that stance is always one element in the mix of factors contributing to the texture and meaning of experiences of expressive culture. Founded on the bedrock of intentionality and profoundly shaped by culture, stance is a fundamental part of all experiences, and attention to it will allow scholars to achieve richer and deeper insights into lived meanings.

Stance is related to but distinct from ideas already in our intellectual toolkits like style, sensibility, aesthetic (such as "a Latino aesthetic"), or spirit (such as "the spirit of the German people"). I will refer to such expressions as "traditional style terms" and will conclude this chapter by making clear the differences between them and stance.

The utility and allure of traditional style terms is that they draw our attention to the distinctive affective and valual quality of particular people and their creations. The difficulty with them, however, is that they proceed from undertheorized ideas about the relationships among text, practice, and experience and may thus lead to all manner of confusion. On a basic level, style terms can be used loosely to refer to the properties of objects, the procedures for creating them, the manner in which those procedures are carried out, or the underlying values that they are believed to reflect. When we speak of "a heavy metal style," for example, we might be referring to features of the music sound (passages of power chords; vocal timbres with a rough quality), the performance (the guitarist's use of downstroke picking; a manner of vocal production that holds the vocal folds in a particular position), or the emotional content of the music (aggression and grandeur). Failing to specify where in the chain of production or reception the meanings associated with particular "styles" or "aesthetics" emerge, the boundary between the habitual and the active components of practice becomes blurred and the dialectics of product and process are lost. The result is that questions of agency are implied, but never adequately addressed. Is a Canadian sensibility, for example, something that a writer has or something that she does? Further, traditional style terms encourage us to gloss over questions of interpretive variability. Writers often feel free to debate the meanings of particular genres or works, but when the discourse shifts to that of "sensibility," the linkage between the work and the impulse from which it sprang is assumed to be so direct and the language so totalizing that conversation is shut down and "for whom" questions are excluded. With all of these potential pitfalls, discourses centering on traditional style terms are particularly susceptible to reification—that is, the treatment of texts, meanings, or groups as independent from the concrete reality of people and their actions and experiences. When we allow ourselves to reify expressive culture or meanings, we lose any empirical check on our interpretation, the people about whom

we write no longer see themselves in our work, and clarity is lost. At its worst, our writing devolves into little more than an erudite spinning out of our unconsidered personal presumptions.

Reification does not just produce difficulties on the level of theory or argument; it also leads to distortions on the level of the interpretation of meaning. Scholars are certainly susceptible to these problems, but this difficulty is most evident in the work of advertisers and critics, individuals whose stock in trade is describing, evoking, and evaluating the meaning of expressive culture. We may, for example, feel comfortable when a writer refers to *the post-punk style* or *Oscar Wilde's sensibility,* and we may have a clear idea of what those terms mean in the context of particular pieces of music or plays. But the meaning of those terms becomes progressively murkier as they are applied to genres further and further from their initial context or when combined with one another. What might the "post-punk Asian" food at Atlanta's Teaspace Restaurant taste like (Access Atlanta 2004)? What exactly did the reviewer of Stephen Fry's novel *The Liar* mean when he referred to that writer as a "post-punk Oscar Wilde"? And when applied to ethnic groups, countries, or even historical periods, style terms become more vague and more problematic, even as they become more seductive and resonant.

In criticizing traditional style terms, I do not dispute the fact that individuals have affective, valual, or aesthetic predispositions and that these predispositions can be partially shared. However, by highlighting the problems with this kind of discourse, I want to suggest that we are prone to confusion about both the meanings they claim to describe and the broader issues in culture and society to which they are tied if we treat reified meanings as a fundamental, underlying reality that is only contingently enacted in practice. Research framed in terms of stance takes as its object the same kinds of phenomena that have been the traditional focus of terms like *style* or *sensibility,* but charts the ground of practice and experience on which they are established. Requiring us to tease apart the twisted threads of meaning that spool out from expressive resources, texts, and practices of production and reception, a stance-oriented approach calls us to specify the objects to which meanings are ascribed, make clear the role of agency in performance, illuminate the interpretive variability between actors in or across production processes, and show how all of this plays out in their lived experiences; such lived meanings are the reality from which generalizations about cultural styles, approaches, or sensibilities are abstracted. Thinking about performance events in terms of the stances of composers, performers, and audience members encourages us to attend, not to reified styles, but to the specific

ways in which the differing participants in a performance actively and socially shape their actions and make them meaningful. Viewing expressive culture in terms of intentionality, we take lived experience as our study object, place people at the center of our analysis, and focus on the social processes with which they engage with texts. Assimilating phenomenological terminology, we gain a vocabulary for talking about that engagement.

This last point is important. The profusion of terms in phenomenology has sometimes served to make the tradition less accessible than it might be, but such terms give us a language for talking about the structure of experience and therefore help us to get closer to the concrete world of people and their relationships to expressive culture. Thinking in the abstract terms of noesis and noema, we gain the clarity that comes from taking a high vantage point and see such seemingly diverse phenomena as perception, imagination, and thinking all as ways of forming experience. Understanding the endless variety of expressive practices (composing a piece of music in a formally defined genre, strolling on a passeggiata, improvising a scene according to the rules of an improv comedy game, or critically listening to a student recital in a concert hall) as noetic sub-modes, we see that such practices are united by an underlying structure: all involve a person grappling with a work of expressive culture and bringing it into experience, a process that is shaped as much by a person's social life as it is by her agency. Taking such an approach paves the way to new understandings of topics fundamental to contemporary scholarship: the ways in which texts evoke powerful meanings for people, the partial sharing of meaning between participants in a performance, the interplay of culture and agency in practices of production and reception, the role of artistic behavior in the long span of a person's life, and the place of expressive culture in power and politics. Using a more philosophical style of writing and argument, the next two chapters illustrate the significance of stance for these topics.

The notion of stance is not only relevant for broad theoretical issues such as these, it can also contribute directly to the interpretation of individual works, genres, or cultures. The music school example that I have elaborated above is a fictional one, but the processes described there are real: composers—and, in the broadest sense, writers—do have stances on the expressive resources that they deal with; performers have stances on the pieces that they perform, and audiences have stances on the works and performances that they engage. Such stances play a key role in the meaning that people find in expressive culture, and attending to the play of stance in performance can help ethnographers interpret such performances more richly. As I observed in the preface, phenomenology offers the fieldworker

no telepathic access to the experience of the other, but that does not mean that such structures of experience are inaccessible. As I suggested above and will show in greater detail below, our actions and the fact of our common nature as subjects in the world enable us to partially share our experiences with others; indeed, all people routinely make interpretations of others' experiences, including their stances. Watching for stance in performance gets us closer to the people around us, puts us in touch with their most intimate practices—their engagement with their texts and their worlds—and helps us understand their lives more richly.

The ethnography of the dynamics of stance in particular cultures is a rich topic for fieldwork, and an enormous amount of research remains to be done in this area. Even when it is not explicitly invoked, theory influences research, and the notion of stance can serve the interests of those ethnographers who do not wish to adopt whole cloth the theoretical apparatus of phenomenology. As I suggested in the preface, theory serves a sensitizing function, awakening the field-worker to dynamics that she may find in her field site and helping those involved in historical inquiry to find the actors behind their archival documents or published texts. The theoretical writings that we read shape our empirical research, framing our assumptions, placing data into contexts, and informing our interpretations. By highlighting dynamics of experience that would otherwise be grasped in a peripheral fashion, the notion of stance can get us closer to the people and things we care about. This is the goal that many ethnographers and historians in the humanities and humanistic social sciences have for their work. By orienting our thinking to concrete actors and their engagement with the world, the notion of stance can bear real fruit for contemporary scholarship.