

Singing History, Performing Race

An Analysis of Three Canadian Operas: *Beatrice Chancy*, *Elsewhereless*, and *Louis Riel*

by

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We accept this dissertation as conforming
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DOCTORAL ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of three English Canadian operas, *Beatrice Chancy* (composed by James Rolfe with a libretto by George Elliott Clarke), *Elsewhereless* (composed by Rodney Sharman with a libretto by Atom Egoyan), and *Louis Riel* (composed by Harry Somers with a libretto by Mavor Moore), that place Canadian history and Canadian historical fictions on the lyric stage. All three operas engage variously with race, gender, sexuality, power, and the political formation of the state.

The central concern of this study is the representation through music of difference and race in *Louis Riel*, *Elsewhereless*, and *Beatrice Chancy*. The analysis considers music as a medium of representation and therefore an equal participant, with the libretto and the *mise en scène*, in creating subtle delineations of character, relationships, and complex interchanges with the world outside the work. In particular, through the analysis of music, narrative, and operatic performance, the study will consider how race is represented in these operas.

Independent but affiliated studies on modern opera and the theoretical context of cultural musicology, and a longitudinal consideration of the representation of race and racism in historical operas, will form a theoretical and comparative historical background to the analysis of the operas.

This study intends to contribute to the field of opera studies by focusing on contemporary Canadian operas.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,
Anna Louise Zapf and Norman Robert Zapf

Introduction

This study is an analysis of three Canadian operas that place Canadian history and Canadian historical fictions on the lyric stage. *Louis Riel* (1967),¹ by Harry Somers with a multilingual libretto by Mavor Moore,² retells the story of Louis Riel and the Northwest resistance to the westward expansion of the Canadian state. *Elsewhereless* (1998),³ by Rodney Sharman with a libretto by Atom Egoyan, is a historical fiction about Canadian diplomats in Africa. *Beatrice Chancy* (1999),⁴ by James Rolfe with libretto and play by George Elliott Clarke, is another historical fiction, based on Shelley's verse drama of the Renaissance Cenci family that reconstructs slavery in the Maritimes in the early nineteenth century. Considered together, the three operas engage variously with race, gender, sexuality, and the political formation of the state. *Louis Riel* and *Beatrice Chancy* represent and critique race and racism in racist societies. In *Elsewhereless*, pernicious racism cruelly and uncomfortably underlies the illusion of a post-race liberalism. The three taken together are an anatomy of power as manifest in nation, group, and individual, and with melodramatic certainty, reveal the tragic consequences of its abuse.

These Canadian operas — distinguished works that are deserving of critical attention in themselves — enabled me to pursue interests that have accompanied my involvement

¹ Harry Somers, *Louis Riel* (opera in three acts), libretto by Mavor Moore in collaboration with Jacques Languirand, 1967, score, collection of the Canadian Music Centre.

² With the collaboration of Jacques Languirand.

³ Rodney Sharman, *Elsewhereless* (opera in two acts), libretto by Atom Egoyan, 1998, score, collection of the composer.

⁴ James Rolfe, *Beatrice Chancy* (opera in four acts), libretto by George Elliott Clarke, 1999, score, collection of the composer.

in the contemporary arts as student, performer, writer, and teacher: as operas they raise issues of music in relation to language, representation, and narrative; moreover, as contemporary opera they call into question the ideological exclusions of modernist history; and in representing Canadian stories that foreground race and racism, they bring to the surface issues of identity, cultural memory, and national history in a Canadian context. Further, they fall within the rich and challenging field of opera studies. Opera is a genre of the theatre. Therefore, those topics of concern to the theatre — such as the immediacy of live performance, the physical presence of the performer or the performing body, the institutions of the theatre, all aspects of the visual from the architecture of the room to spectacle, and the poetics of dramatic dialogue — are also pertinent to the opera. In addition, however, opera studies must contend with music and the critical issues attendant on musical signification, with dramatic narrative sung throughout, and with the singing voice and its myriad relationships to representation and the human psyche.

It is not by accident that I find myself embarking on a project in the interdisciplinary terrain of opera studies. For almost two decades I was part of the innovative, interdisciplinary fine and performing arts program in the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University, developing, and then teaching in, the core theoretical program, Art and Culture Studies. We developed a series of courses that presented the social histories of art practices and cultural theory. These courses were necessarily interdisciplinary in the spirit of the School, inclusive of all of the arts — dance, film, music, theatre, and the visual arts — and pertinent to a given period. It was

always a challenge to include music. In the early eighties, musicology, ethnomusicology, and music theory were only beginning to pay attention to cultural theory and to think of music as the object of a critical approach that would open the field to the kinds of questions asked in relation to the other arts concerning representation, reception, audience and subjectivity, social context, gender and race, and so on. For example, a new area of popular music studies developed at this time as a component offshoot of popular culture studies. Even film theory in the early eighties did not include music in the purview of its critical attention. I therefore drew on the work of historians and theorists in film, the visual arts, and literature, and my own invention.

A shift in academic music studies took place in the 1980s, as Euro-American scholars of music connected their work to cultural theory. By the early 1990s this shift was established with a significant number of publications. This renovation of music studies, retrospectively called the “new musicology” and more recently “cultural musicology,” continues as a crucially important and creative discussion about music in the world.

My academic interest in opera developed from these experiences teaching the interdisciplinary history of the arts. I was fascinated by the importance of opera in that history, drawn to its institutions and social prominence, its interconnections with the representations of state and power, and its extravagance. As a theatre of spectacular illusions, opera historically has involved prominent artists in creating the *mise en scène*. Opera necessitates the historical consideration of art, patronage and politics, of sexuality, technical virtuosity and the training of the body, singers as commodities, audience behaviour, the characters and stories told on the operatic stage, and finally, ineluctably, the music.

Interest in opera performance followed rather than preceded my fascination with its history. As a young music student, I gravitated towards chamber music, text-based works such as the art song, and most particularly contemporary and experimental music. Outside the frame of my experience, opera was almost incomprehensible to me. I learned about opera in the abstract, through excerpts and written accounts within historical studies of music, which of course did not include the long history of opera in Canada, which dates from the now well-known performance of Joseph Quesnel's *Colas et Colinette, ou le Bailli Dupé*⁵ in Montreal in 1790. This significant absence of opera and Canadian culture was particularly Canadian. My initiation to the serious study of music was through a school band program. I didn't have access to opera performance as a child in the sixties, nor could I have brought any cultural understanding to the experience, had I, by luck, found myself at the opera. Canada in the sixties was a country whose high and international culture emanated primarily from major urban centers such as Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver to smaller centers and rural communities often through traveling companies and artists, institutions such as the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Radio Canada. The frame of my cultural references, as a young person growing up in a small, island-bound, Canadian city, in a family with roots in the rural prairies, did not include opera.

My initial, committed encounter with opera performance, however, was not with the canonical, historical opera repertoire but with contemporary Canadian opera. This situates my academic work in a particular place and time: the Canadian cultural scene in the last decades of the twentieth century. As Linda and Michael Hutcheon point out in an

⁵ Denise Ménard and Annick Poussart, "Colas et Colinette, ou le Bailli dupé," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, 2nd ed., eds. Helmut Kallmann, Gilles Potvin, and Kenneth Winters (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 282-283.

essay on new Canadian opera, contemporary opera composition in Canada dates from this period.

But it is in the last half of the twentieth century that most new Canadian operas have been written, thanks to funding by the Canada Council and commissions by various music and drama festivals, university opera departments across the country, the Banff Centre for the Arts, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Radio Canada, the Canadian Opera Company, the Vancouver Opera and more avant garde independent companies like Chants Libres, Autumn Leaf Performance, Tapestry Music Theatre and Vancouver's New Music (sic).⁶

My professional activity and personal commitment throughout this period was Canadian new music, including critical writing, performance, and contemporary music production largely through the artist-run centre the Western Front Gallery and Vancouver New Music. During this period as well, many well-known Canadian composers with compositional roots in the avant-garde became interested in the formal and musical challenges and the expansive, interdisciplinary opportunities of the lyric stage. I was fortunate to attend performances of contemporary Canadian operas, including Claude Vivier's *Kopernikus: a Ritual Opera of Death* (1980, libretto by the composer), Rudolf Komorous' *No no mia* (1988, libretto by the composer after Zeami Motokiyo), Nic Gotham's *Nigredo Hotel* (1992, libretto by Ann-Marie MacDonald), David MacIntyre's *The Architect* (1994, libretto by Tom Cone), Owen Underhill's *The Star Catalogues* (1994, libretto by Marc Diamond), Barry Truax, *Powers of Two* series (1995-1999, libretti the composer), Peter Hannan's *The Gang* (1997, libretto by Tom Cone), Christopher Butterfield's *Zürich 1916* (1998, libretto by John Bentley Mays),

⁶ Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, "Opera and National Identity: New Canadian Opera," *Canadian Theatre Review* 96 (Fall 1998): 6.

The correct name for one of the most important of Vancouver's numerous new music organizations is Vancouver New Music. As well, it is necessary to add to the list of independent companies Toronto's Queen of Pudding Music Theatre, which produced *Beatrice Chancy*.

Elsewhereless (1998), *Beatrice Chancy* (1999), Leslie Uyeda's *Game Misconduct* (2000, libretto by Tom Cone), Gary Kulesha's *The Last Duel* (2000, libretto by Michael Patrick Albano), Robert W. Stevenson, *Nostalgia* (2000, libretto by the composer), Chan Ka Nin's *Iron Road* (2001, libretto by Mark Brownell), and Linda Smith's *Facing South* (2003, libretto by Don Hannah).

This dissertation, and its attention to Canadian opera, is situated within this confluence of experiences and influences. It is, first of all, an exploration of three Canadian operas that present Canadian history on the lyric stage, their interpolation into a larger field of ideas, and their contribution to Canadian cultural memory and the popular consumption of Canadian history. My specific focus is the representation of difference and race in opera, with a particular consideration of the effect of the representation of difference on the dramatic narrative. At a secondary level, my study makes observations about opera history and contemporary opera, the genre context in which these contemporary works are situated or, to put it another way, the weight of the history and apparatus of the genre that these works, or any new opera, must bear. Within modernist histories of music, musical formalists have ignored or maligned opera as an impure genre; similarly, the critical avant-garde and Marxist critique considered opera politically suspect as bourgeois and elitist high culture. In addition, some scholars have separated opera from interdisciplinary musical performance, considering it less viable or progressive as theatre than avant-garde or experimental theatre.⁷ In popular discourse,

⁷ See W. Anthony Sheppard, *Revealing Masks: Exotic Influences and Ritualized Performance in Modernist Music Theater* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). The author separates musical theatre — a

opera is high culture, an elite art, theatrical expression that is over-serious, over-the-top, expensive, excessive if not histrionic, and easily parodied. The adjectival form “operatic,” as in an “operatic film,” often used with a slightly derogatory cast, signifies spectacle, heightened emotion, melodramatic plot, and epic scale. The operatic designation “diva” has been transmogrified to connote rock stars, performance artists, fashion designers, and drag queens. Opera’s convergence with popular culture and social excess has also been cited as further evidence of opera’s impurity. A final, important addition to any consideration of contemporary opera is that, although it is an international phenomenon, its manifestation is frequently local, marginal, outside of the purview of mass or main stream media, and moderately- or under-funded.

My goal in this study is to enjoin the revisionist history of twentieth-century music that includes twentieth-century opera. As well, I hope to contribute to the field of opera studies by focusing on contemporary Canadian operas. A measure of opera’s continuing validity as a genre of interdisciplinary musical theatre is the composition and production of new operas through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. *Louis Riel*, *Elsewhereless*, *Beatrice Chancy*, and many other operas point to the continuing viability and vibrancy of the operatic genre. Furthermore, these recent Canadian operas, I will argue, have relevance for contemporary social issues and public debates. They were influenced and shaped by, and in turn helped produce, critical debates in Canada concerning racism, ethnicity, and multiculturalism, particularly in relation to the construction and reconstruction of Canadian history in the popular imagination. They

category within which he includes Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex*, Britten’s church dramas, and work of Harry Partch — from opera, creating a binarism that attributes progress and creative potential to music theatre while derogating opera. This invective structure has been endemic to the genre since its beginnings. Andrew Clements in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines new musical theatre as a component of opera, a categorical designation that I agree with. See Andrew Clements, “Music Theater,” *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed November 30, 2004).

address the particularly Canadian issue of national history, and engage in a discourse of the local through the representations of Canadian geography and historical topics. I maintain, in fact, that the works with which I am concerned, given their specific narratives and interpretations of histories of racial encounter and racism within Canada, could not have been produced except in a context informed by local, politically committed art practices concerned with these issues, institutional struggles, and criticism in the art presses and from the academe. In addition, this study will use the methods and theoretical approaches that cultural musicology has engaged to analyze these works as informed by, and indeed part of, this Canadian context.

The central concern of this study is the representation through music of difference and race in *Louis Riel*, *Elsewhereless*, and *Beatrice Chancy*. I hope to demonstrate that music is an equal participant with the libretto and the *mise en scène* as a medium of representation, providing subtle delineations of character, relationships, and complex interchanges with the world outside the work. I will conjoin musical analysis with ideas drawn from the new ethnography of Mark Slobin with his attention to the interactions of the music of different ethnic groups, and Lawrence Kramer's approach to signification in music through reception — the listener's relationship with the music.

The dissertation begins with independent but affiliated studies that form a theoretical and comparative historical background to the analysis of the operas. Chapter 1 addresses the exclusion of opera from modernist histories of music and the invective against opera throughout the twentieth century, despite the creation of new operatic works; chapter 2

summarizes the theoretical context of cultural musicology and opera studies that is significant to the analysis of these works; and chapter 3 explores the representation of race and racism, the mask of Euro-America's exotic Other, in historical operas. As well, it presents some of the recent scholarship in opera studies concerned with issues of race and gender.

The ensuing chapters constitute the central concern of this study, the analysis of the operas. Chapter 4 considers the detail of the sonic world of each opera including compositional parameters of pitch, timbre, and rhythm, as well as musical quotation. It is also attentive to signification through text setting and voice and vocal ensemble. Chapter 5, emphasizes the macro-structure of the music and narrative. The discussion of opera narrative, drawing examples from the three operas, includes the diegesis of opera in a fictive world constituted by music, embedded narratives, "phenomenal performance"⁸ or musical performance within the fictive world of the opera, beginnings and endings, and voice. This analysis of the musical macro-structure will also consider time and the particular contribution that music makes to the temporal dimension of the work. The necessity of audience engagement in operatic narrative will also enter the discussion: the porous borders of narrative in the lyric theatre and the risk in opera of the collapse of the illusion of narrative transparency. Chapter 6 concludes this engagement with the narrative in the operas with observations about the hidden histories of the works and their connections to Canadian history.

⁸ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 5.

Chapter 1

New Opera in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Stravinsky's Oedipus Rex is no less a mirror of our times than, for example, Chaplin's The Gold Rush.

Kurt Weill, "Zeitoper," *Melos* 7 (March, 1928)¹

I once said that the most elegant solution of the problem of opera was to blow up the opera houses, and I still think this is true. Opera is the area before all others in which things have stood still ... As I see it, Wozzeck is the last 'opera', extending and completing the traditional form.

Pierre Boulez, "Libérer la musique," *Preuves*, 2nd ser. (1972)²

I think it almost obvious to say that opera ended somewhere around the third decade of the twentieth century as a meaningful European art-form whose existence made some difference to social discourse.

Jeremy Tambling, *Opera and the Culture of Fascism* (1996)³

Any venture into the study of contemporary opera composition, performance, and reception cannot fail to notice the contradictions that surround the genre. Serious criticism and populist invective have pronounced opera obsolete, regressive, and certainly not relevant to the serious engagement of contemporary issues. Histories of modern music have marginalized or elided new opera. Yet opera has maintained and increased its audience, even as the audience for classical music has declined.⁴ Far from disappearing, opera audiences in Canada have grown in recent years. In 2000, the *Journal of Canadian*

¹ Kurt Weill, "Zeitoper," *Melos* 7 (March 1928): 106-8. Translated in Kim Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), 482-484.

² Pierre Boulez, "Libérez La Musique," *Preuves*, 2nd ser. (1972), 133-138. Translated in *Orientations* (London, 1986) and cited in Andrew Clements, "Western Europe, 1945-70," in Robert P. Morgan, ed., *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present*, Music and Society Series (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 280.

³ Jeremy Tambling, *Opera and the Culture of Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.

⁴ Richard Taruskin, "Sacred Entertainments," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 15, no.2 (2003): 109-126. Taruskin describes the market for classical music in North America as falling from 5% to 3% through the 1970s and 1980s, becoming "a niche product, serving a tiny, closed-off clientele whose needs could be met with reissues rather than costly new recordings of the standard repertory." Countering this was opera, which became, in the nineties in the United States, the most lucrative source of commissions for composers, answering to a new and growing audience.

Studies, in an introduction to an interview with critic Linda Hutcheon and playwright and poet George Elliott Clarke, states that, “In the early 1980s, CBC’s *Saturday Afternoon at the Opera* drew some 4000 listeners; now it commands a listening audience of more than 200,000. Observers in the field also note a proliferation of opera houses and opera companies, as well as growing recognition of Canadian performers and companies.”⁵

Linda Hutcheon in conversation says,

[Opera] may be the single most vibrant and expanding art form in Canada right now. That, I know is a very strong statement, but I think it’s verifiably true. You’ve alluded to some interesting statistics about an expanding audience for opera. Even more interesting is that this audience is a fairly youthful one – an audience that has been raised on rock music and concerts, film, in other words on spectacle. Opera appeals to this audience because it brings together the visual arts, the dramatic arts, music, literature. It’s a multidisciplinary art form – the “total work of art.” To a younger generation, that says something. It helps explain why opera and music theatre are the two largest growing public art forms.⁶

In addition to the remarkable recent growth of an audience for opera, and an increase in the commissioning, composition, and production of new opera, it is also important to recognize that contemporary opera has formed a significant part of the operatic repertoire throughout the twentieth century. This recent enthusiasm for opera and the creation of new operas are part of this continuum and not a recent resurgence of a moribund genre. They are the extension of a twentieth-century history of new opera and phenomena that propose complex questions to the critics of opera.

Opera in the twentieth century engendered trenchant criticism on aesthetic grounds from the perspective of modernist composition, and as politically suspect entertainment from artists and intellectuals of the left. Pierre Boulez wrote in 1972 that opera is static,

⁵ Linda Hutcheon and George Elliott Clarke, “Opera in Canada: A Conversation,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35 (2000): 184.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

and poses a “problem” that cannot be solved except through the destruction of the genre: “Opera is the area before all others in which things have stood still.”⁷ Cultural critic and theatre director Jeremy Tambling, from a Marxist position, echoed the post-World-War-II musical avant-garde in describing opera as a form that is creatively and politically dead. Tambling’s 1996 statement, “I think it almost obvious to say that opera ended somewhere around the third decade of the twentieth century as a meaningful European art-form whose existence made some difference to social discourse,”⁸ created a morphology for opera, by pronouncing its end. Tambling, however, does not just pronounce the end of opera as a self-regenerating form. He describes its contemporary resurgence as a regression complete with fetishized stars and spectacle, and from a dystopic perspective of contemporary culture, he describes opera as a regressive genre “whose time has come.”

... opera is a phenomenon whose time has come, even if — especially if — the form is practically speaking dead in terms of new writing and performance of the new. I refer to the increasing popularity that opera enjoys, the fetishizing of its stars, the number of extravaganzas it produces in terms of spectacular arena-type productions, and the money spent on it. It provides a commentary and confirmation of Theodor Adorno’s essay of 1938 entitled ‘On the Fetish Character of Music and the Regression of Listening.’⁹ Its very popularity should encourage an examination of its texts, while the high-tech forms in which it is presented fit very significantly with arguments about the ‘postmodern.’¹⁰

Tambling presents opera as both a dead genre and regressive postmodernism, connected to what he has termed “the culture of fascism,” in that opera can be nationalistic spectacle, noting that the spectacular operatic productions can also be spectacular

⁷ Boulez, cited in Clements, 280.

⁸ Tambling, 8.

⁹ Adorno’s essay is reprinted in translation in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), 270-299.

¹⁰ Tambling, 5. See also Herbert Lindenberger, “From Opera to Postmodernity: On Genre, Style, Institutions,” in Marjorie Perloff, ed., *Postmodern Genres* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

demonstrations of nationalism. “Opera elides with spectacle and national self-representation. For opera houses, like national theatres and arts festivals, were — and still are — co-opted into late nineteenth-century presentations of the spectacular, the larger-than-life, as demonstrations of the power of the nation-state.”¹¹ And in this analysis he is partly right. Yet in face of this analysis, why would any composer choose opera — if it is indeed as moribund and regressive as described — as a vehicle to explore musical and social ideas? And to reverse the question, given that there is a continuous repertoire of new works, including works committed to the exploration of serious contemporary issues, is it possible that opera can be dialectically both regressive and forward looking, replete with creative potential? If this is the case, Tambling’s castigation of opera *per se* and his discounting of the possibility that new opera might contribute to contemporary social discourse takes the form of a familiar mode of opera critique, a continuation of twentieth-century and earlier discourses about the regression, regeneration, and potential of opera.

Boulez’s Futurist vision of blowing up the opera houses is a modernist trope, and in particular is connected to the European avant-garde of the 1950s. Composers at mid-century renewed the pre-war musical avant-garde, developing an ideology of the absolute autonomy of art, and of the austerity and uncompromising economy of musical material that they discovered in the serial compositions of Webern. The ideology of the renewed avant-garde circulated at the summer workshops, the *Darmstadt Ferienkurse für neue Musik*, in the electronic studio at the Cologne Radio, and through the Universal Edition publication *Die Reihe*. Music was considered as pure idea, the discourse about music characterized by quasi-mathematical theorizing, such as number systems connected to

¹¹ Tambling, 7.

musical parameters or mathematical probabilities translated into sounds. According to the avant-gardist ideology, this music could be neither expressive nor subjective. Within this aesthetic, opera was necessarily an anathema. Certainly operas were composed, but these works and their composers were of no consequence to the avant-garde. As Andrew Clements says, “Boulez and his like-minded colleagues had little time for opera in the 1950s; its historical trappings were too overpowering, its associations with outmoded music grammar too intense to survive the wholesale revision that the new generation required.”¹² The comment is an accurate description, yet a strange locution in implying that opera couldn’t “survive” the revisions of the new generation. The encounter might more accurately be described in reverse: the young generation encountered opera — described here in superlative terms redolent with the sublime — it was “too overpowering” and “too intense” — and fled its complexity, socially embedded as it was and wearing history on its sleeve. What is interesting is that by the 1960s almost all of these younger composers had made connections with music theatre, and even specifically with opera — some, such as Luigi Nono and Luciano Berio, in order to find artistic expression for their increasing socialist or Marxist commitments. Andrew Clements states it categorically: “Boulez was to remain the only composer of his generation who did not eventually make some kind of creative *rapprochement* with the musical theatre.”¹³ Music critic and opera librettist Paul Griffiths says ironically, yet poignantly, of Boulez that his “virtual silence since the mid-sixties may be understood as the reaction of a leader without a cause.”¹⁴

¹² Clements, 280.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History*, rev. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 191.

A significant result of the late modernist rejection of opera is the effect that it had on contemporary music historiography and musical theory. Modernist history of twentieth-century music marginalizes opera as insignificant in relation to a history told as a continuum of music's formal innovation. This latter approach characterizes twentieth-century music history in terms of differing conceptual paradigms defining aesthetic enclaves. Griffiths, in a revisionist summary, characterizes, then critiques, modernist history of twentieth-century music. It was presented in terms of "streams": during the 1920s and 1930s, for example, there was "antagonism between the school of Schoenberg and the 'school' of Stravinsky, with a third stream of unregenerated Romantics such as Strauss or Rakhmaninov."¹⁵ Further "streams" included modern nationalist composers, and experimentalists in proto-electro-acoustic composition. The fifties and sixties witnessed the avant-garde (e.g., Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Milton Babbitt), experimentalist (e.g., John Cage, Christian Wolff, and Morton Feldman) and "traditionalist" (e.g., Benjamin Britten and Samuel Barber). By the late 1970s and 1980s, contemporary composition could no longer be summarized by "schools" or streams," a fragmentation that eventually characterized histories of twentieth-century music. This perspective is reflected in Griffiths' second revised edition of his history published in 1994, which approaches music history through recognition of multiple different creative concerns and its social contexts. "Looking back over the last hundred years since Debussy's *Prélude*, however, the whole history of modern music begins to seem less a jostling of rival alliances than an increased turmoil of separate voices. Correspondingly,

¹⁵ Ibid.

the notion of musical progress essential to the idea of modernism, begins to appear quaint.”¹⁶

Recent histories of music contextualize contemporary music practices, considering them, and the formal and aesthetic discourses concerned with music, as a part of a society and its cultural fabric. Opera is an important object in a contextual study of music. All music is socially-embedded, but opera, inherently interdisciplinary and from very early in its history a commercial commodity, emphasizes the limitations of modernist art theory based on the assumption of artistic autonomy. Opera is perhaps the most commercial component of classical music, and because of its institutional connections to audience and patronage, it continues to be a potentially important site in which a composer might extend a career.¹⁷ A historical consideration of opera, therefore, must be contextual and consider the institutions of its production, its relationship to a commercial audience, and its patronage. As a result, the history of opera in the twentieth century has been incompatible with the modernist story of twentieth-century music. Current interest in opera as a viable, creative vehicle for musical composition is particularly significant in relationship to the historiography of twentieth-century music. It necessitates the acknowledgement of opera as a crucial component in the history of contemporary music. A history of opera as a continuum through the twentieth century, including its reception history, its institutions, and the extensive public discourse concerned with opera would contribute a great deal to the understanding and profile of twentieth-century music and indeed culture.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Taruskin.

Tambling, in his critique of opera, points out that in the early twentieth century, and at least through the 1930s, opera was a cultural presence with significant political stakes in Euro-America and in parts of the world colonized by Europe. There is, in fact, an extensive repertoire of twentieth-century operas that remains active in the standard, commercial opera world. This repertoire includes obvious works such as the operas of Puccini and Richard Strauss, but it also includes operas by Debussy, Berg, Schoenberg, Janáček, Britten, Menotti, Krenek, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Hindemith, Henze, and Weill to name some. All of these composers had works that were first performed in a major commercial opera house and were received favourably and even enthusiastically.

For the composers and critics in the first decades of the century, opera was, to recontextualize Tambling's words, "a meaningful European art-form whose existence made some difference to social discourse." The issues that surrounded new opera constituted a significant part of the discussions concerned with the politics of culture and the place of art in society during this period, from the critique of the autonomous art work, to the avant-garde *contra* nineteenth-century Wagnerianism, to popular culture and mass media, to audiences and reception. It is significant that some of the most socially conscious, innovative, and influential critics of the contemporary arts and practitioners of contemporary music and theatre, such as Theodor Adorno, Bertolt Brecht, Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Ernst Krenek, and Kurt Weill, addressed opera, and considered opera as central to their concerns. Ferruccio Busoni stated in 1921, "I expect in the future

the opera will be the chief, that is to say the universal and one form of musical expression and content.”¹⁸

Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, for example, was produced at the Opéra-Comique in 1902, seven years after Debussy completed the score. Its dress rehearsal received a mixed reception, partly because the performance was sabotaged by a satirical pamphlet probably instigated by Maeterlinck. It was received with interest, curiosity and admiration, however, at its première. The conductor André Messager recollected that the première was “certainly not a triumph, but no longer the disaster of two days before [the dress rehearsal] ... From the second performance onward the public remained calm and above all curious to hear this work that everyone was talking about ...”¹⁹ *Pelléas* ran for fourteen performances through April and May, making enough of a profit that Albert Carré, director of the Opéra-Comique, booked a revival for October. The opera remained in the standard repertoire of the Opéra-Comique and with the exception of two years (1905/6 and 1909/10) was produced every year until the outbreak of war in 1914.²⁰ The printed reviews were on the whole favourable, with enthusiastic support from colleagues such as Charles Koechlin, Paul Dukas and Maurice Ravel, and also positive reviews in *La liberté* and *Le figaro*. Certainly *Pelléas* did diverge significantly in its musical language from, for example, Massenet's *Manon* or Bizet's *Carmen*, operas that had also premiered at the Opéra-Comique. *Pelléas* represents Debussy's mature musical style with the addition of the composer's carefully considered ideas about the relationship among text,

¹⁸ Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music and Other Papers*, trans. Rosamund Ley (London: Rockliff, 1957), cited in Susan Cook, *Opera for a New Republic: The Zeitopern of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), 11.

¹⁹ Roger Nichols, “*Pelléas* in performance I — a history,” *Claude Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande*, eds. Roger Nichols and Richard Langham Smith (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 147. Emphasis mine. My discussion of the reception of *Pelléas* derives from Nichols' article.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

music, and gesture. It forgoes functional tonality for tonal fields organized by modal and whole-tone note groups or octatonic scales. Debussy's setting of the text was particularly distinctive: it is almost entirely syllabic declamation with characters almost never singing simultaneously, a kind of "arioso" throughout. Vincent D'Indy, writing about the première, compared *Pelléas* to the *stile rappresentativo* of seventeenth-century opera.²¹ In other words, the opera did not meet crucial expectations of both tonality and text. Yet the work continued to draw an audience large enough to have the run repeated in the same season.

Much of the critical discourse concerning *Pelléas* was not about unfamiliar and intolerable musical gestures that alienated its audience. It was rather discourse situated within already existent discourses about the proprieties of music and musical theatre, and representing the factionalization of cultural institutions in Paris or personal affiliations or estrangements, in other words, a rich and politicized discussion about music that had real effect in terms of performance, publication, commissions, and influence. So, for example, composers and musicians connected with the *Schola Cantorum* in Paris, such as Vincent D'Indy, Pierre de Bréville, and Charles Bordes, were enthusiastic, whereas Théodore Dubois, the director of the Conservatoire, forbade conservatory students from attending the opera. The response to *Pelléas* through its performance history, moreover, continued as a situated discourse. In two later performances, the political and cultural climate in France determined the critical reception. In 1919, it was performed again as part of the standard season of the Opéra-Comique. This was the thirteenth year since its première in 1902 that *Pelléas* was included in a regular season of the Opéra-Comique. The cultural climate of post-war France was defined by a return to reason and pragmatism in

²¹ Ibid., and Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 101.

connection with classicism and the modern — a return to order. It was exemplified by, for example, Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant's Purist group and their magazine *L'Ésprit Nouveau* of 1920, by Jean Cocteau, *Les Six*, the rediscovery of Satie, and the celebration of modernity. *Pelléas* appeared as an irrelevant remnant of pre-war Symbolism. The editor of *Le Courrier musical*, Charles Tenroc, reviewed a gala performance at the Opéra-Comique on December 24, 1920:

Debussy's dramatic inspiration makes it easy for his interpreters to express the feelings of far-away events, of undulating lines, of the softened sensibilities which belong to these evanescent, dream-like characters. Every interpreter these days can manage these things. So much so that the shading à la Cézanne or simply the taffeta-like vocal lines are exaggerated to the detriment of the creative vigour which the composer's palette in many places contains. Everything is misted over with a touching but plaintive charm, and muffled by an intimate vapour to the point of being depressing. We can smell the perfume of roses, but they're dried flowers now. In a word the piece no longer has the spark of youth.²²

Roger Nichols notes the parallel between Tenroc's review and Jean Cocteau's aesthetic expressed in *Le coq et l'harlequin*: "Enough of clouds, waves, aquariums, water nymphs and nocturnal perfumes."²³ In 1919-20, *Pelléas* was no longer new. Twenty-two years later, however, the opera was "reborn": according to Nichols, the war-time performance was not only successful but defined *Pelléas* for a generation, and recovered "the spark of youth" in the opera that was lost on the audiences of 1920. Nichols attributes this latter success not only to the cast, but importantly in France under German occupation, to the French nationalism associated with "this most French of French

²² Cited in Nichols, 154.

²³ *Ibid.*

masterpieces [which] allowed a clear conscience to performers who elsewhere were continually beset by doubts as to what did or did not constitute collaboration.”²⁴

A final instance of *Pelléas* reception is Catherine Clément’s description of her first experience of the opera as a child, and her subsequent parodying of it, to the amusement of her parents.

My first opera, when I was a little girl, made me laugh. Memory conjures up a so-so opera, a sort of operetta, with scenes that change before one’s eyes, swirling costumes, sunny palaces, congenial inns, a raised dagger, black eyes. It was *Pelléas* and there was nothing like that in it. The persistent fog, the simplicity of the words, the foreignness of a sad story, and then this woman giving birth on the front of the stage — that was funny. For weeks I put our daily life to song, pseudo-Debussy, quasi-Maeterlinck. At the dinner table it amused the guests and family. I was taking my place in the bourgeois farce: making fun of an opera that is its reflection nonetheless ...²⁵

Profoundly critical as Clément is of the opera, this anecdote betrays, in the parody and the appreciation of the joke, a comfortable familiarity with the opera. The anecdote belies the supposition, connected with twentieth-century opera, of audience estrangement from the new work because of its form.

Ernst Krenek’s *Jonny Spielt Auf* (*Jonny Strikes Up the Band*) is of interest because the opera concerns contemporary music, audience, and the modern world. The opera was a triumph when it premièred in the Leipzig Neues Theatre in 1927.²⁶ It brought Krenek instant recognition as a composer and significant income from royalties. In its second season, 1927-28, *Jonny Spielt Auf* was performed more than 400 times at 45 different

²⁴ Ibid., 159.

²⁵ Catherine Clément, *Opera or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing with a foreword by Susan McClary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 9.

²⁶ Cook, “Ernst Krenek: *Jonny spielt auf*,” *Opera for a New Republic*, 77-114. My discussion of *Jonny spielt auf* derives from Cook’s chapter on the opera.

opera houses.²⁷ Still in the contemporary operatic repertoire, Krenek's opera is an instructive example to begin a discussion concerned with the changing aesthetic and formal codes in twentieth-century opera in that its subject is modernism and what constitutes modern art. In engaging such a topic, the opera demonstrates its immersion in the discourses and practices of the Weimar avant-garde of the 1920s. It is *zeitoper*, or topical opera, concerned with contemporary life, the response of a younger generation of German composers (in particular, Paul Hindemith, Ernst Krenek, and Kurt Weill)²⁸ to the division that seemed to have opened after World War I between the high art practices of the nineteenth century and the experiences of modern life. Jazz, represented to Europeans by American bands such as Sam Wooding's and Paul Whiteman's that toured Europe in the mid-twenties provided the stylistic impetus for musical renewal and innovation.

Jonny Spielt Auf is evidence that the discussion of opera innovation and politics in relation to opera is not new in the late twentieth century. Indeed the creation and production of new opera is continuous throughout the twentieth century, such that change itself becomes the "tradition," connecting the twentieth century to a longer history of opera characterized by invective, reform and innovation, and cultural politics.

In the two years prior to the composition of *Jonny Spielt Auf*, Krenek had been reconsidering the relationship of his own composition to society and to popular music. He had been particularly influenced by a trip to Paris in 1924. In an address to the Congress of Music Aesthetics at Karlsruhe in 1925, Krenek expressed his concern with the isolation of the composer from the world and from any audience. Art music had become self-referential in its formal preoccupation and of interest only to professional initiates:

²⁷Ibid., 217.

²⁸ See Cook. Also, "Music for Use: *Gebrauchsmusik* and Opera," *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 568-593.

“The absolute music of the present, in contrast to the music of the romantic period, no longer addresses itself to those who share certain emotions, but rather to those who have reached the same stage of musical sophistication. It has become a game that is only interesting to those who know the rules. It has neither the capacity nor the inclination to address itself to the uninitiated community.”²⁹ This music, continues Krenek, does not need performers and audience. (This reflection on contemporary music of the twenties bears comparison with the avant-garde of the 1950s. American composer Milton Babbitt, for example, wrote an infamous article in 1958 whose title, “Who cares if you listen?”³⁰ paralleled the artistic isolation that concerned Krenek.) Krenek continues his observation, perceiving the contemporary composer as the “studio artist” who invents “rules,” thereby composing increasingly esoteric and solipsistic music that renders the listener superfluous. The aficionado of this composition must study both the score and the compositional rules; this delight in the “masterful unfolding of a musical form” is, as Krenek describes, almost an addiction, “a feeling not to be underestimated — something that I can best refer to as intellectual intoxication.”³¹ As opposed to the aficionado, the bourgeois public wanted “dance music.” This loss of connection between composer and popular audience represented to Krenek a crisis in music and composition. Music was no longer functional as it had been through the end of the nineteenth century. It no longer corresponded to the needs and tastes of ordinary listeners whether bourgeois or proletarian, and it was divided into light and serious music, rending asunder a once

²⁹ Ernst Krenek, “Music of Today,” trans. Susan C. Cook, in Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 193-203. It was first given as an address to the Congress of Music Aesthetics in Karlsruhe, October 19, 1925 and subsequently published in *25 Jahre neue Musik*, ed. Paul Stefan and Hans Heinheimer (Vienna: Universal Editions, 1925), 43-59.

³⁰ Milton Babbitt, “Who Cares if You Listen?” [Original title is “The Composer as Specialist.”] *High Fidelity* 8, no. 2 (Feb. 1958): 38-40, 126.

³¹ Krenek, “Music of Today,” 196.

continuous musical practice and audience. Such a continuous musical culture, according to Krenek, characterized European music at least as late as the second half of the nineteenth century. Only Paris, in Krenek's opinion, had a public for new compositions because it had maintained a continuous music culture which admitted both popular and art music and with it a homogeneous music audience.

The only thing that one can say in consolation is that this condition [of a music without a public] exists in such a radical state only in Central Europe. In France there is still a certain kind of rapport between the music maker and his public. There are certainly large circles in Paris who still have a real need to hear contemporary music now and then, chiefly in the theater to be sure. The reason for this state of affairs lies in the fact that France still retains the last vestiges of a homogeneous audience, which I characterized earlier when differentiating light and serious music. This means that the receptive capability of this relatively large audience is on a higher level than that found in the Central European public of the same size. On the other hand, the production of the French artist is instinctively geared to this same level, which by our standards seems superficial and shallow. Whatever you may think of this, I am only interested in demonstrating that a relationship exists between the production of this music and the needs of the audience. No matter what the objections one may raise against it, it has a certain vital charm that is generally lacking in the products of Central European studio intellectuality.³²

In fact Krenek's words had real implications for his own work. "[S]hould we continue to create art, and if so what kind of art should it be?"³³ In a retrospective comment, Krenek described his new aesthetic that arose from the Paris trip:

I was fascinated by what appeared to me the happy equilibrium, perfect poise, grace, elegance, and clarity which I thought I perceived in French music of that period ... I decided that the tenets which I had followed so far in writing "modern music" were totally wrong. Music according to my new philosophy had to fit the well-defined demands of the community for which it was written: it had to be useful, entertaining, practical.³⁴

³² Ibid., 200. Emphasis mine.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Krenek, "Self Analysis," *New Mexico Quarterly* 23, no.1 (1953): 14. Cited in Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 83.

Jonny Spielt Auf arose from these concerns about musical unity, audience and reception, the concern to create an opera that would meet the needs of the audience. It was an opera about modern times that incorporated jazz and popular music. As Susan Cook notes, critics were reluctant to call it an “opera” and instead referred to it through neologisms such as *Opernrevue*, *Musikkömodie*, *Buffo-Opera*, *Jazzoper*, *Gegenwartsoper* and *Zeitoperrevue*.³⁵ Significantly, it is also an opera about the contemporary problem of art in society — and by extension about the problem of writing opera.

The interest in opera and the production of new works has been constant throughout the twentieth century. The “return to opera” in the late twentieth century, or the retreat from opera in the 1950s, is part of the active history of a discourse concerned with opera. This is also the case with the declarations about the demise of opera as a viable and socially significant genre. As extensions of this discourse, the recent critiques of the genre, such as those of Tambling, Theodor Adorno, or Catherine Clément, are to be taken very seriously, but within this historical context. They are important in continuing to develop a critical language as well as critical concerns for the consideration of new works. It is important that new operas are situated within a history of opera; they deserve critical terms and methodologies that can accommodate opera’s position in relation to contemporary music and theatre, to growing audiences, and to the consumer culture in which they are ambiguously situated.

³⁵ Cook, 103.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Perspectives: Music, Opera, and Cultural Musicology

Recent changes in academic music studies: a brief overview

The claim that an artwork reflects the values and ideology of its particular socio-historical context, while contributing to the production of these values, is a central precept in any social history or analysis of an artwork. *Louis Riel*, *Elsewhereless*, and *Beatrice Chancy* are relevant to Canadian social issues and debates concerning race and racism, and the formation of Canadian history in the public imagination. The musical work, however, poses particular critical and philosophical problems for the historian, theorist, or critic who wishes to explore it as part of, and therefore relevant to, its social context. Contemporary conundrums concerning music are ontological, historical, and sociological, and connected to the precepts, ideology, and social institutions that have defined “classical” music in modern Euro-American culture. Questions concerning canon formation, high versus popular culture, representation and meaning, and ultimately the very object of music studies, the musical work, have required a rethinking of music,¹ and ultimately a shift in academic music studies in general.

Through the 1980s, and particularly since the early 1990s, musicologists, music theorists, ethnomusicologists, and sociologists critiqued formalist approaches to musical analysis and the focus on a positivist conception of musical scholarship, the *modus operandi* of academic music studies throughout the twentieth century. The instigating questions of these critiques were primarily concerned with music and representation, and arose from numerous projects that sought to bring music into the discussions within the

¹ Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, eds., *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

humanities that engaged poststructuralist theory. They sought methods or theory that could enable discussion of music in relation to social practices, institutions, and representation. Within modernist musicology, music is the quintessential autonomous art form: separate from language, it transcends social discourses and is, therefore, impervious to ideology and social meanings. The socio-historical context of music is merely a ground for the musical work, the autonomous object. There is no theoretical means to map the interconnections between music and the society of which it is a part. Transcending language and discourse, autonomous music is considered non-representational and non-denotative, and is configured as a transcendent signifier.

The project of the 1980s and 1990s in music studies brought music into the discourse and intellectual commitments of poststructuralism. This was, and continues to be, a serious endeavor. As Susan McClary says in her 1991 study, *Feminine Endings*:

For music is not the universal language it has sometimes been cracked up to be: it changes over time, and it differs with respect to geographical locale. Even at any given moment and place, it is always constituted by several competing repertoires, distributed along lines of gender, age, ethnic identity, educational background, or economic class. Because musical procedures are heavily inflected over history and across social groups, they function extensively within the public domain and are thus available for critical investigation.

Given its centrality in the manipulation of affect, social formation, and the constitution of identity, music is far too important a phenomenon not to talk about, even if the most important questions cannot be definitively settled by means of objective, positivistic methodologies.²

Beyond the formation of group and individual identities, a hermeneutics of music that acknowledges music as discursive, by extension considers it inseparable from its socio-historical context. Critical thought and analysis concerning music should engage in

² Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 26.

conversations of current intellectual and social concern as studies of music did in the past.

Since the mid-1980s, this shift in thinking about music has altered the discourses of musicology, music theory, and ethnomusicology. Music scholars, concerned with the progressive social commitments, intellectual challenges, and debates within the humanities and social sciences including feminism, studies in gender and sexuality, studies of popular culture, psychoanalysis as a hermeneutical practice, race critical theory, postcolonialism and diaspora studies, and postmodern thought, have brought a range of issues and theoretical discourses into studies of music. This attention to cultural theory was designated the “New Musicology” in the early 1990s.³ In his preface to *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* American musicologist Lawrence Kramer discusses an article published in *The New Republic* in 1992 entitled “The Strange New Direction of Music Criticism.” It reviewed four recent works of American musicology: Carolyn Abbate’s *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (1991), Kramer’s own *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (1990), Susan McClary’s *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (1991); and Rose Rosengard Subotnik’s *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (1991). According to Kramer, this article marked a significant public, historical moment in this shift in academic music studies in the United States. He pointed out that the review was a cautionary statement, even though the reviewer liked some of the books. It was, Kramer stated, “a warning against being seduced into straying from the straight path to the

³ In the preface to *Rethinking Music*, Cook and Everist suggest that although the provenance of the term is debated, a significant early use of the term was at an American Musicological Society conference in 1990. Lawrence Kramer, in an abstract of his paper, “*Carnaval, Cross-Dressing and Women in the Mirror*,” placed his work within “the new musicology that tries to situate musical structures within their larger cultural context.” *Rethinking Music*, ix.

strange.”⁴ Kramer then questioned the reviewer’s assessment, suggesting that these so-called “new” books on music were neither strange nor were they new:

But was this new direction really so strange? Was it even really new, or more like a renewal of something lost and forgotten? From one standpoint, nothing could be more ordinary than what these books have in common. The new direction in musicology as I understand and support it is simply a demand for human interest. It chafes at the scholastic isolation of music, equally impatient whether heaps of facts or arcane technical anatomies furnish the scholar’s frigid cell. “Talk about music,” the demand might run, “should bear the impress of what music means to human subjects as thinking, feeling, struggling parts of the world.”⁵

This theorizing began earlier and has continued over the past decade and a half. Since the 1980s, John Shepherd, founding director of the School for Studies in Art and Culture (1991-1997) at Carleton University in Ottawa, has been at the forefront of the development of cultural musicology.⁶ In the mid-eighties he hosted a conference concerned with new musicology that brought together scholars who were engaged in thinking about music in the world. Speakers included philosophers, ethnomusicologists, sociologists, representatives of culture studies and popular music studies, as well as musicologists. In an analogous spirit, a 1987 anthology, edited by Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception*, included essays that considered society in music as much as music in society: “Bach’s music as social discourse” is one subheading in an article by McClary,⁷ and Rose Subotnik, the author of an article on Chopin, begins her essay with a thoughtful preface

⁴ Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ In 2000, Dr. Shepherd was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in recognition of the importance of his scholarship to the paradigm shift in musicology.

⁷ Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, eds., *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 19.

on the autonomy versus the contingency of the musical work.⁸ The anthology, however, also contains essays on popular music, on male hegemony in music, on the electronic reproduction of music, and the representation of music within images of British subjects in India. The inclusive study of music had opened in rich, interdisciplinary ways. Significantly, the Forward, by sociologist Janet Wolff, addressed the ideology of autonomous art.

In the Introduction, Leppert and McClary outline the shift in the practices of art histories, figuring music into the equation.

The past fifteen years have witnessed a major transformation in the ways in which the arts and humanities are studied. Influenced by such socially and politically grounded enterprises as feminism, semiotics, and deconstruction, both the artifacts considered worthy of analysis and the questions asked of canonized works of art have changed radically. These changes, especially evident in studies of literature, film, and visual art, in turn have led to a systematic investigation of the implicit assumptions underlying critical methods of the last two-hundred years, including prominently the assumption that art constitutes an autonomous sphere, separate and insulated from the outside social world. . . .

The only one of the arts that has remained largely untouched by such redefinitions of method and subject matter in its academic discipline is music. For the most part, the discourse of musical scholarship clings stubbornly to a reliance on positivism in historical research and formalism in theory and criticism, with primary attention focused almost exclusively on the canon.⁹

Leppert and McClary then indicate some recent studies from the mid-1980s that signaled a change in musicological practice, “signs,” they state, “that musicology (if not music theory) might be changing along lines pioneered in literary studies.”¹⁰ Joseph Kerman’s *Contemplating Music*¹¹ is cited as a historiographic study that critically and historically

⁸ Rose Rosengard Subotnik, “On Grounding Chopin,” *Music and Society*, 105-131.

⁹ Leppert and McClary, “Introduction,” *Music and Society*, xi-xii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹¹ Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

examines positivism and formalism as definitive of American musicology.¹² They cite, as well, Richard Norton's *Tonality in Western Culture*,¹³ a study that remains relevant as a history of western musical practice. Norton's study historically located and qualified "the central language of the 'Great Composers' such that it can be understood as a social construct rather than as the universal it is frequently asserted to be."¹⁴ Leppert and McClary also mention British musicology, with its propensity towards the sociology of the arts, in works by Christopher Ballantyne, Christopher Small, and Alan Durant.¹⁵ Also important is the Canadian musicologist and sociologist John Shepherd, who has been publishing on issues of music education, popular music, gender in music, and music and identity since the late 1970s.¹⁶

This new work in academic music studies, premised on the acknowledgement that music is socially situated and discursive, is nothing less than a project whose aim is the renovation of music studies. In so doing, it opens music studies to new questions and renewed intellectual engagement.

¹² For a subsequent (1999) critique and an account of other criticism of *Contemplating Music*, see the preface to *Rethinking Music*, v-xii. Cook and Everist register their concern that the "new musicology" has formed another canon and problematically, a new authority. Instead, this significant volume contains careful historical and theoretical studies of the methods — positivism in musicology and formalism in music theory and analysis — that were critiqued with broad strokes in the early 1990s. It counters authority and certainty with questions and professional uncertainty: "The history of musicology and music theory in our generation is one of loss of confidence: we no longer know what we know."(v)

¹³ Richard Norton, *Tonality in Western Culture: A Critical and Historical Perspective* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1984).

¹⁴ Leppert and McClary, xii.

¹⁵ Christopher Small, *Music, Society, Education* (London: J. Calder, 1977); Alan Durant, *Conditions of Music* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); Christopher Ballantyne, *Music and its Social Meanings* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1984).

¹⁶ Examples include: John Shepherd, "Conflict in Patterns of Socialization: The Role of the Classroom Music Teacher," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 20, no.1 (1983): 22-43; and "Music Consumption and Cultural Self-Identities: Some Theoretical and Methodological Reflections," *Media, Culture and Society* 8, no. 3 (1986): 305-330. Shepherd published a summation of his work in music since the late 1970s in *Music as Social Text* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991). Finally, Shepherd co-authored a book with Peter Wicke, premised on British cultural theory, following the intellectual frame of Raymond Williams and the commitment to the placement of art within the social, although moving beyond this to the consideration of psychoanalysis, semiotics, and the performative: John Shepherd and Peter Wicke, *Music and Cultural Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).

Throughout the 1990s, the interdisciplinary engagement of academic music disciplines with sociology, new ethnography, and cultural theory, gained breadth and new depth in numerous new studies, including works of music scholarship that considered music in relation to discourses of feminism, psychoanalysis, race, ethnicity, and identity. In addition, the object of music studies shifted to include popular music, reception studies, and institutions. Susan McClary, for example, has pursued analysis that considers music in relation to feminism and gender studies, that questions gender and structures of power, and, therefore, the premises of both historical musicology and music theory.¹⁷ Other important studies include the work of the sociologist Tia DeNora,¹⁸ Georgina Born's 1995 study of IRCAM, one of the few institutional studies of the European musical avant garde;¹⁹ the philosophical interrogation of the musical work and other seemingly essential and immutable aspects of Euro-American "classical" music practice in the work of Lydia Goehr;²⁰ and also the work of Renaissance scholar Gary Tomlinson, whose book on opera, *The Metaphysical Song*²¹ is an important study of opera in terms of historically changing discourses of the subject, a project with extensive interdisciplinary ramifications. Cultural historian James Johnson's *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*²²

¹⁷ McClary, *Feminine Endings*; note also McClary's later work, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Other earlier and landmark works concerned with the analysis of gender in music include: Marcia Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Ruth A. Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792-1803* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and her later book, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁹ Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

²⁰ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²¹ Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera*, Princeton Studies in Opera (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

²² James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

examines reception and audience behavior at the Paris Opéra in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Indeed, a new interdisciplinary territory of opera studies developed during this period, heralded by projects such as the Princeton Studies in Opera series that began in 1991, and the critical work published in the *Cambridge Opera Journal*.²³ Studies of music in relation to critical discourses and theories of race, ethnicity and identity include anthologies such as Jonathan Bellman's *The Exotic in Western Music*, concerned with the historical construction of the exotic Other in Euro-American music, Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman's *Music and the Racial Imagination*, and Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh's *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*.²⁴ Ethnomusicologists changed their perspectives on world music through engagement with the shifts in ethnography, popular culture, and media studies.²⁵

²³ The expansion of opera studies affected by postmodern concerns and debates has continued to the present. Significant examples include: Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing, with a forward by Susan McClary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton Studies in Opera (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia Julianne Smith, eds., *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Sam Abel, *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performance* (Boulder, CO.: Harper Collins, 1996); Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, *Opera: Desire, Disease, Death* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), and their more recent work, *Opera, the Art of Dying* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin, eds., *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Mary Ann Smart, ed., *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, Princeton Studies in Opera (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

²⁴ Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998); Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, eds., *Music and The Racial Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, eds., *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

²⁵ A few examples can give the breadth of this work: Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock and Roll* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); E. Ann Kaplan, *Rocking Round the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Mark Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993); George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (London: Verso, 1994); Michael Chanon, *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and Its Effects on Music* (London: Verso, 1995); Andrew Jones, *Plunderphonics, Pataphysics, and Pop Mechanics: An Introduction to Musique Actuelle* (Middlesex, England: SAF Publishing, 1995); John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity, and Place* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

Finally, works such as those of Lawrence Kramer and John Shepherd studied the extensive effect of poststructuralist theory on music studies and music reception.

By century's end, this expanding scholarship was already being anthologized as wide-ranging critical conversations in publications with titles such as *Rethinking Music*, *music/ideology: resisting the aesthetic*, *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, and *The Cultural Study of Music*.²⁶ At the beginning of the new millennium, academic music studies are characterized by rich questions and healthy uncertainty. At the beginning of his essay "Ontologies of Music," published in the anthology *Rethinking Music*, Philip V. Bohlman states: "Music may be what we think it is; it may not be." Here is a sign that contemporary music studies have opened a space for creative and critical intellectual inquiry. Bohlman's essay in fact serves as a starting point for music study in this open field:

Music may be what we think it is; it may not be. Music may be feeling or sensuality, but it may also have nothing to do with emotion or physical sensation. Music may be that to which some dance, or pray or make love; but it's not necessarily the case. In some cultures there are complex categories for thinking about music; in others there seems to be no need whatsoever to contemplate music. What music is remains open to question at all times and in all places.²⁷

Bohlman's essay, which questions the ontology of music, the assumed object of academic music study, represents the most recent turn in this critical conversation. He points out that even as "the disciplines of Western music study"²⁸ have radically

²⁶ Adam Krims, ed., *music/ideology: resisting the aesthetic* (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishing Group, 1998); Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, eds., *Rethinking Music* (1999); Judith Lockhead and Joseph Auer, eds., *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton, ed., *The Cultural Study of Music* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

²⁷ Philip V. Bohlman, "Ontologies of Music," *Rethinking Music*, 17-34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

questioned their practices, assumptions about the music as an object of this study have remained intact.

‘Thinking’ and ‘music’ are coupled naturally, as if they were ‘out there’; indeed their ontological juxtaposition enjoys a special status in a project that would dislodge the disciplines of music from methods that have dominated Western intellectual history during the past two centuries. Music, however, may be something other than an object about which one thinks or can think; it may be a practice extrinsic to musical thought.²⁹

Finally, Bohlman clarifies that the plural “ontologies” of his title doesn’t refer to “‘ontologies’ of music around the world, the ways we think about music and the ways others think about music,” but rather to an acknowledgement that music is multivalent in any culture:

... I maintain that multiple ontologies of music exist at both the individual and the local level, as well as at the global level. My recognition of plural ontologies, therefore, maps both individual musical experiences and the landscape of world music cultures and world-music culture.³⁰

The implications of Bohlman’s observations are far-reaching for anyone engaged in the disciplines of academic music. Musicologists, for example, should not only “study” music as a path to understanding, but also practice music as musician and listener:

Ontologically, music is more closely imagined and conceived through ‘rethinking music’ than through ‘thinking music’ ... ‘Thinking music’ privileges one way of understanding music, the cognitive; it proceeds with the assurance that the self is ultimately knowable. ‘Rethinking music’ proceeds only nervously, lacking conviction that any ontological process is ultimately knowable; we rethink music out of the belief that we missed something the first time round. Rethinking undermines thinking music and moves beyond it. Far more important, rethinking music asks us to situate our understanding of music in experiences of music-making, the human practices of bringing music into existence through ritual and belief, act and imagination, and, yes, through thought.³¹

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 34.

The importance of rethinking music to this study

What are the implications of these changes in the academic study of music to the present study? Certainly, this work must be placed in the intellectual field of cultural musicology, opening the operatic composition to the fullness and messiness of the social. It is clear from the examples of recent critical work in opera studies that any analysis of opera and its institutions and practices gains from a reconsideration of the traditional musical object and from Bohlman's "rethinking music." The latter, which also concerns the listener's experience, is particularly pertinent to opera. As an interdisciplinary genre of the theatre, opera is multivalent in its structures and its performance of meaning — text, sound and music, the visual, gesture and the body, the voice, narrative, and the many forms of referencing beyond the work — and therefore requires an equally multivalent approach that can take these into account. In valuing music for its immediacy and its numinous transcendence of language, modernist aesthetics necessarily was less sanguine about opera because of opera's contingency, its interdisciplinary excess, and its impure entanglements with text and theatre. New perspectives in music and opera studies have played some part in the revaluing of opera.

For this study, a consideration of the music as representation and therefore capable of holding social and situated meanings is essential. This paradigm shift enlarges rather than diminishes the musical work, in that it acknowledges the profound part that music plays in the world. This change in approach to music studies affects the hermeneutics of music. The reconsideration of fundamental precepts of music scholarship has opened intellectual possibilities in the critical approach to music and has influenced this study.

Chapter 3

Historical Representations of Ethnic Difference and Race in Opera

The representation of Europe's exotic Other was, and continues to be, a preoccupation of the lyric stage. Throughout four centuries, Europeans have appeared on the stages of European and American theatres as Turks, North and sub-Saharan Africans, North and South American Indigenous peoples (from Incas and Aztecs to Hurons, Cherokees, and Sioux), Chinese, Persians, Japanese, Spanish, and Gypsies — a veritable masquerade of Europeans performing exotic Others. The material of this chapter will provide a basis for comparing the narratives and representations of race in recent operas to representations of exotic characters and cultures in historical operas. This chapter, then, will serve as a longitudinal study that should serve as a comparative background for the analysis of representation in recent operas.

In André Grêtry's comédie *mêlée d'ariettes* of 1768, *Le Huron*,¹ the eighteenth century's noble savage makes an appearance at the Comédie-Italienne in Paris. *Le Huron* is an operatic comedy of manners in which the eponymous protagonist, an Aboriginal from New France, journeys to France where he discovers that he is French, abducted as an infant, and raised Huron. "What luck!" the noble savage exclaims on learning his true identity, "I am French." The mask of the exotic Other² disappears from the narrative

¹ André Grêtry, *Le Huron*, 1768, a comédie mêlée d'ariettes to a libretto by the Encyclopédiste Jean François Marmontel after a story, *L'ingénu* by Voltaire, cited in Miriam Whaples, "Early Exoticism Revisited," *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed., Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University, 1998), 3-25. Reference to this opera and its narrative, 9-10.

² The "exotic other" is a component of a narrative representation of the normative in which an Other is configured in an oppositional, although often complementary, binary structure with a male European subject. The Other fulfills changing roles in different narratives: from the beneficent Pasha as an allegory for the good monarch to various configurations of the shadow or undesirable aspects of the rational, male, European subject, from irrationality and lack of self-control to sins of the body such as lust and gluttony. It is finally, also an object of desire. These shadow attributes — negative complements to the rational subject — are also claimed by lower class characters in comic opera and in the informal theatres of Europe (the fairs and later the boulevard theatres

when the European performer, who masquerades as an indigenous North American, becomes European and literally takes off the costume of the Other.

This exchangeability between an exotic Other and a European subject, and the resulting existential confusion, derive from the Enlightenment's universal assumptions concerning the human. In *Le Huron*, as in the numerous examples of the operatic representation of inter-racial relations that characterize the history of opera, the non-European is never a chance creation. The representations are related to, and arise from, historically specific relationships that an imperializing and colonizing Europe had with much of the rest of the world. This included the Ottoman Empire, which in different instances, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century representations ambiguously considered as both part of, and exotic to, Europe. This label of "exotic" was, at different times, extended to other parts of Europe, including Russia, Spain, and Italy. Similarly, Western European representations and narratives identified an exotic Other within the state: the European Roma but also Jewish communities.

In Grêtry's *Le Huron*, the fictional unmasking of the non-Western character reveals the European self. The mask of the Other can usefully serve as a synecdoche for the representation in European opera of racial difference, inter-racial encounter, racism, and the history of European imperialism.

of Paris, for example, or traveling and improvisatory theatres such as *commedia dell'arte* companies, and so on). These characters were frequently subversive of authority, and provided comic entertainment for audiences of all classes within a bawdy, physical theatre. It is within this tradition of seventeenth and eighteenth century European theatre that many of the exotic characters are formed. For a description of the *commedia dell'arte* companies, the theatres of the fairs in Paris, and public reception in the early Eighteenth century, see Thomas E. Crow, "Fêtes Galantes and Fêtes Publiques," in *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Stories set in geographical spaces beyond Europe with plots that included travel, commerce, conquest, exotic characters in fantastical costumes and elaborate *mise en scènes* characterized the mixed genres of opera and ballet of the spectacular European theatre of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This representation of the world on the stages of Europe mirrored the history of European international relationships including European colonization and the slave trade across what Paul Gilroy has called “the Black Atlantic,”³ the transport of Africans as slave labour to North and South America and the Atlantic islands. European consciousness was formed by global commerce whose effects on Europe included the increase in wealth, and the material changes resulting from the importation of goods such as coffee, tea, the potato, sugar and chocolate. Urban cultures in Europe, both elite and popular, were global cultures. These theatrical presentations were part of this European global consciousness, which influenced literature including travel writing, early anthropology, decorative fads such as rococo chinoiserie, coffee houses, and scientific and technical improvements in navigation.⁴

³ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁴ A study that would place opera within global discourses is beyond the scope of my overview. There is a distinguished and growing body of scholarship concerned with European colonialism and the complex production of social and artistic meaning, including: Richmond Barbour, *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of "the East," 1576-1626* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Julia Douthwaite, *Exotic Women: Literary Heroines and Cultural Strategies in Ancien Régime France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Michèle Longino, *Orientalism in French Classical Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Felicity A. Nussbaum, *Torrid Zone: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, eds., *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

An early vehicle for exotic theatrical spectacle was the *ballet des nations*, a subject for court presentations that was “called into existence (a good many years before it was named) to celebrate the spectacle of national diversity.”⁵ These consisted of entries representing different racial groups singing, dancing, and enacting stories through operatic recitative. They ranged from full-scale productions such as André Campra’s *L’Europe galante* of 1697 and Rameau’s opera-ballet, *Les Indes galantes* of 1735 to set-pieces inserted into operas, such as the *balli* of Venetian opera of the seventeenth century, and plays. Miriam Whaples suggests as possibly the first of such performances a “Grand Ballet d’Étrangers,” with dances that included Persians, Turks, and “*Indiens*,” performed at the French court in 1598 for Henri IV.⁶ The 1626 carnival ballet, *Grand bal de la Douairière de Billebahaut*, in which Louis XIII participated, is a grotesque of the dowager of misrule and disorder, who “receives extravagant, amorous homage from Turks, Persians, Africans, Tartars, and ‘People of the North,’ who included both Greenlanders and Frisians,” and also an appearance of Atabalipa or Atahualpa, the Peruvian king who was executed in the custody of Pizarro in 1533.⁷ These representations, which in France characteristically took the form of the world paying homage to the French monarchy, continued into the eighteenth century.

Rameau’s *Les Indes galantes*, the opéra-ballet of 1735, presents four *Entrées* or Acts, each a different story depicting an encounter between Europe and another racial group: “The Generous Turk,” “The Incas of Peru,” “The Persian Festival of the Flowers,” and

⁵ Whaples, 16. See also Irene Alm, “Dances from the ‘Four Corners of the Earth’: Exoticism in Seventeenth Century Venetian Opera.” in Irene Alm, Alison McLamore, and Colleen Reardon, eds., *Musica Franca: Essays in Honor of Frank A. D’Accone* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1996), 233-257.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

“The Savages.”⁸ The stories contain assertions of the triumph of rationality, the beneficent monarch, and the noble savage. In the first *entrée*, for example, Osmin, the magnanimous Pasha, releases the European slave of his harem, Emilie, to her lover Valérie. The Incan tale of the second *entrée* is a colonial narrative in which reason overpowers and demystifies the irrational trickery of the Incan priest. A volcano, depicted on stage, kills the priest, permitting the Incan Phani to marry her lover, the conquistador Don Carlos. In the final *entrée* set in colonial America, the indigenous princess Zumi, after weighing the love of the Spaniard Alvar and the Frenchman Damon, decides that both are inferior to her true love, another indigenous character, Adario. The scenario of this performance is a vehicle for comic satire about the shortcomings of lovers in France and Spain.

There were numerous productions of the history of the Spanish conquest in Peru and Mexico that depicted Incan and Aztec personages as variously noble or depraved. The second *entrée* of Rameau’s *Les Indes galantes* is an example of French Enlightenment anti-clericalism projected onto a Peruvian priesthood. By contrast, in a *tragedia in musica*, *Montezuma*, composed by Carl Heinrich Graun in 1755 to a libretto by Frederick the Great, “the Mexican ruler (like Cortez, a castrato role) and his betrothed, Eupoforce, are heroic and articulate.”⁹ Cortez and his soldiers are the villains. Another sympathetic and noble representation of the North/South American Aboriginal is Vivaldi’s *Montezuma* (1733),¹⁰ which depicts the Spanish invasion of Mexico and concludes with

⁸ Rameau: *Les Indes galantes*, a CD recording performed by Les Artes Florissants, dir. William Christie (Arles: Harmonia Mundi S.A., 1991).

⁹ Whaples, 9.

¹⁰ *Montezuma, Drama per Musica*, performed by La Grand Écurie et la Chambre du Roy, dir. Jean-Claude Malgoire, CD recording (AUVIDIS Distribution, 1992). The score used for this production was a reconstruction created by Malgoire aided by musicologists Roland de Candé, Roger-Claude Travers, Professor Antonio Fana, Jean-Pierre Demoulin, and Professor Peter Ryom.

the marriage of Montezuma's daughter, Tuetile, to Ramiro, a friend of Fernando Cortez and a soldier in the Spanish army. Gaspare Spontini's *Fernand Cortez* (1809), another opera on the subject of the Spanish conquest, also demonstrates that these operatic stories were contingent on historically and politically situated circumstances. Composed during the period of the Napoleonic wars, it glorifies Cortez, the general and conqueror, and depicts the evils of the Aztec priesthood.¹¹

The most common exotic theme, popular throughout Europe in eighteenth-century music and musical theatre, however, is the representation of Ottoman culture and in particular, the harem. Within these representations, unlike the musical treatment of other exotic subjects and histories, composers developed a musical style that was conventional and codified by the late eighteenth century. It was recognizable to an eighteenth-century audience in instrumental as well as dramatic music. This *alla turca* style was a free translation of Turkish janissary bands into European art music.¹² Many Europeans had direct experience of these Turkish ensembles, in that they accompanied Ottoman military incursions in western Europe, and also reached western European courts and cities as gifts to western nations from the Ottoman rulers.¹³ As Mary Hunter points out,

Of all the 'exotic' cultures that inhabited popular consciousness during the eighteenth century, that of the Ottoman Empire was one of the few of which a significant number of Western Europeans could have had some direct (albeit limited) experience. There had been occasional Ottoman envoys and embassies in Europe since the sixteenth century, but after the final military defeat of the Ottomans, reified in the Treaty of Passarowitz

¹¹ Whaples, 9.

¹² Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 21; Mary Hunter, "The Alla Turca Style in the Late Eighteenth Century: Race and Gender in the Symphony and the Seraglio," in Bellman (1998), 43-73; Matthew Head, *Orientalism, Masquerade, and Mozart's Turkish Music* (London: Royal Music Association, 2000).

¹³ The narrow genre of Turkish music that western European composers imitated was called *mehter*, and was known to western Europeans through their constant warfare and ongoing diplomatic relationships with Ottoman Turkey. Bands consisting of members of elite troops, the *yeni çeri* (hence "janissary" music) accompanied Ottoman armies into battle. Donna Zapf, "Haydn's *L'incontro improvviso* and the Imperial Fest at Esterháza," unpublished essay, 1996.

in 1718, Ottoman envoys and ambassadors were regularly sent (along with enormous retinues) to establish political alliances, cultural exchanges, and technological understandings with the West.¹⁴

“Turkish” music in this period develops in relation to direct experience of a non-European music. The gestures of the *alla turca* style included characteristic melodic figuration, chromatic alterations — usually a raised fourth to simulate exotic modality, characteristic ornamentation such as *acciaccaturas*, *appoggiaturas*, and trills, musical malapropisms such as parallel fourths and octaves or awkward vocal leaps that were usually connected with comic characters, a reduction in texture to unisons or heterophony, limited or unchanging harmony, and the addition of tympani, cymbal, and triangle. These “Turkish” musical conventions could be freely applied in different narrative contexts as signifiers of “otherness.” They were universalizing conventions of musical exotica whose use lasted into the nineteenth century. Gluck, for example, used *alla turca* music in the depiction of the barbarian Scythians in *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), the sequel to his *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774).¹⁵

The “Turkish” style is also conventionally connected only to male characters. As Mary Hunter says, “the *alla turca* style in eighteenth-century opera is associated with extreme masculinity (bravado, fierceness, an obsessive interest in domination).”¹⁶ This depiction of male characters is also connected to vice, excess, and the body. Masculine *alla turca* style used with negative values is represented by musical gestures that were anathema to the aesthetics of European art music. In this masculine aesthetic travesty, *alla turca* style and “Turkish” operas of the eighteenth century differed markedly from

¹⁴ Hunter, 43.

¹⁵ Herbert Lindenberger, “Opera/Orientalism/Otherness,” in *Opera in History: From Monteverdi to Cage* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 165.

¹⁶ Hunter, 57.

orientalist representations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in particular from the feminized orient of the nineteenth century. As Hunter comments,

Despite eighteenth century reliance on the seraglio as the location for Turkish stories, however, the eighteenth century versions of the Orient ... differ from later literary representations discussed by Lisa Lowe and others, as well as from operatic repertory, in that they typically do not fold the primary markers of Otherness into the single image of the voluptuous Oriental woman, but rather distribute them among a variety of character types, divided by class and by gender.¹⁷

Nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Michael Tenzer in “Western Music in the Context of World Music,”¹⁸ describes the condition of late twentieth-century western music as globalized “diffusion and exchange,” a corollary in music of Ong’s “condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space”:

Viewed from the West, the topography of late twentieth century world music presents a teeming array of interlocking traditions and contexts. While the boundaries between musical traditions have never been fixed or impermeable, the political, scientific, and social revolutions of this century have catalysed a remarkable process of diffusion and exchange that has fundamentally reshaped the sensibilities of those who make and listen to music everywhere.

The perception of musical cultures as interdependent is relatively new and has come about in the West only through the growing pains associated with a more relativistic view of culture. The universality of the musical language of the great eighteenth and nineteenth century Western composers, once held as an unassailable truth, emerges from more recent revisionist scrutiny as a regional dialect — one with far-reaching impact, to be sure, but none the less a product of the aesthetics of the Germanic culture in which it crystallized. Reflecting the relativistic tendencies evident in most areas of contemporary thought, musical cultures are now increasingly seen as interacting and in a constant state of flux, their

¹⁷ Ibid., 57. Hunter discusses the feminine in these “Turkish” narratives in the section of her article entitled, “Women *Alla Turca*?” 65-73.

¹⁸ Michael Tenzer, “Western Music in the Context of World Music,” in Robert P. Morgan, ed., *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present*, Music and Society Series (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 388-410.

identities determined by the particular requirements of the social groups from which they derive.¹⁹

Tenzer gives as examples the popularization of North Indian music in the 1970s by sitarist Ravi Shankar, a piece by Danish composer Per Norgard, *I Ching* (1982) for solo percussionist which bears similarities to percussion music from Guinea as recorded by the National Percussion Ensemble of Guinea, and the Kronos String Quartet performing in 1992 a work that they had commissioned from Korean composer Jin Hi Kim, who performed her composition with the quartet on *komungo*, a Korean zither. But Canadian examples abound: Vancouver, British Columbia, has numerous composers who music crosses music cultures; non-western or multicultural ensembles such as Gamelan Madu Sari, the Vancouver Chinese Music Ensemble, or Silk Road; as well as recorded and live performances from its diasporic communities. The audience for bhangra, popular fusion music in the South Asian diaspora, in Vancouver, is larger than that for the Vancouver Opera. This understanding of contemporary world music as an urban, cosmopolitan experience has a complement in any record store where compact discs designated as “World Music” form a continuity with “Jazz” or “Classical” in a commercial taxonomy of commodified music.²⁰

Nineteenth-century imperialism and global modernity are historical precedents to the situation of contemporary music within global diffusion and exchange. The nineteenth century, which culminated in what British historian Eric Hobsbawn called “the age of empire,”²¹ saw European empires ascend to control most of the globe. The geographical territory under imperial rule had more than doubled since the late eighteenth century.

¹⁹ Ibid., 388.

²⁰ For a discussion of the city as the “entrepôt for the encounters with world music,” and the implications for ethnomusicology, see Philip V. Bohlman, “Colonial Musics, Postcolonial Worlds, and the Globalization of World Music,” in *World Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 130-150.

²¹ Eric Hobsbawn, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books: 1989).

Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* describes European powers as holding approximately 35 percent of the earth's surface in 1800, an amount that by World War I had expanded to 85 percent.²² This included the conquest of India in the first half of the nineteenth century and the scramble for Africa at century's end. The new imperialism was based on industrialism or, as Hobsbawn says, "the decisive double breakthrough of the first industrial revolution in Britain, which established the limitless capacity of the productive system pioneered by capitalism for economic growth and global penetration."²³ Settler colonies and the American republic pushed into the interiors of continents. Changes in the technologies of travel and communication made the world increasingly interdependent under European power. The outcome for subjugated peoples was catastrophic: land claimed for private property necessitated killing or relocating indigenous populations; enforced money economy and European trading restrictions disrupted local economies. The great waves of emigrating populations — settlers out of Europe, and coerced labour from Africa and Asia into North and South America — promised both the possibility of better circumstances for the European lower classes, and slavery or indentured servitude for many others. Finally, as the political revolutions of the late eighteenth century in France and the United States "established the models for the public institutions of bourgeois society,"²⁴ so renewed imperialism in the nineteenth century furnished, for the imperial metropolitan centers, hegemonic discourses of race and European supremacy. A serious understanding of art practices as complexly part of

²² Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 7-8. See also, Robert C. Young, *Postcolonialism: an Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 2-3; and Hobsbawn "Overture," in *The Age of Imperialism*.

²³ Hobsbawn, 9.

²⁴ Ibid.

social and cultural configurations must consider this historical context in relation to nineteenth-century opera.

Operatic representations of the “exotic Other” in the nineteenth century are explicitly racialized and informed by many social discourses. “Others” — women, the lower classes, the insane, and non-Europeans — were represented as inferior to a discursive norm: the male, European, bourgeois, unitary, and rational subject. It was at this juncture, corresponding also to the decline of the Ottoman Empire, that the Orient, and the exotic Other, became feminized and sexualized, a representation that remained into the twentieth century. This representation differed from the eighteenth-century masks of the exotic, constructed within a classical model of the perfectible man. In the seraglio comedies, for example, negative representations of non-Europeans are associated with male character types, male servants or slaves, who are undeveloped individuals ruled by their passions and appetites. They remain, however, part of a continuum of the human, and although racially Other and lower class, are not cut off from the possibility of attaining greater humanity. This continuum of the human is analogous to the belief, common within Europe to the late eighteenth century, that human sexuality is a continuum in which the female is an imperfect, incomplete and therefore inferior, version of the male — a belief that also shifted in the eighteenth century as women, too, became ineluctably Other.²⁵

Systematic and institutionalized beliefs about biologically determined race developed through the nineteenth century, dislodging eighteenth-century universalism. The human

²⁵ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). The idea of pairing these two ideas, however, comes from a discussion in Linda Phyllis Austern, “‘Forreine Conceits and Wandring Devises’: The Exotic, The Erotic and the Feminine,” in Bellman (1998), 26-42, 34 fwd. Austern persuasively argues continuity in the representations of Woman and Other from the seventeenth century to the present.

species was divided into a hierarchy of racial types based on essential physical characteristics that indicated behaviors and other psychological, intellectual, social, and cultural characteristics. In the first half of the nineteenth century, ethnology was concerned with scientific racism, and in particular with the question of whether the human species was multiple or polygenetic.²⁶

Robert Young, in *Colonial Desire*, discusses an aspect of this scientized study of race, the concern about the possibilities of the human hybrid, or the progeny resulting from the interbreeding of two different species. The nineteenth-century neologism for human hybridity, “miscegenation,” dates from the American Civil War, a hoax designed to discredit Lincoln through the suggestion that the secret agenda of the unification of North and South and the emancipation of the slaves was the intent to bring about racial amalgamation in the United States.²⁷ The center of this anxiety about racial purity is sexual desire. As Young points out, much debate was expended on the existence of sexual affinity within a racial species and repulsion between races, an argument that was problematic in relation to the American South, where there was much evidence of sexual interaction between races.

Co-existing with the ideal of racial purity in this period is the specter of a degenerate mixed race, the threat that racial difference might be erased altogether through mass hybridization.²⁸ As Young states, “the naming of human mixture as ‘degeneracy’ both asserts the norm and subverts it, undoing its terms of distinction and opening up the prospect of the evanescence of ‘race’ as such.” As a result, “[t]he idea of race here shows

²⁶ George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 66.

²⁷ Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 144.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

itself to be profoundly dialectical: it only works when defined against potential intermixture, which also threatens to undo its calculations altogether.”²⁹

There have been numerous operas that represent racialized characters and whose narrative structures depend on the implicit assumption of the taboo against miscegenation. Sexual desire and the anxious discourses of human hybridity, definitive elements of the psychology of imperialism and race, repeatedly inform the representational construct of the racialized Other in nineteenth-century opera: feminine and essentialized, she finds herself, over and over again, in a tragic or impossible love story with a European male, a relationship configured across race. Susan McClary’s study of Bizet’s *Carmen*, for example, examines Carmen’s multiply configured differences: through race as a gypsy, class as a worker in the cigarette factory, and as a criminal and prostitute. There would be no narrative, however, without the character of Don José, the bourgeois soldier who desires Carmen and is subsequently lured to self-destruction.

Meyerbeer’s *L’Africaine* (1865) is another fantasy of miscegenated desire. Set in the sixteenth century, it contains a fictional history and geography of imperialism. The navigator and explorer Vasco da Gama returns to Portugal with tales of an “unknown” island not yet claimed by any colonizing European power. As proof of his discovery, he brings two slaves, Sélika, queen of the island, and a male aristocrat, Nélusko. Sélika, beloved of Nélusko, loves her captor, Vasco da Gama, who is promised to the Portuguese aristocrat Inès. Vasco’s desire is ambiguous: the love duet at the climax of Act IV is with Sélika only after he drinks a love potion, and his most impassioned outbursts in the opera concern his ambition to discover and claim new territory. After five acts and a complex plot, Vasco is united with Inès. Sélika, and subsequently Néluska, commit suicide under a

²⁹ Ibid.

mancinilla tree whose toxically fragrant flowers bring hallucinations and death. The narrative and the music of this opera present intimate reflection and emotion, and the delirious sweep of mass ritual, large choral numbers and the mandatory ballet *entrées* (priestesses, priests, Amazons, jugglers, and warriors), and the spectacles of onstage shipwreck and combat. The geography of this theatrical world is extensive and diverse: council chambers of the admiralty in Lisbon, an Inquisition prison, a ship in the Indian Ocean, a “Hindu” temple on a tropical island, and a tropical garden.

In this narrative of race, gender, colonization, and slavery, the slave queen and racial Other, Sélika, desires her master, Vasco da Gama, who in turn displays his unbridled passion for the unknown and for discovery. The heterosexual union between the white couple, Vasco and Inès, is not dramatized and therefore does not drive the plot. However, it would have been evident to an audience, whether consciously or unconsciously, as racially appropriate. The relationship between Vasco and Sélika, conversely, is ambiguous and ambivalent, leaving the prehistory of the narrative open to audience speculation. Sélika’s musical declaration of love and the love duet attest to latent, narratively impermissible, sexuality between this pair.

The denouement is Sélika’s self-immolation following her act of beneficence in releasing Vasco and ensuring the freedom of the white couple. A contemporary European audience would have understood the racial conventions of nineteenth-century narrative, which prohibit Sélika’s marriage to the white hero. Yet Sélika embodies the possibility of inter-racial sexuality. She is racialized, yet sings her desire for the white colonizer, thereby making evident the otherwise unacknowledged fact of inter-racial sexuality. Sélika’s inappropriate desire, subversive of narrative proprieties, yet reassuringly

compliant with the master's wishes, even infects her dying fantasies as she envisions Vasco coming to her like Zeus to Leda, in the guise of a swan. For a nineteenth-century European audience whose self-identities are premised on the discourses of race and colonization, this characterization and plot structure potentially offered a *frisson* in its play with miscegenation. At the same time, Sélika, the racial Other, protects the European protagonist and chooses death rather than deny him his desire, which is both the colony and the white woman, or put another way, his reinsertion into an economy of power in which he will continue to benefit from the prerogatives of his race. Nélusko, the appropriate consort for Sélika, also chooses death, a comforting denouement to the story. The elite of the Other world lies down in death before the desiring, imperial European. In this troubling narrative, Sélika preferred slavery in her beloved master's country to ruling as a queen in her own. Race, in this reading, is the central "character" of the narrative.

Léo Delibes' *Lakmé* (1883) and Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904) are further examples of plots driven by inter-racial desire and imperialism. The female protagonists commit suicide for an unattainable inter-racial love. *Lakmé* is set in the India of British occupation, making it, in 1883, an opera of current events. The idea of empire would have been experientially immediate to the French audience through France's colonial engagement in North Africa, forming protectorates in Tunisia in 1883 and Annam in 1885. As in *L'Africaine* and the later *Madama Butterfly*, *Lakmé* reveals, and simultaneously covers over, the history of colonized women.

In *The Colonial Harem*,³⁰ Algerian critic Malek Alloula analyzes postcards of Algerian women, possibly reproduced in the millions in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Alloula's "album" shows the distorting lens of the colonialist

³⁰ Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986).

“phantasm,” the “sweet dream” of orientalist sexuality as feminine. The French photographic fantasy of Algerian women was constructed almost entirely in-studio with models, the colonizing male imagination making its desire visible on the bodies of Algerian women, using the camera and therefore the truth-claim of photography as witness to its “truth.” In these photographs, as in *Lakmé*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *L’Africaine*, the Other, the object of European colonization, is represented through the sexualized body of a woman. In each of these opera narratives, the eponymous female Other desires a man who is formally attached to the colonizing state. This powerful fiction is a synecdoche for the imperialist enterprise, the appropriate desire of the colonized for the European colonizer. Alloula, however, places the orientalist sexual fantasy in its historical conditions of exploitation, violation, and violence. “For the Orient is no longer a dreamland. ... Colonialism makes a grab for it, appropriates it by dint of war, binds it hand and foot with myriad bonds of exploitation, and hands it over to the devouring appetite of the great mother countries, ever hungry for raw materials.”³¹

Representations of the racialized Other, then, are premised on the violent conditions of colonization in which the psychic economy of the Western colonizer, fixated on an orientalist fantasy, is unstable. Within the fictive world of *Lakmé*, for example, Gerald, the British soldier who loves Lakmé, must make a transition from being infatuated with the native — his colonialist imaginary — to taking up a position within the symbolic order of European power: as responsible soldier and as husband to Ellen, his appropriate white fiancée. Lakmé, with maternal understanding, recognizes that she must die in order for Gerald to successfully assume his place in that symbolic order. She kills herself to ensure his passage from an infantile to an adult state, her recognition of Gerald’s rightful

³¹ Ibid., 3.

place in the colonized world forming the dialogue of the last scene of the opera. There is a parallel here to Séluka's release of Vasco da Gama in *L'Africaine*. In each, the opera as a whole, represents the colonialist wish for radically submissive colonial subjects, impossible because unconnected to reality. This representation was popular with contemporary audiences, its limited effect of closure repeatedly depicted on the lyric stage.

The feminine racialized Other is also represented in *Madama Butterfly* (1904).³² Here, however, the representation is informed by late nineteenth-century *japonisme* — the fascination with and commercialization of things Japanese that affected the *belles-lettres*, the visual-arts, interior design, fashion, and the theatre — and was part of the fashion for Asian exotica, and in particular Asian female characters in European musical theatre. Arthur Groos described this fashion as extending the purview of the exotic from the Near to the Far East, following “the expansion of Western colonial interests from the Near East and India to China and Japan.”³³ Similar female characters inhabit operas such as Saint-Saëns' *La Princesse Jaune* (1872), Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* (1885), Messenger's *Madame Chrysanthème* (1893), and Mascagni's *Iris* (1898). As Alloula's

³² *Madama Butterfly* and its late twentieth-century derivative, *Miss Saigon*, both contain as central character a colonized woman who exchanges her life for the potential growth of her son. The composer of the latter, Claude-Michel Schönberg, derived his inspiration for the musical from a post-Vietnam war photograph, which he reads through the narrative lens of *Madama Butterfly*. The photograph depicted the separation of a Vietnamese mother from her small daughter. [“This photograph was, for Alain and I, the start of everything...” From the program notes and libretto to *Miss Saigon* (New York: Angel Records, 1988).] The photograph does not convey the story of *Madama Butterfly/Miss Saigon*: there are no Americans, for example, in the image, and the only narrative is portrayed by the grief of the parent who is about to be separated from her child, and the terror or despair expressed by the weeping child. The commentary to the photograph, however, provides the story — whether fictional or true we can't know from the image — of a child about to board a plane to the United States to live with her unknown, American father, “with whom the woman had spent a brief moment of her life.” (Program notes) The photograph, now inscribed with the colonial narrative of the racialized Other, also reinscribes the myth at its core: “[The mother] knew, as only a mother could, that beyond this departure gate there was both a new life for her daughter and no life at all for her. Here was the most staggering example of the ultimate sacrifice that she was prepared to make.” Emphases mine.

³³ Arthur Groos, “The Return of the Native: Japan in *Madama Butterfly/Madama Butterfly* in Japan,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1, no. 2 (July, 1989): 168.

colonial studio photographers, who produced the illusorily “true,” sexualized images of colonized Algerian woman by incorporating fragments of reality through the power of the photograph, so Puccini, Messager, and Mascagni all insert fragments of a “real” Japan into their operas, through attention to detail in the *mise en scène* and the use of Japanese melodies and instrumentation. The music is inflected with exotic elements that inform the meaning of the drama at important moments, and provide audiences with the pleasurable *frisson* of an experience of the Other. These were as much derived from the *belles-lettriste* conventions of *japonisme* as from an accurate depiction of Japanese society and culture.³⁴

By the late nineteenth century, European composers had considerable access to Asian music through publications or direct experience of Asian musicians in Europe. Debussy, famously, heard the music of the Javanese gamelan at the International Exhibition in Paris in 1889.³⁵ Opportunities for Euro-Americans to encounter the music of world cultures directly increased through improving technologies of travel and recording. Global colonization, commerce, and technology seemingly served up the world for Euro-American experience and consumption. The global circulation of music is evident in these late nineteenth century operas concerned with the exotic, with colonization, and with race. An example, is Bizet’s *Carmen*, where “Spanish” music is derived from African-Cuban music or from the music of Parisian cafés.³⁶

³⁴ For a careful discussion of some of these sources, including the available music sources — publications and recording of Japanese music were available to Puccini — see Groos. Groos’ article also provides an important study of the reception and production of *Madama Butterfly* in Japan from the first production of a scene from the opera in 1914 to the 1950s and beyond. See Groos, 177 fwd.

³⁵ Annegret Fauser, “World Fair — World Music: Musical Politics in 1889 Paris,” in Jim Samson and Bennett Zon, eds., *Nineteenth Century Music: Selected Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2001), 179-223. Fauser also has a work forthcoming on the international exposition of 1889: *Celebrating the French Republic: Music at the 1889 Exposition Universelle*.

³⁶ See McClary, *Georges Bizet: Carmen*.

In the late nineteenth century, the racial boundaries of propriety within European music had become increasingly porous. The encounter with music from throughout the world profoundly affected the musical avant-garde of the twentieth century, and by extension art music composition throughout the century. Western art music changed as a result of the encounter. World music affected melodic and rhythmic organization, instrumentation, musical texture, different intonation systems, compositional procedures, and even, as Anthony Sheppard points out, “the basic conceptions of what constitutes a musical sound.”³⁷ Sheppard’s study is concerned with the influences of “exotic models” — and in this term he includes ancient Greek theatre — on Western contemporary musical theatre. He considers, for example, Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex*; the influence of Noh theatre on Britten’s church parables; and Harry Partch’s “Integrated Corporeal Theatre.” The conditions for the fluid exchange of music and musical experiences expressed by Michael Tenzer in describing the century’s end are increasingly characteristic of Western musical experience from the mid-nineteenth century: access to global cultures and performers, including direct experience of these music, set in motion and lubricated through commercial exchange.

³⁷ Studies of the influence of world music on Western classical music, see Tenzer; Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Sheppard, 2001; and essays in Bellman, 1998.

Chapter 4

The Depiction of Cultural Difference through Music in *Beatrice Chancy*, *Elsewhereless*, and *Louis Riel*

How and to what ends does music indicate social difference and race within the fictional worlds of *Beatrice Chancy*, *Elsewhereless*, and *Louis Riel*? All three represent cultural alterity in relation to racialized groups or individuals, delineating these differences through musical representations as well as in text, narrative, and *mise en scène*. This includes, in *Beatrice Chancy* and *Louis Riel*, intentional historical realism structured through the musical representation of music associated with racially defined groups. All three operas attempt, with varying degrees of success, to avoid the construction of an exotic Other, and to counter racism with revisionist Canadian history or critical fiction.

Recent ethnomusicology, informed by the transnational interchange of culture that is visible and audible in diasporic communities, urban festivals of the arts, or theorized and marketed as “world music,” is pertinent to the analysis of depictions of cultural difference through music. This is particularly the case for the works under discussion, whose narratives are based on racial difference and whose fictional worlds are fields of interacting musical representations. The significant change in recent ethnomusicology is the decentering of Euro-American classical music, against which all others appeared as deviations. Ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin describes how, as late as the 1960s, the study of world music held an “Orientalist stance” in which “few people seriously questioned

the notion that beyond the Western classical tradition there were three kinds of music to be studied: Oriental, folk, and primitive.”¹ Slobin continues:

This triad underlaid many works and was implicit in the training of my generation of researchers. ‘Oriental’ of course referred to those Asian ‘high cultures’ that had long-term, accessible internal histories and that could be ‘compared’ with similar European systems. ‘Primitive’ encompassed all the ‘preliterate’ peoples of the world, who had to rely on oral tradition for transmission and who had no highly professionalized ‘art musicians’ in their midst. The ‘folk’ were the internal primitives of Euro-America.²

In *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*, Slobin attempts to find a theory and methodology of analysis for the musical hybridity that he observes — the multiple musical interchanges among individuals, groups, and sub-cultures within an encompassing hegemonic society. This theory of musical hybridity, which he develops in part through field observation of interactive musics, supercedes earlier ethnomusicology that proposed discreet musics and that privileged Western classical music — a model that informed all other discourses of Western academic music. Slobin’s project acknowledges that the elusive “pure” music of a specific local group is a myth that lies at the heart of earlier ethnography. It is the condition of music, including Western classical music, to be promiscuous. As Slobin describes recent ethnomusicology, “Somewhat before anthropology was willing to concede the lessening importance of purely local scenes ... ethnomusicologists conceded that acknowledging interactive patterns of various sorts was crucial to their work: the musicians taught us what our advisors had overlooked.”³ All musicians, in other words, — from seemingly isolated groups performing “traditional”

¹ Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds*, 4.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 5.

music, to historical classical composers such as Mozart, to a contemporary performer such as Andy Statman, who describes his music as “Moroccan African Mongolian klezmer”⁴ — move among musical styles and cultures, opportunistically learning, adopting, or adapting what they need.

The consideration of each opera in terms of multiple musical subjects is also pertinent to an analysis of the musical representation of cultural difference and the work as a signifying field. This idea is derived from Lawrence Kramer’s discussion of music and subjectivity in *Classical Music, Postmodern Knowledge*,⁵ in which he proposes the term “musical subject” in a consideration of the listener’s relationship to, and therefore reception of, the musical work. Kramer’s preamble to this discussion is a description of the neurologist Oliver Sacks’ study and observations of Parkinsonian patients. Sacks found that musical activity, whether singing, playing, or listening, relieved these patients’ difficulty in speech, writing, and mobility. Kramer’s development of Sacks’ observation extends to the consideration of music and subjectivity:

Important as this relief was somatically, it was even more important psychically: in the words of one patient, ‘It was like suddenly remembering myself, my own living tune ...[What music imparted] was not just movement, but existence itself.’ In Sacks’ terms what music imparts is a ‘naturalness in posture and action’ correlative to ‘the living I’; in Kristevan terms, the gift imparted is the primordial *jouissance* (quasi-orgasmic unrepresentable bliss) of the semiotic, the continuity of presubjective desire and signification.⁶

⁴ Cited in Slobin., x. Clarinetist Andy Statman, who began his musical career playing klezmer and “bluegrass/newgrass” mandolin, has been a leader in the “neo-klezmer” movement from the 1980s. Slobin uses him to describe the field of the individual musician, characterized promiscuously by many “musics.” Slobin makes the comment about klezmer and Statman’s description of his own music: “In figuring out [Statman’s] stance, remember that the ‘traditional Jewish European music’ itself was a blend of styles including Moldavian, Ukrainian, and shades of Balkan, all transformed in New York in the 1920s and 30s.” (x).

⁵ Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, 20-25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

What Kramer crucially suggests about this experience, which Sacks describes as “the living I,” is that not just any music can create this effect. Only music that the listener already knows, music that is already embedded in an individual’s life, can create what Kramer has named, following Kristeva, the experience of *jouissance*. Kramer describes this in a manner that shifts Kristeva’s use of the term “musical”: “The semiotic is articulated as an immediacy only through an already significant symbolic that endows the immediacy of the semiotic with already-reflective meaning.”⁷ In other words, music reception is dependent on listener recognition, which in turn results from the summation of the listener’s cultural experience, including music. Kramer articulates this self-recognition as the “musical subject” constructed within, or summoned by, the musical work.

Deeds of music seek receptive listeners. As part of its illocutionary force, music addresses a determinate kind of subject and in so doing beckons that subject, summons it up to listen. The subject is determined by, or as, a position in relation to historically specific possibilities of discourse, action and desire. The musical summons may be issued at the level of style, genre, form, or ‘the work itself’; it may appeal to social, sexual, psychical, or conceptual interests. Listeners agree to personify a musical subject by responding empathetically to the music’s summons.⁸

The three operas of this study — as dramatic narratives — “summon” or construct multiple musical subject positions that require the acquiescence of the listening audience in order to convey meaning. Another kind of musical subject emerges if this concept is extended to musical creation: the composer’s field of cultural experience including musical background, academic training, conceptual interest, and so on. A similar case can

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 21-22.

be made for the musical subject in the realm of performance and the performer. As well, because these operas present dramatic narratives with fictional characters, in another register we might consider the characters of the drama as musical subjects created and performed within the music and heard only as “summons” to other musical subjects. The operatic work in this way is interlaced with society through the creative and social activities of composing, performing, and listening.

While Slobin’s poststructuralist ethnomusicology is useful in considering the operatic work as a field of musical difference and interrelations open to observation and analysis, Kramer’s concept of musical subjects, a consideration of reception, creates a bridge between the work as representation and the audience. Ethnomusicology provides further insight into Kramer’s model of reception and our complex participation in the signification of cultural difference represented musically. In his attempt to find a method with which to consider overlapping and enmeshed music cultures — from the individual to the group or subculture, to “supercultural music” or hegemonic expression, Slobin demonstrates that “[w]e are all individual music cultures,” attuned or subject to a sonic universe awash with transnational musics, that we pay attention to or ignore “without knowing how we do so or why.”⁹ Even the musical group affiliations that we may have or recognize are shifting, unstable, nomadic. “Up close, what’s ‘Irish,’ ‘American,’ or ‘Irish-American’ looks like the work of tent-dwellers, not stone raisers after all.”¹⁰ Slobin’s summation of this condition of music is useful.

[W]e need to think of music as coming from and moving among many levels of today’s societies, just as we have learned to think of groups and

⁹ Slobin, ix.

¹⁰ Ibid., x.

nations as volatile, mutable social substances rather than as fixed units for instant analysis. Yet at any moment, we can see music at work in specific ways, creating contemporary forcefields of desire, belonging and at times, transcendence.¹¹

The poststructuralist field of music cultures and its attentiveness to the construction of musical subjectivity are theoretical underpinnings necessary to the analysis of these contemporary operas. All delineate characters and groups through musical composition: by means of direct quotation or paraphrase, through voice assignment to characters, through vocal style and technique, or through sections of the opera characterized by a musical style that intentionally signifies group affiliation or individual character. *Beatrice Chancy* and *Louis Riel* are narratives of racial oppressions — slavery and colonialism — in which the composers construct contesting racial groups through music, including, in both cases, Anglo-Canadian culture as a specific group rather than as a normalizing universal. In *Beatrice Chancy*, Rolfe creates further critical distance from Eurocentrism in that he explores musical difference as fluid relationships rather than as static essences. The musical representation of cultural difference and, by extension, race is almost absent in *Elsewhereless*, in part because Atom Egoyan's libretto holds at its core a critique of cultural assumptions about race, group affinity, or nation. The African character, Malcolm, ferociously embodies and enacts this critique. Rodney Sharman's music contains few allusions to cultural difference, nor does *Elsewhereless* use the musical construction of difference within the musical world of the opera as an intentional gesture towards situational or historical realism, as do both *Beatrice Chancy* and *Louis Riel*. The musical delineation of group and individual identity, however, is nonetheless present in

¹¹ Ibid.

Elsewhereless. And all three operas incorporate musical quotations that designate group affiliation.

Finally, all of the operas are dramas of interracial encounter, with varying degrees of interpersonal violation and violence. *Beatrice Chancy* and *Louis Riel* represent imperialist and racist cultures within their fictive worlds. In *Elsewhereless*, in contrast, Canadian characters disavow the trope of race and are partially oblivious to their own racism and to their prerogative as colonizing subjects. The dramatic narratives of these operas differ from those of the earlier operas discussed above in that they attempt to critique various types of oppression, betrayal, and violence. Further, because the libretti engage race and racism, the composers were forced to contend with the musical representation of cultural difference. The concern is not whether a representation is true to a “real” historical, musical prototype, that is, whether a representation of difference — Cape Breton fiddle music, for example — is accurate to a specific historical instance of that music. Historically located, collaborating imaginations create an opera, and by extension, the operatic work makes its references to society and its discourses, institutions, and contending systems of belief. What is at stake is not truth to the real, but what discourses the work conjures, or to what other representations it alludes. These works contain musical depictions of difference that attempt to revise racial oppression, to render hierarchy problematic, or to effect a critical field of difference. They are self-consciously critical and self-reflexive. The extent of their success as well as their limitations and failures must be measured by attention to the music, and not only to the text and the drama.

Music and race in *Beatrice Chancy*

Beatrice Chancy, set in the Annapolis Valley in the British colony of Nova Scotia in 1801, is a fictional slave narrative that represents, through its music, the cultural diversity that characterizes the narrative. Poet, playwright, and critic George Elliot Clarke simultaneously wrote a play and the opera libretto for *Beatrice Chancy*, structured on the narrative of Percy Bysshe Shelley's Gothic verse play *Beatrice Cenci*, as Clarke says, "[r]acing Shelley."¹² Beatrice Chancy is the sixteen-year-old mulatto daughter of white slave owner Francis Chancy and one of his slaves. When the opera opens, she returns to the household having spent three years in a convent in Halifax, as her father and owner says, "To make you more like us — /Wise, modern, beautiful."¹³ She has, through the years of her enforced absence, loved Lead, a slave owned by Chancy. The transformation represented in the narrative is Beatrice's maturation from an innocent girl to a woman, acquiring the knowledge of social hierarchy and power, knowledge which she acquires through betrayal and sexual violation. Her father's brutal tyranny over the household, which includes herself, her "stepmother" Lustra, and the slaves, is unveiled to her, and her future foreclosed. When Lustra informs Chancy that Beatrice loves and desires to marry Lead, he tortures Lead and rapes Beatrice. Beatrice becomes the agent of violent revolution, and with the collusion of Lead and Lustra, she kills Francis. Lead is shot¹⁴ and Lustra and Beatrice are hanged by British troops, agents of state justice.

¹² George Elliott Clarke, "Racing Shelley or Reading the Cenci as a Gothic Slave Narrative," *European Romantic Review* 11, no. 2 (2000): 168-185.

¹³ George Elliott Clarke, Libretto of *Beatrice Chancy*. The libretto is published in "Opera and Music Theatre," eds. Grace Kehler and Harry Lane, special issue, *Canadian Theatre Review* 96 (Fall, 1998): 62-77.

¹⁴ In the CBC TV production, broadcast on *Opening Night*, February 2001, Lead is hanged with Beatrice and Lustra at the conclusion of the opera.

Composer James Rolfe was self-consciously concerned with a historical reconstruction of the musical context: identifying a local scene, Nova Scotia, sketching its historically configured racial groups, and exploring the inevitable effect of the intersection of the cultures of these groups on their music. It is telling that the collaborators, both poet and composer, considered the historical reconstruction important enough to write a preface to the score giving historical background to the opera and instructions to performers. The preface provides a brief history of power and injustice in the Maritimes: French colonists replaced the indigenous Micmac, and were deported by the British in 1755 who then expropriated French settlements for New England immigrants and Loyalists. The latter brought approximately 1,500 African slaves. Further, within the wave of British Loyalists to Nova Scotia were free Blacks, including many who fought for the British during the American War of Independence.¹⁵ This background achieves a number of ends: it establishes that the opera's narrative is based in historical fact, that there has been a significant presence of people of African descent in Nova Scotia from the eighteenth century, that the history and the fictional world of the opera represent different racial groups, and finally that this mix of peoples and cultures provides the source for the musical styles of the work.

The notes to the opera describe both the simplicity and the richness of the musical environment: *a cappella* singing in church, singing schools, and dances accompanied by solo fiddler, "often (as in the United States) one of African descent."¹⁶ Rolfe's statement about the music and his research towards its composition mirror Slobin's observations

¹⁵ George Elliott Clarke and James Rolfe, "Performance Notes and Historical Background," *Beatrice Chancy*, unpublished score, 1997. The composer and librettist give as source for this historical information: Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

concerning the fluidity of musical style and group association. Rolfe describes the musical historical background to *Beatrice Chancy*:

There seems to be a remarkable degree of mixing between different musical cultures: English, Scottish, Irish, Acadian, American and African-Canadian musics were intermingled with each other. What the resulting musics actually sounded like is only partially known. Fiddle tunes are best-documented, as are the songbooks of the singing schools; some hymns of many different religious denominations also survive. The early music of African-Canadians is a matter of conjecture, as neither recordings nor sheet music exist, and written records are scant. I studied recordings and accounts of African-American music from remote locales — coastal islands, rural areas, and prisons — of the southern United States, in the belief that they offer the nearest clues as to how African-Canadian music of that era might have sounded and functioned. Recorded and printed sources from Nova Scotia furnished further clues.¹⁷

The musical background to the drama also justifies the negotiation with the boundaries of Western classical music found in this work. An inventory of signifying musical styles in the opera, for example, would include contemporary musical language and techniques; music freely composed in the style of African-American roots (spirituals, hymns, and shouts or call-responses); diatonic imitative counterpoint as in a Renaissance madrigal, as well as other contrapuntal devices such as passacaglia figures and melodic augmentation and diminution; music freely composed that continues the eight-note melodic patterns of the reels; arias reminiscent of nineteenth-century virtuosic *bel canto* or eighteenth-century *opera seria*, some with long melismas and word painting, in which the opera self-reflectively acknowledges its own history; the Act I.1 duet sung by Beatrice and Lead, with its D major tonality, which is a soaring ballad in the tradition of

¹⁷ Ibid.

the American musical; and finally musical quotations of an English ballad, Scottish-Canadian fiddle tunes, and African-American spirituals (Figure 4.1).

African-American spirituals

“I must walk some lonesome valley,” Act I.2

“Oh Mary don’t you weep,” Act IV

“No more auction block for me,” Act IV

“Oh, Freedom,” Act IV

English ballad

“The Cherry Tree Carol,” Act I.1

Fiddle tunes Act I.2

Strathspey: “Captain Campbell” (Scottish/Canadian: Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island)

Reel: “Colonel McBain” (originally Scottish, Irish)

Reel: “*Caber Feidh*” (originally Scottish, Irish, Cape Breton)¹⁸

Figure 4.1 Musical Quotations in *Beatrice Chancy*

It is important to add that there are self-reflexive references to opera in all three operas. The signification “opera,” moreover, is inscribed with multiple international histories. This inscription includes a network of institutions of training and production such as conservatories, universities, companies, talent agencies, the musicians and theatrical unions, etc. and their histories. “Opera” as a signifier is also embodied by singers and musicians, whose phenomenal skills, developed through rigorous musical education, reference Western musical training, practice, and performance. Opera, *sui generis*, offers a plethora of contemporary meanings and possibilities of personal or

¹⁸ Detailed information on traditional fiddle tunes is available on the internet site: Andrew Kunz, *The Fiddler’s Companion: A Descriptive Index of North American and British Isles Music for Folk Violin and Other Instruments*, <http://www.ibilio.org/fiddlers/index.html> (accessed December 12, 2004).

group identity visible in popular and official culture, fan activity, blockbuster concerts, film, and popular literature.

As a result of these multiple musical styles, *Beatrice Chancy* is a signifying field that offers the possibility of multiple subject positions or “musical subjects” and a fictional world of multiple and interactive music cultures as understood by Slobin’s poststructuralist ethnomusicology. Rolfe’s commentary on the ring shout in the preface to the score, for example, indicates the complex of meanings that he brings to the opening moments of the opera.

The Ring Shout (sic) is an African-American practice which flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries; it may also have occurred in Nova Scotia. After church services, or at gatherings such as corn-shuckings, participants would form a circle, moving counterclockwise, clapping their hands and stomping their feet, creating a driving polyrhythmic groove, which would then accelerate gradually. Their movements are described as shuffling, in part because it was considered irreverent to lift the feet off the ground while dancing. A leader would sing out short regular phrases, often improvised, often including non-verbal vocables, and the others would call out a fixed response. Subjects were usually Biblical stories, especially ones with which the African-Americans could most identify: stories of freedom and overcoming a powerful oppressor. The ring shout was one of the few forms of African self-expression which was permitted in the North American diaspora — many others (particularly drumming and religion) were suppressed by white society.¹⁹

The ring shout in this description signifies the slaves, their culture, and their ability, even within brutal oppression, to speak with a subversive voice. It is also plausible to assume that the musical style of the shout would be familiar to North American audiences as signifying African-American music and slavery. This is not, however, “the specter [of race that] lurks in the house of music,” one “that hovers and haunts barely noticed, so

¹⁹ Performance Notes, *Beatrice Chancy*.

well hidden is it beneath the rigors of the scholarly apparatus,” as discussed, analyzed, and critiqued by Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman in “Music and Race, Their Past, Their Present,” the introduction to *Music and the Racial Imagination*.²⁰ The opera, while representing a racist society and racist oppression, is not itself racist. The music, even as historically identified with slavery, is not “race music” in the sense that Bohlman and Radano theorize, i.e., constructed within Eurocentric music discourses as a musical style that is inferior to Euro-American classical music. Rather, composer and librettist have created a drama that reconstructs a revisionist history that ultimately critiques racism. Music plays an important part in creating a context for the opera that decentres Euro-American culture and subject positions.

The musical context which Rolfe researched and composed for *Beatrice Chancy* has, at first glance, obvious affiliations with groups: the spirituals and shouts with the slave community, and the Scottish fiddle tradition with the master. The score, however, as if illustrating Slobin’s observations about the poststructuralist condition of music, presents imbricated musical styles shared by all members of the cast and orchestra, and dispersed as gestural elements throughout the entire opera. It defies simple binary relationships between groups and their associated musical styles, in which the musical exotic, as a mask of the exotic Other, necessarily stands in opposition to the Euro-American self. The music of *Beatrice Chancy* is, rather, an interactive field of differences and relationships. As signification and narrative, the music of *Beatrice Chancy* represents the intimacy of the slave-owning household, as well as its violence and oppression. Within this

²⁰ Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, eds., *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1-53.

claustrophobic matrix, Rolfe creates an interchange of musics, which, although initially connected to specific groups, are also disseminated throughout the work as a whole, complicating simplistic designations or untroubled associations: derivations of a style connected with one group play a part in constituting the music of a character from another; a musical style such as the ring shout is developed as a dramatic device; slaves sing the “master’s” reels, which are, in turn, composed within the call-response structure of the shouts, a musical hybridity. Finally, melodic and rhythmic gestures derived from the music of African slaves in North America permeate the score. In other words, the musical depiction of race in *Beatrice Chancy* is dynamic and interactive.

Crucially, while Rolfe uses specific music to identify racial groups, and has constructed sections of the score in which a specific racial reference predominates, the entire score is informed by an intermingling of elements abstracted from these differing musical styles. A definitive aspect of the sonic world of the opera is the predominant use of alternating major and minor thirds; predominant melodic and harmonic tritones; modal and pentatonic scales; improvised performance that includes microtonal inflection; and syncopated rhythmic figures that derive from the music associated with the slave community in the fictional world. Certainly, this musical material results from Rolfe’s research into the historical musical sources that form the basis of his reconstruction of this sonic world. One source that Rolfe lists in his score, Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.*,²¹ for example, discusses aspects of the music and musical practice of African slaves in North American, including the occasions for musical performance, musical practices, and microtonal alterations of pitch; it also includes. Examples 4.1a-

²¹ Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.*, rev. (New York: Dover Publications, 1992).

4.1d are ethnomusicological transcriptions of this oral, improvisatory tradition from Courlander, which contain conspicuous tritones, alternation between major and minor thirds, syncopations, improvised performance, and microtonal inflection. (Examples 4.1a to 4.1d)

$\text{♩} = 104$ Orig. - 3 st. M. K.

Let me go home, whis - key,
let me walk out that door.
Let me go home, whis - key,
let me walk out that door.
Well I'm feel - in' so fine but I
just can't take it no more.

Example 4.1.a

A blues melody, transcribed by musicologist Mieczyslaw Kolinski, illustrating conspicuous tritones, microtones, and major/minor thirds.²²

Axes
etc.

Example 4.1.b

A work song illustrating conspicuous tritones.²³

²² Ibid., 20. It is interesting that Courlander cites Kolinski as pointing out uncertainty as to the cultural source of partially flatted sevenths and thirds (19): “[T]hey are not a common occurrence in West African singing, though some observers have noted their presence in African areas other than the ones in which Kolinski has done most of his work. ... Some hold that true blue tonality is not to be found in the European tradition. Kolinski, on the other hand, has observed the presence of blue notes in English folk songs.” (19-20) The “truth” of source is not the issue here. Rather, this argument about source begs an assertion of the hybridity, in Slobin’s sense, of this music.

²³ Ibid., 28.

J. B. B.

Example 4.1.c

A fragment of a prayer song, transcribed by John Benson Brooks, contains improvised polyphony, harmonic tritones and sevenths, and syncopations. Its complexity is increased by the improvised counterpoint.²⁴

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

♩ = . bout 88

M. K.

The musical score consists of eight staves of music in a single system. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked as *♩* = . bout 88. The first staff has the lyrics 'Oh' and 'oh'. The second staff has 'ah' and 'oh ah'. The third staff has 'ah' and 'oh'. The fourth staff has 'ah' and 'ah'. The fifth staff has 'ah' and 'ah'. The sixth staff has 'ah' and 'oh'. The seventh staff has 'ah' and 'oh'. The eighth staff is a variation, marked '1) Var.', with lyrics 'oh oh' and 'weh ah (3 times with variants)'. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and syncopation, and includes microtonal pitch inflections.

Example 4.1.d

This song, transcribed by Kolinski, contains microtonal pitch inflections, alternating major and minor thirds, tritones within the melodic structures, syncopation, and irregular rhythm. The opening lyrical melodic leap of the first variation, is a tritone.²⁵

These musical elements, such as harmonic sevenths and tritones, irregular and syncopated rhythm, and third alternations, also occur in Western music practices, although in very different musical and social contexts. Although Rolfe states in the

²⁵ Ibid., 251.

preface to the score that his intention is to create musical realism through the incorporation of this music into the opera, the integration of elements of this style throughout the work create potentially multiple levels of interpretation dependent on the musical context. An example is the effect created by the presence of these elements in music associated with Francis Chancy. The menace of Chancy's response to Beatrice's profession of love for Lead (Example 4.2) is intensified through a setting outlined by a diminished triad A-C-E \flat , extended melodically through repetitions of the two minor thirds A to C, and its mirror inversion, E \flat -C, emphasizing the tritone. The two minor thirds occur in augmentation in the left hand of the piano, cello, and bass, as if underlining the melodic shape. As well, Chancy's arioso is syncopated. A plausible interpretation is that the minor thirds, prominent tritone, and syncopation — musical elements that, in the context of the opera, a listener might associate with the musical culture of the slaves — create an oppositional tension when incongruously associated with Chancy. More to the point, this is an example of the sonic world that Rolfe has composed, where musical elements can be overtly associated with a particular group within the opera, yet also become unifying gestures that create musical cohesion. They remain, of course, audible and available to the listener's interpretation, wandering musical subjects in Kramer's sense, or following Slobin, evidence of music's essential hybridity. (Example 4.2)

Beatrice Chancy / p. 64

200 A piacere

rall. . . M $\text{♩} = 112 - 120$

B. woman, and do love . . . this man . . . I love this man.

F. Hi-Ha *p* *ferocitè* *crescendo*
And I thought you thought yourself lucky to

Perc. *p* *marcato*

Pho. S. *p*

VI. *p*

V2. *p*

Via. *p*

Vic. *p*

CB. *p*

Example 4.2 Beatrice Chancy Act I.2, mm. 206-238.

Boatrace, Chancy / p. 65

214

B. Father, I love you as I'm supposed to; Father, you don't know what you're saying!

F. be puny my flesh, not some slut, so low as to go lusting for the pawings of some half-ape! You'll not mock my love by embracing such filthy, tar-plastered dung!

Perc.

Pno.

V1. *mf leggiero*

V2. *mf leggiero*

Vla. *mf leggiero*

Vlc. *mf leggiero*

CB. *mf leggiero*

Example 4.2 continued.

Beatrice Chancy / p. 46

228

B. I love you as I'm supposed to, as I'm supposed to, as I'm supposed to, as I'm supposed to. Father, you don't know what you're saying! Father, you don't know what you're saying!

L. Hus- band! She's your own daughter! she's your own flesh. Please,

F. You're no - bo - dy's slave but mine! No - bo - dy's slave, you're no - bo - dy! You'll not mock my love, you'll not mock my love, you'll not

Perc.

Pno.

V1.

V2.

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

legato

Example 4.2 continued.

The interval of the tritone is prominent throughout the entire opera, ambiguously deriving from an African-American source, yet frequently doing the conventional harmonic and melodic work of Western tonal music, affectively heightening dramatic or interpersonal tension. Both conversations between Beatrice and Lustra, in Act I.1 and Act

II.1, are defined through prominent melodic tritones and minor thirds. In Act I.1, Lustra announces Beatrice's return from Halifax, elliptically narrating the prehistory of the opera that will be completed by Beatrice in the Act II.1 conversation: she (Lustra) sent Beatrice to a convent in Halifax to remove her from Chancy's gaze and thereby forestall his memories of Beatrice's mother. From the outset, Lustra voices her ambivalence toward Beatrice, a tension that is also heard in the musical setting. Lustra's melody, in a manner similar to Chancy's music in Example 4.2, creates the outlines of melodic tritones through chromatic pitches that have the effect of the characteristic alternating major and minor thirds. Beatrice's greeting begins on Lustra's concluding D[♯] and extends over a minor ninth from d¹ to f², chromatically elaborating a diminished seventh chord (D/F/A^b/C^b) with its concomitant minor thirds and tritones placed in melodic prominence. (Example 4.3)

Beatrice Chancy / p. 23

309 *mf* *joyfully*

B. Dear Luvah, my second mo- ther, I joy- to see you e- gain, after three long years, after three long

Perc. [Conga] L R B L R [Conga pattern may be varied ad lib.] B S B B S *mp* *leggiero*

VI. 1. Shaker *mp* *leggiero*

V2. *mp* *leggiero*

Vla. *mp* *leggiero*

Vic. *mp* *leggiero*

CB. *mp* *leggiero*

Detailed description: This musical score page contains a vocal line and five percussion parts. The vocal line (B.) is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature. It features lyrics: "Dear Luvah, my second mo- ther, I joy- to see you e- gain, after three long years, after three long". The vocal line is marked *mf* and *joyfully*. The percussion parts include Conga (marked *mp* *leggiero*), Shaker (marked *mp* *leggiero*), Viola (marked *mp* *leggiero*), Violin (marked *mp* *leggiero*), and Cello (marked *mp* *leggiero*). The Conga part includes a bracketed instruction: "[Conga pattern may be varied ad lib.]". The Shaker part has a circled 'e' above it. The Viola, Violin, and Cello parts have a circled 'pizz.' above them. The score is arranged in a system with five staves for percussion and one for the vocal line.

Example 4.3 Beatrice Chancy Act 1.1, mm. 309-322.

Beatrice Chanoy / p. 24

317

B. How I longed to eye dark-passioned clouds, rain o - ver the riv-er. so

L.v. years, sugar snow,

Perc. Your presents are so, so

VI. *mp leggero*

V2. *mp leggero*

Vla. *mp leggero*

Vlc. *mp leggero*

CB. *mp leggero*

Cresc.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a vocal and instrumental ensemble. The vocal line (B.) is in the soprano clef and contains the lyrics: "How I longed to eye dark-passioned clouds, rain o - ver the riv-er. so". The instrumental parts include Percussion (Perc.), Violin I (VI.), Violin II (V2.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Contrabass (CB.). The string parts are marked with dynamics like *mp* and *leggero*. There are also performance markings such as *Cresc.* and a circled 'C' above the vocal line. The score is written on multiple staves with various clefs and time signatures.

Example 4.3 continued.

The Act II.1 conversation occurs *in extremis*: the confrontation with Chancy over Beatrice's love for Lead has occurred; Lustra, bringing food, enters the locked room in which Chancy has incarcerated Beatrice. The repeated occurrences of the tritone and sevenths are striking dissonances — a traditional Western affective use — as Beatrice learns that Lead is alive, although beaten and tortured by Chancy. Lustra's intoning of the terrible story ends on G/F#. Beatrice's anguished cry in response, dropping almost two octaves, ends on D \flat /C, a tritonal relationship with Lustra's phrase. (Example 4.4)

Beatrice Chancy / p. 79

23 **Poco meno mosso**
p *espression*
 Oh, father, who art in heaven, de-liver me from my father... Who's there?
[Enter Lucrezia]

Meno mosso
p Where's Lead? Does my love still breathe? But...
mf

Poco più mosso
 Our master has left a bit of food. Come... eat.
 He breathes yet.
mf

Lu.

Perc. *[Bass Drum]*

Pho. *pp*

Vl. 1. *senza sord.* *p* *mf*

Vl. 2. *senza sord.* *pp* *mf*

Vla. *senza sord.* *pp* *mf*

Vlc. *senza sord.* *pp* *mf*

CB. *pp* *mf* *Pizz.* *p*

Example 4.4 *Beatrice Chancy* Act II.1, mm. 28-41.

Tempo giusto $\text{♩} = 60$

40

rall. A tempo a piacere

with disgust *p*

f God, God ___ hates our planet, and all ___, and all who creep, who creep beneath his gaze! *mf smugly* *f*

Like all mulattas, you speak too hotly!

Perc. $\text{♩} = 60$

Pno. *mf marcato*

V1. *norm.* *mf marcato* *pp*

V2. *norm.* *mf marcato* *pp*

Vla. *norm.* *mf marcato* *pp*

Vlc. *norm.* *mf* *pp*

CB. *mf* Arco

Example 4.4 continued.


Rolfe also uses larger set-pieces to create musical sections that are “raced” in complex ways. Some sections use quotations, commonly identified with ethnic or racialized groups, in ways that might or might not emphasize the association: examples include “The Cherry Tree Carol” which Beatrice sings at the end of Act I.1; the spiritual, “I must walk some lonesome valley,” sung by Deal and Moses at the conclusion of Act I.2; the reels in Act I.2, or the chorus that ends the opera, “Oh Freedom.” There are also extended sections composed in a style that signifies race, such as the ring shout that opens the opera, or the Act I.2 reels. The opera is constructed, in fact, of discreet and contrasting sections that interact musically and are ambiguous in their group signification rather than delineating incontrovertible difference.

Chancy’s entrance in Act I.2 and the description of the feast to celebrate Beatrice’s homecoming is dominated by quotations of two reels and a strathspey:²⁶ “Captain Campbell,” a Scottish/Canadian strathspey from Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island; and the reels, “Colonel McBain,” originally Scottish/Irish, and “*Caber Feidh*,” originally Scottish/Irish/Cape Breton (Act I.2, mm. 52-199, see Example 4.5). Arguably the music “belongs” to Chancy, the white landowner, and his wife Lustra, in as much as the reels can be associated with the main house. However, the scene is constructed in such a way as to render this designation more complex. Chancy and Beatrice in their solos, as well as Deal and Moses representing the collective, for example, all sing text to the quoted reels. Lustra, Deal, Francis, Lead, and Moses answer Beatrice’s greeting with a choral rendition of the “Colonel McBain” reel. This invites multiple interpretations. One leads back to

²⁶ A strathspey is a Scottish dance, slower than a reel.

Rolfe's statement, quoted above, that solo fiddlers at dances were frequently African-American, and recalls Slobin's observations about musical impurity: no single group "owns" the music. (Example 4.5)

Beatrice Chancy / p. 48

52  Alla marcia
(♩ = 120 - 132)

D. *p* *leggiero e staccato*
Ain't gonna give, ain't gon - na give, oh no

F. *f*
My wife, my fa-mi-ly, forget your soft troubles, your pain,
p *leggiero e staccato*
Ain't gonna give, ain't gon - na give, oh no

Le. *p* *leggiero e staccato*
Ain't gonna give, ain't gon - na give, oh no

M. *p* *leggiero e staccato*
Ain't gonna give, ain't gon - na give, oh no

Perc. *p* *leggiero*
[Snare Drum]

Pho. *f*

VI. *f* *leggiero e staccato*
[Strabury: "Captain Campbell"]

V2. *f* *leggiero e staccato*

Vla. *f* *leggiero e staccato*

Vlc. *f* *leggiero e staccato*
(Airo)

CB. *f* *leggiero e staccato*
Pizz.
p *staccato*

Make those fiddles quarrel like gulls, break out steps that stamp like

Example 4.5 Beatrice Chancy Act I.2, mm. 54-117.

Bearrte Chaney, p. 30

69 D

The musical score consists of the following parts and lyrics:

- L.v.** (Vocal): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord.
- D.** (Vocal): *f* Annapolis cheese, Windsor butter, Madeira Portuguese, Adam's Pale Ale, pickled melon, biscuits, chicken, pigtails.
- F.** (Vocal): *f* Here's Grand Pt's witte, Annapolis cheese, Madeira Portuguese, Jamaican dark rum, Adam's Pale Ale, chicken, pigtails.
- L.e.** (Vocal): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord.
- M.** (Vocal): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord.
- Perc.** (Percussion): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord.
- Phos.** (Phonograph): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord.
- V1.** (Violin I): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord.
- V2.** (Violin II): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord.
- Vla.** (Viola): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord.
- Vlc.** (Violoncello): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord. (Arco)
- CB.** (Cello/Bass): *mf* I found my Lord, I found my Lord, my Lord, my Lord. Pizz.

Example 4.5 continued.

Beatrice Chancy / p. 51

77 E

Lu. *mf* Sweet p'la - to vine, sweet

D. *mf* cholecherry pie, a good kick of whisky, Newfie screech, yee-
gaspereaux and clams, wild blueberries, sides of ham, Sweet p'la - to vine, sweet

F. *mf* Grass-hopper setlin' on a sweet p'la - to vine,

L.e. *mf* Sweet p'la - to vine, sweet

M. *mf* sides of ham, black coffee, sweet cream, cholecherry pie, a good kick of whisky, Newfie screech, yee-
oysters, scallops, gaspereaux and clams, with bundles, on or near tin Sweet p'la - to vine, sweet

Perc. *p leggiero*

Pro. *p leggiero*

V1. *p leggiero*

V2. *p leggiero*

V1a *p leggiero*

V1c *p leggiero*

CB. *p leggiero*

Example 4.5 continued.

Beatrice Chaucy / p. 32

84

(Missing Chaucy cuts Lead short. Enter Beatrice.)

D. p' ta - to vine _____

L. Sweet p'la - to vine, sweet p' la - to vine _____ *crescendo*
 An snapped rim off a sweet p' ta - to vine.

M. Tur - key gob - bler snuck up right behin' _____

Perc. p' ta - to vine _____

Pho. Sweet p'la - to vine, sweet p' la - to vine _____

V1. p' ta - to vine _____

V2. _____

Vla. _____

Vlc. _____

CB. _____

Ando

Example 4.5 continued.

Branco Clancy / p. 34

102

B. Our

Lul. ni - la, country He - len, no old - er than six - teen A - prils.

D. ni - la, country Helen, no old - er than six - teen A - prils.

F. I sent you to Ha-li-fax to make you more like us - wise, modern, beautiful.

Le. Our vanilla, country He - len, no old - er than six - teen A - prils.

M. Our va - nilla, country Hel - en, no old - er than six - teen A - prils.

Perc.

Pno.

VI.

V2.

Vla. *f* *leggero*

Vlc. *f* *leggero*

CB *f* *leggero*

Example 4.5 continued.

Beatrice Chancy / p. 55

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The musical score consists of the following parts and lyrics:

- B. (Baritone):** father, Lusera, and all my folk, I love you through and through. If I should miss Hea-ven when I die, this merrily will be my Zi-on.
- Lu. (Lute):** Was ever a lass so lovely as An-na - po - li - sa Be-a - trice?
- D. (Drum):** Was ever a lass so lovely as An-na - po - li - sa Be-a - trice?
- F. (Flute):** Was ever a lass so lovely as An-na - po - li - sa Be-a - trice?
- Le. (Lute):** Was ever a lass so lovely as An-na - po - li - sa Be-a - trice?
- M. (Mandolin):** Was ever a lass so lovely as An-na - po - li - sa Be-a - trice?
- Perc. (Percussion):** (No lyrics)
- Pno. (Piano):** *ritardando e marcato*
- VI. (Violin I):** *ritardando e marcato*
- V2. (Violin II):** *ritardando e marcato*
- Vln. (Viola):** *ritardando e marcato*
- Vlc. (Violoncello):** *ritardando e marcato*
- CB. (Cello):** *ritardando e marcato*

Additional performance markings include *ritardando e marcato* for the strings and *ALCO* for the cello.

Example 4.5 continued.

Another, more disturbing implication is that the fiddle music is a sign of subjugation: Chancy has tyrannical jurisdiction over the house and its society, and all members of the household “dance” to his tune. There is a sense that the fiddle music represents the household as a coherent and oppressive whole, within which individuality is subordinated, and which functions with the relentless inevitability of the regular rhythms and modal closures of the melodies. This is born out by the presentation of the reels in this scene. Rolfe subverts essentialist musical affiliation with race, for example, by composing Chancy’s entrance as a call-response. His call to “Captain Campbell” darkly invokes the dance: “Make those fiddles quarrel like gulls,/ Break out steps that stamp like rain,/ Sing with voices like wine pissing from a fat stomach.”²⁷ He is answered by the Black community whose interspersed text and melody, “Ain’t gonna grieve no mo’/ Ain’t gonna grieve mistuh massa,/ ‘Cos I found my Lord,”²⁸ constitutes the communal response, characterized by a harmonic tritone, melodic minor thirds, and rhythmic unison: raced musical gestures and language of the oppositional group that reassert musical identity. (Example 4.5, mm. 54-73)

Chancy and Beatrice both sing to the reel melodies, Chancy in apparent control and Beatrice in concert with her father, because innocent of his oppressive power. As the scene develops and tension increases, both drop the melody, even as “Colonel McBain” continues in the violins. Similarly, the threatening fable told by Lead, Deal, and Moses, “Grasshopper settin’ on a sweet p’tato vine,/ Turkey gobbler snuck up right behin’/ An’ snapped ‘im off a sweet p’tato vine,” arises out of the collective description of the feast

²⁷ Clarke, Libretto.

²⁸ Ibid.

set to the reel melody, breaks from the reel, shifting the melody to a rising minor to major third. (Example 4.5)

And through the entire scene, the reel melodies continue. They enforce cohesion with virtuosic intensity while creating manic tension. This is born out as the repetitive fiddle patterns of “*Caber Feidh*” careen out of control, lose the original melody, and change the modal set with the addition of $A\flat$ and $B\flat$ when Lustra informs Chancy that Beatrice wants to marry. The harmony through the “*Caber Feidh*” reel emphasizes the tension and increasing violence of the text. The bass enters on the repetition of the reel melody, a rising line in double whole notes: C-D-E-F-F \sharp -G \sharp . C and D, the finals of the melody, harmonize as drones on the melodic root; the E and the F create drones on the thirds. F \sharp and G \sharp , however, occurring as the melody spins into melodic “fiddle” embellishment, are tritones against the melodic roots, and are followed by a cluster chord on $B\flat$ [G \sharp , A, $B\flat$ or 111]. The violins continue, despite increasing dissonance, playing a written-out “improvised” extension of the melody modeled on fiddle patterns. These morph into a rising and insistent figure at m. 191 in piano and violin that is reminiscent of the rising passacaglia figure that accompanies Beatrice’s first statement of extreme fear that foreshadows the violence of the opera (Act I.1, mm. 348).

This entire section has a relentless quality without resolution, created by the fiddle style. The scene concludes after a nine-measure crescendo from *piano* to *fortissimo*, with Beatrice’s *a cappella* lyrical assertion of her love for Lead, “I’ve grown a woman, and do love this man.” Beatrice sustains the highest pitch in the opera, a $b\flat^2$, over four beats on

the word “love”; the entire statement is at the top of the soprano range. Here, the words become increasingly less audible, the statement more akin to a cry.²⁹

The violence and tension of this scene is between groups, the Scottish household and the Black community, and between individuals, Chancy and Beatrice, Chancy and his wife, and more covertly, Lustra and Beatrice, created through musical quotation and stylistic reference. Although the use of style creates narrative opposition and subversion of authority, the attribution of musical styles in the scene and, by extension, in the opera does not reside with a single group. In Kramer’s sense, quotation and composed allusions to racial styles “summon” the listener as musical subject to make direct associations from personal familiarity with these musics: both the reels associated with the house and North American slave song music associated with the Black community. The music then undermines simplistic or singular affiliations, and potentially unsettling audience assumptions. Both styles, and others as well, are composed into the musical fabric of the opera and pass among Chancy and Lustra, and Lead, Deal, Moses and Beatrice. (N.B. Example 4.2 Chancy’s alternating minor thirds framing a tritone, a statement which follows directly from Beatrice’s *a cappella* cry, “I love this man.”) The exchange of musical style within the music of the opera creates a complex musical interchange across race and power, mirroring Slobin’s observations of the “impure” conditions of music in the world.

A final observation further emphasizes the elasticity of the musical quotations and references: musical style has structural implications also. The reels and strathespey, for

²⁹ Michel Poizat, *The Angel’s Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992). Carolyn Abbate discusses the “voice-object” in relation to the Bell Song from Delibes’ *Lakmé*, citing Poizat. Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 10.

example, in addition to the narrative and referential possibilities discussed above, serve formally as limited pitch sets that delineate sub-sections of this extended scene. The call-response form of the ring shout, in that its concertato structure is proto-narrative and potentially agonistic, prefigures another type of integration: a shift from a musical structure signifying race to dramatic structure. The most dramatically integrated appearance of a shout, Beatrice's "Jesus lance down the valley/ Jerusalem, Jerusalem" (Act III.2, mm. 93-150), is only figuratively a ring shout, or at most is ambiguous, while signifying a range of dramatic ends. The *a cappella* chorus that opens the opera (Act I.1, mm.1-104) is another example of a dramatically integrated ring shout. Here, the shout configures the emergence of the dramatic narrative simultaneously with the individuation of the characters and their transformation from performers to the fictional subjects that they will embody throughout the opera.

The text of the opening ring shout presents the metaphor of winter breaking into spring as the coming of freedom, which, in its extension as the argument between religion and revolution, is an allegory in the literal sense of coded speech: religious salvation spoken openly in the public realm (*egorein* [*agora*]) alluding to another meaning (*allos*), political liberation.

Massa Winter be dyin' now —
 Our icy chains'll be no mo'.
 Ain't sweet spring on the horizon?
 Ain't we gonna dwell in Zion?³⁰

This is the substance of the tension that inhabits the shout, and indeed is a vital debate within the Black community within the opera. Tension is accentuated by the concertato

³⁰ Clarke, Libretto.

structure of call-response, or soloist in contrast with chorus. This structure becomes dramatic action when an argument between Lead and Deal develops within the shout. The opening ring shout is divided into three sections, each with a different leader or caller, the Reverend Richard Moses, Lead, then Deal. Each section represents a stage in a progression that unveils the allegory. The allusion is hidden when Moses calls the shout. Significantly, in terms of harmonic voicing and the traditional operatic character designations for the bass voice,³¹ Moses is a bass. When Lead, a baritone, assumes the call, he improvises text on the idea of freedom using explicitly violent imagery and Biblical stories whose connection to political insurrection is direct.

Lead: One of these days
 When the moon's like blood,
 And the stars go dark,
 We gonna be free —
 Gotta be free —
 Brother, sisters,
 Sisters, brothers:
 Free like Moses,
 Free like David.
 If we kill Pharaoh,
 If we kill Goliath,
 Gonna be free.³²

Deal appropriates the call, in contest with Lead, taking it into the soprano register c² to g² and reasserting the allegory. Although the high register of the call suggests Deal's intention and assertion, the stage-note in the score leaves no doubt of the intended meaning: "Lead is miffed at Deal taking the spotlight; he makes his asides ever more

³¹ The bass voice was traditionally assigned to a comic figure or to a figure representing central authority – a patriarch. The many examples include Sarastro, the high priest in *Die Zauberflöte*; the king of Egypt and Ramfis, the high priest in *Aida*; Zaccaria, the high priest of the Hebrews in *Nabucco*; Lodovico, the Venetian ambassador in *Otello*; Don Pédro, president of the Royal council or the Grand Inquisitor of Lisbon in *L'Africaine*; or Arkel, king of Allemonde in *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

³² Clarke, Libretto.

pointedly.”³³ Musical decisions underlie the shift from musical style to dramatic contestation. One is the introduction of percussion. Moses’ call is *a cappella*. The percussionist enters with Lead, instructed to “[incorporate] some of the shouters’ hand and foot patterns into a polyrhythm.”³⁴ When Deal asserts the call, the percussionist increases the complexity and the assertion of race: “Percussionist’s groove is now more funky, African, overtly polyrhythmic.”³⁵ (Example 4.6)

³³ Rolfe, *Beatrice Chancy*, score, 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

Individuated characters emerge as does the diegesis of the opera from within the opening shout, the process of individuation following the trajectory of the emergence of dramatic conflict. All of the characters of the opera sing and dance the opening shout, and in both the live performance and the performance televised by the Canadian Broadcast Corporation, the musicians join in as well, a performance option not indicated in the score. The singers and the musicians of the orchestra form a response chorus or slave group. Not yet individuated into the characters they will become in the drama, their role is collective and performative. Moses is possibly the exception, in that his performance is compatible with his diegetic role.

The other performers either disappear from the scene as it progresses — musicians, Beatrice, Lustra, and Francis Chancy — or emerge into character — first Lead, then Deal. The contested political allegory of liberation of the ring shout is embodied by Lead and Deal as an argument between characters. Lead emerges first from the ensemble and shifts the veiled allegory to literal reference to insurrection and violent revolution. Deal attempts to return signification to metaphoric speech, as if in competition with Lead, placing faith in “Almighty God who rents us breath.” Lead adds a bitter conclusion to Deal’s words, “he can stop mine right now,” stopping the ring shout and forcing the chorus to step into character. (Example 4.6)

Deal: Praise the Lord!
 Don’t contradict
 Almighty God —
 His power and his glory!

Lead: (Aside) [spoken] Power? We ain’t got no power.

Deal: The slayer of evil —
 Almighty God

Who rents us breath ...

Lead: He can stop mine right now:
 This here ain't no life —
 We crawl around in shit
 Like white maggots,
 Smilin' as they whip us,
 Laughin' as our flesh bleeds!³⁶

Pitch structure follows this process of gradually entering into the diegesis of the opera by means of the structure of the ring shout. It is significant that Lead stops the ring shout on a D. All three sections of the opening ring shout, in C mixolydian (or, with the added flat third E \flat , C dorian) have functioned as a limited pitch set (C,E,E \flat ,F,G,A,B \flat) with the second degree of these modes absent. When Lead re-enters on D (Act I. 1, m. 104), it is the first time that the pitch is heard in the opera. His entire ensuing speech, explicating the conditions of slavery and the impotence of prayer in face of oppression, is set as a melodic elaboration of the pitch of D with octave displacements. The shock of Lead's outburst on d¹, relatively high in his range, is overdetermined: it brings the shout to a sudden halt and introduces a pitch that has not yet been heard in the opera. In a sense, the narrative begins at this moment, when the singers assume their characters in the drama, and the shout grinds to a halt on D, the predominant or organizing pitch of the opera.

The second shout, with Beatrice's violent call, "Jesus lance down the valley," (Act III.2, mm. 93-150), is one of the two scenes in the opera that takes place exclusively within the Black community. (The other is Act II.2. As well, a case could be made that the long first scene of Act I divides dramatically into three: the opening ring shout and the duet that concludes the scene also take place within the Black community; the

³⁶ Clarke, Libretto.

entrance of Lustra, the mistress of the house, forms the intervening second “scene” within the scene.) Deal has returned to tell Lead and Moses of Beatrice’s rape, and Deal and Lead sing together about their oppression: “The white man’s heaven is a black man’s hell!” Beatrice enters, as the score instructs, “singing, stomping feet and clapping hands as in Act I, scene 1.”³⁷ Lead, Deal and Moses punctuate her song with the response “Jerusalem.” Here, perhaps more pointedly than in Act I, the ring shout evolves from a musical to a dramatic structure. Beatrice’s call begins as veiled religious speech, a plea to Jesus for salvation; however, as she recites the increasing horror of her real oppression, the illusion of religious speech ruptures.

Beatrice: Jesus lance down the valley,
 Lest the white man sell me,
 For a sack of potatoes,
 Prevent me to marry lord,
 Steal me from Nova Scotia,
 Slay me that awful day,
 Slay me that awful day.

At this point, there is a shift in meaning. What pours forth is not the other term of the religion-revolution allegory. Rather, Beatrice, in a vision of deicide, makes a commitment to violent action. (Example 4.7)

Beatrice: I saw Jesus,
 I saw the Lord.
 He was standing there,
 The pale corpse.
 I killed Jesus,
 I stabbed him,
 All bloody and red.
 I stabbed Jesus —
 Again and again and again ...³⁸

³⁷ Rolfe, *Beatrice Chancy*, score, 146.

³⁸ Clarke, Libretto.

This ring shout is also important to the dramatic narrative. Unlike the Act I shout, Beatrice, Lead, Deal, and Moses begin and remain in character. This is the moment in the dramatic narrative when Beatrice, through her participation in the ring shout, assumes a raced body through music and dance, and establishes her identification as Black. Further, within the shout, the other characters establish their relationships to Beatrice that will continue through the remainder of the opera, the murder of Francis Chancy, the murder of Lead by soldiers, and the execution of Lustra and Beatrice.

The musical structure of the shout is exploited for dramatic effect. At the outset, the caller and the chorus alternate every two measures, in a manner analogous to the Act I shout. When Beatrice sings the second stanza, “I had a dream,” however, the alternation increases to single measures. The music embodies the mood and action, portraying Beatrice’s possession, swept away by the increasing intensity and urgency of her emotions, as she is also immersed in the group shout. As her words slip further into sacrilege, first Moses, then Deal drop out, until only Lead sings the responses to the end, when the shout collapses as Beatrice drops the narrative with the words “again and again and again ...” The stage direction in the score says that “Moses steps back in shock and disapproval,” then “Deal steps aside.” Lead voiced a parallel dream in Act II.2:

Lead:	I had a dream of vengeance, A black man with an axe, cleaving White bodies in God’s name. Soon, soon, a black army will march — And cut and stab and burn — And make white Nova Scotia howl.
-------	---

It is Lead who joins Beatrice in her commitment to kill Francis Chancy. (Example 4.7)

Beatrice Chancy / p. 149

139

B. I killed Jesus I stabbed Jesus all bloody and red I stabbed him I stabbed him again and again and again

D. Je - ru - sa - lem! Je - ru - sa - lem! Je - ru - sa - lem! Je - ru - sa - lem!

Le. Je - ru - sa - lem! Je - ru - sa - lem! Je - ru - sa - lem! Je - ru - sa - lem!

M. Je - ru - sa - lem! Je - ru - sa - lem! Je - ru - sa - lem! Je - ru - sa - lem!

(Deaf steps aside)

(Moses steps aside in shock and disapproval)

(Deaf steps aside)

Example 4.7 *Beatrice Chancy* Act III.2, mm.139-159.
 “Jesus lance me down the valley.”

Beatrice Chancy / p. 150

150

[F]

B. Strength doesn't come from surten - der. Strength doesn't come, it doesn't come, it never (or
and again and a - ...

D. You bes' knows what you doin'. You bes' knows what you doin'. in!' You bes' knows what you doin', what you doin',

Le. He must die! He must die! He must die! He must die!

M. Mur-der's a sin! Mur-der's a crime! Bow down to God! Bow down to God! I'll stab him! I'll stab him! I'll stab him! I'll stab him! He must die! He must die! you're too proud, you're too pro

Example 4.7 continued.

The ring shout transforms from a musical structure signifying race to a dramatic device complicated by the racial association. Chancy's entrance in the feast scene, Act I.2, for example, is a call-response (see Example 4.5), here an assertion of his authority as he assumes the position of leader of the call, yet at least in part transfigured by the association of the call with the Black community. Like the reels and melodic/harmonic references to North American slave music, then, the ring shout is a complex signifier: as a summons to race and as formal device, as associated with specific characters and used by a character outside the referenced racial group.

Finally, the other styles of the opera add to the field of significations and to the ambiguity of raced musics. Clear racial opposition created through music is continuously denied or undermined. The heterophonic duet between Deal and Moses that closes Act I, "I must walk my lonesome valley," a quotation, is a pentatonic melody that could be either African or Euro-American. The addition of the solo violin obligato and conclusion alludes to Rolfe's supposition of African-Canadian solo fiddlers, and to the complexity that music maintains in relation to cultural boundaries, which in practice it continually crosses. (Example 4.8)

Benincè Chansy / p. 76

370 **Poco più mosso**
♩ = 50 - 58

D. *for*
M. *me, I got to walk it for myself.*
VI. *sp*
Perc. *Play highest windchimes and triangles sparsely, softly... ppp*

382 **ATTACCA**
VI. *sp*
Perc. *...fade out gently, letting ring...*

Example 4.8 continued.

There are many examples of the slave group singing music in what might be considered Euro-American style: the English ballad, “The Cherry Tree Carol,” which Beatrice sings at the end of Act I.1, is an example, as are the contrapuntal choruses such as the madrigal-like imitative entry of “How can we love” (Act I.1, mm. 190), the heterophonic and imitative chorus, “I was black but comely” (Act III.1, mm. 4), and the quodlibet-like chorus in Act IV, “Air will sour/No more auction block for me/Every bit of evil on this earth” (Act IV, mm. 301 fwd.). At the conclusion of the opera, this chorus uses all of the performers who move ambiguously in and out of their individuated characters. The performer singing Lead, for example, sings in this chorus although the character Lead died earlier in Act IV. Francis Chancy, conversely, steps back into character posthumously to sing an impassioned line stating his love for Beatrice, “Ah, Beatrice, if I had to destroy this whole world to let you live, to let love live, I’d do it!” mirroring the exact words and paraphrasing the melody that Beatrice sang to Lead immediately before the chorus. Francis’s love for his daughter, blighted by incestuous desire, is the terrible irony of the opera, evidence of the perversion of love in a context of violent oppression.

There are also references to historical operatic style in Lustra’s melismatic word painting in her Act IV.1 aria, “I’m not myself but a stranger” and in Beatrice’s aria in Act II.1 as she describes her mother, “My sufferings sue my mother’s, who worked her gold flesh to white bone, whose sweat nourished these orchards, whose apples flourished upon her pain.”³⁹ Rolfe composes long melismas, baroque in virtuosic sensibility, on “flourished” and “pain.” The melisma itself is a “flourish” on the melody, and these

³⁹ Clarke, Libretto.

accentuate the irony that would pair “flourish” and “pain”. The melisma on “pain” is a long vocalization of anguish descending two octaves from $b\flat^2$ to $b\flat^4$. (Example 4.9)

whose apples flour -
u - pon her pain,

Beatrice Chancy / p. 87

101
B. whose apples flour -
rished u - pon her pain
Lu.
rit. m

Example 4.9 *Beatrice Chancy* Act II.1, mm. 96-107.
Beatrice's aria, "My sufferings sue my mother's."

These last stylistic references, to Opera itself, bring the operatic frame into a self-reflexive and critical perspective. This disrupts a “neutral” ground that could be interpreted as representing no style at all, yet, in fact, is the language of Euro-American art music, signifying universality. Opera with its history is brought to the foreground to contribute with the other stylistic examples to the integration of the field of references. The integration is constant throughout the score, creating a protean musical context that presents identity and racial groups in intimate relationship with each other, and that actively participates in constructing the drama.

Colonizing the West: *Louis Riel*

Louis Riel tells the story of Riel's leadership of the Métis people and Métis resistance to Canadian expansion. It is set in the period 1869 to 1885, from shortly after Canadian confederation through the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway a decade and a half later. The operatic story begins in 1869 with the unsuccessful attempt of William McDougall, appointed by the Canadian government in Ottawa as the governor of Rupert's Land, to enter the territory. It follows historical events through different geographical locations: the Red River settlement of Fort Garry, Ottawa, Toronto, the mission at Sun River in Montana where Riel lived through part of his exile, a church in Frog Lake, Saskatchewan, and a courtroom in Regina. The central tension concerns the accession of Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories into the newly formed Canadian federation, and the sovereign rights of the Métis and the Indigenous peoples, who are rendered indistinguishable in the opera. Louis Riel is the visionary leader who champions these rights and imagines a society characterized by diversity and religious tolerance.

I believe I have a mission. /When I came the Indian starve.
 The Métis have no rights, no laws: /and now they live like men! We all
 see into the future more or less: /and I say humbly, through God's grace
 I am the prophet of this New World! /What are these mad ideas of mine?
 Only that human beings have rights. /We are not birds: we walk the
 ground! /We do not fly when the giants come.

As for religion am I insane /to quit a church dividing man from man?
 When I am dead my children's child /will shake hands with Protestants —
 French and English side by side.⁴⁰

Riel's nemesis in the opera is Sir John A. MacDonald, also a visionary, dedicated to a Canadian federation spanning the continent, and a pragmatist for whom the end is

⁴⁰ Mavor Moore, Libretto of *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Centrediscs, CBC Enterprises, 1975), 30.

sufficient justification for political manoeuvring. Although Riel and MacDonald are oppositional in both the narrative and the music, a parallel is drawn between the intensity of the commitment that each holds for his cause. At different points in the opera, each sings the identical text, MacDonald's statement a melodic inversion of Riel's,⁴¹ "I cannot let one foolish man stand in the way of a whole nation!"⁴² as justification for executions: Thomas Scott by the Métis under Riel, and Riel by the Canadian justice system. The opera ends in November of 1885 with the execution of Riel.

Somers, in the notes to the 1975 recording, described the opera as "a multi-level composition"⁴³ constructed from musical styles that include "original folk material," "abstract, atonal writing" for orchestra, "straight diatonic writing," and "the constant juxtaposition of all of these various things."⁴⁴ As well, the opera includes electronically produced sounds and prerecorded music disseminated into the theatre by loudspeakers, which, according to Somers, should ideally be positioned around the audience.⁴⁵ Multi-levels and the juxtaposition of different music is the defining feature of the opera. It is in these terms that Somers describes the operation of each compositional style. Borrowed musical material, for example, is used in a traditional manner as ordinary melodic material that recurs throughout the score in different musical contexts. The atonal orchestral writing, according to Somers, creates a "platform of orchestral sound on top of which the singing is entirely apart. They might, for example, be quite dramatically intense in their singing whereas the orchestra might be very quiet, sustained with the odd

⁴¹ The score gives the performer the option, however, of inverting MacDonald's statement: "Alternative is inverse: low to high." Score of *Louis Riel*, Act IV, vol. V, 595.

⁴² Mavor Moore, Libretto, 22 and 31.

⁴³ Harry Somers, Notes to *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Centrediscs, CBC Enterprises, 1975), 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

rumble of drums.”⁴⁶ As Brian Cherney points out in his study of *Louis Riel*, the orchestral writing “is Somers’ own style as evidenced in the orchestral works of the early sixties.”⁴⁷

Somers uses these musical styles to represent race and group affiliation in the opera: Métis and Indigenous peoples of the West and the Anglo-Protestant society of Ontario. Modal and tonal music associated in the opera with Métis and Aboriginal culture and society⁴⁸ includes the quotation of “Les tribulations d’un Roi Malheureux,” a song about MacDougall’s unsuccessful attempt to enter Rupert’s Land during the Métis resistance of 1869, with text by the Métis musician Pierre Falcon (1793-1876) to an air “The Wandering Jew”;⁴⁹ “The Buffalo Hunt,” a song about Métis life, whose text appears in a novel by Agnes Laut, *Lords of the North* (1900), although attributed to Pierre Falcon, set to a melody “Cecelia” by Jean Klinck; and a third song that Anglo-Protestant settlers sang as they marched towards Upper Fort Garry to retake it from Riel and the Métis in 1870, “The Marching Song,” “Riel sits in his chamber o’ state” with words by A. H. Morton to a traditional Scottish air, “Johnny Cope.”⁵⁰ There is ironical ambiguity in the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Brian Cherney, *Harry Somers Canadian Composers I* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 133.

⁴⁸ Andrew Zinck, in his study of the narratives of Somers’ operas, argues that Somers constructs a “modal/tonal opposition” in *Louis Riel* between the music of the West and the East. Although this is debatable, certainly, as Zinck also points out, Somers’ treatment of the quotations of both racial groups intensifies the differentiation. Zinck states, for example, regarding the D major rendition of “Cécélia” the melodic attribution for “The Buffalo Hunt,” quoted by Somers (Act II.6), “The original key of D major is abandoned by Somers for the modal setting which, in combination with a new, additive metrical organization, enhances the ‘primitive’ atmosphere evoked in the dance in the opera.” (125) The phrygian mode on A, Zinck’s attribution for Somers’ handling of the tune, is evoked only through the final, which is also the only pitch changed from the original; it is at least ambiguously an F major setting with a final on the third degree of the scale. His point, however, about the musical context is well taken. The rhythmic organization created through metrical shifts between 3/8, 5/8 and 7/8, accentuated by hand clapping unsettles the regular 6/8 of the original. However, as this additive and subtractive rhythm is an advanced modernist compositional technique, whether it is heard as a representation of an exotic Other (“‘primitive’ atmosphere”) depends on the context of the opera and needs further analysis. The argument can also be made that neither “Hano,” nor “Misfortunes of an Unlucky King” are modal.

Andrew Michael Zinck, “Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1996), 125.

⁴⁹ Margaret Arnett MacLeod, ed., *Songs of Old Manitoba* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1959), 19.

⁵⁰ All three songs are printed with commentary in MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba*.

use of “The Marching Song” in that, within the opera, it signifies Métis. A fourth quotation, a Tsimshian song, which in the source version establishes tonal centers around f^1 and b^1 through repetition within the intervallic frame e^1 to d^2 , becomes the atonal, virtuosic aria-lullaby, “Hano,” sung by Marguerite at the beginning of Act III. Tonal music associated with Anglo-Protestant Ontario includes the quotation from John Coulter’s play *Riel*, “We’ll hang him up the river with a ya ya ya.”⁵¹ In addition to the quotations, however, the score has musical references to race composed by Somers. These include the first of the two buffalo dances that open Act II.6, the tonal patriotic hymn of the Orangemen, and the saccharine Victorian parlour waltz, both in Act II.4.

Métis

“Est-il rien sur la terre” (“Les tribulations d’un Roi malheureux”) (Act I.2 and Act II.2)

“Now list to the song of the buffalo hunt” (Act II.6) (attribution)

Aboriginal

Tsimshian song “Hano” (Act III.1)

March reputedly sung by the English-speaking settlers in 1870 marching on Upper Fort Garry: Scottish Air and parodied words

“Riel sits in his chamber o’ state” (Introduction and Postlude)

From John Coulter’s play *Riel*

“We’ll hang him up the river with a ya, ya, ya” (Act II.4, II.6 and Act III)

Figure 4.2: Musical Quotations in *Louis Riel* as designated by source

⁵¹ Cherney notes that the melody was “notated by Dr. Healey Willan from a version Coulter recalled from his youth in Ireland.” Cherney, 135.

Underlined text = the West, associated with Métis and Indigenous peoples
Italics = Ontario, Oranngemen, Ottawa, and Sir John A. MacDonald
 Plain text = not discernible as representing race
 * = quotation or reference to the original statement of a quotation

Act I	
Introduction	* <u>Modal melody, "Riel sits in his chamber o' state," on tape</u>
Scene 1 U.S.-Canadian Border, south of Fort Garry, 1869	Atonal <u>Métis-Atonal</u> <u>Métis chorus, "À bas le Canada d'Ottawa"</u>
Scene 2 Fort Garry, Red River Headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company	* <u>Interlude and introduction: opening melody</u> Atonal <u>Métis chorus, "Riel a raison"</u> <u>Riel's aria, "Au milieu de la foule"</u> * <u>Métis chorus, "Est-il rien sur la terre" ("Les tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux")</u>
Scene 3 The Prime Minister's office, Ottawa	<i>Atonal "vaudeville"</i> <i>MacDonald's theme</i> <i>MacDonald's Sugar aria</i>
Scene 4 The House of Julie Riel	<u>Introduction (references flute from Riel's aria I.2)</u> <u>*Julie's aria references the opening melody</u> <u>Riel's aria, "Je vous aime, Seigneur"</u>
Act II	
Scene 1 The Prime Minister's office, Ottawa	<i>Atonal vaudeville "Sir John slightly high"⁵²</i> <i>MacDonald's theme</i>
Scene 2 Fort Garry Trial of Thomas Scott	<u>Métis-Atonal</u> <u>*Métis chorus, "Est-il rien sur la terre"</u>
Scene 3 Fort Garry, on the day of Scott's execution	* <u>Opening melody</u> <u>Métis-Atonal</u> Atonal
Scene 4 The railway depot in Toronto. Schultz and Mair arouse a crowd.	<i>Tonal on-stage band: "Ontario Gothic"⁵³</i> <i>*"We'll hang him up the river"</i> <i>Victorian musical hall waltz</i>
Scene 5 The Prime Minister's office, Ottawa	<i>Atonal Ottawa</i> <i>"That will save the day"</i>
Scene 6 The Courtyard, Fort Garry	<u>Diatonic Buffalo dance 1</u> <u>*Tonal Dance 2 "Now list to the song"</u> <u>*Off-stage chorus, "We'll hang him up the river"</u>

Figure 4.3 Distribution of Place and Musical Representation of Race in *Louis Riel*

⁵² Somers' designation, cited in Cherney, 138.

⁵³ Somers' designation, cited in Zinck, 126.

Act III	
Scene 1 Riel's house in Sun River, Montana, 1880	*Atonal Marguerite's lullaby "Hano" <u>Métis-Atonal quintet</u>
Scene 2 The Prime Minister's office, Ottawa	Atonal "Ottawa"
Scene 3 Church in Frog Lake, Saskatchewan, 1885	<u>Diatonic: liturgical music, Catholic and French Métis-Atonal</u> Riel's aria, "L'esprit qui me guide" based on "Hano" <u>Atonal Chorus, "Riel avait raison" (references chorus I.1)</u>
Battle	Atonal with tape
Scene 4 The courtroom in Regina	Atonal Diatonic chorus and conversation
Scene 5 Riel's cell	<u>Métis-Atonal</u> *Julie references the opening melody
Scene 6 The courtroom in Regina	Atonal <u>Riel's self-defense</u> *Tonal Chorus, "We'll hang him" (bridge between scenes)
Scene 7 A street in Ottawa and a square in Regina	Atonal <u>Métis chorus: "Riel" (recapitulation of the III.3 chorus)</u> *Final flute statement of the opening melody

Figure 4.3 continued

Whereas in *Beatrice Chancy* musical style and quotation are the substance of the music, in *Louis Riel*, references and quotations are contained within a unifying and flexible atonality. Somers also adapts borrowed material to his own compositional style and need, even as it remains profiled within the encompassing atonal context. As Somers says about quotations in the score, "[T]here's original folk material, which I think is quite beautiful. I made it indigenous to the whole work, so that certain themes and tunes keep recurring, taking on different shapes according to the way the events progress. A simple

tune at the outset, for example, has another color and kind of signification later.”⁵⁴ There are few sections of the work that are not either atonal in themselves, or layered with the atonal orchestra: the opening and concluding modal melody “Riel went up to his chamber o’ state” performed by a taped unaccompanied voice and solo flute respectively is one such example; the others are the on-stage band which performs Somers’ patriotic anthem of the Ontario Orangemen, Act II.4, “Canada first! Canada is British!,” the buffalo dances that open Act II.6, and the singing of the liturgy that begins the scene in the church in Frog Lake, Saskatchewan, Act III.3.

Although Somers consulted historical sources in order to represent group identity and race through music, he composed few passages requiring performance practice that ranges beyond Western classical or operatic style. Non-traditional performance practice in *Louis Riel* derives from avant-garde composition of the sixties, or more specifically, Somers’ own musical explorations of this period, such as extended vocal technique evident in the *sprechgesang* and virtuosic demands of Marguerite’s aria “Hano,” Act III.1, aleatoric passages requiring differing degrees of improvisation, and performance with tape. In this, *Louis Riel* differs from *Beatrice Chancy*, in which non-classical performance styles were required of the musicians and singers in the performance of fiddle music or the ring shout. In the first production, one of the singers, Lisa Lindo (Deal) used a non-operatic voice. There are, however, exceptions in *Louis Riel* where performance is non-operatic. One is the haunting solo voice played over loudspeakers at the opening of the work, with its microtonal inflection and ornamentation. The performance of this music requires an extended vocal technique similar to that found in

⁵⁴ Somers, Notes to the *Louis Riel*, 9. Emphasis mine.

Riel's arias and in "Hano." In addition, however, the voice is non-operatic and enters the theatre through loudspeakers, separated from the world of the opera through technological mediation. Another is the satirical presentation of Victorian society in the crowd scene, Act II.4. Here Somers requires poor, amateur performance, with the instruction in the score for a band on the stage to "play badly: bad intonation, flabby tone, soggy reeds, etc.," and for the chorus to perform with "always someone getting out of tune, and one monotone." Later in the scene, when Dr. John Schultz, a leader of the Canadian group in the Red River settlement, directs his hypocritical speech to the crowd, the instruction to the singer is "Voice at times melodramatic lieder, at times declamatory grand opera." (Example 4.10)

Voice at times melodramatic lieder,
at times declamatory grand opera.

[4] Sufficient tempo to keep it moving. Vocal needs will determine.

Sch. *p*
we have come on a grim pil-grim-age: no less than an-

[4]

Ctr.
Corn.
Tuba *p*

Sch.
Ch. *p*
oth-er ho-ly cru-sade to res-cue yet an-oth-er land from sav-ages..... and no less sav-age un-der the
[Cheer]

Ctr.
Corn.
T.

Example 4.10 *Louis Riel* Act II.4.
Ontario Gothic

The image displays a musical score for a scene, continuing from Example 4.10. It features five staves: Soprano (Sob.), Chorus (Ch.), Clarinet (Cl.), Cor Anglais (Cor.), and Trombone (T.). The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The Soprano part has lyrics: "mask of the Pope and Am-er-i-can re-pub-lican-i-sm! Our cause has". The Chorus part has the instruction "[response: Cheers]". The Clarinet part has lyrics: "now a mar-tyr: Thom-as Scott!". The Cor Anglais part has lyrics: "Thom-as Scott was for his". The Trombone part has lyrics: "mur-dered". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Example 4.10 continued.

These musical elements coalesce in a work that is at once musically brilliant and troubling in its interpretation of the history of the Northwest resistance, an opera that is itself a marker of the attitudes and politics of the historical moment of its creation at the centennial of Canadian confederation. It is sympathetic to Riel and the cause of the Manitoba Métis partly at the expense of MacDonald, who is portrayed in broad, satirical strokes, as are the bigoted Ontarian citizens. The representation and diffusion of difference in the work is further reflected in the multilingual libretto, written in English, in French with the collaboration of Jacques Languirand, and in Cree in Marguerite's scene (Act III.1), with the addition of the Latin of the church scene (Act III.3). Yet the representation of Riel as the isolated tragic hero of the opera elides Métis social

organization and government, culture, and history. The Indigenous peoples such as the Cree and the Blackfoot appear as extensions of the Métis, and ultimately, the opera presents a primitivist history of both Métis and the Indigenous peoples of the prairies that parallels its musical primitivism.

Certainly, the opera is a site of interchange of different musics dispersed throughout the score as signifying sections. Somers composed the musical representations — of race, location, or historical commercial culture, for example — such that they emerge as sonic “figures” in the atonal orchestral “ground” of the whole.⁵⁵ Difference in the music is represented as equivalent terms within that ground, their interpretations determined by musical presentation and the dramatic context. Further, the atonal orchestral sections, separated from the musical representations of the many musical subjects — in Kramer’s sense — of the opera, functions metaphorically as another term, a narrator’s voice within which quotations or referential inflections occur.

The geography of *Louis Riel* extends across the continent, in contrast with the exploration in *Beatrice Chancy* of the micro-society of a Maritime household. As Andrew Zinck points out in his important study of Somers’ operas, the narrative of the opera is predicated on geography:⁵⁶ the “West” (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Montana), and the “East” (Ontario and Quebec). However, the alignment of Quebec with Riel and the fact of the Métis community as French speaking and Catholic together prevent a simple geographical divide. The opera also does not present a simple binarism between western Métis/Aboriginal and eastern Anglo-Protestants with the musical representation

⁵⁵ For discussion and analysis of Somers’ orchestral style and its derivations from his orchestral works of the early sixties such as *Stereophony*, see Cherney, 137 fwd; for discussion of serialism in *Louis Riel*, see Zinck, 118 fwd.

⁵⁶ Zinck, 120.

of the West placed in the position of primitive, exotic Other to the “normalcy” of the “traditional” tonality of the East. The satirical representations of southern Ontario and Ottawa cannot uphold the “normal” and “universal” term of the binarism.

Ontario, for example, is not represented through allusion to an essential musical culture but through the representation of period popular music. The music of Act II.4, a caricature through musical allusions to Victorian society and popular music culture, is itself “exotic” in the atonal musical world of the opera, in contrast with the musical gestures and quotations that represent Métis/Aboriginal, which Somers has integrated into the atonal ground. As well, the mob scenes peopled by English Canadians in Act II.4 and during the Riel’s trial, Act III.6, are replete with the potential for violence, the trial scene devolving into mass hysteria. The Act II.4 scene of Ontario’s response to the resistance and the death of Scott is more precisely a parodic depiction of nineteenth-century popular culture: Euro-American, hegemonic, and urban. Somers designated the march of the Orangemen, for example, as “Ontario Gothic,”⁵⁷ a term that appropriately describes the entire scene. The march functions as a patriotic anthem with text naming the Other, the French, and asserting Canada as British. The Victorian waltz underscores John Schultz’s speech, which presents the ideology of empire, “another holy crusade to rescue yet another land from savages,” while again asserting identity against the Other: savages, the Pope, and American republicanism.⁵⁸ There is a purposeful irony in the contrast between the violent rhetoric of Schultz’s distorted description of Thomas Scott’s “martyrdom” and the Victorian parlour waltz played by the cornet in the band on the stage. (Example 4.10)

⁵⁷ Ibid., 126.

⁵⁸ Moore, 23.

The march and the waltz organize race as well as group identity and ideology. The extent of Somers' understanding of the potential danger of group identity is evident in the last tune of the scene as chorus and band march off the stage, singing the musical quotation "We'll hang him up the river." The unquestioning allegiance of the crowd to an organizing culture, powerfully depicted by music, through which it marks its distinction, and its capitulation to Schultz's rhetoric, are proto-fascist. "We'll hang him up the river" appears in the West, traveling with the soldiers to Fort Garry (II.6), and again among the voices at Riel's trial in Regina, demanding his execution (Act III.6-7).⁵⁹ In both instances there is the same menacing sense of group identification beyond reason or empathy. In his commentary on the opera, Somers describes the nightmarish scenario he envisioned for Riel's trial:

And in the Trial Scene, I want to achieve something Kafka-ish rather than literal: the prosecuted man who really doesn't understand the frame of reference he's in. I want voices from the [loud]speakers, sometimes totally distorted, to sound various statements and accusations, while Riel keeps trying to sing over and through them to make his statement.⁶⁰

In the end, Somers gave the menacing interjections to the chorus rather than using prerecorded music disseminated by loudspeakers. The "Kafka-ish" courtroom scene of Act III.4 culminates in "We'll hang him up the river" at the end of III.6, when the Canadian court sentences Riel to death. Song becomes a directive to action.

The music associated with the Métis also depicts instances of group identity, although in contrast to the identity within the Anglo-Protestantism of Ontario, group identity amongst the Métis is neither negative nor caricatured. The buffalo dances in Act II.6, the

⁵⁹ An important discussion of Louis Riel and the critique of Canadian nationalism is in Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, "Imagined Communities: Postnational Canadian Opera," in Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin, eds., *The Work of Opera*, 235-252.

⁶⁰ Somers, Notes to *Louis Riel*, 9.

mass sung in the church at Frog Lake in Act III.3, or the carousing rendition of Pierre Falcon's song about McDougall, "Les tribulation d'un Roi Malheureux" sung by Métis men in Acts I.2 and II.2, have none of the sinister associations that Somers gives to the depiction of "Ontario Gothic." The organic society of the Métis, as presented in the opera, is structured to contain the chaos and threat brought by human behavior and the elements. In this context, music that identifies the group is also integrated with the collective activity of Métis life. The single, highly significant instance where the injustice of Métis social organization is depicted, is in the trial of Thomas Scott, a parallel to the unjust trial of Riel himself.⁶¹ The second chorus of "Les tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux" immediately follows the trial. Prerecorded and played off-stage, it ends the scene. The audience hears for a second time the rousing song of Métis solidarity that tells the story of MacDougall with *esprit de corps* and amusement, this time through Scott's death sentence.

In addition to the representation of differences in the opera through quotation or composed sections, Somers has inflected the atonal "ground" of the opera to represent individual and racial identity. What Somers called the "abstract, atonal writing" of the orchestra presents three intentional designations: neutral atonal material such as the fortissimo cluster chords and tape at the beginning of the opera; gestural choices within an atonal context in the Western scenes to signify Métis and Aboriginal individuals and society, creating a musical context, a "Métis-atonal"; and similarly in the Ottawa scenes, gestural choices alluding to a milieu of popular Victorian culture that present a satirical depiction of Sir John A. MacDonald.

⁶¹ A full description of the parallel between the two trials is in Cherney, 131.

In his study of *Louis Riel*, Zinck describes a “Native-inspired ‘layer’” of music within the opera which includes “numerous grace-note ornaments and *glissandi*”⁶² in reference to his observations of the changes that Somers made to the opening melody, the march “Riel sits in his chamber.” Indeed, throughout the opera Somers develops a set of musical gestures including melodic, rhythmic and timbral choices that become conventionalized as representative of Aboriginal or Métis music or signifying Aboriginal/Métis. An example at the beginning of the opera is the “neutral” atonal music of Act I which follows the taped Introduction. This section contains sustained cluster chords in the strings and pitched percussion, punctuated by nine- and twelve-note cluster chords in brass, winds and piano, then additive cluster chords with staggered entrances throughout the orchestra. Within this musical context, the tape returns, playing a chorus, which sings a second stanza of the opening melody:

O hey, Riel are ye wakin' yet?
 Or are yer drums a-beatin' yet?
 If ye're nae wakin', we'll nae wait
 For we'll take the fort this mornin'!⁶³

The tape and cluster chords end in a *decrescendo*, preparing the “Métis-atonal” section, although the change is still abrupt. The ensuing “Métis” section contains, characteristically, predominant percussion (with a characteristic rhythm of straight thirty-second notes in two to four impulse groups), predominant flute and piccolo, and the appoggiatura-like flourish, which occurs throughout the score. (Example 4.11)

⁶² Zinck, 128.

⁶³ Moore, Libretto to *Louis Riel*, 17, quoted from A.H. Murray, “The Marching Song,” *Songs of Old Manitoba*, 50.

17.

FIGG. Don't worry about exact time values. Play figures as a fast series of notes.

Flu.

[All dynamics will be relative to acoustics and size of hall.]

Timp.

Perc.

ELEC. [VIDE] [TAM TAM]

Hp.

Vlns. 1 2

Example 4.11 *Louis Riel* Act I.1.

The Minnesota border south of Fort Garry immediately prior to the entrance of MacDougall and his coterie. "The stillness of a prairie winter night."

18.

The musical score is arranged in a system with the following parts and markings:

- Picc:** Piccolo part with a melodic line starting in the third measure, marked *p*.
- Tpt. 1:** Trumpet 1 part with a long note in the third measure, marked *pp*, *f*, and *pp*. A box labeled "HARMON MUTE" is placed above the staff.
- Timp:** Timpani part with a melodic line in the first two measures, marked *pp* and *ppp*.
- Perc.:** Percussion part with various rhythmic patterns and dynamics including *pp*, *ppp*, *pp*, *f*, and *pp*. Includes markings for "LARGE CYM.", "LITTLE", "S. DR.", and "SLIGHT BELLS".
- Vibes:** Vibraphone part with a melodic line in the third measure, marked *pp*.
- Hp:** Horns part with a melodic line in the third measure, marked *pp* and *p*.
- Vln. 1 & 2:** Violin parts with a melodic line in the first measure, marked *pp*.

Example 4.11 continued.

This first instance of the “Métis-atonal” establishes its terms, and becomes a point of reference through the remainder of the work. Somers adds to the musical gestures in the “Métis-atonal” gestural set, ultimately including melodic material from the opening march, from Riel’s arias, from the Métis chorus “À bas le Canada,” and from Marguerite’s aria, “Hano”; *appoggiatura*- and *acciaccatura*-type ornamentation; orchestral choices such as solo flute or piccolo with percussion and harp; and characteristic rhythmic patterns of rapid regular impulses. Not all musical gestures necessarily signify “Native,” or bring an audience to make a connection between a particular gesture and an Aboriginal or Métis subject. The set functions primarily in context, circularly or self-referentially, through association with Métis or Aboriginal characters, and with geographically-appropriate *mise en scènes*. The musical gestures in the set overlap with a codified lexicon of the musical exotic that inherently signify “primitivism,” conjuring the “primitive” exotic for an audience, regardless of musical complexity. These include melodic fourths and fifths (the first Buffalo dance, Act II.5), ornamentation and microtonal pitch inflection (in all of the vocal music mentioned earlier in the paragraph), melismatically elaborated vocal line (Riel’s arias, but in particular the second aria, Act I.4), and the uses of hand clapping, characteristic percussion and solo flute. The Métis/Aboriginal signification is not essentialist. It is clarified for the listener within the opera itself through repeated use of this material in dramatic contexts associated with Metis/Aboriginals such as the orchestral opening of Act I.1. However, there is an interacting signification between dramatic context and familiar conventions for representing the exotic. Some of the gestures, the ornamentation and melismas, the flute and drums, for example, which reference the “primitive” exotic beyond the opera,

signify with greater authority because of the dramatic context in which they are used. And these codified gestures reciprocally clarify the interpretation of the West and the fictional subject Riel as Métis/Aboriginal.

Riel's Act I.2 aria "Au milieu de la foule" is interesting in this regard in that it is loosely dodecaphonic, with each section approximately following the text stanza and delineated by complete cycles of two alternating twelve-note sets. The overall structure is A-B-A¹-B¹-A²-B². The solo flute introduction, a rising minor third and descending semitone (3-11) derives from the two rows, where it is found in inversion (9-1) and retrograde inversion (11-3). Within this atonal context, however, the aria presents Riel as a musical subject whose cultural identity is Métis/Aboriginal. This is accomplished through the application of the conventional set of musical gestures that signifies Aboriginal: the minor third of the solo flute; the elaborately ornamented and occasionally melismatic vocal line; extended vocal techniques outside of conventional operatic performance practice such as a trill ending in a long descending glissando, or accented, separated pitch iterations with grace notes to a single syllable; the interjections in the second stanza by the tom tom; and the appoggiatura-like flourishes on trumpet. (Example 4.12)

79.

Tempo I^o (Brisle march tempo)

Hr. 1. *sond. 1. f* *ppp*

Tmb. 1 *ppp*

Tuba *f* *ppp* *Tempo I^o*

Perc. *P* *rall.*

Vln. 1 *ppp* *pp*

Vln. 2 *ppp* *pp*

Vla. *ppp* *pp*

Cel. *ppp* *pp*

Bass *DIV. mf* *pp* *mf* *pp*

Fit. *Slow* *pp* *f* *P* *pp* *f* *P*

Perc. *long* *P (no more than p)*

Flk. *ppp* *ppp* *con moto* *rall.* *con moto*

Riel. *P*

Au mil-ieu de la fou-le Qui se gi-te et s'é-cou-le

Example 4.12 *Louis Riel* Act I.2.
Riel's aria, "Au milieu de la foule"

80.

Riel. *rall. — con moto Broaden*
 Lorsque l'on a-per-çait un homme au front pen-sif Et que son air de
 Riel. *con moto* *più f* *rall. — con moto*
 tris — tes-se Ex-prime de la no-bles-se On lui jet-te un
 Riel. *sfz* *Piu-Mosso* *Meno-Mosso*
 re-gar-de fur-tif Les gens se disent à l'or-œil-le: Fut-re quel est donc ce-lu-i-
 Perc. *Slow-accel. — con moto* *rall.*
 [II] *Tom-Tom middle drum - try different sticks for hard, 'dry' sound.* *mf* *p*
 Riel. ci? Et l'at-ten-tion qu'il é-veil-le Se borne à ce va-gue
 Flt. *con moto* *rall.* *Slow*
 Perc. *p* *pp* *p* *ppp*
 Riel. *3/8 + 2/8 + 3/8 + 2/8* *long gliss*
 Sou-ci.

Example 4.12 continued.

The musical score consists of several systems of staves:

- Percussion (Perc.):** Features a snare drum part with dynamics *pp* and *poco più f*. A rehearsal mark [14] is present.
- Riel:** The vocal line with lyrics: "sirs C'est dans la pain - e qu'il con - sume ces jours a - breu vés d'am - er -". Dynamics include *P*, *f*, *rall.*, and *Slow*.
- Cello:** Accompanying the Riel part, with dynamics *pp* and *P*. A rehearsal mark [15] is present.
- Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Trumpet (Tpt.):** Woodwind and brass parts with dynamics *pp sempre* and *f*.
- Annotations:**
 - Handwritten note: "Riel start intoning Latin somewhere in here. Need not be specific words, and actual pitch up to singer." with arrows pointing to the Riel staff.
 - Handwritten note: "Chorus insert starts somewhere about here at its own tempo. Work out entry & timing by rehearsal. Melis approaching from distance" with arrows pointing to the Riel and Cello staves.
 - Handwritten note: "STR. MUTE" above the Trumpet staff.

Example 4.12 continued.

Marguerite's aria, "Hano," is another example in which the "Métis-atonal" is in play. This continues through the scene, from the ensuing melodrama to the magnificent quintet in which Gabriel Dumont, Isbister, and Poundmaker contest with Marguerite over Riel's future. Riel's vocal line alternately adheres to, and separates from, Marguerite's plea, which is musically derived from her aria. These examples construct a musical reference that signifies "Métis/Aboriginal" through the integration of the gesture, and the intensity of the creative commitment to the external musical dialect. (Example 4.13)

The musical score for Example 4.13, Act III.1, is a quintet. It features the following parts and lyrics:

- Marguerite (Marg):** Oh, Lou-is, nous sommes i-ci chez nous. Tu m'a promis de ne partir jam-
- Dumont (Dum):** You we trust. You. Show us how. The Mé-tis need you. Ri-el, you.
- Isbister (Isb):** You we trust. You. Show us how. The Mé-tis need you. Ri-el, you.
- Poundmaker (Pound):** You we trust. You. Show us how. The Mé-tis need you. Ri-el, you.
- Violin I (Vln I):** *mf*
- Violin II (Vln II):**
- Viola (Vla):**
- Cello (Cel):** *p*

Example 4.13 *Louis Riel* Act III.1.

Quintet with Marguerite, Riel, Gabriel Dumont, Isbister, and Poundmaker

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system includes vocal parts for Marg and Riel, piano accompaniment for Dum, lcb., and Poud, and a string section (Vln). The second system includes vocal parts for Marg and Riel, piano accompaniment for Dum, lcb., and Poud, and a string section (Vln, Vla, Cel, Bass).

System 1:

- Marg:** ais ... jam ais! Tu m'a prom-
- Riel:** This time I am not a-lone. I care, mon Dieu, I care.
- Dum, lcb., Poud:** Lead ou r peo ple (puh le) once a
- Vln:** (Instrumental)

System 2:

- Marg:** is. Ne pars pas. Ne pars jam-ais, jam-ais, jam-ais ais-ais-ais. Le mal-a
- Riel:** I am not a-lo
- Dum, lcb., Poud:** -gain. Lead. The Me-tis need you. The In-di-ans need you. Lead, Ri-el!
- Vln, Vla, Cel, Bass:** (Instrumental)

Example 4.13 continued.

Musical score for Example 4.13 continued, featuring vocal parts and a string ensemble. The score is written in French and includes the following parts:

- Marg:** Soprano vocal line with lyrics: "die l'a min-e! Lais - sez - le! Lais - sez - le! La mal-a-
- Riel:** Bass vocal line with lyrics: "ne."
- Dum:** Tenor vocal line with lyrics: "Me - his need you, Ri - el. In - di - ans need you. Lead a - gain."
- Isb.:** Alto vocal line with lyrics: "Me - his need you, Ri - el. In - di - ans need you. Lead a - gain."
- Pound:** Bass vocal line with lyrics: "Me - his need you, Ri - el. In - di - ans need you. Lead a - gain."
- Vln 1 & 2:** Violin parts, starting with a *p* dynamic.
- Vla.:** Viola part, starting with a *mf* dynamic.
- Cel.:** Cello part, starting with a *mf* dynamic.
- Bass:** Double Bass part, starting with a *mf* dynamic.

The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*p*, *mf*), accents, and slurs. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves.

Example 4.13 continued.

Musical score for Example 4.13 continued, featuring vocal lines and instrumental accompaniment. The score is written in G major and 4/4 time.

Vocal Lines:

- Mag:** die | l'a | min | e! | Oh
- Rid:** I | am | not | a-lone | this time I can-not go
- Lead:** Lead us; show us. Show us. Show us. Show us how. Show us!
- Lead:** Lead us; show us. Show us. Show us. Show us how. Show us!

Instrumental Lines:

- Vln 1:** *slow* *gliss* *p* (first measure), *f* *gliss* (second measure), *f* *gliss* (third measure)
- Vln 2:** (Empty staff)
- Vla:** (Empty staff)
- Cel:** (Empty staff)

Example 4.13 continued.

Musical score for Example 4.13 continued, featuring vocal parts and an orchestra. The score is divided into two systems, each marked with a box containing the number 12.

Vocal Parts:

- Marg:** Louis! Ne pars pas! Ne pars jam-ais. Jam-ais-ais-ais. Oh
- Riel:** with you. I can-not. I can-not go with you.
- Dum. / lsb. / Poud:** Ri-el, lead us once a - gain. Show us. Ri-el, lead us once a - gain. Ri-el, lead us. Lead!

Orchestra:

- Vin. 1 & 2:** Violins
- Vla:** Viola
- Cell.:** Cellist
- Bass:** Bass

The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, key signatures, and dynamic markings (e.g., *f*, *p*, *mf*).

Example 4.13 continued.

Ultimately, the opera celebrates Confederation and the westward push of the Canadian state, representing this drive for territory and unification as the inevitable and necessary corollary to Confederation. This is evident in the music that represents Sir John A. MacDonald. His is an ironizing and punning voice, whose utterances are the patter of the music hall, except where he speaks passionately of his vision of an undivided nation stretching across the continent. In these instances, Somers drops the specific musical reference and composes music for MacDonald that is lyrically direct and in the atonal language of the opera. Sir John and the Canadian nation stand in as the oppositional term to Métis/Aboriginal primitivism, and as such assert in the opera foundational myths of Canadian nationalism, most particularly the inevitable disappearance of Aboriginal peoples and the inevitability, and therefore the rectitude, of the expansion of the Canadian state. This celebration of the Canadian state coexists with Somers trenchantly critical representation of the southern Ontarian mob.

The premise that Métis/Aboriginal societies will inevitably vanish is a tenet of primitivism. Exploration of analogous Canadian primitivism leads beyond the frame of the opera. Somers' source for Marguerite's aria, the lullaby "Hano," is a Tsimshian song, a lament for the death of a chief that belongs to the Skateen family of the Gitlarhdams, a Tsimshian group from the upper Nass River near Hazelton in British Columbia.⁶⁴ Transcribed by Sir Ernest MacMillan, it is one of over seventy Tsimshian songs in a collection assembled with commentaries by Marius Barbeau. The original text has only two words bearing linguistic meaning: *Taqawq*, the "head" or "chief," and *suwawdet*

⁶⁴ Marius Barbeau, "Tsimshian Songs," in *The Tsimshian: Their Arts and Music*, Publications of the American Ethnological Society 18, ed., Marian W. Smith, 97-157 (New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1951), 153.

“they call him.”⁶⁵ Marguerite sings the vocalizing syllables “hano” and “yi-e,” then continues with Cree words not associated with the melody, beginning with “Sakastayo,” “it is sunrise,” as the aria develops beyond the original melody. Example 4.14 gives the original transcription of the Tsimshian song. (Example 4.14)

⁶⁵ Ibid.

No. 69.

Hano

Transcribed by
Ernest MacMillan

Drum Second note : C#. Met.: ♩ = 78 (Larghetto)

(Refrain:) ha no - ha no - hi - hi - ye - -
haa yay

ye - - ha no - ha no hi - hi - ye - - he - - ha
hay

no - ye - he i - ye - e i - ye - e ye - - i ye - - ha
yay ha ee yay ay

no ha no - e hi - - hi - - ye - - he - -
z ye

ta qo - q, ta qo - q hi - - hi - - ye - - -

ye - - ta qo q ta qo q hi - - hi - ye - - he - - eu

wo - - de hi - ye - he i - ye - e i - ye - e ye - - - i.
waw da

ye - - ha no ha no e hi - - hi - - ye - - he - -

Record VII C 124 a (53)

Example 4.14 “Hano”, transcribed by Sir Ernest MacMillan.
Source for Marguerite’s aria, “Hano,” Act II⁶⁶

The Cree text is not a funeral dirge for the death of a chief but the ballad of a great chief in a mythic past beyond memory, a story that derives from a story.

⁶⁶ Ibid., transcription #69.

Long ago /long ago
 that one was a chief /long ago
 among old men. /This is an old story.
 This /in this land
 is what I heard /this story.⁶⁷

This text mirrors comments that Somers made about the use of the melody. Cherney states that “Somers regards [the source melody of Marguerite’s aria] as a lament for the passing of a people.”⁶⁸ And Zinck states that, in an interview (January 7, 1993), “Somers dismiss[ed] the seemingly incongruous use of the Tsimshian melody by a Cree character in the opera as a simple case of the composer’s legitimate interest in certain musical materials overriding concerns of cultural authenticity.”⁶⁹

Somers’ interest in the Tsimshian music in itself, without concern for its social context, is a creative attitude of a culture long accustomed to the circulation of art and artifacts mechanically reproduced, here recorded and transcribed. In the positive sense, Somers’ “legitimate interest in [Tsimshian] musical materials” from the collection of Marius Barbeau had a profound effect on the sound world of the opera, opening possibilities of creative expression. It is also a complex example of musical exchange, an assertion that cultural “authenticity” is an illusion and an illustration of musical opportunism that demonstrates the creative edge of impurity. This is the attitude that also underlies much “world” music, music of diasporic groups, or Andy Statman’s self-described “Moroccan African Mongolian klezmer” music mentioned earlier.

The effect and influence of this music is greater than Cherney’s description of the Tsimshian song as “[t]he motivic basis for [Marguerite’s aria], presented in the opening

⁶⁷ Moore, 26.

⁶⁸ Cherney, 134.

⁶⁹ Zinck, 273. Emphasis mine.

five or six notes.”⁷⁰ In fact, Somers quotes the entire song, with interpolated composed material. But further, the musical character of the song is the substance of the dialect that inflects the music associated with Métis/Aboriginal characters/place/society, which in turn is the predominating sound-world of the opera, present in all but five of the seventeen scenes and Introduction. This is not to suggest that Somers has quoted other Aboriginal music beyond “Hano,” or that he made a scholarly study of this music. Rather it is through this song, and as well through Somers’ likely examination of the song collection, that the general musical ethos of the Tsimshian music, as transcribed in the Barbeau collection, entered the opera. The evidence for this supposition is in the score: the use of drum in relation to solo voice with repeating rhythmic figuration; vocal ornamentation and microtonal inflection; intoned declamation on the same pitch or alternatively rhythmically irregular, freely moving vocal lines; melodic elaboration of a single pitch; and melismatic elaboration of melodic lines. All of these characteristics can be found in the transcriptions from the Barbeau collection as illustrated by Examples 4.14, 4.15, and 4.16. (Examples 4.14, 4.15 and 4.16)

⁷⁰ Cherney, 134.

First note: C. Met: ♩ = 56 (Largo)

Drum ——— Drum ——— louder ——— etc

very slow and mournful

həye-ye he - - ε ye-he haye-ye-he - - ye-he e - - - no a
haw yay ya hay zə naw aw

ne yə - ə - he - ye he he-ye-ye-i he-hi - hi ksəm-nə-se-gene - -
nəy ksəm naw əəyganəz

- - ig we he ksəm-nə-se sene - - - igwe-he kwudəox-ne-tes - - ke
əəg we həz kwudəarh nə tes kyay

e - he-səndə - e həhe ye - he e ye - ye - he hi hi - he yəhi yə
səndaw

- he ho yo he heye - ye he - - - he he he ya ye-e - - -
may have lowered pitch unintentionally,
but record here is accurate

- he - he hay-ya hə - - hə ə nə yə - hə he ye - he

e - - ne - - - he kwudəox-ne-teske - - txwe he
trwə hay

i-tus sədiə-gə - - txwe he wiet wietə - - hie e'e-se
əə tus əəy die gəz wəz ət wəz ə hie

Example 4.15 “Ksemnaw Sayayanə” Woman Wolverine.

A funeral dirge of Nawzek, a chief in the family of Kweenu — a Raven-Frog chief of the Gitwinkul tribe of the Gitskan, Upper Skeena River near Hazelton.⁷¹

⁷¹ Barbeau, transcription #66, recorded in 1924.

First notes: G# and C#. Met.: ♩ = 96 (Larghetto)

not strictly in rhythm dragging behind regular beats

un hun un hun e he un hun un hun e he ni hi ye e e ni hi ge e ni hi
z hz nee hee ya gya

Drum

drum beats do not follow a definite rhythm. The melody likewise. Sometimes is accelerated or the reverse.

gva (falsetto) yelping of a dog - slower

End

ge huhu huhu uhun uhu ahu uhu uhun u hun u he u-hun u

rhythm not regular

gva (yelping)

full voice

hun uhe uhun unhun ehe ni hi ge e e ni hi ge aha aha aha aha

ha ha ha ha uhu uhu uhu uhu 'nef-gan . a' o tifa-fantk 'wis-ga nis
nayhl kan aw hihla hlantk ka

tamwilyel 'wi' nax noq o ho o 'wi ma-txam - la-xe 'wisganis
tem wil yehl wee nartnawk wee mat hem larhe wis ka nis

drum slower, beats louder. much slower faster slower

Record VII C 164a (120)

Example 4.16 “Nayhlkan Hlantk” “This is why the large mountain has moved.”

A ceremonial song, the second song of the mountain goat performance. Also from Gitwinkul.⁷²

The incorporation of the Tsimshian music as a “dialect” is first heard at the beginning of the opera. The Introduction opens with solo improvised timpani and tom toms, followed by

⁷² Ibid., transcription #62.

unaccompanied voice, as if separating the voice-drum combination of the songs. The pre-taped tenor rendition of “Riel sits in his chamber o’ state” is a radical departure from the modal march in common time. (Examples 4.17, 4.18, and 4.19) It is rewritten in unmetered, irregular rhythm, with Somers’ direction that it be performed “Slow but not rigid.” The vocal line is highly ornamented, including Somers’ notation of pitch-bending at the end of each of the first three lines of text. Somers’ final change is to the pitch set, abandoning the Aeolian mode of the original in the last line of the stanza. The “Marching Song” becomes a Tsimshian funeral dirge, a hybrid between Somers’ extended vocal writing and the transcribed Tsimshian songs. The irony here is extreme: Somers has transformed one of the key songs of the period, belonging to White opposition to Riel, into a representation of Métis/Aboriginal music. The melody recurs throughout the opera, and in fact frames the opera, in that a solo flute rendition of the melody concludes the work.

1. Ri - el sits in his cham-ber o' state, Wi' his stolen silver forks
 an' his sto-len sil-ver plate, An a' his braw things spread out in
 style so great; He'll not break - fast a - lone this morn - ing.

Refrain
 O Hey, Ri - el, are ye wak - ing yet, Or
 are yer drums a - beat-ing yet? If y're nae wak-ing
 we'll nae wait, For we'll take the fort this morn-ing.

Example 4.17 "The Marching Song": "Riel sits his chamber o' state"

Introduction

Graphic guide. Size of dot = dynamic intensity : Space = relative time distance. (Duration)

[4 to 6 drums]

Example 4.18 *Louis Riel* "Introduction": drum solo.

Pre-taped

Slow - not rigid (Possible to be higher transposition.)

Tenor *f* Ri-el in his cham-ber o' state, — 6 sec.

(Strong on the last consonant each time.)

Wi' his stol-len sil-ver forks an' his sto-len sil-ver plate, — 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ sec.

An-a' his brow things spread out in style so great; — 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ sec.

He'll not break fast a-lone this morn i-ng. — 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ sec.

Example 4.19 *Louis Riel* “Introduction” “Riel sits in his chamber o’ state.”

From the opening song, the Tsimshian dialect pervades the imaginative musical world of the work. It can be heard in all three of Riel’s arias, with the last, Riel’s vision, repeating the melody of “Hano.” It is heard as well in the Métis-atonal passages and in some of the choral writing, such as “À bas le Canada d’Ottawa” and the invocations “Riel.” It is foundational to the creative expanse and musical profundity of the opera.

Somers’ second statement about “Hano,” that it is a “lament for the passing of a people,” is the other, more conventional side of this creative exchange. It is an expression of the colonialist belief system that proposed that Aboriginal peoples of the continent, in their timeless primitivism, outside of history, were doomed to disappear, their static cultures unable to adapt to modernity.⁷³ Somers’ lament is for Riel and the Métis, and

⁷³ A recent Canadian study of history and Indigenous cultures is Penny van Toorn, “Stories to Live In: Discursive Regimes and Indigenous Canadian and Australian Historiography,” *Canadian Literature* 158 (Autumn, 1998): 42-63.

indeed a lament frames the opera. Mavor Moore described one possible and homologous interpretation of Riel: he was “the leader of a small nation standing in the way of ‘progress.’”⁷⁴

Yet, there is another history in the opera in addition to Riel’s that contradicts Somers’ lament. Somers’ musical “exchange” was with the transcribed approximations of a musical performance tradition, encountered in the published Barbeau collection. It was, therefore, musical exchange with the living musicians who sang the songs, distanced from the composer by time and multiply mediations. Ethnologist Marius Barbeau recorded the music of the collection between 1920 and 1929, almost equidistant — approximately forty years — between Riel’s death and the first production of *Louis Riel* in the Canadian centenary.⁷⁵ Through the filter of this extensive mediation, Somers engaged with the Tsimshian elders who sang into Barbeau’s sound recorder. Barbeau’s commentaries to the transcriptions identify most of the Tsimshian singers who performed songs owned by living families. These real people who lived on the Nass and Skeena Rivers of British Columbia are ghosts that haunt the opera, and theirs is a story of the continuing presence of First Nations people, of the loss and the survival of conquered and oppressed cultures, and indeed of ethnology in Canada that was the benevolent arm of Canadian colonialism.

Somers’s choice of the Tsimshian song tradition as source for the musical representation of Métis and by extension the opera is particularly significant in that it marks the absence in this opera of a Métis musical culture that predates Riel: the fiddle

⁷⁴ Moore, Notes to *Louis Riel*, 7.

⁷⁵ Barbeau, 99. Barbeau notes that the seventy-five published songs are part of a collection of nearly three thousand recordings of First Nations Music in Canadian archives, now in the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

tradition whose sources it shares with Quebec and Acadia. This absence in the 1967 opera is evidence of a historical perception of Canadian Métis and Indigenous peoples. The subsequent emergence of the Métis as a cultural and political presence includes most prominently the National Métis Council and many regional councils, Métis festivals and conferences, the reconstruction of the Métis language, *Michif*, and the current development of a Métis constitution. The website of the Métis National Council, “metisnation.Canada,” pictures Riel and Dumont on the upper left-hand side of the masthead. The living presence of Métis fiddle music inhabits works of contemporary artists such as Montreal jazz/contemporary composer and bassist, Norman Guibault’s *Riel Plaidoyer Musical*, a 1999 musical that retells Riel’s history and reinscribes Riel as a political leader. This musical argument in defense of Riel is, in the composer’s words, “*une musique métissée*” of original compositions, improvisation, and contemporary performance of music from the period including Métis songs and fiddle tunes. Guibault writes in his preface to the work that

with this musical [argument] in defense of Louis Riel and his people I add my voice to those of all who hope to denounce this terrible injustice committed against him and his people. A fair tribute to this national hero, unjustly accused of treason, is long overdue.⁷⁶

And Métis fiddlers abound. Commercially available on CD, widely disseminated through the Internet, they are the musical embodiment of Métis culture.

⁷⁶ Normand Guibault, “Preface,” *Plaidoyer Musical Riel* (Montreal: DAME, 1999).

Desiring Language: *Elsewhereless*

Elsewhereless is a domestic drama of interpersonal relationships and covert imperialism that unfolds within two time frames displaced by a decade and a half, 1979 and 1994. It is set in a purposely-unnamed African country that is devolving into chaos and genocide. The narrative takes place in a house that is occupied in the different time-frames by two members of the Canadian diplomatic core: first Antoine, the Canadian ambassador to the country and his partner Eugene; then Beth, the first secretary to the consulate, and her husband, Andrew. Malcolm, a native of the country, remains in the house through both occupations, and is servant and cook in both households. The claustrophobic self-interest of the developed world and its lack of concern for the needs or identities beyond itself, are evident at the outset through the confinement of the narrative to a single domestic interior and in the refusal, within this fictional world, to name the country in which the story takes place.

The narrative unfolds in flashbacks. It opens in 1979, the date made clear to the audience through a sign that alternates with 1994, the present time of the fiction. Antoine, a diplomatic attaché of talent and ambition, is assigned to what he perceives as an outpost of civilization, in effect a demotion. “We’ve been banished here,” he sings early in the opera in a moment of lyric intensity, “Banished! Me because of you. — You because of me”⁷⁷ (Scene 2). Banished, he surmises, because he and Eugene live openly as a gay couple. Malcolm enters Antoine and Eugene’s household as a servant immediately on their arrival. He is awkward and young, and speaks little English; he is also homosexual, as he admits in his first scene. Eugene and Malcolm form a close and complex

⁷⁷ Atom Egoyan, Libretto to *Elsewhereless*, unpublished score, 8/4-9/4.

relationship characterized by emotional and physical intimacy that remains ambiguous to the audience. There is no overt indication in the opera that they become lovers, for example. Eugene teaches Malcolm English, enculturating him through language, and in turn, Malcolm cares for Eugene who is dying from an illness symptomatic of AIDS. Antoine, Eugene, and Malcolm form a triangle of love and jealousy, and possibly adultery and betrayal, that lies at the heart of the opera.

Antoine has power over the household, and at a significant point in the story, refuses Malcolm's request for a letter of recommendation to enable him to attend university in Canada. Why would Malcolm want to leave he asks: "Malcolm, this is your place. This is where we live, — And you live too. This is our home. — Our family. Why leave the ones who love you?" (Scene 4). When Antoine is promoted to ambassador, to his despair his post is in the same country. He is not moving up in the diplomatic world; he is merely changing residences. As they prepare the move, Antoine, jealous of Malcolm and Eugene, insists that Malcolm remain at the house despite his earlier rhetoric about home, love, and family. Malcolm is left behind, and profoundly hurt and bitter, he denounces Eugene as they part. At some point outside of the enacted events, Eugene dies.

The story continues a decade later. A new diplomatic attaché, Beth, and her husband, Andrew, occupy the house under the actual, if not the nominal, control of Malcolm. The country is disintegrating in violence, on the edge of genocide. In a section composed as melodrama (Scene 3), Beth reads a letter from Antoine that describes the political and social chaos, yet denies the reality of the situation and asserts non-action:

All reports that innocent people are being indiscriminately slaughtered are untrue. /To be sure, there has been some relocation, but these forced migrations are being handled in an orderly manner. /Unfortunately, the

inevitable curtailment of civil liberties is unavoidable. I have decided that it is imperative that the first secretary and I remain in the country. /I see no immediate threat to our welfare, and, if current political trends continue, we can be optimistic that the situation will soon return to one of stability.⁷⁸

The two letters associated with Antoine, both refusals, are crucial in delineating the political climate of the opera and the nature of the encounter between Anglo, liberal Canadians and the African host country. The first letter, Malcolm's recommendation, is a refusal in that it was never written. The diplomatic pronouncement, the second letter, is a terrible indictment of Western powers in Africa, ignoring the extremity of a real situation of dire humanitarian emergency. The text is chilling: genocide reported but denied, forced migrations, the signs of ethnic cleansing acknowledged as orderly but with "inevitable" human rights violations. This is familiar to an audience from historical events in Rwanda, and most recently, in Darfur in western Sudan. But further, Antoine's denial, when fully revealed in Scene 11, is shown to be an intentional, self-interested act, and more sinister because plausibly a willful misreading, for personal gain, of the seriousness of the country's imminent collapse.

The denouement, and the present time of the opera, takes place in the afternoon and evening of a dinner party that Beth and Andrew are hosting for Antoine, in order to convince him to let them leave the country. In the dinner scenes, the history of Malcolm, Eugene and Antoine floods the present moment. Malcolm serves Antoine the brain of a living monkey, to the horror of Beth and Andrew. In Scene 7, the last scene of Act I, Antoine, attentive but detached, removes the animal's skullcap, observes the quivering brain and eats. "Beauty," he says, "is only the first touch of terror."⁷⁹ This statement of

⁷⁸ Ibid., 3/2-3/3.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 9/7-10/7.

Sadeian cruelty also shades both time-frames of the opera in Gothic darkness, with the sudden intimation that all is not well beneath the polite domestic exterior and Canadian reserve.

In an emotional statement, Antoine refuses to close the embassy and provide Beth and Andrew with transportation out of the country. His outburst, both coldly rational and motivated by anguish, is a revelation fitting of a moment of Gothic melodrama, and brings into the light of the present another aspect of his past.

Beth: We're in danger! Do you understand?
 Antoine: I won't let you leave.
 Andrew: You can't make us stay!
 Antoine: Only I have authority to order a plane.
 The roads are blocked.
 Beth: Why are you doing this?
 Antoine: When we were posted here our love was our shame. We
 were exiled. Now, this wretched place is the focus of
 attention. As everyone flees — we remain: remain and
 become heros! Heros!
 Alone I'm a madman captive to my dreams — Together
 we're a team — captive to our ideals.⁸⁰

Malcolm leaves the dinner party. In manic abandon, Antoine seizes the dead monkey and dances. A bullet from the erupting streets crashes through a window, killing Antoine. With Antoine's death, the young couple are finally able to leave, not comprehending what has transpired. Beth says to Malcolm as she leaves, "There are things that have happened in this house, in this place ... I don't know — what to feel. — What I'm supposed to feel. — I am so sorry."⁸¹ Malcolm remains, alone in the house, separated from the outside world.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 5/11-8/11.

⁸¹ Ibid., 3/12-4/12.

Central to the narrative, yet obscured, is an insidious racism — or at least Eurocentrism — the undertow of the liberal, post-race, polite social intercourse in the opera. There are few references, in the extremely unified music, to race or group identity. In this it differs from *Louis Riel* and *Beatrice Chancy*. Yet in *Elsewhereless*, as well as in the other two operas, the story turns on inter-racial relationships.

In *Elsewhereless*, race is complicated by other arbiters of difference and identity: gender, sexuality, and differentials of wealth and opportunity. Discrimination because of sexuality, and the attempt by the Canadian state “to regulate desire,”⁸² is a significant prehistory of the opera. One might surmise that in 1979, the chronological beginning of the narrative of the opera, it was an act of courage to live as an openly gay couple in Canada, and an act of professional suicide to do so within the civil service. Through the 1950s and 1960s, gay men and lesbians were constructed, within Cold War rhetoric and ideology, as significant national security risks. Hundreds lost their jobs or were demoted within the federal civil service in Ottawa, and thousands were under surveillance by the RCMP.⁸³ Until 1969, acts of homosexuality were deemed illegal by the Canadian criminal code. This chill and threat haunts the opera through the character of Antoine, feeding his bitterness, and underlying his reckless grasp at fame: “When we were posted here, our love was our shame” (Scene 11).⁸⁴

⁸² Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Homo and Hetero Sexualities*, 2nd rev. ed. (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1996).

⁸³ Ibid. See also: Gary Kinsman, “Constructing Gay Men and Lesbians as National Security Risks, 1950-70,” *Whose National Security? Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies*, Gary Kinsman, Dieter K. Buse, and Mercedes Steedman, eds. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000), 143-153, and David Kimmel and Daniel J. Robinson, “The Queer Career of Homosexual Security Vetting in Cold War Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (September, 1994): 319-345.

⁸⁴ Egoan, 6/11.

Malcolm's sophisticated understanding of the politics of discrimination within Canadian society is revealed in a conversation with Andrew when they first meet:

Malcolm: Is this your wife's first posting?
 Andrew: Yes.
 Malcolm: She worked hard, and here you are, — In the middle of nowhere.
 Andrew: I wouldn't say that.
 Malcolm: I had a similar experience when I was young. My dream was to go Elsewhere.⁸⁵

In this subtle conversation, Malcolm astutely recognizes the probable gender discrimination of Beth's posting, as he simultaneously disparages his country, an instance of internalized self-deprecating and ironic Euro-centrism. It is the music in this case that indicates Malcolm's ironic inflection: he sings the line, "In the middle of nowhere," to a melodic motive associated with Antoine. Andrew, asserting his liberal Canadian belief in the equitable society, denies the implication of sexism. Malcolm, however, maintains his position, now associating his own experience with Beth's: racial/ethnic discrimination analogous to gender discrimination.

The discrepancy of prerogative and opportunity between the Canadian characters and Malcolm, the African citizen, brings another layer of contemporary meaning to the opera. The narrative of the opera is, in this, also predicated on the contemporary abyss between the wealthy and impoverished nations, the North and the South, irrevocably separated by global differences in wealth and therefore in all aspects of life experience, underscored and intensified by racism. The Sharman/Egoyan opera reveals the extremity of this global

⁸⁵ Ibid., 3/5-3/6.

social and political condition within a microcosm of interpersonal relationships and tensions.

This discrepancy is further emphasized through the stage set created by installation artist and filmmaker, Phillip Barker. The opera, in a manner analogous to a film whose *mise en scène* is fixed, has a designated stage set written into the score that includes a transparent scrim onto which live and pre-recorded video images and photographs are projected. The images to be projected are also written into the score, sometimes adding information, as in the projection of Antoine's diplomatic missive that Beth reads in Scene 3, but more frequently creating narrative links and additions. It is through the projections that the "outside," the genocide that Antoine names and denies in his letter, and that is "screened" from the Canadians, is projected to the audience. At the end of Scene 9, present time, as Malcolm enters carrying a dead child in his arms, who has been shot outside Beth and Andrew's house, the score indicates that "[t]he video of the young black boy is projected onto the scrim. He is smiling into the camera."⁸⁶ At the end of Scene 10, set in the past, as Malcolm bitterly separates from Eugene, the direction in the score indicates, "On the scrim, newsreel footage from a moving vehicle of black bodies on the side of the road."⁸⁷ The projected images create a simultaneity, revealing the outside of the intimate interior — a reminder also of a historical reality outside of the theatre. The images of Africans on the scrim reveal the limited purview of the fictional world of the opera and serve as critical commentary on the narcissistic enclosure depicted by the opera.

⁸⁶ Rodney Sharman, *Elsewhereless*, unpublished score (1998), 10/9.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5/10.

Whereas both *Louis Riel* and *Beatrice Chancy* include sections of music that represent race, and integrate multiple musical styles through musical gesture, orchestration, and performance style, there are almost no musical references in *Elsewhereless*. The idiosyncratic instrumentation of the opera — two flutes doubling alto flute and bass flute, bass clarinet, mandolin, guitar, violin, double bass, and percussion — is in character with Sharman's chamber music. The extensive percussion includes four instruments that derive from non-Western music and could potentially signify an exotic Other: low-pitched gongs (B♭ and d♭), reminiscent of the gamelan; a log drum combined with bass drum; a Chinese opera gong; and a small quica, a friction drum whose prototype is from Brazil. Sharman deploys them in the opera, however, in such a way that their signification is ambiguously deflected from the self-Other binarism (gongs and Chinese opera gong), or they are anchored to a more specific meaning or ethos that belies this construction (log drum and quica).

The pitched gongs are heard for the first time in the Prologue, in the midst of, and arguably deriving from, Malcolm's hauntingly pensive melody as he sings of his alienation from self and place, his psychic suspension from the world disintegrating around him:

What I feel — /When I feel — /Is suspension.
 Like a piece of dust.
 Floating — /Floating in the air.
 I hear guns. People screaming.
 These sounds suspended with me —
 In time and space.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Egoyan, 3/1-5/1.

The melody unfolds around a motive [10 3], the “floating motive”, and its permutations [9 2, 2 9, and 3 10], that recur throughout the opera (Example 4.20). The minor third of the pitched gong is the defining interval of the motive. The pitched gongs enter after an extended silence in the vocal line in which the score indicates “The sound of distant gunfire — people shouting.”⁸⁹ Their descending minor third is an extension of the floating motive as Malcolm sings “I hear guns.” His words are set to the retrograde inversion [2 9] of the motive, ending on c[#], in enharmonic unison with the gong’s d^b.

The second statement of the gongs follows the music that Sharman designates the “suspended waltz” that begins as Malcolm is finishing the end of his line, “in time and space.” The waltz uses a diatonic pitch world that shifts between D/A and D^b/A^b every other bar, within which the shimmering non-resolution of seventh and fourth chords is layered with a tonal melody in the harp. The waltz is suspended rhythmically as well through additive rhythm, in that the three beats of the waltz are extended in almost every measure by a sixteenth, an eighth or in its penultimate measure, a quarter note. D^b and B^b, the gong pitches, are privileged pitches in the suspended waltz, and indeed the last “*expressivo*” melodic descent of the flute and bass flute cadences with the pitched gongs, a rocking minor third in the trochaic rhythm of the waltz. Throughout the suspended waltz, an image of ballroom dancing is projected onto the scrim. As it fades after the cadence, the pitched gongs, now solo, make a gradual *crescendo* over seven repetitions of the figure. In the repetition and *crescendo*, the gongs are abstracted from the waltz, becoming an independent signifier. (Examples 4.21 and 4.22)

⁸⁹ Sharman, 4/1.

9 MALCOLM *p*
What I feel is sus -

12

15 *mp* Like a piece of dust

16 Flame - 2 - 3 - ing

FLUTE

BASS FLUTE

BCL 1,2

HARP

GUITAR

15 *mp* Like a piece of dust

16 Flame - 2 - 3 - ing

FLUTE

BASS FLUTE

BCL 1,2

HARP

GUITAR

Quintet *p*

Example 4.20 *Elsewhereless Prologue.*
Malcolm's floating motive

(Mancini's image refers to the imaginal ballroom dancing.)
 Suspended waltz from 190

73

74

79

80

Fl. 1

Bsn.

Cl. 1, 2

Hr.

Gong

time and space.

DIA DIA

DIA DIA

DIA DIA

Example 4.21 *Elsewhereless Prologue.*
 The “suspended waltz” and the pitched gong

The pitched gongs with unaltered pitches (B \flat and d \flat) pervade the opera, occurring in the Prologue, in four of the seven scenes of Act I, and all five scenes of Act II. Frequently, they are connected with representations of tension or fear. They are also connected with Malcolm: first in the Prologue, present-time, and also in Scene 2, where, in the bass register, they are entwined with Malcolm's awkward attempt to speak in English. The characterization of Malcolm, however, both through text or music, is never exotic. (Example 4.21)

The quica is the onomatopoeic scream of the monkey, used for the first time in Scene 1 during Beth and Andrew's uneasy conversation. "Animals make strange noises," Andrew says in response to the "quica *ad libitum*," thus interpreting the intruding and incongruous sound. The low-pitched gongs, then the log and bass drums, follow in quick succession, the latter in an isorhythm that recurs through the opera. (Example 4.22) They contribute to the tension of the scene, or by extension from the signification of the quica that is anchored by text, they could be interpreted as the threat of the outside, the night sounds of the foreign country, the chaos beyond the walls of the enclave. It is only in the ensuing scenes of the opera that the association of these instruments becomes specific. In Scenes 3, for example, Malcolm brings in the live monkey, and Beth asks, "Did that animal scream a moment ago?" Malcolm responds, increasing the horror, "Yes. Outside. As I was bringing it in. Its muzzle came off."⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Egoyan, 6/3.

LOG DRUM

BASS DRUM
(Pedal)

Example 4.22 *Elsewhereless*, Scene 1
The log and bass drum rhythm

The log and bass drum rhythm occurs for a second time in Scene 2, fifteen years earlier as Antoine and Eugene arrive and meet Malcolm for the first time. (Example 4.22) The drum rhythm occurs at the end of the scene in which the complex triangle has already formed: Malcolm in broken English speaks his desire for language, and Eugene, as evident in the music, is drawn to Malcolm. The relationship evolves quickly, in the space of a short conversation, yet the release of desire is crucial to the entire opera.

Antoine: Are you married
 Malcolm: Mar...ried?
 Eugene: Do you have a wife?
 Antoine: A woman?
 Malcolm: No.
 Antoine: Une amie?
 Malcolm: I don't under...
 Eugene: Someone you like.
 Malcolm: Maybe you... girlfriend. Someone I like...Eugene.
 Antoine: You want him as a girlfriend?
 Malcolm: Yes.

Antoine laughs as he leaves the room.

Malcolm: Antoine make fun?
 Malcolm's and Eugene's voices overlap:
 Eugene: You made a mistake. A girlfriend is a woman you like in intimate ways.
 Malcolm: I want...no mistake.
 Eugene: You'll learn.
 Malcolm: I want to learn.
 Eugene: There are books.

Malcolm: You teach me.
 Eugene: Teach you? Teach you what, Malcolm?
 Malcolm: Words. I want words in intimate ways.⁹¹

In this conversation and throughout the scene, Eugene “translates” Antoine’s abrasive questions to Malcolm, serving as a gentle bridge between the two other men. The pitched gong is connected to Malcolm earlier in the scene through register — the character Malcolm is a bass voice — and shared pitches. It occurs, in unison with Malcolm, on the words: “Married” (B♭); “Antoine make fun?” sung to the gong pitches as the gong plays an inversion; and through the last words of the scene, “I want words in intimate ways” which Malcolm again sings to the gong pitches, in inversion, the minor third filled with microtonal internal pitches. It is at this point that the log and bass drums enter. In this retrospective iteration, the tension created by the drums in the previous scene (present time with Beth and Andrew) is shown as associated with the tension of the relationship, which is already complex at first encounter, fraught with forbidden desire.

This is born out as the drums appear in later scenes. The characteristic rhythm of the drums is played on the body and tapped strings of the guitar in Scene 5 as Malcolm reminisces to Andrew about his past with Eugene and Antoine. His speech is covert, his story a fabrication that drifts between actuality and fantasy.

Malcolm: My dream was to go Elsewhere. I worked hard and finally I received a scholarship to university.
 Andrew: You must have had good support.
 Malcolm: I had an excellent letter.⁹²

⁹¹ Ibid., 7/2-11/2.

⁹² Ibid., 4/5.

The drum rhythm begins as Andrew suggests “support.” Tapped on the body and strings of the guitar, the timbre is altered and distant, its tension less immediate but still ominous, as is the altered memory. It continues through the remainder of the scene, even after Malcolm has left. It occurs again in Scene 10, the past, as Eugene and Antoine leave the house, and finally, in Scene 12 as Beth and Andrew leave, beginning after Beth calls Malcolm.

A Chinese opera gong is another potential signifier of race through music. Its clanging, penetrating timbre is widely recognizable to an audience as non-Western, if not specifically connected with the Chinese theatre. It is used sparingly in *Elsewhereless*, only twice, in Scene 7, the concluding scene of Act I, and the continuation of this scene in Scene 11, the penultimate scene of the opera. The Chinese opera gong opens and closes Scene 7, the finale of the act and the consummation of the tension that builds out of the Prologue. The act ends with Antoine’s arching and lyrical statement: “You must try it before it dies.” Antoine, in an act of aestheticized cruelty that recalls the Sadeian sublime, eats the living monkey. This is a central moment in the opera, structurally in its placement, but also at the level of meaning. Antoine indulges an internalized primitivism: a step into truth and hysteria that Malcolm has arranged.

The act of eating the brain of a live primate is both claimed as current practice and discounted as apocryphal. It is, however, associated with Asia, and in particular China, rather than Africa. A more serious concern in Africa is the trade in bushmeat to urban centres as well as rural villages. This trade poses a threat to wildlife, particularly to large primates brought to near extinction through hunting, and creates health problems for human and domestic animals; task forces are studying the connections between

consumption of bushmeat and a recent Ebola epidemic in the Congo.⁹³ As well, investigations have been made connecting the origins of HIV/AIDS to the handling of African primates during hunting, and through the ingesting of the meat.⁹⁴

The point of this for the opera is that Malcolm's feast is itself a primitivist charade, in the sense that primitivism or exoticism has never required cultural accuracy. Any gesture (music, instrument, costume detail, action) will do as long as its signification, within its extended context of communication, conjures an Other, distant from the self. By this point in the opera, Antoine has descended into his heart of darkness, willingly playing along with Malcolm's game, and in so doing reveals the mask of the exotic Other as the self. Following Malcolm's design, Antoine enacts cruelty for pleasure beyond compassion, symbolically ingesting the country and revealing the Western, mythic, cannibalistic Other as the Western self. The act of using the pain and death of the Other, of inflicting pain, of ingesting the damaged body of the Other in a symbolic ritual, mirrors Antoine's willful inaction in face of genocide, a synecdoche for the damage and neglect wrought by Western imperialism in Africa. The use of the Chinese gong at this instance is associated with Antoine, sounding for the last time in the scene as he sings, addressing Beth and Andrew, "You must try it before it dies."⁹⁵

⁹³ The web site of the Bushmeat Crisis Task Force, an international organization of concerned scientists and environmental organizations, located in Washington, D.C., contains verifiable information on this issue. <http://www.bushmeat.org/about.html> (accessed December 12, 2004).

⁹⁴ Ibid. A hearing was presented to the U.S. Congress on this subject, February 19, 2002, by the Harvard Center for Health and the Global Environment, including a presentation by Jane Goodall. <http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/biobrief.html> (accessed December 12, 2004).

⁹⁵ This interpretation, of course, rests on the assumption that Malcolm consciously constructs the primitivist horror, that it is not merely an incongruity in the opera, perpetrated unconsciously by writer and composer. I suggest that the opera is too carefully and intricately constructed, the character of Malcolm too sophisticated and aware within the context of the narrative, for another interpretation. The scenes with the monkey are problematic in performance, however; at the Vancouver performance, which I attended, a stuffed animal was used as the stunt-animal in an awkward attempt at realism. Certainly many of the reviews highlighted the incident, sometimes shifting the revulsion to satiric commentary as in one headline, "Slurping the monkey with Mr. Egoyan." (May 7, 1998), http://www.eyenet.net/eye/issue/issue_05.07.98/art/opera.html (accessed December 14,

The second use of the Chinese gong confirms the connection of the instrument to Antoine and the interconnection between his act of eating the monkey and his scheme that would instrumentalize genocide to further his career. It occurs in Scene 11 at the word “heroes,” as he sings “As everyone flees, we remain and become heroes.”

An obvious but ambivalent reference to group identity is the “suspended waltz” which is repeated multiple times throughout the opera in its entirety or through motivic reference. This music is associated with Eugene and Malcolm, although it is heard for the first time and in its most complete statement in the Prologue. This, however, is where it is emplotted in the narrative; its chronological origin in the story occurs in Scene 6, which opens with Eugene and Malcolm dancing to music — the suspended waltz — from the radio. The group affiliation suggested by the music is gay culture, specifically that aspect of gay culture associated with opera and the musical. The waltz, sweet and tentative, seems to derive from operetta. Its provenance is telling in this regard. It is a self-quotation, Sharman incorporating an earlier piano composition, one of his *Opera Transcriptions* I, “La Rondine,” after Puccini’s *La Rondine*. A quote from *La Rondine* is audible in the waltz. It is highly unlikely, however, that an audience would recognize either the self-quotation or the reference to Puccini, not least because *La Rondine* is a lesser known and infrequently performed work. *La Rondine*, however, is, significantly, a version of the *La Traviata* story, concerned with social boundaries and forbidden love.

A second, unambiguous reference to group identity occurs in Scene 11, where Sharman includes quotations of *O Canada* and *The Maple Leaf Forever*, as Antoine

2004), or Chris Dafoe’s comment in his *Globe and Mail* review, May 12, 1999, “Curious George is strapped to the dinner table, his furry skull poking up through a hole, awaiting Antoine’s knife and spoon.”

dances manically with the dead monkey. It is a sardonic and telling moment, indicting the Canadian nation state and by extension the wealthy North as complicit in the tragic disintegration of the African country. Beth and Andrew, who register their horror at Antoine's gustatory performance and their fear of the country outside, yet are unable to act, are also complicit, even though contradictorily they are disempowered in the household and the perverted world of the Canadian embassy.

National anthems

O Canada

The Maple Leaf Forever

Other

Rodney Sharman, *Opera Transcriptions I*, "La Rondine," based on Puccini's *La Rondine*

Figure 4.4 Musical Quotations in *Elsewhereless*

The mask of the exotic Other is created by Malcolm for Antoine who becomes both its signifier and signified. When characters look out the window from the enclave, we are shown only a character's face, not the object of the gaze. The opera turns on the slow realization that we see and know only as the Canadians in the fictive world, as the outsiders. Malcolm, the African character, who might have been the site for the construction of visible and audible racial difference, forecloses ethnographic curiosity. He tells Eugene, who wants to associate authenticity with Malcolm's "tribal past," that the marks on his face "are scars of a time — of a place long forgotten. In this country, /marks become scars."⁹⁶ To Andrew's later query about his name he replies with a question:

⁹⁶ Egoyan, 6/8-8/8.

Malcolm: What makes you think Malcolm is not my real name?
Andrew: We assumed you're from a tribe.
Malcolm: Why?
Andrew: Your scars.
Malcolm: They're birthmarks."⁹⁷

Malcolm, conversely, learns to speak the culture of the West as he perfects English. It is the music that shows his mastery of cultural subtlety beyond language. Malcolm's acquisition of language is not merely at the level of the constative meaning of the words, but also at the performative level of the utterance. The irony of the opera is the reversal and deconstruction of the mask or the exotic Other that Antoine assumes. The Canadians are Other, foreign and unknowing. Malcolm, however, moves between worlds. His locution is not only fluent English, but patterned after Antoine's ironic and self-deflecting speech pattern. This is revealed not through the libretto, but in the music. (Examples 4.23 and 4.24)

⁹⁷ Ibid., 2/5-3/5.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a scene. The score is written on multiple staves, including vocal lines and instrumental parts. The vocal parts are labeled 'ANT' and 'MR'. The instrumental parts include 'Acoustic Bass', '2nd Violin', 'GUIT', 'HP' (Harp), 'Vcllo' (Violoncello), and 'Vla' (Viola). The score includes lyrics: 'You love me?' and 'In my special way.' There are performance markings such as 'G.P.' (Grand Piano), 'p' (piano), 'mf' (mezzo-forte), and 'f' (forte). The score is written in a clear, legible hand.

Example 4.23 Elsewhereless Scene 4.
Antoine's speech

Difference in *Elsewhereless* is not indicated through the cultural markers of race or racial phenotype. It is configured through gender and sexuality, and more troublingly, in the discrepancy of life possibilities within the global economy as depicted in the opera. The opera ends as it begins, with Malcolm alone after the departure of the Canadians. There is no satisfactory closure, making the last scene particularly appropriate in that, in a filmic manner, it cycles back to the beginning. The wasted lives, wasted opportunities, and the perversion of love that fill Malcolm's lyrical repetition of Eugene's dying plea — "I dreamed of a place where I would find no shadow of lingering ambition, a place which spoke of nowhere else,"⁹⁸ — prevent closure, and the narrative remains open — like a wound.

⁹⁸ Egoyan, 18/8 and 4/12.

Chapter 5

Operatic Narratives

Diegesis

Each opera creates a fictive world that establishes a space-time continuum, and characters that experience this world, act and interact, remember a past and project into a future. This description of the fictive world is analogous to the conventional understanding of diegesis in film, with the significant difference that in opera the characters sing. In film, music that sounds within the fictive world and is available to the experience of the fictive characters — a radio playing in a room, perhaps, or a band in a club — is considered “diegetic.” The orchestral strings that crescendo as the characters walk into the landscape, oblivious to the musical effects available to the audience, is non-diegetic. Clearly in film, the diegesis is premised on a realist aesthetic that disguises its structure and the labour and technical mastery necessary to its construction. Non-diegetic music functions in classic film to create affect, and as a key contributor to the illusion of the seamless unfolding of the narrative. It both triggers and confirms audience response to the film. The film audience is not meant to hear it or to be critically aware of the work that it is doing to influence experience.

In opera, music has a different relationship to the fictive world. Here, different from the sound world of film, the diegesis must include all of the music — all aspects of the sounding universe of the work — because music, in changing relationships with text, with verbal or dramatic meaning, is the fictive world. The consideration of music — both sung and orchestral — in opera as the context or *mise en scène* for the drama action is only a limited understanding, and possibly a misunderstanding of the music. As much as

the text, music is the drama: there is a musical macrostructure, music affects the moment-to-moment experience of the listener, and as well, music summons the listening subjects and the fictional musical subjects and their group affiliations within the work. Although in analyzing opera it is usual, and often necessary, to consider instrumental music separately and in relation to vocal music, or to consider different types of vocal setting such as recitative, arioso, aria, melodrama, *sprechgesang* and so on, all of this occurs within the operatic diegesis. Although this stretches the concept of diegesis beyond its meaning in relation to film, there is some value in considering a notion of an operatic diegesis.

As a starting point, it is useful to consider the traditional meaning of the term “diegesis” as the telling of the story, in relation to “mimesis” or showing of the inner life of the characters. One might say that both opera and classic film narrative tell the story mimetically, overtly projecting both the psyche of the characters of the narrative and a psychological or affective interpretation of the action or event — the narrative — for the audience. In opera, the diegesis or space-time continuum of the narrative is more inclusive than is the conventional film use of the term, in that the devices for creating the affect or mimesis are part of the diegesis and not external to it.

Music sung, for example, is inextricable from character formation, and repetition of sung music is foundational in creating relationships between characters. In the brilliant quintet in *Louis Riel* Act III.1, the scene in which Gabriel Dumont, James Isbister, and Poundmaker contest with Marguerite for Riel’s allegiance, Riel’s painfully fractured consciousness is shown through the music he sings and the construction of the quintet. The three “intruders” sing in rhythmic unisons, the text set almost syllabically to open

fourths, fifths or three-note quartal chords. Marguerite's ornamented and melismatic line opposes them, alone with violin at first, then joined by Riel. Riel's music from the beginning is stylistically connected to Marguerite's, but the interconnection becomes overt when the two lines briefly merge completely. Both Marguerite and Riel sing the ornamented melismas in unison. (Example 4.13) Significantly, the trio's persuasion doesn't succeed, again as is made clear by the music, which maintains the oppositional structure of trio against duo. Riel changes his mind only when Dumont reminds him that he "has a mission." The music, then, participates in an act of mimesis: showing the complexity of Riel's commitments, divided between the intimate life of his family and his political aspiration. The latter, however, as the music shows, is significantly not influenced by external persuasion.

This complexity of allegiance is continued in Act III.3, as Riel addresses the congregation of the church at Frog Lake. He sings of his vision (the libretto describes him as changing "to a mystical trance: all are hypnotized") to Marguerite's lullaby of Act III.1, "Hano." Through this passage, the orchestra is both minimal and inseparable from Riel's musical statement. The rapid iteration on snare drum, with ornamental flourishes on woodwinds, trumpet, celeste, and harp signify as Aboriginal within Somers' fictive world — or diegesis. This adds many possible layers to an interpretation of Riel: as Métis; as bound to his wife and family at the deep, psychic level of his melody; as regressive in dreaming his delusional vision of defeating an army through Marguerite's cradle song; or as doomed to failure and mournful extinction by association with Marguerite's Cree text that spoke of a culture long gone.

A vocal line that is associated with a character or characters as a form of mimesis, revealing psychological depth as well as inter-relation between characters, occurs also in *Elsewhereless*. Here, an intense musical cohesion is created through contrapuntal relationships based on a few definitive melodic motives. One is the floating motive, heard first as sung by Malcolm in the Prologue. It appears in all of its melodic permutations, and as well informs the vocal lines throughout the opera, most notably in Scene 2 in Antoine's speech. Another, a motive reminiscent of the opening figure of Britten's *Death in Venice* — a sequence of two rising whole tones, separated by a descending semi-tone sung to the protagonist Aschenbach's words, "My mind beats on, my mind beats on," appears in Antoine's vocal line for the first time in Scene 2 and later in Scene 4.

The extensive mimetic work that the music achieves in the diegesis of *Elsewhereless* is particularly evident in Scene 2, when Eugene and Antoine first meet Malcolm. The vocal lines reveal and become the characters themselves and define their relationships. For example, in his first appearance in the opera, Malcolm sings descending chromatic lines, with interpolated quartertones. His struggle to speak English is created in a literal way through a staggering, breathless rhythm, syncopated, erratic, halting, and punctuated with silences. "I ... do ... not ... meet. My name is Malcolm."¹ His attainment of perfect English by the end of the narrative is also reflected in the transformation of his vocal line, the most profound transformation experienced by any of the characters of the opera.

Although this could also be demonstrated gesturally by the actors on the stage, it is first of all the music that shows the intensity of the initial interaction between Malcolm and Eugene that subsequently plays out as a foundational tension of the opera. The violin

¹ Egoyan, 2/2.

plays a D#/E oscillation as Malcolm haltingly introduces himself, pitches that continue through Eugene's greeting . The limited pitch set that comes into focus with Eugene's words finds its most complete statement in the diatonic rising fourths of the flutes and bass clarinets [E G# A A# B C# D#]. Eugene's vocal line is situated in this expansive diatonic context through the repetition of pitches [G# A B] as he introduces himself to Malcolm. Malcolm repeats Eugene's name and as well his pitches [G# A]. (Example 5.1, mm. 111-119) Eugene is too "nice" to flirt, yet his next interaction with Malcolm includes the gong pitches [Bb Db] associated with Malcolm. This shared space of pitch set and pitch repetition create an immediate connection between Eugene and Malcolm. It holds genuine attraction and the possibility and foreshadowing of a deeper friendship, a danger that Antoine "hears"/recognizes. (Example 5.1, mm.133-140)

Transcribed

109 MALCOLM
(in very broken English)

112

My name is Malcolm.

117

118

My name is Eu-gene.

119

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Example 5.1 *Elsewhereless*, Scene 2.
Eugene and Malcolm's introduction

ANTONIO VIVALDI - *Violin Concerto in G major, Op. 3, No. 1*

ARRANGED BY: [Name]

G.P.

C

119

And this is An - tone.

Eugene

An - tone.

120

Tempo rubato

G.P.

125

A Tempo

Mucoua

I bring in more...

A

Example 5.1 continued.

ARCHIVES

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for Alto Saxophone (Alto Sax), Male Voice (Mal), Clarinet (Clarinet), Violin (Viol), and Cello (Cel). The second system includes staves for Alto Sax (Alto Sax), Eb Cornet (Eb Cornet), Eb Trombone (Eb Trombone), Eb Baritone (Eb Baritone), Violin (Viol), and Cello (Cel). The lyrics are: "I... am... ve... - ty nice.", "I've been banished here.", and "Why are you asking for this?". Performance markings include dynamics like *mp*, *f*, and *ff*, and articulation like *staccato* and *trill*. A rehearsal mark 'F' is present at the beginning of the first system, and '151 ff' is marked above the second system.

Example 5.1 continued.

Antoine's statements in this scene are mocking and ironic: neumatic — almost melismatic — vocal lines that becomes his characteristic manner of singing throughout the opera. "Our new houseboy," a derogatory, colonialist, and petulant reference to Malcolm, is a crabbed circling melody that makes use of all the chromatic pitches within the perfect fourth between G and C. (Example 5.1, m. 133) This statement is finished by Eugene in a simple descending diatonic fifth, setting the text "He seems very nice." Malcolm brings in luggage, his statement, "One more," beginning on B \flat , Eugene's final pitch. Eugene asks, "They aren't too heavy?" and states, "You must be strong," to rising fourth species [B \flat -C-D-D \flat -E \flat]. Eugene's melody, repeated for both phrases, attempts the retrograde statement of his descending diatonic fifth, yet the melody falls, as if pulled, into Malcolm's sphere — the D slipping to D \flat — effecting a statement of the pitched gongs D \flat -B \flat in inversion. Significantly, the gongs, which are already established in connection to Malcolm, sound against Eugene's statements. Antoine completes Eugene's sentence, mocking both Eugene and Malcolm in recalling Eugene's words, "And very nice." Antoine's melodic line here is an inversion of the melodic setting of "Our new house boy." (Examples 5.1, mm. 141) In this brief scene, then, framed by Antoine's melodic inversion, the core tensions and relations of the opera — desire, fear, love, and a casual racism — are already in play, delineated in the music. (Example 5.1)

Throughout the opera, Antoine's vocal line is characterized by melismatic settings. In an operatic diegesis as carefully configured as is *Elsewhereless*, characterized by syllabic, arioso-like settings, Antoine's melismas — and indeed any of the instances when a character expands a melodic line — make strong contrast. Antoine's melismatic lines, his excess of notes, reveal his distancing of himself from the warmth of social relations, an

affectation that is ironic and judgmental, at times cruel. This works against the convention of melismas in operatic melody, which usually create intensity or excess of emotion, signification moving beyond language and reason. They also, however, might be seen as working within this convention, revealing Antoine's fear and the possibility of his losing control. In this operatic diegesis, it becomes significant that Malcolm's perfecting of English includes the assimilation of Antoine's bitter and mocking melody. (Examples 4.23 and 4.24)

Similarly, in all three operas the orchestral interludes are formative in creating the affect within the fictive world rather than external to it. Frequently, instrumental music repeats at significant points, adding emphasis or shifting the signification in relation to a past event. These functions are also characteristic of non-diegetic music in film. The orchestral music in opera differs, however, in that it is inextricable from the sung melody, and ultimately determines the shape and character of the fictive world. It is, with the voice, the way the operatic story is enacted.

Operatic diegesis also differs from film in that it is never seamless, and particularly when most powerfully affective. In opera, composed moments of great intensity or vocal virtuosity frequently rupture the diegesis. By emphasizing voice, they are performative and foreground music over narrative. At the level of reception, the risk always exists that the diegetic surface will be broken, the story interrupted through audience identification with some aspect of the music or performance. This may or may not be intended by the composer, in that audience response can never be determined completely.

All of the operas contain “‘phenomenal’ performance,” music that is performed and heard by the characters on the stage, and understood as such by us, the theatre audience.² In *Beatrice Chancy*, only the opening ring shout is such an instance, although there are ambiguous instances such as Beatrice’s singing of “The Cherry Tree Carol” in her scene with Lead in Act I.1. *Louis Riel* contains many examples, including the Act II.4 on-stage band and mob chorus, “We’ll hang him up the river,” Marguerite’s lullaby, the singing of the liturgy in the Church at Frog Lake, and the Métis choruses and dances. In *Elsewhereless*, in Scene 6, a radio plays the “suspended waltz,” the music to which Eugene and Malcolm dance. The suspended waltz is both phenomenal performance in Scene 6, yet also recurs as a significant non-phenomenal component of the diegesis, that is “unheard” by the characters.

There are also instances in *Beatrice Chancy* and *Louis Riel* where the music of the opera itself is outside of the narrative and therefore is extra to the diegesis, or non-diegetic. The non-diegetic in opera narrative is determined by narrative structure, rather than through use of an aesthetic determination, realism, as in film narrative. *Louis Riel* is framed by Somers’ adaptation of the marching song “Riel sits in his chamber o’ state.” Analogous to the opera overture, this melody is of the opera and crucial to its interpretation, yet functions as a commentary outside of the story. *Beatrice Chancy* has more frequent music that is outside of the operatic diegesis, stopping the action by commenting on it, as would the chorus in Greek tragedy. These instances are all choruses, quotations of spirituals, such as “O Mary don’t you weep,” “I must walk some lonesome valley,” and “O Freedom,” or madrigal-like compositions such as “How can I

² Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 5.

love” and “I was black but comely.” They open the narrative, in some cases stopping the forward drive of the plot, profoundly affecting the experience of the opera, increasing rather than diminishing its intensity. They are also analogous to the structural effect of the aria in baroque opera in stopping the action. They create respite from the violence of the story while reflecting and commenting on it, refocusing attention and interpretation from the brutal immediacy of particular events to an indictment of slavery and the necessity of historical memory.

Voice has an ambiguous place in operatic diegesis. The literal voice of the singer who embodies a character in the opera is crucial to the construction of character. Voice in this sense seems self-evident: the sopranos, contraltos, tenors, or basses of the opera. Voice, for example, might be considered as a signifier of the gender of a character in the most commonsensical way, with high registers associated with the female voice and femininity, and low associated with the male voice and masculinity. It is well known, but worth noting again, that this is not the case in opera, where the assignment of a particular voice to a character, and therefore the signification of the singer’s voice, is conventional. The operatic voice is also characterized, through its history, by gender ambivalence or ambiguity: the castrato voice in the eighteenth century, the contemporary male soprano, women who specialize in trouser roles, sometimes taking over a castrato role but also in many cases as a composed part, a tenor as an old woman and so on. The effect of the voice, further, is shaped by histories of practice, training, institutions, performance practice, and through these, audience expectation.

Abbate, using the work of Michel Poizat,³ distinguishes different functions of voice in opera. The voice can directly serve language and the drama, and thereby remain within the operatic diegesis. It can become, following from Poizat, a “voice-object” capturing the listener’s attention, or as Abbate says, a “radical autonomization” of the voice shedding linguistic or dramatic meaning.⁴ Or, finally, the performance itself supercedes the drama or the pure sound of the voice, as Abbate says, “moments at which either of the first two are breached by the consciousness of the real performer, of witnessing a performance.”⁵ Both the “voice-object” and performance are points of identification for the listener outside of the operatic diegesis. The danger is always present that through audience identification, the performer will emerge from within the operatic diegesis and remove the mask of character.

Opera always contains this explicit relationship with the audience, the risk and pleasure of the open and multifaceted work. And although one might say that certain operas — *bel canto* opera as represented by Rossini, for example — privilege voice and virtuosic performance, even those works most committed to drama are not exempt from audience identification with a voice and vocal performance. Both *Beatrice Chancy* and *Louis Riel* possess moments of vocal virtuosity and extremes of vocal range that potentially could pull the audience from its immersion in narrative. The virtuosic vocal lines that characterize Beatrice are examples, more compelling because they are composed in the soprano range privileged in opera since its inception. Rolfe’s vocal embellishment in some arias, such as Beatrice’s Act II.1 aria in which she recalls her

³ Poizat.

⁴ Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

mother, as discussed above, allude to the history of the genre. The brilliance and acclaim that the young soprano Measha Brueggergosman brought to the role is evidence of the performer superceding the work. Obvious examples of equivalent soprano virtuosity in *Louis Riel* include Marguerite's lullaby, "Hano" in Act III.1, the Act III.1 quintet, Julie's aria in Act I.3, and the trio among Riel, his mother, and sister in Act II.3.

In both works, male voices also — in these operas, Francis Chancy and Louis Riel respectively — bear the potential of similarly affecting an audience. Chancy's aria in Act II.3, "God, Beatrice, if only you knew how much I suffer!" and his last line in Act IV.1 "A man knows death before he sees it," register an intensity commensurate with Beatrice's outbursts, and are frequently high in the baritone range. Louis Riel's arias, also virtuosic and frequently demanding a high tessitura, can announce to the audience virtuosic vocal performance or recede into the character of the delirious Riel, one of the rare depictions in opera of male hysteria. Characteristic of mad scenes in opera, the music which Somers composed for Riel, particularly in his Act I.4 aria, consists of melismatic and ornamented vocal lines, and is characterized by virtuosic singing and the disintegration of language. The distinguished and memorable vocal artistry of Bernard Turgeon as Louis Riel, Roxolana Roslak as Marguerite Riel, and Gregory Dahl as Francis Chancy, illustrates the separation of performance from within the operatic diegesis. Finally, the contest between story and vocal performance has high stakes, in that vocal virtuosity and extremes of range mark the significant places in the narrative in all of the operas. The voice *in extremis* contributes to the emplotment of the story and is also the site of potential rupture.

Voice also has musical connotations not directly connected to the demands of the text. The choice of voices in the work, the Soprano/Alto/Tenor Bass (SATB) configuration for example, contains a potential sonority that defines the operatic diegesis. This is a version of a musical connotation of “voice” meaning a strand in the contrapuntal composition, and it bears the weight of music history through accentuating the soprano-bass harmonic orientation of Western music. However, this isn’t a necessary component in contemporary composition. *Elsewhereless* has a distinct and idiosyncratic sonic world, with a vocal complement of mezzo-soprano, tenor, two baritones and a bass, with obvious vocal emphasis on the male voices. The orchestra in *Elsewhereless* is also distinctive and defines the sound of the diegesis of this opera.

Time and the journey

Opera is a performed narrative. As such, it requires the transformation of a chronicle or story into plot. Peter Brooks describes the concept of plot:

Plot as we need and want the term is hence an embracing concept for the design and intention of narrative, a structure for those meanings that are developed through temporal succession, or perhaps better: a structuring operation elicited by, and made necessary by, those meanings that develop through succession and time.⁶

He then suggests as an analytical model the Russian Formalist distinction between *fabula*, “the order of events referred to by the narrative,” and *sujet*, “the order of events presented in the narrative discourse.”⁷ This distinction, and its usefulness in thinking about operatic narrative, is particularly apparent in *Elsewhereless*, which tells its story via

⁶ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*

flashbacks as if emphasizing that the present moment is never singular or sufficient, its meaning and experience finding fullness only in history. This sense of the troubled present is intensified in *Elsewhereless* in that the opera is framed by the immediate present. Malcolm, the sole remaining bearer of the stories, is separated from the internal narrative by the abyss of memory. (Figure 5.1)

Scene Emplottment (<i>sujet</i>)	Chronicle (<i>fabula</i>)	Characters	Main event(s)	Significant musical event, quotation, or reference to ethnicity
Act I				
Prologue	13	Malcolm	The narrative present	Suspension motive and suspended waltz Pitched gongs
1	8	Andrew, Beth, Malcolm	Waiting for Antoine, before dinner. The monkey's scream.	Pitched gongs, log drum, quica
2	1	Antoine, Eugene, Malcolm	Antoine and Eugene arrive, meet Malcolm. Banishment.	Pitched gongs, log drums
3	9	Andrew, Beth, Malcolm	Antoine's directive to keep the Canadian embassy open. The live monkey — "a specialty," "an honour."	Pitched gongs, log drum
4	2	Antoine, Malcolm	Malcolm asks Antoine for a letter of recommendation.	
5	6	Andrew, Beth, Malcolm	Andrew and Beth arrive, meet Malcolm.	Rhythmic pattern of the log drums, beat on the body and strings of the guitar
6	3	Eugene, Malcolm	Dancing, the English lesson. Malcolm inquires about his letter of recommendation.	Suspended waltz
7	10	Andrew, Antoine, Beth, Malcolm	Antoine arrives for dinner, kills and eats the monkey's brain. Terror and beauty.	Pitched gongs, Chinese opera gong

Figure 5.1 The Emplottment of *Elsewhereless*

Act II				
8	4	Antoine, Eugene, Malcolm	Malcolm is reading to Eugene his letter requesting a scholarship. Antoine enters and announces that he is promoted to ambassador. Eugene's elsewhereless.	Passacaglia Eugene's "elsewhereless" melody Pitched gong
9	7	Andrew, Beth, Malcolm	Andrew sketching Malcolm Beth enters and Malcolm leaves. "Things are worse." A child is shot.	Suspended waltz Pitched gong
10	5	Antoine, Eugene, Malcolm	Antoine and Eugene leave the house. Malcolm rejects Eugene.	Echo of suspended waltz Pitched gong, log drum
11	11	Andrew, Antoine, Beth	Antoine explains his design to become a hero, using the imminent genocide, dances with the dead monkey. Antoine is shot.	Pitched gong Chinese opera gong "O Canada" "The Maple Leaf Forever"
12	12	Andrew, Beth, Malcolm	Andrew and Beth leave. Beth gives Malcolm a letter.	Passacaglia melody (Scene 8) Pitched gongs, log drum
(Postlude)	13	Malcolm	Malcolm tears Beth's letter. The narrative present. Dream of Elsewhereless.	Malcolm recalls Eugene's "elsewhereless" melody

Figure 5.1 continued

Brooks extends his examination of emplotment by engaging the structuralist analysis of Roland Barthes in *S/Z*, in so far as it engages narrative and the reader. He takes Barthes two irreversible codes of his five codes, the proairetic and the hermeneutic that proceed only forward and must be analyzed thus. Brooks describes them respectively as "the code of actions ('The Voice of the Empirical') and the code of enigmas and answers ('The Voice of Truth')."⁸ The pure proairetic narrative would be a chronological chronicle, as Brooks describes the picaresque tale or the novel of pure adventure, in which the structure of the plot follows the causal "logic of the actions." The purely

⁸ Ibid., 18.

hermeneutic he describes as the detective story, in that the hermeneutic code “concerns rather the questions and answers that structure a story, their suspense, partial unveiling, temporary blockage, eventual resolution, with the resulting creation of a ‘dilatatory space’ — the space of suspense — which we work through toward what is felt to be, in classical narrative, the revelation of meaning that occurs when the narrative sentences reaches full predication.”⁹ Brooks’ concluding analytical assessment of Barthes’ irreversible codes in terms of a consideration of emplotment is a useful fleshing out of the simple distinction between *fabula* and *subet*:

Plot, then, might best be thought of as an “overcoding” of the proairetic by the hermeneutic, the latter structuring the discrete elements of the former into larger interpretive wholes, working out their play of meaning and significance. If we interpret the hermeneutic to be a general gnomic code, concerned not narrowly with enigma and its resolution but broadly with our understanding of how actions come to be semiotically structured, through an interrogation of their point, their goal, their import, we find that Barthes contributes to our conception of plot as part of the dynamics of reading.¹⁰

A speculation in terms of operatic narrative would be the consideration of the extent to which the music is part of the hermeneutic code, participating in the overcoding of discrete elements of action, and simple cause and effect, to create “larger interpretive wholes,” and influencing their “play of meaning and significance.” Brooks’ semiotic structuring of actions in the literary story and plot in order to engage the reader might be translated into musical terms and compared with Kramer’s latent musical subjects that present their signification through listener recognition, are organized by the musical structure, and powerfully determine the experience and ultimately the meanings of the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

opera. Music in opera might be considered co-extensive with the hermeneutic in that it configures and interprets the proairetic elements of the narrative.

On the other hand, music also possesses its own logic and interconnections, not reducible to the drama. In *Elsewhereless*, for example, melodic and motivic repetitions of the floating motive or the suspended waltz can remind the listener of prior events, situations, or characters and their interactions, or even signify beyond the opera. They also have significance within a musical logic that creates a time frame that differs from the emplotment of the drama alone. The first time the suspended waltz is heard, for example, and the iteration that gives it musical precedence in the opera, is in the Prologue, the chronological end of the narrative. This is also the case for the floating motive. The Prologue, Malcolm's present, radically separated from the enclosed story, is the source of motivic, timbral, and pitch orientation for the entire opera. Each of the operas, although radically different in their particulars, could be analyzed in terms of musical logic in relation to the libretto. The emplotment of opera combines the verbal logic of the libretto with the logic of the music to create a whole that is indeed larger than the two separate elements.

This sense of opera emplotment as the radical fusion of linguistic story and music may have yet another twist. In a chapter "Narrative Desire," Brooks describes reading as a form of generalized desire, analogous to Freud's Eros.

Narratives both tell of desire — typically present some story of desire — and arouse and make use of desire as dynamic of signification. Desire is in this view like Freud's notion of Eros, a force including sexual desire but larger and more polymorphous, which (he writes in *Beyond the Pleasure*

Principle) seeks “to combine organic substances into ever greater unities.”¹¹

A consideration of desire in opera would need a dedicated analysis engaging both music and voice in addition to narrative. It would also be necessary to address narrative and musical time in relation to emplotment. Narrative time, which determines the experience of the operatic plot and is another defining element of the operatic diegesis, is contingent on musical time, which in turn is significant in the configuration of desire in opera. Micro-rhythm or the moment-to-moment delineation of time, the macro-rhythm of sections, repetitions across the work, the affective expansion of musical time beyond linguistic time, as well as the drive toward, and delay of, closure — i.e., the musical contribution to the configuration of dilatory space — are all part of this. A further aspect of desire in relation to the operas of this study is that each opera has desire at the core of its plot, and each possesses characters that are, in Brooks terminology, “desiring machines.”¹² Each opera contains an analogous pair, which consists of an inter-relationship “shown” by the music. Further, each pair is inter-racial, a characteristic that is crucial to the relationship between the characters. In *Louis Riel* the analogous desiring machines are Louis Riel and John A. MacDonald, their interconnection created in the plot, although they never meet. Certainly, oppositional structures in terms of geography, race, relative power and political design, as described by Zinck,¹³ are also characteristic of the opera, and are corroborated and intensified by the music. Whatever their differences, however, Riel and MacDonald are similar in the intensity of their respective desires. It is telling, in this regard, that they both sing the line, “I cannot let one foolish

¹¹ Brooks, 37.

¹² *Ibid.*, 39.

¹³ Zinck, “Music and Dramatic Structure in the Operas of Harry Somers,” 51-55.

man stand in the way of a whole nation!” to the same melody, thus linking their individual desires despite difference. In *Beatrice Chancy*, father and daughter, Beatrice and Francis, are likewise linked in analogous desires that so exceed the narrative they seem metaphysical: desire for love, revenge, power, justice, material satiation that questions life’s meaning. They share a melody that Beatrice sings in the assertion of her love for Lead in Act IV, and Francis repeats when singing of his love for Beatrice, in the final chorus of the opera. In *Elsewhereless*, Antoine and Malcolm share their love and desire for Eugene and their impassioned ambitions, in each case thwarted by the unjust social structures in which they are situated. They too share music: Malcolm assimilating Antoine’s bitter manner of speech as revealed in his melodic lines, and ultimately restating Malcolm’s melody. (Examples 4.23 and 4.24)

Boundaries

A final observation about narrative in opera concerns the configuration, through plot and music, of a desire for closure and the finite. This is the case despite the breaching of the boundaries of the work in its reception and its dialogic inter-textuality. These breaches of the enclosed work are acute in *Beatrice Chancy*, *Elsewhereless* and *Louis Riel* which function as a signifying field: self-consciously referencing the “field” of ethnographic observation; a metaphoric “field” as a bounded space that is nonetheless open and connected to other spaces; and the “field” on another level of opera and its influences. The drive towards closure, however, is evident in that each work has a macro-structure that defines the temporal limits of the work and also the large shape of the

operatic narrative. Each, as with any narrative, has a narrative eschatology, a concern with beginnings and endings.

Beatrice Chancy has a structure analogous to baroque opera or oratorio, consisting of delineated shorter sections within scenes, each scene containing at least one aria, and every character having a significant aria or solo. It begins with a ring shout, “Massa Winter be dyin now,” and ends with a spiritual, “O Freedom,” speaking the veiled and then the revealed allegory of freedom from slavery. Both iterations of the freedom allegory involve the entire cast and orchestra, and in both instances are sung *a cappella*. The opening of the opera is poised ambiguously inside and outside of the diegesis, as performers gradually leave the shout to enter their place in the diegesis of the opera as musician or character. The final choruses of the opera are outside of the diegesis, commenting on the narrative and projecting desire beyond the narrative boundary.

Elsewhereless has a plot that unfolds as cinematic narrative in a series of flashbacks enunciating two simultaneous narrative times. Framed by the present, as if the entire opera is a nested story or a meta-narrative, the operatic narrative, with the participation of the music, creates a cyclic structure. It is mysteriously closed in on itself as the conclusion of the opera loops back to the Prologue, and in this possesses the potential for infinite other stories or none — a moment in time. Malcolm is the sole occupant of the postlude and prologue, the “native-subject” who remains after the withdrawal of the Others. He is changed, as we learn from his music, marked by his relationships, yet the opera closes with his repetition of Eugene’s dream of “elsewhereless,” sung to the past tense: “I dreamed of a place where I found no shadow of lingering ambition, a place

which spoke of nowhere else.” Just as Malcolm shuts the Others and therefore the audience from his past, so his future is cloaked in mystery.

Louis Riel is a well-known and contested history rendered in the opera as mythic, universalizing the characters beyond historical specificity. The opera is framed by the haunting melody derived from the march “Riel sits in his chamber o’ state.” Somers musically inflected the melody in order that it be identified within the codes of the opera as Métis and therefore associated with Riel. It occurs as a ballad at the beginning of the work, outside of the diegesis of the opera. The original text of the march is still intact and therefore sung to the transformed music. The doubleness of this utterance — Somers’ musical treatment paired with the original text — forces reflection on the ambiguity of Louis Riel within Canadian history.

Chapter 6

Singing Canadian History on the Operatic Stage

Why do we narrate history? Perhaps because, as Peter Brooks says in the preface to *Reading for the Plot*, “

Narration is one of the large categories or systems of understanding that we use in our negotiations with reality, specifically in the case of narrative, with the problem of temporality: man’s time-boundedness, his consciousness of existence within the limits of mortality. And plot is the principal ordering force of those meanings that we try to wrest from human temporality.¹

In face of the pathos of human mortality, there is a drive to create permanence through the temporal unfolding of a story. In the case of national histories, histories of colonial encounter, occupation, or conquest, of slavery, of minority groups within dominant societies, the historical narrative can be a means of defining present reality and therefore affecting such crucial concerns as legal status, ownership, or identity. As such, history is a site of conflict in which the present good is at stake.

It is for this reason that there is urgency to promote histories that posit subject positions, narrative interpretations, and experiences that counter oppressive hegemonic stories. This is an issue of representation that is exacerbated in that both dominant history and counter-narratives are disseminated through a kaleidoscope of cultural forms from literature, film, popular music, television, to visual culture, government institutions, scholarly publications, and indeed art music and opera.

History as cultural representation has a social stake. This is the case regardless of its cultural vehicle, film, novel, or opera, for example, or the form in which it is presented,

¹ Brooks, xi.

whether fiction as in the case of *Elsewhereless* and *Beatrice Chancy*, or “historiographic metafiction” as in the case of *Louis Riel*. They are all, as Linda Hutcheon describes historiographic metafiction, “obsessed with the question of how we can come to know the past today.”²

The history of the nation state, as Benedict Anderson theorizes, forms part of the national self-definition³ explicating how a national entity conceives of itself as a cohesive whole. In Anderson’s analysis, the nation is an imaginary social and political configuration, in which most of its members will not meet or know each other, yet all will experience a sense of “belonging” to an understandable entity.⁴ The nation state also needs history; Anderson indicates “[the nations’] subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists.”⁵ Equally valuable, however, Anderson leaves open-ended the moral and ethical judgment of the national entity: to paraphrase Anderson, the nation is indeed invented, but is not necessarily a fabrication prone to nationalism as false consciousness. As he says, “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”⁶ This opens the possibility of re-imagining the nation, and appears as an invitation for critical engagement in the representation of national histories, and social practices and relationships.

² Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 44.

³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

Historically a settler society, both a colony and colonizing, Canada has particular needs in creating cultural cohesion. From European encounter and the violent conquest of northern Indigenous peoples, it has been a multicultural society characterized by waves of migration from different parts of the world and with different relations to power, political process, education, and wealth: slaves, indentured servants, refugees, and business, professional, and upper classes. Canadian history in English originally possessed an Anglo-European bias characterized by mythic constructions of the land as northern wilderness, a forbidding and sublime geography, and the inevitably disappearing noble savage, even though the wilderness was in truth resource or real estate, and despite the continuing historical and political presence of Aboriginal peoples. These myths were enlisted in a history whose markers, all from Anglo-Canadian perspectives, included the defeat of the French, Confederation, the building of the Canadian railway and the drive westward, and pioneer stories of the Prairie provinces and the North. Populist English Canadian identity still draws on this mythic construction even after many decades of historical revision that acknowledges racial difference and racism, violence perpetrated on Indigenous peoples, class and labour history, gender and sexuality as important components of Canadian history.

Each of the operas studied tells a Canadian historical narrative that deals with issues of race and racism. These works break no new historical or ideological ground, but significantly they place Canadian historical narrative in the site of myth — the operatic stage. These works make claims, through the representation of national history (*Louis Riel* and *Beatrice Chancy*) and narrative dependent on Canadian history (*Elsewhereless*), to a definition of the Canadian past and by extension the present and future.

As well, these operas take on political issues that are contemporary with their productions. The most recent operas, *Elsewhereless* (1998) and *Beatrice Chancy* (1997), are informed by recent progressive discourses concerning race, gender and sexuality, whiteness, identity, and globalization. *Louis Riel* (1967) belongs to an earlier historical period. It was commissioned for the centennial of Canadian confederation and followed a decade of debate about Canadian identity in face of regionalism and the assertion of provincial identity — an issue brought into focus by the Pearson government's "cooperative federalism," Premier Jean Lesage's appeal for special status for Quebec, and changes to Canadian immigration law that shifted from supporting racist, neo-colonial policies of nation-building that recruited European immigrants to non-racist policy in the early sixties.⁷ These conditions were the base of Pierre Elliot Trudeau's vision of a multicultural, bilingual nation. Alan Simmons, discussing changes in Canadian immigration policy, provides a rich description of the period in which *Louis Riel* was created. The ethos that Simmons describes aids a historical reading of the opera. Simmons also observes Canadian ambivalence to racial equality and Canada's continued racist practices in this period, even as the government instituted new immigration policies and official multiculturalism.

The late 1950s and early 1960s was [from the perspective of Canada's emergent position as a middle power, its labour needs, and newly opened immigration policies] an important moment of change in the perception by Canadian political and business leaders about the role of the nation in the international system. Canada's rising wealth, its role in the Second World War, and its place as a Commonwealth nation at a moment when former

⁷ See Paul W. Bennet and Cornelius J. Jaenen, "The Challenge of Canadian Diversity, 1960s-1980s: Emerging Identities or Portent of Deconfederation?" in *Emerging Identities: Selected Problems and Interpretations in Canadian History* (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1986), 524-558. See also, Alan Simmons, "Racism and Immigration Policy," in *Racism and Social Inequality in Canada: Concepts, Controversies, and Strategies of Resistance*, ed. by Vic Satzewich (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 1998), 87-114.

colonies of Britain in Asia, the Caribbean and Africa were becoming independent nations, created significant opportunities for Canada to take on new leadership in the international system in such areas as peace keeping, international development, and anti-racism. To leaders of the time, the imagined future of the nation necessarily included a shift first to non-racist immigration, then to multiculturalism (1971) and the official incorporation of humanitarian principles governing refugee admission and family reunification (1978). The non-racist thrust of the policy over the 1960s and 1970s, however, never did develop any strong anti-racist elements, and policy remained open to charges that racist sentiments and practices were deeply structured into immigration practice, including particular practices that admitted non-European workers into lower-wage occupational niches.⁸

It is within the context of contemporary Canadian history that the three operas of this study were written, and find their fullest meanings. Both *Elsewhereless* and *Beatrice Chancy* develop musical narratives that are based on critiques of racism and minority oppression, and issues of identity and globalization. Both have historical injustices as prehistories to the narrative. The creative and political act of writing *Beatrice Chancy*, a narrative of Canadian slavery, is part of George Elliott Clarke's larger project of acknowledging the history of African-Canadians in the Maritimes, and in particular Africville, leading to his recent project significantly titled, *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature*. In the Introduction, Clarke describes childhood as an African-Canadian in white Nova Scotia; he remembers his concerned father explaining racism, and his own growing consciousness of Black resistance. This project makes pointedly plain the need to acknowledge memory and experience as a form of healing historical injury and omission. The recent experience of racism and cultural division are the experiential root of Lead's powerful cry that he will "make white Nova Scotia howl."

...as a boy, I was less certain about my Nova Scotianess. Nothing in the province reflected me or mine save for the two dozen or so churches of the

⁸ Simmons, 95.

African United Baptist Association (AUBA). Official — tourist brochure — Nova Scotian culture consisted of kilted lasses doing Highland flings to ecstatic fiddle accompaniment, or of hardy, stolid fisherman — or sailors — perishing amid the heaving North Atlantic waves, or of ‘folkloric’ Acadians pining for exiled ‘Evangeline’ in their ‘picturesque villages. The exalted Nova Scotian culture of my youth was *not* Africville — that black hamlet occupied by the City of Halifax, *not* poor black schools that somehow still educated and graduated people’s intellectuals, *not* a couple of dozen black communities, *not* magnificent black ministers and unparalleled black singers, *not* even the indefatigable black boxers.⁹

Elsewhereless has a pre-history of the systemic oppression in Canada of gays and lesbians at its most virulent, destroying careers and lives. As well, the inaction of the West at the unfolding of human catastrophe in Rwanda, as the most obvious African example, has a parallel with Atom Egoyan’s personal history as an Armenian-Canadian and through this the Armenian genocide in Turkey. This personal connection and the struggle between history and memory is the subject of Egoyan’s more recent film *Ararat* (2003). The story unfolds in Toronto, its narrative thread the making of a film about the genocide, through which Egoyan explores collective memory and the construction of history. The text of Antoine’s letter in *Elsewhereless*, callously denying the coming political storm and revealing his terrible opportunism in face of tragedy, bears comparison with the history of the Armenian tragedy.

Louis Riel, written and composed within the social and political conditions of the 1960s, differs from the later operas. Mavor Moore identifies John Coulter’s play *Riel* as the progenitor of the opera, in particular its dramatic shape that ironically constructs a parallel between Riel’s execution of Thomas Scott and the Canadian government’s execution of Riel, both justified by an appeal to the interests of the state over the

⁹ George Elliott Clarke, *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 3.

individual: "I cannot let one man stand in the way of a whole nation." Moore also overtly presents Riel as a universalized figure:

The legend will far outgrow the man, because Riel is more than a minor figure in Canadian history. He is an immensely colourful personification of some of the great liturgical themes of mankind. One is that of the idealist driven mad by continued betrayal by ruthless realists in whom he mistakenly trusts. Another is that of the thinker paralyzed by his thinking, the Hamlet syndrome. Another is that of the half-breed, the schizophrenic who belongs to no people. Still another is that of the leader of a small nation standing in the way of "progress": is he hero or fool? And what of a madman unjustly hung?¹⁰

These assumptions of national cohesion, racial purity in face of the pathology of *métissée*, or of the inevitability of progress and the disappearance of indigenous culture are themes of the opera that must be addressed.

Albert Braz, in his study of the many representations of Riel, *The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture*, characterizes the opera as one of the martyr versions of the Riel history, a "distinct portrait of Riel as a victim of Confederation," and following John Kinsey Howard's *Strange Empire* (1952) "in its overt demonizing of Canadian expansionists from Thomas Scott to MacDonald."¹¹ This needs to be qualified with the observation that the opera is a reflection of a historical moment. It shares the Anglo-Canadian concerns of the sixties about national cohesion and regionalism, Quebec nationalism and the binary division between English and French Canada as well as concern for Other racial groups, here represented by Aboriginal people and Métis. It also has an element of Canadian post-war confidence, which strove for a more significant

¹⁰ Mavor Moore, Notes to the Recording of *Louis Riel*, Centrediscs, 7.

¹¹ Albert Braz, *The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 133.

place in global politics.¹² Despite its satirical representation of Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, it also celebrates his determination to create a powerful and united dominion. Significantly, Macdonald is set up as both oppositional to, and parallel with, Riel.

All three operas are haunted by ghosts of historical brutality or oppression, sung as embedded stories within the narrative. In *Louis Riel*, Marguerite's lullaby and Taché's passionate description of the West before Canadian expansion bring the spectral presence of Aboriginal and Métis peoples into the opera, even as, within the context of the work, they are subject to the myth of inevitable disappearance. In *Beatrice Chancy*, Beatrice tells the story of her mother, washed ashore in a shipwreck and claimed as slave and concubine by Francis Chancy. In this moment, the local history opens to the Black Atlantic, connecting Canadian history prior to Confederation to an imperial story of brutal injustice that spans continents.

Elsewhereless is possessed by embedded historical narratives that emerge in Antoine's outbursts of ambition and talent denied, and by the absence of history in Malcolm's refusal to reveal personal memory or experience. His refusal of history at once reveals its psychic necessity and importance. The profound and terrifying metaphor of "elsewhereless" assumes personal and political significance as both despair in Antoine's banishment and Malcolm's thwarted desire for education, and plenitude in Eugene's wish for a location outside of history, a location of pure presence without ambition. This wish for plenitude, a plenitude whose other component is death, is "echoed" by Malcolm in the Prologue and "postlude" that frame the opera.

¹² See Simmons.

Finally the telling of these significant histories is important for Canada. Even in the case of the older opera, *Louis Riel*, the envoicing of the protagonist and the presence of his fictional subjectivity unmediated by external narrator moves beyond the limitations of the work, and continues to be an important experience. It represents, as do *Elsewhereless* and *Beatrice Chancy*, the poly-lingual, poly-musical voices of the colonized Others, again as unmediated performance. They are subjects and central actors in their own histories, who sing these unbearable histories that must be told.

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Scores

Rolfe, James. *Beatrice Chancy*. Libretto by George Elliott Clarke. 1997. Photocopy of manuscript in the possession of the composer.

For 2 sopranos, mezzo-soprano, 2 baritones, bass
organ, piano, percussion, 2 violins, viola, violoncello, contrabass
Full score.

Sharman, Rodney, *Elsewhereless*. Libretto by Atom Egoyan. 1998. Photocopy of manuscript in the possession of the composer.

For mezzo-soprano, tenor, 2 baritones, bass
2 flutes, 2 bass clarinets, mandoline, guitar, harp, percussion, violin, contrabass
Full score.

Somers, Harry, *Louis Riel*. Libretto by Mavor Moore with Jacques Languirand. 1967. Photocopies of manuscripts in the possession of the Canadian Music Centre.

Louis Riel has 30 named characters, other subsidiary characters, and choruses. Primary characters: Marguerite Riel, soprano, Julie Riel, mezzo-soprano, Riel and Sir John A. MacDonald, baritones, Bishop Taché, bass.

Full orchestra.

Five-volume orchestral score and three-volume 2 pianos and vocal score.

Discography and Video

Rolfe, James. *Beatrice Chancy*. The Queen of Puddings Music Theatre Company.

Directed by Dáirine Ní Mheadhra and John Hess. With Measha Brueggergosman, Lori Klassen, Lisa Lindo, Nigel Smith, Gregory Dahl, and Marcus Nance. Recorded by CBC-TV, June 28-30, 1999. Archival CD in the possession of the composer. (2 compact discs).

Sharman, Rodney. *Elsewhereless*. Vancouver New Music. Directed by Owen Underhill. With Fides Kruger, Willy Grenzberg, Benoit Boutet, Curtis Sullivan, and Marcus Nance. Recorded by John Siddel, May 15, 1999. Archival CD in possession of the composer. (1 compact disc).

Somers, Harry. *Louis Riel*. CBC-TV production and broadcast. Conducted by Victor Feldbrill. With Roxolana Roslak, Donald Rutherford, and Bernard Turgeon. Broadcast October 29, 1969. Introduction by Jan Rubes, with an interview of Harry Somers and Mavor Moore by Warren Davis. Archival videotape in the possession of the CBC and in the Music Archives at the National Library of Canada. (monophonic videotape).

———. *Louis Riel*. National Arts Centre Orchestra. Victor Feldbrill. With Roxolana Roslak, Diane Loeb, Donald Rutherford, Bernard Turgeon, and Jean-Pierre Hurteau. October 23, 1975. Recording of a live performance at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC. Centrediscs CMC 24/25/2685. (3 LP discs).