

PART I

**MAPPING THE TERRITORIAL BOUNDARIES
OF MUSICAL EKPHRASIS**

Music and the Sister Arts

John Robert Colombo (1936-),
What Pablo Picasso Did in "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon"

He stripped five of our women
whose eyes were as open as oracles
three he broke on beds of geometry
two he placed front to back with beasts

voodoo and calculus he let loose
to corrupt our consciousness
this way he circled us into a science
that way he settled us into a savagery¹

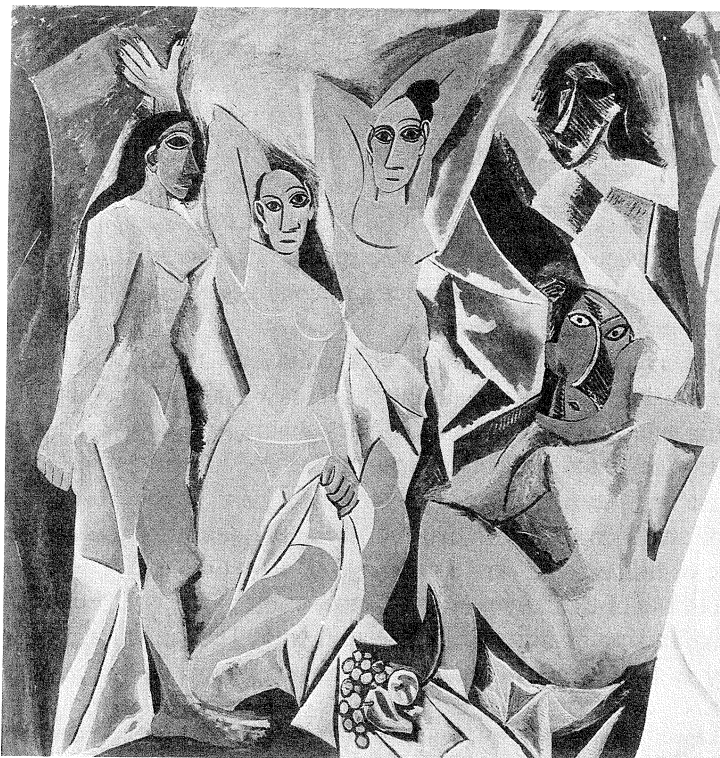


PLATE 1: Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

¹John Robert Colombo, *Abacadabra* (Toronto and Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. 60.

In the 1936 World Exposition in Paris, Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* was juxtaposed to Paul Éluard's poem on this very Picasso painting. Likewise, museums and art expositions increasingly consider pairing their exhibits with poetry inspired by them. Today's most avid collector of such poems, Gisbert Kranz, tells about having seen in the collection of the Vatican the bust of Pericles with, next to it, a framed poem about the sculpture.

The relationship between the two art forms started out as an invitation to poetry to learn from visual art. Horace's famous line, "ut pictura poesis," stimulated poets throughout the centuries to experiment with this claim. Lord Byron renders the prompt in his own words: "As pictures, so shall poems be,"² and more recently William Carlos Williams maintains that "the ear and the eye lie down together in the same bed." However, the history of literature and art has included voices that stressed the downside of too unproblematic a mutual emulation. Against the Greek poet Simonides of Keos who declared in deceptively brilliant rhetoric that poetry is eloquent art while art is mute poetry (thus prejudicing the case in favor of literary art), Leonardo da Vinci concluded, "if you call painting mute poetry, poetry can also be called blind painting."³ Lessing in his famous 1766 meditation on the boundaries between art and poetry, *Laokoon*, retorted that, deplorably, the result of making these boundaries permeable was often "in der Poesie die Schilderungssucht, und in der Malerei die Allegoristerei"—poetry rendered clumsy by the urge to depict, and art burdened by allegorizing.⁴

While such interartistic banter continues to draw admiration and contempt, fascination and doubt about its validity, the study of the relationship and mutual influence is now generally accepted as enlightening in many respects. Investigations of the ekphrastic poem in particular promise insights not only for literary theory and history, but also for other disciplines. For art historians, the full appreciation of the comprehensive nature of this type of verbal appraisal of art works opens new avenues into the evaluation of art reception. For a semiology of art, the investigations into ekphrasis constitute crucial groundwork. The knowledge of ekphrastic poetry is further considered to deepen insights regarding aesthetics, the

²"Hints from Horace," 571, in *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London 1961), p. 137. The expression "ut pictura poesis" stems from Horace's *De arte poetica* 360.

³Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting*, vol. 1, translated and annotated by A. Philip McMahon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 18.

⁴Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon, oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, in *Ausgewählte Werke* (Hamburg: Standard Verlag, 1955), vol. 5, pp. 5-87.

sociology of taste, and a socio-history of the interrelationships of the arts. And just as philosophical hermeneutics has contributed to the theory of ekphrasis, the theoretical reflections originating in the study of ekphrasis may in turn help further to clarify certain positions of hermeneutics.

Ekphrasis

The literary topos through which a poem (or any other verbal text) aspires to the timeless, eternal poise of the visual arts has received much attention in recent years and been subjected to intense scrutiny. As Leo Spitzer reminds us in the context of his beautiful study on Keats's *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, the term *ekphrasis*, enthusiastically revived in the literary debate of the past two decades, has been "known to Occidental literature from Homer to Theocritus to the Parnassians and Rilke, [as] the poetic description of a pictorial or cultural work of art, which description implies, in the words of Théophile Gautier, 'une transposition d'art,' the reproduction, through the medium of words, of sensuously perceptible *objets d'art*."⁵ Other definitions of the term *ekphrasis* include James Heffernan's concise phrase of "the verbal representation of visual representation"⁶ and Claus Clüver's more encompassing wording, by which he defines ekphrasis as "the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system."⁷

One of the ways of approaching the study of ekphrasis is to distinguish from various viewpoints what it is and what it is not. The German term "Bildgedicht," often used with similar connotations, covers the same ground and more. Understanding how the Germanic term is both broader and also more vague in its scope can serve to map the actual territory and its surroundings; I will return to this question later. Another way of contextualizing ekphrasis was pointed out by Hans Lund, who distinguishes between "texts interpreting a static artifact as a dynamic reality" (i.e. texts that "interpret existing or fictitious pictures as if they

⁵Leo Spitzer, "The *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, or Content vs. Metagrammar," *Comparative Literature*, 7 (1955): 204-225, repr. in Spitzer, *Essays on English and American Literature*, ed. Anna Hatcher (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 67-97: 72.

⁶James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 3.

⁷Claus Clüver, "Ekphrasis Reconsidered: On Verbal Representations of Non-Verbal Texts," in U.-B. Lagerroth, H. Lund, and E. Hedling, eds., *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997) p. 26.

were delimited sections of an exterior reality”) and “texts interpreting a dynamic reality as a static artifact” (i.e. texts that “interpret delimited fields of vision taken from the imagined or actual world of objects as if it were a matter of pigment on canvas”).⁸

Finally, a third extension of the scope defined by the term ekphrasis is found when we retrace it to its historical origins. In Greek literature, ekphrasis was by no means restricted to the poetic realm but occurred equally in epic works. One of the most typical applications was as a description of a work of art that pictorially represents mythological or historical figures. Such narrative portrayals were not an end in themselves but were aimed, as Mack Smith argues, “to provide an implicit, didactic commentary upon the narrative within which they are incorporated.”⁹ The visual pictures thus rendered in words were typically not independent works of fine art but decorations found on practical objects: tapestries, carpets, vases, and shields. Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* describes two tapestries, by Minerva and Arachne respectively, and then uses this discourse about representation to expose conflicting views of divinity. Longus’s *Daphnis and Chloë* opens with the description of a painting, and Virgil in the *Aeneid* shows his Aeneas weeping over a mural of the Trojan War. The most famous of all is certainly Homer’s ekphrasis of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*. Examples of this kind from more recent literature include Miguel de Cervantes’s discussion of Master Peter’s puppet show in *Don Quixote* which, according to Mack Smith, “thematizes the debate over the respective virtues of histories and romances,” the discussion in Jane Austen’s *Emma* of the protagonist’s idealizing portrait of Harriet Smith, and, in Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, Vronsky’s conventionalized portrait of Anna, which is contrasted with the portrait of her by Mihailov, who is said to have captured pictorially the traits that correspond to her essential character.¹⁰ In all these cases, a pictorial representation is interpreted verbally with the aim of understanding better what was primarily depicted. Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is another fascinating case to be investigated in this context.

⁸Hans Lund, *Text as Picture: Studies in the Literary Transformation of Pictures* (Lewiston NY: E. Mellen Press, 1992; translation of *Texten som tavla: Studier i litterär bildtransformation* [Lund: LiberFörlag, 1982]), pp. 1-2.

⁹Mack Smith, *Literary Realism and the Ekphrastic Tradition* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), p. 11.

¹⁰For more details on ekphrasis in prose texts see Mack Smith, *Literary Realism*, pp. 9-15.

There are, then, various viewpoints from which authors of epics, poetry, or prose can present a piece of visual art, and various ways in which they can embed such ekphrasis in their verbal texts. Alternatively, they can create verbal texts that are conceived as ekphrastic from beginning to end, where “the verbal representation of visual representation” is neither a part nor an interpretive mirror of an encompassing narration, but the content in itself. This happens most frequently (although by no means exclusively¹¹) in poems, and it is on them that I will focus in what follows. Furthermore, while the term ekphrasis was originally used with an implicit restriction to the word-image relationship, a similar case has been made in recent scholarship for literary representations of photography and film, dance and mime, and even musical compositions. Evocative descriptions of and narrations about “texts” belonging to any non-verbal sign system actually serve the same function as the traditional ekphrasis; they follow the same conventions, and make the same demands on the readers, as do verbal texts evoking paintings and sculptures.

Extending the application of the term towards the other side, I will argue that the recreating medium need not always be verbal, but can itself be any of the art forms other than the one in which the primary “text” is cast.¹² As the title of my study indicates, I will be particularly interested

¹¹In the course of several conference sessions on “ekphrasis,” I heard scholars argue for including certain essays written by art critics and critics of adjacent fields—ballet and film were particularly singled out—among what is considered an ekphrastic activity. The concept of “hymnische Kritik” as used by E.T.A. Hoffmann, Schumann, Jean Paul and others seems very fitting. Generally, the problem is, of course, with the word “certain.”

¹²While works of visual art aiming to “represent” works of literature or music are rarer—it is of paramount importance to distinguish transformations into a new, independent work from mere illustrations of a displayed verbal or music text—such “reverse ekphrasis” does exist. In his fine comparative analysis, “On Intersemiotic Transposition” (in *Poetics Today* 10/1, particularly pp. 79-83), Claus Clüver shows how Charles Demuth’s painting, *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold*, is more than superficially linked to William Carlos Williams’s poem “The Great Figure” whose third and fourth lines provide its title. Identifying ingredients typical for intersemiotic transposition (a transformation into an independent piece of art, or a “visual equivalent” rather than an illustration), Clüver asserts that in addition to the depiction of objects and materials mentioned by the poet, Demuth expresses such qualities as movement, the past tense, and noise. Finally, much earlier in the history of the arts, Giovanni Paolo Pannini painted the Roman scenes described in Hawthorne’s “novel,” *The Marble Faun* (see *Ancient Rome* and *Modern Rome*, now in the Metropolitan Museum). As Wendy Steiner brilliantly points out, Pannini did far more than transfer in paint onto canvas what Hawthorne had verbally depicted. The painter’s two works “establish the ideological division on sculpture and architecture on which *The Marble Faun* is based. They contrast the ancient world to the modern, the classical to the Catholic, and the

in transformations from the visual or verbal to the musical. I believe the creative processes that apply in the step from a painting to its poetic rendering to be analogous to that from a poem or painting to its rendering in music; in fact I maintain that they correspond to a degree that justifies adapting the terminology developed in the adjacent field. In view of this wider application, I would thus like to offer a forth definition of ekphrasis which further generalizes Clüver's wording. I suggest ekphrasis to be "a representation in one medium of a text composed in another medium."

To sum up: what must be present in every case of traditional ekphrasis is a three-tiered structure of reality and its artistic transformation:

- (1) a scene or story—fictitious or real,
- (2) a representation of that scene or story in visual form—a painting or drawing, photograph, carving, or sculpture (or, for that matter, in film or dance; in any mode that reaches us primarily through our visual perception), and
- (3) a rendering of that representation in poetic language. The poetic rendering can and should do more than merely describe the visual image. Characteristically, it evokes interpretations or additional layers of meaning, changes the beholders' focus, or guides their eyes towards details and contexts they might otherwise overlook.

Correspondingly, what must be present in every case of what I will refer to as *musical ekphrasis* is

- (1) a real or fictitious scene or story,
- (2) its representation in a visual or a verbal text, and
- (3) a rendering of that representation in musical language.

Music's sister arts, particularly the two media whose intersection gave rise to the term here adopted, presuppose different admixtures of "representation" and "narration"; similarly, the commonly used terms for the musical transformations—variations of either "tone poem" or "tone painting," in extension of the subtitles used in program music—also seem to alternate between the two concepts. A brief discussion of these two terms denoting modes of rendering reality is thus in order.

Pantheon to St. Peter's. They even inspire the opposing thematic foci in the novel through the artworks central to each canvas. [...] Finally, the semantic structure of Pannini's two canvases is fundamentally akin to that of *The Marble Faun*." (Wendy Steiner, *Pictures of Romance*, p. 109) These are cases of "visual representation of verbal representation."

Representation

There is a startling difference between music and the visual arts—painting in particular—in their attitudes toward representation and abstraction. It can easily seem that music is naturally, normally abstract, whereas painting is naturally, normally representational.

(Kendall Walton, “What is Abstract About the Art of Music?”)

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle expresses the firm belief that representation is characteristic of all arts—the visual, the verbal, and the musical. When used in the context of adjectives like visual, verbal, and musical, the term representation clearly carries with it a wealth of different implications.

The center of almost all philosophical theories of representation is occupied by a pair of terms in the style of “depiction/reference” or “picture/proposition.” The widespread dualistic understanding in turn prompted attempts at conflating the two concepts. The philosopher and aesthete Arthur Danto reminds us that the early Wittgenstein thought that a proposition was a sort of picture—a picture of a “fact”—so that propositional and pictorial understanding were of a piece for him.¹³ Considering this somewhat peculiar equation in the light of Wittgenstein’s famous formulation, “[t]o understand a proposition means to know what is the case if the proposition is true,” Danto then proceeds to explore the two opposing ways in which human utterance may relate to objects in the world.¹⁴ A depiction has what is called a “natural relation” to the object of which it is a depiction: recognizing what a depiction represents calls on the same sorts of perceptual skills that enter into recognizing the thing itself; basically the same neural pathways are activated in the process of recognizing a visual representation of a tree as in the process of recognizing the tree itself. What is at play here is resemblance, mimesis, or emulation—terms that denote that one aspect of the object (for instance, its visual appearance from one particular angle) is artfully reproduced, copied in the form of a highly consistent *gestalt*. Beyond still pictures (figural paintings and other works of visual art), modes of mimetic representation include moving pictures (mime, ballet, silent film), real-time

¹³For a discussion of this, see the chapter “Vehicles of Understanding,” in Arthur C. Danto’s *Connections to the World: The Basic Concepts of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 45-53.

¹⁴These in some sense composite representations are, of course, in no way all the “vehicles of understanding” Danto admits; he adds, in particular, names, signs, and symbols on the side of simpler units, and impressions, concepts, and ideas on that of more complex modes.

direct-speech performance (drama, staged or filmed), and “sonic pictures” (above all, onomatopoeic renderings, which range from generic cuckoo calls in orchestral scores to Olivier Messiaen’s bird-song transcriptions and from the portrayals of thunder and storm, waves and babbling brooks, to that of screeching doors and galloping horses).

A work (or expression) of mimetic art is often described as a structure of signs of the type called iconic, “the iconic sign being defined as that which has a singularity to, and shares some properties with, the object it denotes.”¹⁵ In musical utterances, this is the exception and not the rule. Sounds are by and large not signs in the sense of epitomizing recognizable identities that are unambiguously linked to an extraneous reality. In fact, musical representation can function in many different ways: as a signal, an emotional symptom, a mimetic image, an abstract trope denoting a thought, and even as a composite symbol referring to an entire concept.

I wish to argue that what and how music communicates about any extra-musical stimulus does indeed fall into the two categories that can be seen as analogous with those pertinent in the context of painting and poetry: depiction and reference. I use *depiction* by musical means as encompassing not only the instances of mimicry mentioned above, but also sensual impressions of hues, shapes, and spatiality. Correspondingly, *reference* by musical means, just like reference by verbal and pictorial means, will be understood as relying on cultural and historical conventions. In this context, Leonard Meyer speaks of connotations, which he defines as “those associations which are shared in common by a group of individuals within a culture.” Thus, he continues, “[c]onnotations are the

¹⁵The terms icon, index, and symbol originate, of course with C.S. Peirce. For Henry Orlov’s usage see “Toward a Semiotic of Music,” in Wendy Steiner, ed., *The Sign in Music and Literature* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 131-137: 132. Even the ostensibly most obvious musical emulations of nature are not, however, necessarily pure icons, as Karbusicky has shown with regard to the cuckoo call: “... the cuckoo’s cry [...] is an acoustic picture of the bird, and thus an *icon*. However, it can also be understood as an *index*: ‘Spring is here!’ In another context it can *symbolize* the whole of nature; in [...] the first movement of Gustav Mahler’s Symphony no. 1 the iconic quality is exceeded in this manner.” (Vladimir Karbusicky, *Grundriß der musikalischen Semantik* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986], p. 60-61.) Monelle seconds this when he observes that “it is possible for a musical syntagma to signify iconically an object which itself functions indexically in a given case.” However, he reminds us that there are musical portrayals of phenomena for which no expressive convention exists, like Arthur Honegger’s *Pacific 231* and *Rugby*. (See Raymond Monelle, *Theorizing Music: Text, Topic, Temporality* [forthcoming], draft text pp. 31-32.)

result of the associations made between some aspect of the musical organization and extramusical experience.”¹⁶

Let me expand on the two aspects of depiction/portrayal and reference /connotation. Albert Schweitzer, writing about the music of J.S. Bach, is one of many who refer to a distinction that keeps haunting the assumptions about music and its extra-musical stimuli. “Poetic music deals more with ideas, pictorial music with pictures; the one appeals more to the feeling, the other to our faculty of representation.”¹⁷ Indeed, poetry can convey feelings by referring to them directly, naming the invisible, whereas in painting, emotional expression must proceed via the representation of visible objects. However, the idea that any picture could be a perfect copy of *what is seen* (or that any other mimetic representation could be a perfect copy of what is perceived through the corresponding senses) is problematic in the sense of what Ernst Gombrich in *Art and Illusion* has famously called “the myth of the innocent eye.” This myth which, as Gombrich explains, supposes that what is perceived is simply given, that human observers passively receive sensual input and, if they are representational artists, set themselves the task of *re-presenting* what is out there, ignores the crucial role interpretation plays as part of the perceptive process.

What enables us to see or recognize a mimetic representation of an object as such is not just the resemblance between the object and the depiction of it, but also, and very significantly, convention. As members of a given culture we have learnt the iconographic conventions according to which a certain kind of representation must be read. “When we step in front of a bust,” Gombrich points out, “we understand what we are expected to look for. We do not as a rule take it to be a representation of a cut off head.”¹⁸ Similarly, since we are familiar with the “convention” of black-and-white photography, we do not conclude that the people thus presented literally have grey faces, that their hair and the clothes they wear are invariably either white, grey, or black, etc. “Realistic representation,” says Nelson Goodman, endorsing Gombrich’s view,

¹⁶Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 258.

¹⁷Albert Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach*, trans. Ernest Newman (London: Black, 1923/1950), vol. 2, p. 21.

¹⁸Ernst H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton, NJ: Phaidon, 1977 [5th edn]), p. 53.

depends not upon imitation or illusion or information but upon inculcation. [...] there is usually a system of representation, a plan of correlation, under which the picture represents the object. How correct the picture is under that system depends upon how accurate is the information about the object that is obtained by reading the picture according to that system. But how literal or realistic the picture is depends upon how standard the system is. [...] Realism is a matter of habit.¹⁹

While Goodman seems to agree with Wittgenstein when he stresses the “analogy between pictorial representation and verbal description,”²⁰ there are clearly limits to this analogy. In speaking of a “blue apple,” it is a matter of convention that the sequence of letters b-l-u-e denotes the color that English-speakers have learned to associate with the syllable, and not any of the ones we are accustomed to seeing on the skin of an apple; but if a painter paints a shape of an apple and colors it blue, then it is intuitively not a matter of convention if we find less resemblance between this representation and its object than, say, with a picture where the apple is green or red. On the other hand there is, as Gombrich puts it, a considerable “degree of plasticity in the way we see the world,”²¹ which enables us to learn to perceive resemblances between even outlandish pictorial representations and objects of the world by mastering conventions.

In music, a representation of “the extant world” is not quite so obvious. Schopenhauer objects to the notion of musical imitations of “phenomena of the world of perception,”²² and Tovey concurs with so many musicologists of his time who maintain that programmatic elements in so-called serious music are irrelevant to its value as music.²³ One believes that music has only very limited mimetic potential, while the other declares any musical representation as undesirable.

¹⁹Nelson Goodman, *Language of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn. 1976), p. 38.

²⁰Goodman, *Language of Art*, p. 40.

²¹Ernst Gombrich, *The Image and the Eye: Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London: Phaidon, 1994) p. 28.

²²Friedrich Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. I, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), p. 264.

²³Tovey considered musical programs incidentals that the listener can safely ignore while concentrating on the “musical” significance of the sounds. “Not a bar of the ‘Pastoral’ Symphony would be otherwise if its ‘program’ had never been thought of” (Donald Francis Tovey, “Programme Music,” in *The Forms of Music* [New York: Meridian Books, 1956], p. 168).

This was not always the dominant view. Rousseau, when writing his *Dictionnaire de musique* in the 18th century, clearly did not think so. Under the heading “imitation” he included two entries, apparently conflating *mimesis* and *imitatio*. The second deals with the technical device of “the same aire, or one similar, in many parts,” while the more prominent first entry explores the field of music imitating things extra-musical, arguing that this art is no less capable of emulation than its sister arts. “Dramatic and theatrical music concurs to imitation,” Rousseau contends,

as well as poetry and painting; 'tis to this principle that all the fine arts are connected. [...] But this imitation has not the same extent for all. All that the imagination can represent to itself has its origin from poetry. Painting, which does not offer its picture to the imagination, but to the sense, and that one sense alone, paints only objects peculiar to the sight. Music would appear to have the same bounds in regard to the hearing: however it paints all, even the objects which are not visible; by a transformation almost inconceivable, it seems to place the eye in the ear, and the greatest surprise of an art, which agitates only in the movement, is to be able to form from it even the image of a repose. Night, sleep, solitude, and silence enter into the number of the extensive paintings of music. We know that noise can produce the effect of silence, and silence the effect of noise; [...] the art of the musician consists in substituting, in the place of the insensible image of the object, that of the movements which his presence excites in the heart of the contemplator. He will not only agitate the sea, animate the flame of a conflagration, make rivulets flow, the rain fall, and torrents swell, but he will paint the horrors of a boundless desert [sic], calm the tempest, render the air tranquil and serene, and spread over the orchestra, a new and pleasing freshness. He will not directly represent things, but excite in the soul the same movement which we feel in feeling them.²⁴

In Renaissance Italy, Giovan Giorgio Trissino's treatise about poetry and the other arts, *La quinta e la sesta divisione della poetica* (c. 1549), granted music's power to portray and imitate even more credit. Discussing imitations produced by various artistic means, he gives examples of imitation in painting (referring to Leonardo, Montagna, and Titian) and in dance and music before he applies his theory to poetry. “To be sure,” comments Claude Palisca,

²⁴See the first entry of article “IMITATION” in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique*, first published Paris: Chez la veuve Duchesne, 1768; English by William Waring (New York: AMS Press, 2nd edition 1975), pp. 198-199.

it is easier to recognize action in painting, in dance, and in music, in which it is portrayed visually or in performance, than in poetry, which can only narrate action and is normally read in stationary silence. Dance and music are actions that imitate other actions.²⁵

Another dimension of depiction based on imitation occurs when music represents phenomena of the interior rather than the exterior world. The contemporary philosopher who has arguably contributed most to our understanding of representation in the arts, mimesis, make-believe, and fictional worlds, Kendall Walton, strictly distinguishes feelings and emotions created *in the listener* from feelings and emotions perceived to be *in the music*.²⁶ While Walton agrees that music's capacity to elicit feelings in listeners does not amount to representation, he asserts that music, like literary and pictorial representation, does establish fictional worlds. These worlds may not be peopled with goblins and fairies, detectives and lovers—at least in the case of instrumental music that is not programmatic by its composer's definition; we do not normally expect them to contain anything other than musical components—but they do contain the emotions these and many other inhabitants of imaginary worlds might have.²⁷ Walton reminds us that we speak of wistful melodies and hurried rhythms, of motion and rest, tension and release, resignation and resolve, aggressiveness, struggle, anger, and uncertainty, exuberance, and arrival. We perceive the music to contain components that appear impetuous, powerful, delicate, sprightly, witty, majestic, tender, arrogant, peevish, spirited,

²⁵Claude V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 398-399. Schoenberg expressed similar thoughts in the introduction of his *Theory of Harmony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

²⁶Kendall Walton, "Listening with Imagination: Is Music Representational?" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 52, no 1, pp. 47-61, and "What is Abstract About the Art of Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XLVI/3, Spring 1988, pp. 351-364.

²⁷"Listening with Imagination," p. 55. Walton does admit that there is a significant difference between the fictional world of direct emotions expressed in music and the fictional world of emotions mediated through specific characters and plots as expressed, particularly, in literary works, namely with regard to an appreciator's involvement. "We should wonder," he muses, "how involvement with mere sounds could be gripping in anything like the way involvement with monsters and dragons, innocent damsels, evil villains, and tragic heroes—even fictional ones, can be. Why should we care what happens to a four-note motive consisting of three eighth notes on a given pitch followed by a half note a third below? We do not follow the fortunes of musical motives in quite the same way we follow the fortunes of Romeo and Juliet or Anna Karenina, wishing them well or ill and worrying about what might happen to them" (pp. 54-55).

yearning, chilly. Such perceptions draw the appreciator in, and sometimes make her or him part of the fictional world in a way corresponding to that observed in the case of the props of other cases of make-believe. "It is by portraying vocal and other behavioral expressions of feelings that music portrays the feelings," Walton specifies.²⁸

What is shared in all cases of representation from direct depiction to symbolic reference, Roger Scruton holds, is the fact that "you understand it [...] by recuperating thoughts about a fictional world."²⁹ One crucial condition is that what is being represented be identifiable to the appreciator. As Meyer holds, "Ultimately it is the listener who must make connotation concrete."³⁰ And yet, such fictional worlds need not be "possible" worlds. In fact, the realm of myths and fairy tales and the impossible worlds of Escher's engravings constitute successful fiction that may be as consoling, challenging, or edifying as representations of our mundane reality.

Depictions that seem to fall into the category of portrayal are not limited to the representation of the object itself but may point to a conceptual subject matter beyond it; this opens the field to the symbolic and allegorical.³¹ For a denizen of the Western world, the (visual or verbal) evocation of a blindfolded woman with scales in her hand (or even the scales alone, given the right context) "represents" justice, while depictions of a largely naked woman standing under a tree in a lush garden and holding an apple signify not only Eve and the Garden of Eden but also Original Sin (and, possibly, even the hubris of humankind's quest for knowledge). Similarly in music, a melody known as a line from a national anthem may signify patriotism, and the solemn sound of trombones may symbolize the angels of the Last Judgment, just as a mime's ostensibly simple hand gesture may give an audience an abbreviated formula for a complex social self-definition, etc.

²⁸Listening with Imagination," p. 55. Some of the metaphoric terms above are Walton's (see "Listening with Imagination," p. 50), the last-mentioned ones stem from Hanslick (*On the Musically Beautiful*, trans. G. Payzant [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986], pp. 9, 10, 32).

²⁹R. Scruton, *Modern Philosophy: An Introduction and Survey* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994), p. 353.

³⁰Leonard Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, p. 266.

³¹In a chapter entitled "Symbol and allegory," Raymond Monelle distinguishes the use of the terms by C.S. Peirce and by what he refers to as aesthetic idealists. "For the American semiologist, symbol is opposed to icon and index in a trichotomy of signs. But for the aesthetic idealists, the symbol has a transcendent resonance which gives it a master function in music and makes it a determinant of moral force and aesthetic value." (Raymond Monelle, *Theorizing Music* [forthcoming], draft text p. 301.)

Just as symbolic and allegoric depictions rely on a cultural context to provide the appreciator with the necessary frame of reference, verbal representation is founded on linguistic conventions. Based on reference and not mimesis, words point to particular objects by agreement, not by inner necessity or resemblance. The sounds, as well as the signs on paper representing the sounds, are arbitrary in that they have nothing substantial in common with what they denote. (Dog, chien, Hund, perro etc. do not look or sound like man's best friend.) In the language of poetry, the conventions for mediated references can be expanded almost *ad infinitum*, in a complex communicative process between poets and their audience. And, as in depiction, the area of referential relationship governed by convention also allows for representation by means of symbolic pointers. Here music is at least equal to the other arts. As Roman Jakobson observed,

in our everyday experience, the discernability of visual indexes is much higher, and their use much wider, than the discernments and utilizations of auditory indexes. Likewise, auditory icons, i.e. imitations of natural sounds, are poorly recognized and scarcely utilized. On the other hand, the universality of music, the fundamental role of speech in human culture, and, finally, a mere reference to the predominance of word and music in radio suffice to prove that [...] the supremacy of sight over hearing in our cultural life is valid only for indexes or icons, and not for symbols.³²

Conventions established between parties engaged in communication through representation need not, and in fact do not, end with verbal language. The Western musical language has developed a highly sophisticated catalogue of signifiers that are agreed to be pointing towards non-musical objects. Among the best known are

- (1) the figures of musical rhetoric developed in the 15th and 16th centuries, especially by Burmeister and his followers,³³
- (2) the "affective types" developed as an extension of the rhetorics-of-music tradition, and the influential system of categorizing the connotations of intervals, from the chromatically descending *passus duriusculus* expressing grief, sorrow, and anxiety to the tritone as *diabolus in musica*, the devil in the realm of music,³⁴

³²Roman Jakobson, "Visual and Auditory Signs," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2: *Words and Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), p. 335.

³³See Joachim Burmeister, *Hypomnematum musicae poeticae ... ex Isagoge ... ad chorum gubernandum cantumque componendum conscripta synopsis* (originally published 1599) and *Musica autoschediastiké* (1601).

- (3) the affective connotations linked with keys, tonalities, and modes,
- (4) the semantic interpretation of brief musical units as “gestures” on the basis of their kinesthetic shape,³⁵
- (5) the tracing of a visual object (like the Cross) in the pitch outline,
- (6) the letter-name representation of or allusion to persons—from Bach’s famous pitch signature and those of Schumann, Shostakovich,³⁶ Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, etc. to the acrostic bows of reverence to a patron (Schumann’s Mr. Abegg, represented in his variations on A-B_b-E-G-G) or a lover (Berg’s HF = Hanna Fuchs), and other cryptographic messages.³⁷

These basic categories actually constitute intrinsically different ways of music’s referring to a non-musical object. Figures with a generally understood rhetorical or affective message do not rely on a mediator to be conveyed; they function almost like a semantic vocabulary. Gestures need *Einfühlung* on the part of the individual listener, who perceptively links a certain structure with a kinesthetic image to arrive at an affective connotation. Suggestive pitch contours are (usually clumsy) translations of visual silhouettes and represent an object only insofar as the listener attaches the metaphoric concepts of “high” and “low” to what is heard as faster or

³⁴Leonard Ratner, surveying the music of the 18th century, remarks that “[f]rom its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early 18th century developed a thesaurus of *characteristic figures*, which formed a rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor.” See Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), p. 9.

³⁵On the creation of semantic content in instrumental music through representations of the body, see David Lidov: “Mind and Body in Music,” *Semiotica* 66/1 (1987): 69-97. Similarly to gestures, which exploit a listener’s identification with motor activity, a specific timbral quality may be linked with a particular vocal grain (“what kind of feeling would be expressed if this timbre was that of a human voice?”).

³⁶Shostakovich based his musical monogram neither on the spelling as we know it in English or French (beginning with *Sh*) nor on his native Russian (where the initial sibilant is written as a single cyrillic letter that has no equivalent in the musical scale) but on the German spelling common for his name, *Schostakowitsch*. His famous signature motif D-S-C-H [= D-E_b-C-B] is used for the first time in the third and fourth movements of his Tenth Symphony, where, shortly after Stalin’s death, it speaks for the composer’s assertion of his individuality—a scandalously subversive act in Communist Russia. The later Eighth Quartet of 1960 is saturated with the DSCH motto.

³⁷For a set of interesting studies in this direction see the various essays by Eric Sams on the use of ciphers by Schumann (in *Musical Times* 106 [1965] and 107 [1966]) and Brahms (in *Musical Times* 112 [1971]).

slower vibration;³⁸ and letter-name allusions rely on the prior translation of the musically received message into its notational equivalent and its basically arbitrary, though conventionally prescribed alphabetic signifiers in order to be decodable.

Yet even the latter two cases of mediated representation can turn into convention. The listeners' experience of a correlation between certain musical tropes and implied meanings develops from unexpected recognition—or the recognition of unexpectedness³⁹—via repeated exposure to anticipation, thus establishing a set of conventions that may gradually come to bypass the original mediator, even develop into forms where the mediator is actually inaccessible. Similarly, the Germanic naming of pitches (with B and H as well as the suffix-inflected Fis for F \sharp and Es for E \flat) is self-evident neither for the Romance-language terms for pitches, which are based on *do-re-mi* and modified by idiosyncratic words for “sharp” and “flat,” nor for those used to the Anglo-Saxon scale lettered A-B-C-D-E-F-G. As a consequence, it is a matter of learned convention, and thus of the “joy of literacy,” if lovers of Western music across language barriers recognize that A-E \flat -C-B stands for Arnold SCHoenberg, or that the repeatedly heard E \flat -E \flat in Luigi Nono's *Il canto sospeso* refers to the SS, the infamous Nazi troupe.⁴⁰

Conversely, composers using musical tropes to represent non-musical objects and concepts employ a great variety of mimetic, descriptive, suggestive, allusive, and symbolic means. Single components and their syntactic organization, vertical texture and horizontal structure, tonal organization, timbral coloring, and occasionally other parameters are entrusted with suggesting depiction. Quotations of pre-existing musical material

³⁸For the purpose of my current argument, I am using “metaphor” as describing both placement and motion in auditory space and nuances of affective content. For a lucid investigation of the fuzzy boundaries and extremely varied landscapes within the territory of “musical metaphor,” see Naomi Cumming, “Metaphor in Roger Scruton's aesthetics of music,” *Theory, analysis and meaning in music*, ed. Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 3-28.

³⁹See Leonard Meyer's definition that “Musical meaning arises when our expectant habit responses are delayed or blocked—when the normal course of stylistic mental events is disturbed by some form of deviation” (*Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture* [Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967], p. 10). Recently, Robert Hatten has focused on this point in his crucial study on markedness as a generator of signification, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994).

⁴⁰I owe thanks to Gottfried Scholz, who brought Nono's device to my attention.

may add allusive reference, and allow for modifications of context, medium, or tonal environment that successfully express defamiliarization or irony. Last but by no means least, countable units—from notes to beats, bars, or sections—invite play with numerical symbols both traditional and innovative. These latter cases move ever further into the realm described by the phrase “the joy of literacy”: not only do such significations remain hidden to the uninitiated, we no longer expect them to be accessible even to insiders through the means of primary sensory perception, but only to skilled readers of the score.

Yet the similarities between the two systems of referential representation—the verbal and the musical—are limited in significant ways. As a result, the application of linguistic terms to music tends to make music appear as an inferior relative rather than an equal sister. The absence of commonly agreed semantic reference in musical components is, however, counterbalanced by a wealth of non-semantic communicants not applicable in verbal language. As Orlov puts it, “[language] is discrete, linear, and abstract while [music] is continuous, multidimensional, and sensuously concrete.” And he specifies further:

Linguistically, the identity of an utterance does not depend on the way it is pronounced, on the quality of the voice, pitch, speed, and loudness; a letter is recognizable as the same letter in all kinds of print, handwriting, shape, and substance; a word refers to all and each of the things which have, or may be given, the same name. The elements of language are of a generic nature.

The elements of music are of a different, singular nature. It is within the scope of music theory only [...] that these elements appear to be standard units. [...] Musically, the tones are unique elements of an infinite set. [...] Each single tone is contemplated and experienced by the listener as an inimitable multidimensional object, a piece of reality itself alive and rich with all sorts of meaning.⁴¹

Vocal timbre and instrumentation, volume and rhythmic structuring, spatial (registral) and temporal placing make all the difference. If a sentence is uttered an octave above the speaker’s natural voice or in a slow, unmodulated and unstructured monotone, its referential meaning does not change (although the listener’s mood may well). The opposite is the case in music: not only is what is being communicated inflected by such external factors; these and similar attributes may well *be* what is being communicated.

⁴¹Henry Orlov, “Toward a Semiotic of Music,” pp. 133-134.

Narration

Closely linked with the concept of “representation” is another term that is used to render a segment of life in any of our artistic languages: “narration.”⁴² It is particularly pertinent here for two reasons. One lies in its presumed complementarity to representation; just as the spatial art forms may be said to represent directly while the temporal art forms do so only indirectly, a narration seems to rely on temporality to such a degree that it can exist in contexts defined by the static spatial dimension only in mediated ways. Exploring this mode in juxtaposition to that of representation would therefore appear a meaningful basis for a study that aims explicitly at dealing with the interchange between the different artistic media. The other reason, to which I will return repeatedly in the course of this investigation, is that surprisingly many of the examples from one of the sister arts chosen by composers for musical ekphrasis reveal themselves as intriguing hybrids of the two modes: visual representations attempting to narrate and verbal representations apparently encapsulating the atemporal, the “frozen moment.”

Throughout the centuries, thinkers pondering the intrinsic difference and the comparability between the arts have focused on the meaning of such cross-over phenomena, although in their eagerness they sometimes misrepresent an entire art form by overemphasizing one of its genres or modes of manifestation. Metaphoric definitions comprising statements like that which describes architecture as frozen music,⁴³ and Stendhal’s definition of the novel as “a mirror carried along a road,” form part of this tradition.

In her study, *Pictures of Romance*, Wendy Steiner focuses on narrativity as she explores the change of the pictorial aesthetics that took place at the seam between the late medieval and the Renaissance understanding of visual representation. “In medieval art, for example, single panels often contained temporally discrete sections, with protagonists repeated in several scenes in the same work. The logic of Renaissance

⁴²“Narration” or “narrative” is used with at least two meanings: (1) as a sequence of events unfolding in time and based on a causal connection, and (2) as something told by somebody, to which the appreciator therefore has less direct access. I am interested in the first sense here. Narration in this sense may or may not be present in representation; the terms are not on the same level, but narrative modifies representation.

⁴³Hegel uses the expression “gefrorene Musik” in his lectures on aesthetic; Goethe in his conversations with Eckermann (23 March 1829) refers to one of his early papers in which he called architecture “erstarrte Musik.”

perspective largely put a stop to such narrativity in high art, for the image was to be a perceiver's vision of the world at a single moment in time."⁴⁴ It is crucial to bear in mind, Steiner observes, that "it is not the medium of painting but its conventions that have reduced narrativity to an apparently peripheral concern for art historians."⁴⁵ The new aesthetics required that paintings depict one of two things: a single frozen moment or an eternal essence—not, however, continuity, development, change, much less plot; no modification affected by time. To convey their narrative intent, painters now had to resort to other means. Painting the climactic scene of a familiar story—especially a biblical or mythological one—and thus implying the development of a known plot in what Lessing famously called the "pregnant moment," was one answer to the problem; allusions to literature and dramatic poses—again hardly veiled insinuations of tales told in a medium not barred from temporal sequence and narrative development—were another. Concomitantly, literature developed more and more genres in which the mode of seeing and watching became of paramount importance. It is surprising to notice that many of the literary texts chosen by composers for musical transformation are of the kind that de-emphasize narrativity (see particularly the symbolist poets and dramatists), while the preferred works of visual art often belong to one of the atypical categories that allow for a relatively high degree of narrativity.

What, then, characterizes narration in the visual medium? In *Narrative Pictures*, Sacheverell Sitwell aptly speaks of "the painting of anecdote." Most of the examples given, however, illustrate only one type: that of the pictorial sequence of homely scenes. Another writer exploring the possibility of narration in post-Renaissance art, Nancy Wall Moure, includes mythological, legendary, and historical subjects, pointing out that narrative elements may hide behind depictions of historical actors but not behind portraits, behind mythological subjects but not behind allegorical ones.⁴⁶ If narration relies on story, and if story is a specific sequence of events carried out by (or occurring to) particular characters in a particular place at a particular time, then both of the above categories soon exhaust our interest. Genre scenes, often deliberately not presented

⁴⁴Wendy Steiner, *Pictures of Romance: Form against Context in Painting and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 2.

⁴⁵Wendy Steiner, *Pictures of Romance*, p. 9.

⁴⁶See Sacheverell Sitwell, *Narrative Pictures: A Survey of English Genre and its Painters* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), and Nancy Wall Moure, *American Narrative Painting* (New York: Praeger, 1974).

as singular events, are characteristically low in specificity and actuality; visual representations of historical, legendary, and mythological subjects by definition rely on a pre-existing “story” shared between artist and viewer in a medium other than the pictorial. One of the most notable exceptions are Hogarth’s pictorial sequences, including *The Rake’s Progress*, *The Harlot’s Progress*, and *Marriage a la Mode*, reputedly the first picture stories that “tell” without reference to a predating, verbally relayed narrative.

Stories, then, or developments of any kind, can be visually narrated only in special cases described as “multi-episodic narratives” (Steiner). These include the “non-realistic” depictions in pre-Renaissance art and again in the twentieth century where a recurrent subject seen in different constellations signals temporal succession,⁴⁷ as well as multiple-frame forms like the frieze and the fresco series, the diptych and the triptych, the narratively related sculptures constituting stations on a path, and other pictorial sequences up to the comicstrip. Allusive rather than explicit narratives are given where a culminating scene is understood to stand for the entire story, arousing the recollection of the narrative in the viewer’s mind rather than spelling it out. Frank Kermode calls this “arrested narrative”;⁴⁸ it allows the representation simultaneously to function as a symbol of an underlying idea.

If we apply Kermode’s description, clearly devised for the single-scene depiction, to any of the types Steiner lists as multi-episodic narratives, it becomes apparent that, rather than *representing* continuous narrative, these *imply* a temporal sequence and development with the help of a succession of spatially separate, topically related cases of “arrested narrative.” Visually conveyed narratives, then, remain confined to the climactic or symbolic moment. Interestingly though, the conception of a visually rendered narrative as a procession through various rooms made

⁴⁷Wendy Steiner lists paintings by Sassetta, Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Benozzo Gozzoli for the time before the Renaissance, and engravings by M.C. Escher as characteristic examples from the 20th century. Norman Bryson (in *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981]) mentions two instances of the same genre during the time when the agreed aesthetics scorned multi-episodic depictions: Poussin’s *Israelites Gathering Manna in the Desert* and Watteau’s *Meeting in a Park*. Both works sparked debate and criticism; it was felt that they risked undermining the temporal *vraisemblance* of a scene. I would like to add the astounding, 765-gouache pictorial diary (or “operetta”), *Life? or Theater?* by Holocaust victim Charlotte Salomon.

⁴⁸Frank Kermode, “Secrets and Narrative Sequence,” *Critical Inquiry* 7/1 (Fall 1980): 84-5.

its way into literary genres; a poem traditionally consists of “stanzas” (*stanza* = Italian for room). The realm in which the visual arts excel, and where a single “take” is worth a dozen pages of words, is that of place, circumstance, atmosphere. Among the literary genres, much of poetry as well as symbolist dramas seem to aspire to a similar atemporality, framing scenes as something akin to verbally conveyed stopped-action pictures.⁴⁹ Conversely, among the art works that have inspired composers are disproportionately many that “tell” a story. One of Hogarth’s pictorial sequences excited Stravinsky; frescos by Giotto and Piero della Francesca moved Hindemith and Martinů to their symphonic works; among the myriad artworks by Marc Chagall, not his individual paintings but his serial stained-glass windows for the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center near Jerusalem attracted composers. What Wendy Steiner sees as the “opposition between image and story, design and narrative, and repetition and progression, deeply embedded in the aesthetics that governed pictorial art and destined to play an important role in [literary] symbolism,” applies also and specifically to the transformation of a scene or story from one medium to another.

The reverse type of interaction occurs when literary texts privilege description over narration. Terms like “word painting” or “Beschreibungsliteratur” refer either to descriptive literature as such, as a genre opposed to narrative, or to the descriptive mode as it may be adopted for passages within a larger work of fiction. The distinction goes back to Georg Lukács who, in his 1936 article “Erzählen oder Beschreiben”⁵⁰ (To Narrate or to Describe), argued passionately against the descriptive mode in prose, blaming it for turning the narration from something dynamic into something episodic. Gérard Genette expressed a similar ambivalence about the depictive aspect of verbal representation. Distinguishing rather rigidly between “narration” and “description,” where narration constitutes the “temporal, dramatic aspect” while description serves to “suspend the course of time and contribute to spreading the narrative in space,” Genette declared the descriptive mode “a mere auxiliary to narrative” and

⁴⁹Even prose narratives with strong symbolic overtones, and those involving a quest beyond the surface development, sometimes use the metaphor of the house and the progression through its chambers, to create this effect of arrested stations on the way to wisdom. Examples in English-language literature range from Spenser’s *The Fairie Queene* to Poe’s *Masque of the Red Death*.

⁵⁰The original German version of the article can be found in Georg Lukács, *Werke IV: Essays über Realismus* (Neuwied etc.: Luchterhand, 1971).

even went so far as to call it narrative's "ever necessary, ever-submissive, never-emancipated slave."⁵¹ More recently, Tom Mitchell has added an ideological dimension to (male, temporal, dynamic) literature's uneasiness with (female, spatial, static) depiction—verbal and otherwise. He shows how literary texts have long cast spatial metaphors as female, and condescended to an individual's expression through painting as to a mark of "sexual and racial otherness."⁵²

There is, interestingly, another very different angle to this cross-over: one where a verbal representation does not try to describe something visually *perceived* or something spatially *represented*, but to *emulate* the genre of static, spatial representation. The accent is here not on the medium, but on the course of engagement provoked in the audience. As Rudolf Arnheim has pointed out, the ordering of the perceptual process in literature is predetermined by the text, whereas what is present in a painting is there all at once, as it were, and could theoretically be grasped in any order. The "directed tension" of shapes may be laid out to guide a spectator's eye, yet "this dynamic is inherent in the work and quite independent of that of the subjective exploration."⁵³ Such atemporal and essentially timeless presence of a *gestalt* would seem to be a privilege of spatial representation, and a limit of the temporal arts. Some modern poets seem to sense this particularly strongly and react by trying to make the temporal art emulate the spatial. Here are e. e. cummings's ekphrasis on a stone sculpture by the fifteenth-century artist Luca della Robbia and May Sarton's ekphrasis of an ancient tapestry; both attempt to force language to transcend the sequential mode.

e. e. cummings, *these children singing in stone*⁵⁴

These children singing in stone a	ever these silently lit
silence of stone these	tle children are petals
little children wound with stone	their song is a flower of
flowers opening for	always their flowers

⁵¹G rard Genette, *Figures of Literary Discourse*, transl. Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 134-136.

⁵²See W.J.T. Mitchell, "Space, Ideology, and Literary Representation," *Poetics Today* 10/1: 91-102; 98-99.

⁵³Rudolf Arnheim, "The Unity of the Arts: Time, Space, and Distance," *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 25 (1976): 7-14; quoted from p. 9.

⁵⁴From e. e. cummings, *One Hundred Collected Poems* (New York: Grove, 1923), p. 80.

of stone are silently singing a song more silent than silence these always	eyes know if a lit tle tree listens
children forever singing wreathed with singing blossoms children of stone with blossoming	forever to always children singing forever a song made of silent as stone silence of song

May Sarton, *The Lady and the Unicorn: The Cluny Tapestries*⁵⁵

I am the unicorn and bow my head
You are the lady woven into history
And here forever we are bound in mystery
Our wine, Imagination, and our bread,
And I the unicorn who bows his head.

You are all interwoven in my history
And you and I have been most strangely wed
I am the unicorn and bow my head
And lay my wildness upon your knee
You are the lady woven into history.

And here forever we are sweetly wed
With flowers and rabbits in the tapestry
You are the lady woven into history
Imagination is our bridal bed:
We lie ghostly upon it, no word said.
Among the flowers of the tapestry
I am the unicorn and by your bed
Come gently, gently to bow my head,
Lay at your side this love, this mystery,
And call you lady of my tapestry.

I am the unicorn and bow my head
To one so sweetly lost, so strangely wed:

You sit forever under a small formal tree
Where I forever search your eyes to be

Rewarded with this shining tragedy
And know your beauty was not cast for me,

Know we are woven all in mystery,
The wound imagined where no one has bled,

My wild love chastened to this history
Where I before your eyes, bow down my head.

⁵⁵May Sarton, *Collected Poems (1930-1993)* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), p. 84.

Cummings, Wendy Steiner argues, “takes ekphrasis so literally here that the poem reveals the basis of the topos and the technical features upon which it depends.”⁵⁶ The same can be said of Sarton’s work. Both poems, by way of their irregular repetitions and clipped sentences, suggest roaming eye movements, toggling between a focus on the main characters of the depiction, the attributes around them, and the whole. Both poems end in such a way that one could easily read them as circle poems; an image to suggest this is given in Cummings’s mention of the flowering wreath carved around the children on whom the poem centers, while Sarton adds the repetitively used metaphor of “weaving into history” to describe the woven artwork, the device of having her thirty lines turn on merely two rhymes,⁵⁷ and the fourfold “forever” to allude to its extremely static nature. Such an understanding that these poems could virtually go on and on would relegate the limitations of temporality and linearity to the written format only, allowing us to continue enjoying the verbal evocations of the representations in stone and tapestry until that moment when, having seen as much as we wanted to see, we might also turn away from the visual images themselves.

Music, as I will show later, is capable of the same descriptive effect—what Steiner refers to as the “embodying of the still-movement paradox.” Even more than language, it can do so without compromising its intrinsic logic. The reason for this greater flexibility is that music, while resembling verbal texts in that it develops in time, at the same time “paints.” Like the media of visual art, it *conveys* to its audience the sensual experience of colors and textures, rather than *referring* to them as language does. Both its range of register and its compositional textures (polyphony above all) create a spatiality to which literary modes can only allude.

But can untexted music also narrate? In his work on Mahler, Anthony Newcomb (drawing on definitions by Paul Ricœur) maintains that it can and does. Following a work of music entails, he believes, the same basic activity as following a story: the interpretation of a succession of events as a meaningful configuration. Constantin Floros’s studies of the semantics in Mahler’s symphonies rest on a similar assumption. Carolyn Abbate

⁵⁶See Steiner’s excellent discussion of this poem in *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 43-46.

⁵⁷Or three, if one wanted to go beyond the final syllable; see (1) head / bread / wed / bed / said / bled, (2a) history / mystery / tapestry / tragedy, (2b) knee / tree / be / me.

urges us to differentiate the nineteenth-century claim that certain linear elements of music can be regarded in analogy to the events in a dramatic plot, where music is perceived as generating expectations on the basis of culturally established paradigms; it moves through tension and release towards closure. She argues that music should be “seen not merely as ‘acting out’ or ‘representing’ events as if it were a sort of unscrolling and noisy tapestry that mimes actions not visually but sonically, but also as occasionally respeaking an object in a morally distancing act of narration.”⁵⁸ However, she cautions, such “moments of diegesis” are far from normal or universal in untexted instrumental music. Since Abbate is here referring to music that does not, by its title, claim to be a representation of an extra-musical reality, the allowance for “narrative acts of music” is extremely encouraging. Untexted music may not be able to provide the details of a plotline because it cannot establish the non-musical specifications of the characters and props in the fictional world. But as Walton confirms, mere titles often suffice to provide this essential factual skeleton and make music patently representational—and even narrative.

Having thus argued that music, like art and literature, is capable of depicting and referring to things, including things in a world outside its own sonic realm, and that what is represented in a pictorial, literary, or musical medium may be image or story, design or narrative, I now turn to the more specific question how music may represent something that has previously been represented in a work of visual art or literature.

Musical Ekphrasis Versus Program Music

In an appendix entitled “Symbolism and Music,” Mack Smith writes:

The fin de siècle conflict between the realist and symbolist movements in literature can be observed in the contrasting fine arts each uses as analogues of its works. Tolstoy and Zola implicitly compare their techniques to those of realist painters whose representations are so clear they seem real. As painters create forms that correspond to easily recognized details, so realist novelists use a language that clearly refers to everyday details. The major tenet of realism, objectivity, implies an external approach to character, a view of human personality that is roughly analogous to a lifelike portrait that accurately renders the external details of the human form.

⁵⁸Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrativity in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. xi-xii.

The Symbolists, on the other hand, in eschewing realist externality, strove to portray internal states that concrete detail and referential language are ineffective in describing. The language of symbolism is evocatively ambiguous so as to suggest almost ineffable internal states. *Music is the closest parallel to the symbolists' aims, so music became the emblem of their aspirations* [emphasis mine].⁵⁹

Smith's reasoning here seems to supply a potential answer to the question why "the musical representation of verbal or visual representation," as I would like to define the phenomenon in paraphrasing Heffernan, seems to have found its ultimate form only in the last years of the nineteenth century, and why so many of the works that are being thus musically translated are works of symbolist style or, at least, of symbolist character.

Musical compositions with explicit reference—whether verbal (in titles and accompanying notes) or onomatopoeic—have existed for much of the history of Western music; yet, I claim, musical ekphrasis has not. This brings me to the important task of defining criteria along which we can agree to distinguish between, on the one hand, the musical equivalent of ekphrasis, and what is generally known as "program music" on the other. The two genres belong to the same general species: both denote purely instrumental music that has its *raison d'être* in a definite referential, narrative, or pictorial scheme; both have variously been described as "illustrative" or "representative" music. While the term "program music" is considered by many to be simply the umbrella term for both kinds, I will argue that it is essential for a full understanding of music of the "ekphrastic" kind to attempt a distinction.

In literature, the equivalent is the distinction between ekphrasis proper and "word painting" or "Beschreibungsliteratur." One way of approaching the difference is to ask whose fictional reality is being represented. "Program music" narrates or paints, suggests or represents scenes or stories (and, by extension, events or characters) that may or may not exist out there but enter the music *from the composer's own mind*. The range of application for the term "program music" is very wide, spanning from the biographical (as in Richard Strauss's *Aus Italien*) and the emotional expression associated with nature (as in Beethoven's often-quoted "Erwachen heiterer Gefühle bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande" in the *Pastoral Symphony*) or the cosmos and astrology (see Gustav Holst's

⁵⁹Mack Smith, *Literary Realism*, pp. 246-47.

*The Planets*⁶⁰), through the depiction of an historical or literary character (Berlioz's *King Lear*, Liszt's *Hamlet*), all the way to a musical impression of a philosophically created "world" (Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*).

Musical ekphrasis, by contrast, narrates or paints a fictional reality created by *an artist other than the composer* of the music: by a painter or a poet. Also, musical ekphrasis usually relates not only to the content of the poetically or pictorially conveyed fictional reality, but also to the form and style of representation in which this content was cast in its primary medium. Thus, in music with titles reminiscent of literary works, Liszt's *Hamlet*, for instance, is a musical impression of the character that was verbally depicted by Shakespeare. However, Hamlet and the legend around him have existed prior to and independently of the poet who made him famous and Liszt's music, which does not attempt to relate to the play's plot or structure, linguistic or stylistic features, speech patterns or philosophical content, cannot be said to transform the play. A borderline case exists in Paul Dukas's *L'Apprenti Sorcier*, which illustrates the structure in Goethe's *Zauberlehrling* and provides an amusingly graphic illustration of some of the poem's details. At the other end of the spectrum, Schoenberg's *Pelleas und Melisande* purports musically to recreate Maeterlinck's drama—its characters, its outline, and its symbolism, as the composer found the courage to admit many years after writing the work, having originally feared to be lumped together with the by then rather scorned creators of "program music." Similarly, in music referring to works of visual art, Liszt's *Hunnenschlacht*⁶¹ was inspired by Kaulbach's

⁶⁰This 1919 suite—program music in a sense despite the inclusion of choral sections—consists of seven movements inspired by the "character" of each of these celestial bodies: "Mars, Bringer of War," "Venus, Bringer of Peace," "Mercury, the Winged Messenger," "Jupiter, Bringer of Jollity," "Saturn, Bringer of Old Age," "Uranus, the Magician," and "Neptune, the Mystic."

⁶¹Strictly speaking, even more riveting for the composer than the mural itself seem to have been the thoughts his friend Kaulbach shared with him while preparing himself for the work of art. It is as if the visual artist, fascinated by the mingling of bodies, chose to depict one half of these thoughts, while the composer portrayed the other. The painter ultimately concentrated on the continuation of the combat between the souls of the slain that, or so a chronicler of the battle told, were seen "in the mist that floated upon the surface of the lake during the last rays of the setting sun." By contrast, Liszt, according to his own testimony, chose to focus on the battle between the ferocious barbarian (Attila the Hun) and "the personification of Celestial succor" (Theodoric). Where the painter portrayed never-abated violent rage, the pious composer depicted the ultimate victory of "divine truth, universal charity, the progress of humanity, and the hope of the world" which "sheds over all things a radiant, transfiguring, and eternal light." (Franz Liszt, quoted in Earl V. Moore, *The Symphony and the Symphonic Poem* [Ann Arbor: Ulrich's Books, 1966], pp. 142-143.)

fresco depiction by that title. The composition, however, transcends the historical particularity as well as the specific pictorial source, painting a musical picture of a battle not particularly of the Huns, and with no equivalence to structural or stylistic features in Kaulbach's frescoes. One step further on, in Debussy's *L'Île joyeuse* inspired by Watteau's famous canvas *L'Embarquement pour Cythère*, the music illustrates the real-life experience of a boat trip that was not necessarily in the artist's mind. Again at the other end of the spectrum is the Catalan composer Leonardo Balada's orchestral piece *Guernica, after Picasso*. In this work, written in 1966, composer portrays musically not so much what happened in that Basque town in 1937 in a devastating German bombing raid during the Spanish Civil War, but, as he states explicitly,⁶² how his compatriot Pablo Picasso visually depicted the event in his famous canvas.

Program music has been with us for several centuries. While it had its heyday during the latter part of the 19th century, Bach's *Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo* (Capriccio on the Departure of His Most Beloved Brother) is not as singular an example from earlier eras as many want to believe. As Ernest Newman points out,

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the minds of the men who tried to write poetic music for instruments alone, ran in two main directions. They either wrote pieces musically interesting in themselves, and gave them fanciful titles, such as "Diana in the wood," "The virtuous coquette," "Juno, or the jealous woman," and so on, or they frankly began with the intention of representing appearances and events in music. Thus in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book we have pieces with the titles, "Faire weather," "Calm whether," [*sic*] "Lightening," "Thunder," and "Clear day." [...] Frohberger wrote a suite showing the Emperor Ferdinand IV making his way up into heaven along Jacob's ladder. Frohberger, indeed, was realistic beyond the average. He not only painted nature, for example, but indicated the locality as accurately as a geography or a guide-book could do; and it was not merely humanity in general that moved about among his scenes, but the Count this or the Princess that.⁶³

⁶²Leonardo Balada (1933-), private communication with the author, September 1997. Three other composers have taken up the same topic: the Canadian, Clermont Pépin, in *Guernica: Poème symphonique* (1952) and the Germans, Walter Steffens and Paul Dessau, in *Guernica: Elegie nach Picasso* for viola and orchestra (1979) and "*Guernica*": *Klavierstück nach Picasso* (1937).

⁶³Ernest Newman, "Programme Music," in *Musical Studies* (London: John Lane, 1905), pp. 103-188; 125-126.

H.I.F. von Biber (1644?-1704) was one of the first composers to use music for what he took to be representation of extra-musical reality. While the programs that inspired his instrumental paintings or narrations are mostly religious—see the Mystery or Rosary Sonatas, each depicting one of the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary—one of his most striking tone paintings refers to a secular subject matter. *Battalia* for violin solo, strings, and basso continuo, written in 1673, is an astoundingly evocative musical equivalent to the battle paintings characteristic for the period.

Johann Kuhnau (1660?-1722), Bach's predecessor at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, was particularly articulate about what he thought representative music could, and should, achieve. He prefaced his six Bible Sonatas, which, he claims, depict "the fight between David and Goliath," "the melancholy of Saul being dissipated by music," "the marriage of Jacob," etc., arguing that the composer, like the poet, prose-writer, or painter, often wants to turn his listener's attention in a particular direction. Just like an artist, who adds a caption explaining whom the person seen in a painting represents, the composer must append words to distinguish, say, the sadness of Ezekiel from the weeping of Peter and the lament of Jeremiah. As this composer maintains, the words, intended to elevate the emotion from the generic to the definite and specific, need by no means be set in music as in a song. Kuhnau's idea of achieving the desired effect was to illustrate his subject in music and elaborate his poetic purpose verbally, including occasionally a summary of the main musical motifs with corresponding explanatory labels. One notes that the reality depicted here, while inspired by the Bible, has taken shape in the previous artistic representation of another author or painter. Kuhnau, then, has progressed one step beyond those composers whose principal aim it was to integrate into their music the almost untransformed sounds of external reality—from bird calls and roaring beasts to wind and water, thunder and lightning, hunting horns and the clamors of battle. Instead, it is the poetic purpose that directs the music in his Bible Sonatas and determines—beyond thematic components—expression and structure alike.

Around the same time in France, Couperin wrote musical pieces of representational content (see, e.g., "The Pilgrims") and Rameau chose titles like "Sighs," "Tender Complaints," and "The Joyous Girl." In Italy, Vivaldi composed his *Le quattro stagioni* (accompanied by four sonnets, possibly his own) and many other works carrying programmatic titles, such as the chamber concertos *La tempesta di mare*, *La caccia*, *Sonata al Santo Sepolchro*, and *Per la Solennità di San Lorenzo*. Slightly later,

Dittersdorf wrote twelve programmatic symphonies on topics like Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *The War of the Human Passions*. Muffat, Jannequin, Buxtehude, Frescobaldi, and Gombert were among the many other composers who explored the representative dimension of music before Haydn's *Schöpfung* (Creation) and those works by Beethoven that made the genre famous: the *Pastoral Symphony*, the *Egmont*, *Leonora*, and *Coriolan* overtures, *Wellingtons Sieg* (the "Battle Symphony"), etc. However, as Wagner pointed out in his well-known essay on Liszt's symphonic poems, while these compositions aimed at sketching a character or telling a story in musical texture, their form was still determined almost entirely by the laws of absolute music.

This apparent contradiction of content and form changed only very gradually. Beethoven's legacy determined the developments in the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. Early on, the programmatic orchestral compositions by Hector Berlioz, *Symphonie fantastique* and *Harold en Italie*, took off from the impressionistic example of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony; they led to many further examples of musical "nature canvases," particularly in Eastern Europe—Mussorgsky's *Ivanova noch' na lisoy gore* (St. John's Night on the Bare Mountain) and Smetana's *Vltava* (Moldau) come to mind. Meanwhile, composers like Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Franz Liszt, and César Franck expanded the musical reaction to dramatic sources found in Beethoven's overtures. Interestingly, Liszt and Franck both started out with compositions inspired by the same poetic source, which invited primarily the painting of nature: Victor Hugo's *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne* (What One Hears on the Mountain); Franck's work dates from 1845-47, Liszt's from 1848-49. Both then continued with musical reactions to and commentaries on works by many of the leading poets of their time. Franck's compositions in this genre include *Les Éolides* after Leconte de Lisle, *Le chasseur maudit* after G.A. Bürger, and *Les Djinns* after V. Hugo; corresponding works by Liszt are *Tasso: lamento e trionfo* (after Byron, originally written as an overture to Goethe's play *Torquato Tasso*), *Orpheus* (conceived as an introduction to the first Weimar performance of Gluck's opera), and *Prometheus* (intended as an overture to Herder's drama *Der entfesselte Prometheus*). Other symphonic poems by Liszt may have come into being independently of a dramatic work which they would serve to preface; these include *Mazeppa* (after Hugo), *Eine Faust-Symphonie in drei Charakterbildern* (after Goethe, written as if in non-vocal reply to Berlioz's vocal composition, *La damnation de Faust*),

Die Ideale (after a poem by Schiller), and *Eine Symphonie zu Dantes Divina commedia*.

Of course, just as it has often been pointed out that there is no definite line of demarcation between absolute music and program music, it is also true that the boundary between program music and the musical equivalent of ekphrasis is plastic and permeable. In *Die Ideale*, Liszt divides Schiller's poem into sections of different intensity or different emotional coloring, and places the words before the part of the score that illustrates them. For his piano poems, the *Petrarca Sonnets*, as well as for his symphonic poem, *Mazeppa*, he has the entire poetic text reprinted in the musical score—as if in extension of the song form, juxtaposing the words and their setting not simultaneously but consecutively, with many interesting correspondences of form. From here, it is only a minimal step to a genuine “transformation” of content and representation, style and metaphors from the poetic medium into that of music.

The two composers around the turn of the century who seem to have worked right on the borderline of program music and musical ekphrasis are Modest Mussorgsky and Richard Strauss. Mussorgsky's 1874 work, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, originally a piano suite that became known as a piece in the repertoire of symphonic poems thanks to Ravel's ingenious orchestration, was suggested by a memorial exhibition of architectural drawings, stage designs, and watercolors in honor of his recently deceased friend, Victor Hartmann. In the absence of full details about the individual exhibits it is difficult to appraise to what extent the composition constitutes a series of “transpositions” into music of the artist-friend's pictorially created world, or rather more general impressions, distilled of what the composer took home from the experience at the exhibition and his fond memories of his friend's character.

Strauss's “Tondichtungen” include autobiographically inspired pieces (notably *Aus Italien*, *Ein Heldenleben*, and *Symphonia domestica*) along with compositions based on tales of pranksters and eccentric knights (*Till Eulenspiegel*, *Don Quixote*), a poem (*Don Juan*, after Lenau⁶⁴), a drama (*Macbeth*, after Shakespeare), a philosophical treatise in the form of a poetic parable (*Also sprach Zarathustra*, after Nietzsche⁶⁵), and finally a tone poem for which he himself wrote out a detailed synopsis that he then

⁶⁴The fly-leaf in the score bears three extracts, of 7, 17, and 8 lines respectively.

⁶⁵Strauss's score is preceded by a quotation from Nietzsche, Zarathustra's Prologue, in which, after 10 years of solitude, he begs the sun to bless his descent to mankind.

exactly illustrated in his music: *Tod und Verklärung*.⁶⁶ As was mentioned earlier, Strauss's *Macbeth* makes no attempt at following the intricate action of Shakespeare's play but is, instead, a psychological study; like *Don Juan*, it is cast in sonata-movement form with fairly independent episodes, which can be understood to portray the characters. Similarly, *Also sprach Zarathustra* comes across as a musical reflection on the general idea in Nietzsche's work rather than a musically transformed representation of the work itself. By contrast, the stories that are less definitely shaped by their authors and thus allow the composer more freedom of subjective expression turn out to have become his most poetic compositions. *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, After the Rogue's Tale, Set for Large Orchestra in Rondo Form* (as the work's full English title reads) is a masterful musical narration on at least three levels: it contains a programmatic description of the scoundrel's tricks in great detail, serves as a general musical portrait of a rascal, and presents a charming example of musical humor. *Don Quixote: Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character* is cast as a *sinfonia concertante* with viola and violoncello as solo instruments (roughly for Don Quixote and Sancho Panza). It is a masterpiece of musical pictorialism, with hilariously realistic windmills, sheep, and flying horse, which paved the way for much of the musical pictorialism in the twentieth century. At the same time, the composition contains what strikes many Strauss scholars as an admirably subtle psychological portrayal of Don Quixote's deranged mental state.⁶⁷

It is here that we witness the birth of musical ekphrasis. All that is now left to do before I can turn to what lies at the other side of this threshold is a brief discussion of some of the theories of transposition/transformation/translation/transcription/transmutation (etc.) from one art to another that, while developed within the field of ekphrasis proper, may prove relevant for a deeper understanding of what to expect in cases of musical ekphrasis.

⁶⁶As is by now well known, the poem by Alexander Ritter that one finds printed in the score was written (on Strauss's request) after the music was composed. While this is thus a case of ekphrasis, it is a transformation from music into poetry, and not the other way around.

⁶⁷See, e.g., Michael Kennedy's summary in the article on Strauss in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, vol. 18 (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 225-228.

Poems or Paintings ... *and* Music? *in* Music? *into* Music?

Since his medium is not paint but words, the poet or novelist will be clear exactly where the painter is vague—this is, in directing attention to meaning; and he will be vague exactly where the representational painter will be clear—that is, in depicting the appearances of things. If literature offers a more insistent and complex pattern of conceptual relationships, painting offers a more insistent and complex pattern of visual relationships.

(Judith Dundas, “Style and the Mind’s Eye,”

The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 37 [1979], p. 325.)

Entire speeches, but also individual words seem to me so ambiguous, so vague, so easily misunderstood in comparison to genuine music, which fills the soul with a thousand things better than words. What the music I love expresses for me are not thoughts that are too *indefinite* to be captured in words, but too *definite*.

(Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy,

from a letter to Marc-André Souchay)

How does music speak thus? by what means, and in which mode? The case studies that form the main body of this book are undertaken in the hope that on their basis, I will be able to offer a methodological framework for the various manifestations within the genre of music responding to art and poetry. However, even at this point, at the outset of the investigation, it will be helpful to map the territory within which I shall be treading. Having drawn a distinction between program music in general and musical ekphrasis in particular, I will now address the question of how a poetic or pictorial source text relates to—and transmutes into—a musical composition. In order to develop pertinent categories that may help us, generally, to deal with the musical material in a systematic way and, specifically, to know what to exclude and why, I turn once more to the already established methodologies in literary ekphrasis.

Hans Lund, in his chapter “The Picture in the Poem: A Theoretical Discussion,” offers a very useful scheme of defining what stance the author of the secondary representation (in his case, a poet; in my case, a composer) may be adopting towards the work of art that constitutes the primary representation of the scene or story (in his case, a painting; in mine, a painting, poem, or drama). Lund establishes three main categories for the relation of text to picture: combination, integration, and transformation; only the latter qualifies as ekphrasis. Here are Lund’s definitions one by one, and my own adaptations for the field of music.

By *combination* I mean a coexistence, at best a cooperation between words and pictures. It is, then, a question of a bi-medial communication, where the media are intended to add to and comment on each other. The old emblematic writing belongs to this category. Here, too, are found certain works by authors traditionally called “Doppelbegabungen” by German critics, i.e. authors who combine and to a certain degree master the literary as well as the pictorial medium. Examples are William Blake, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Günter Grass. Works which are the results of a creative cooperation between a writer and a pictorial artist [...] are also found here. Illustrations made afterwards to match literary texts are not primarily a concern for literary scholars but for art historians.⁶⁸

What Lund is sketching here amounts, it seems to me, to two somewhat different genres in the case of musical composition: *setting* and *collaboration*; both answer the questions put in the heading of this chapter with “Poems or paintings *and* music.” I will begin with the latter. *Collaborations* involving music as one of the key components include the very interesting pieces *Parade* (Picasso/Cocteau/Satie/Massine) and *L’Histoire du soldat* (Stravinsky/ Ramuz), to name only two outstanding examples here. Collaborations with music as one component differ essentially from transformations of a painting or poem into music, whereby a structured entity with all its constituent parts and all layers of message is recreated on another plane. They are excluded from this study for two reasons. First, it is usually unclear which sign system, if indeed any of those involved, should be considered primary, and which constitutes the transposition. Second, one may assume that the myriad aspects of communication, which would otherwise be expressed within a single artistic text, are conceived as being shared among the collaborating arts here. We are, then, not dealing with the transformation of form and content from one artistic representation into another, but instead with a sort of “synthetic effect,” whereby the various arts contribute constituent parts of equal weight towards a single artistic *gestalt* and message. In such a joint venture, individual components complement one another but could often not stand on their own.

Music knows few cases that correspond directly to the phenomena of “emblematic writing” or the dual art work of “Doppelbegabungen.” A composer like Schoenberg, who was also a gifted artist, nevertheless did not create any work in which expressions of his dual talent combine in

⁶⁸Hans Lund, *Text as Picture*, p. 8.

such a way as to engender a single overarching artistic message.⁶⁹ The closest analog in recent music is probably Erik Satie. Many of his piano scores tread a fine line between musical score and artwork. Works including his own depictions or those of other visual artists (see, e.g., *Sports et Divertissements*, published as facsimile with drawings by Charles Martin) may have been intended, or so Satie scholars believe, to be looked at as much as performed. Further back in history, from the time when emblematic writing itself blossomed, one composition at least seems to function as a musical analog. In the early 17th century, Michael Maier created a work by the title *Atalanta fugiens*. It consists of fifty musical settings in an imitative style accompanied by emblems and epigrams. (Also known as “Michael Maier’s alchemical emblem book,” the work is specifically intended to be appreciated “per oculis et intellectui”).⁷⁰

In addition, the field of music encompasses compositions that are manifestations of a combination of talents that is much rarer than the dual aptitude for poetry and painting, composition and painting, or music and poetry writing: synaesthesia. In correspondence with some painters who claim to be putting on canvas the hues communicated to them in musical sounds, composers endowed with this gift of seeing colors when hearing pitches or chords may purport to be creating a composition consisting of sound and color. In the case of a composer like Olivier Messiaen⁷¹ who expected his audiences to see with their inner eye the hues expressed in

⁶⁹The only exception, involving sound and colored light, occurs in Schoenberg’s *Die glückliche Hand*.

⁷⁰*Atalanta fugiens* by Michael Maier (1568-1622) is listed alternatively with the explanatory subtitle *hoc est, emblemata nova de sacretis naturae chymica* and the longer *Secretioris naturae secretorum scrutinium chymicum per oculis et intellectui: accurate accommodata, figuris cupro, emblemata, epigrammata, illustratum, opusculum ingeniis alterioribus*. The work was composed in 1617 and first published in 1618. The music is for three unspecified voices; the emblems are engravings in copper.

⁷¹In the famous lecture he gave in the cathedral of Paris while he was composing his only opera, *Saint François d’Assise*, Messiaen expounded the relationship between the words of Thomas Aquinas he had chosen for the opera and the phenomenon of sound-color, using images like “interlocked rainbows” and “spirals of color.” He finds support in Saint John whose lines “In Thy Music, we will SEE the Music, In Thy Light, we will HEAR the Light” (John 17:3) he quotes adding that “this knowledge will be a perpetual dazzlement, an eternal music of colors, and eternal color of musics.” (*Conférence de Notre-Dame*, prononcée à Notre-Dame de Paris le 4 décembre 1977 [Paris: Leduc, 1978] p. 15). For more details see Olivier Messiaen, *Musique et couleurs: nouveaux entretiens avec Claude Samuel* (Paris: Belfont, 1986), and Camille Crunelle Hill, “Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Theme of Truth in Messiaen’s *Saint François d’Assise*,” in Siglind Bruhn (ed.), *Messiaen’s Language of Mystical Love* (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 143-166.

his chords, the visual component is, for most of us, beyond our perceptive abilities and thus beyond verification; these works thus do not literally involve two media. The composer's assertion refers to a private reality which is not easily shared by an audience and the details of which have to be taken at face value. In compositions like Alexander Scriabin's *Prometheus* by contrast, notated for *clavier à lumières* in addition to the instruments of musical performance, the audience does enjoy a bi-medial performance. Moreover, analysis reveals that the correlations of sounds and colors are part of a complex system of spiritual symbolism.⁷²

Settings of one text in another medium, while often intriguing in themselves, also constitute a hybrid form in comparison to the phenomenon I am studying here. Whenever a poetic text is set as vocal music, or a dramatic text as opera (or, for that matter, a musical composition as ballet), the original medium is *inflected* rather than *transformed*. Granted, in vocal music, intonation—one of the many features of vocal language—is modified; secondary features dependent upon or related to intonation, like speech tempo, word spacing, etc., may be more or less effected, and structure may occasionally be expanded by repetitions. All other aspects of the original text, however—vocabulary and syntax, metaphors and allusions, the mode of expression and the objects spoken of—will characteristically remain completely untouched. The instrumental accompaniment may be anything from servant to partner (and, in recent times, even competitor) to the vocal part, but it is not typically entrusted with creating a self-contained musical transformation of as many aspects of the poetic model as possible. Rather, we often speak of it as “supporting” the vocal line or “painting a backdrop” for it. Such accompaniment is a musical illustration *of and to* the poetic text. The case is somewhat more complex when a choreographer chooses a piece of music to which to compose a ballet. One would want to distinguish in what cases the music is used primarily as an aesthetically satisfying vehicle for the choreography, and in what cases it actually inspires a conceptual interpretation. Ideally, in order to make such a distinction with authority, one would need to create an artificial situation in which one could focus on choreographies in a silent performance—say, on a video recording played without sound. The question would then be whether the plastic-kinetic

⁷²See Leonid Sabanejev, “Prometheus von Skrjabin,” in Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc (eds), *Der Blaue Reiter* (Munich 1912), and Danuta Mirka, “Colors of a Mystic Fire: Light and Sound in Scriabin's *Prometheus*,” in Siglind Bruhn (ed.), *Signs in Musical Hermeneutics* (*The American Journal of Semiotics* 13: 1-4, 1996 [1998]), pp. 227-248.

work could be intuited as a transformation of (essential aspects of) the musical compositions in any of the myriad ways in which ekphrastic poems—often read without the model being present—relate to the work of visual art to which they owe their being. But back to Lund.

The second sector of my field of research I call *integration*. Here a pictorial element is a part of the visual shape of a literary work. Whereas pictorial elements in a combination have relatively independent functions, a pictorial element in an integration cannot be removed without destroying the verbal structure. Integration means that verbal and visual elements constitute an overall unity which is not reducible to the sum of the constituting elements. In this sector we find stanzas in the shape of a goblet or hour-glass and the like in the pattern poems of baroque poetry, as well as Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* and the concrete poetry of Modernism.⁷³

The most obvious examples of music integrating a strong visual element can be found in compositions written in graphic notation. This system, by which a composer specifies or suggests performance ideas developed from the verbal directions found in earlier scores, which were now expanded and, in part or in toto, replaced by imaginative symbols that intended to activate the performer's creative participation. Known at least since the middle of this century (Morton Feldman's *Projections* of 1950-51), this notational practice moved more and more into the area of non-specific analogy of sign and intended contents. However, I doubt that we are generally dealing here with a "piece of visual art" even on the simplest level of defining the term art. Notation, in all cases, is graphic in nature. And while an explicitly graphic notation of music that claims to do without any kind of "alphabet" or transliteration of clearly delineated phenomena takes the idea into often interesting territory, I would hesitate to count such scores among the "integrations of music and picture."⁷⁴

⁷³Lund, *Text as Picture*, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁴The integration of verbal and visual expressions into musical compositions includes many examples that need little reflection: neither verbal performance instructions nor the visual element of the musical notation itself would normally prompt us to think that we are dealing with a relationship between two art forms, although both instances meet the condition: musical notation would not be in existence without the medium it aims to perpetuate, and compositions would not have survived in a condition as close to their original design without the help of some means of record-keeping. Similarly, performance indications detached from the music to be performed make no sense, while music conceived with expressive nuances that cannot be specified unequivocally outside the verbal medium loses a valuable dimension when deprived of these directions.

More interestingly, there are several cases that would require answering my initial question with “the visual or the verbal *in* music.” Music knows the equivalent to “stanzas in the shape of a goblet,” and pieces like Kurt Schwitters’s famous *Ursonate* and many works by Hugo Ball have shown us that “poems in the form of musical sound patterns” are equally possible.

Next, there are cases in which visual elements that originate outside music appear integrated into a piece of music. One example occurs in scores whose visual presentation follows shapes the outlines of which suggest depicted objects.⁷⁵ Another step further, visual representations that could possibly function as artistic objects in their own right may be declared by their authors to be intended to function as scores.⁷⁶

In other instances, a constituent part of the musical language is based on a linguistic component which would not necessarily appear independently in a poem or drama; themes shaped on the basis of letter-name allusions (B-A-C-H etc.) fall into this category. Finally, as if in combination of the implicit graphic aspect and the implicit letter names, a musical score may contain elements that graphically are both musical *and* verbal text. The most striking example that comes to my mind is the title page of a composition for male chorus written in the ghetto Terezín by one of its

⁷⁵The scores of Sylvano Bussotti could be compared here with concrete poetry, in that the visual aspect of the written form conveys a message of its own. However, the combination of conventional notational components (notes on staves) with graphic elements is often rather baffling, as when the staves themselves crisscross one another in visually interesting ways that call any straightforward reading of the pitches written onto them into question—and thus, much more than overtly graphic scores, trigger reflections about the signs on which most of us rely for musical communication.

⁷⁶Paul Moor, an American music critic who has been based in Berlin for the past decades, tells of such a “score” for a Trio, presented at Darmstadt in the early fifties by Earle Brown. As Moor recalls it, “the score at one point included a framed horizontal panel embellished with what I can only call apparently random squiggles of the Brown pen, each such panel differing individually from its two counterparts—but Nuria Nono (née Schoenberg) kindly explained to me Earle’s fundamental idea: the performer (on whatever instrument) contemplating that panel should improvise whatever simultaneously just happened to come to mind. This opus became even more exacerbatedly aleatory if the three participating artistes obeyed Brown’s directive to interchange parts and then go back to the top for another go-round, more or less *ad libitum*.” (Paul Moor, electronic message to the author, 23 February 1998). Similarly, the Polish-born Israeli composer Roman Haubenstock-Ramati is said to have organized exhibitions under the title “Musikalische Graphik.” His exhibits included colored lithographs which bore a close resemblance to the work of artists like Kandinsky, but were ostensibly intended as scores. Haubenstock-Ramati is said to have explained, “actually, musicians can perform almost anything by Paul Klee—or for that matter by anyone.”

inmates, the composer Pavel Haas. Besides the title itself, *Al S'fod* (Do not Lament), and the usual information regarding the composer, the poet—Jakov Simoni—and the scoring, Haas decorates the title page with musical notes that, while they are carefully placed on their staves, are actually adapted to look like Hebrew letters. The camp authorities would hardly have recognized this, but the ones for whom the message was intended did: it reads “Kizkeret lejon hasana harison vemuacharon begalut Terezín”—In remembrance of the first and at the same time the last anniversary of the Terezín exile.⁷⁷

One step further, musical scores may be accompanied by verbal and visual texts in the form of epigrams and illustrations. Since epigrams are frequently quotations from extant literary works, they could, of course, stand alone and do not concern us here. Illustrations in musical manuscripts, however, form a category of their own. Before Satie's sketches in his own pieces in the early twentieth century, they were known primarily from manuscripts of late medieval and Renaissance music. An illustrative example is the famous *Chansonnier Cordiforme*, the “heart-shaped chansonnier.” More fanciful than useful for music making, it is a kind of troubadour song written into a preciously illuminated heart (topped with four instead of two semicircles).⁷⁸ Similarly, the visual, verbal, and musical components appear almost inseparably integrated, and the artistic is ingeniously blended with the practical, in the manuscript pages of fifteenth-century canons (see Plate 2 below).

Another very interesting example of the integration of both visual and verbal elements into music is found in those written and painted scores that flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and were referred to as “Augenmusik”⁷⁹—musical notation with a symbolic or otherwise

⁷⁷For more details regarding the composition and its context, see Joza Karas, *Music in Terezín 1941-1945* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1985).

⁷⁸The text of this composition by Johannes Regis (c.1430-c.1485) begins “S'il vous plaist que vostre ie soye” (If you want that I be yours). The art work of the manuscript was done by Jean de Montchenu. (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. nouv. acq. fr. 2973, fol. 20v-21r).

⁷⁹“Eye music” may play self-consciously with ‘high’ and ‘low’ pitches, ‘large’ and ‘small’ note values, etc. The *Gulliver Suite* for two violins in Telemann's 1728-29 *Der getreue Music-Meister* includes a Lilliputian chaconne and a gigantic (“Brobdingnagian”) gigue. The first is written in absurdly small note values (with up to six beams, hence 256th-notes, in a time marked as 3/32), the other in a hilariously large time frame (whole notes grouped with 24/1 in every measure). This charming adaptation of the musical notation to the characters thus portrayed is a clear case of *Augenmusik* since nobody but the performers will truly perceive the joke.

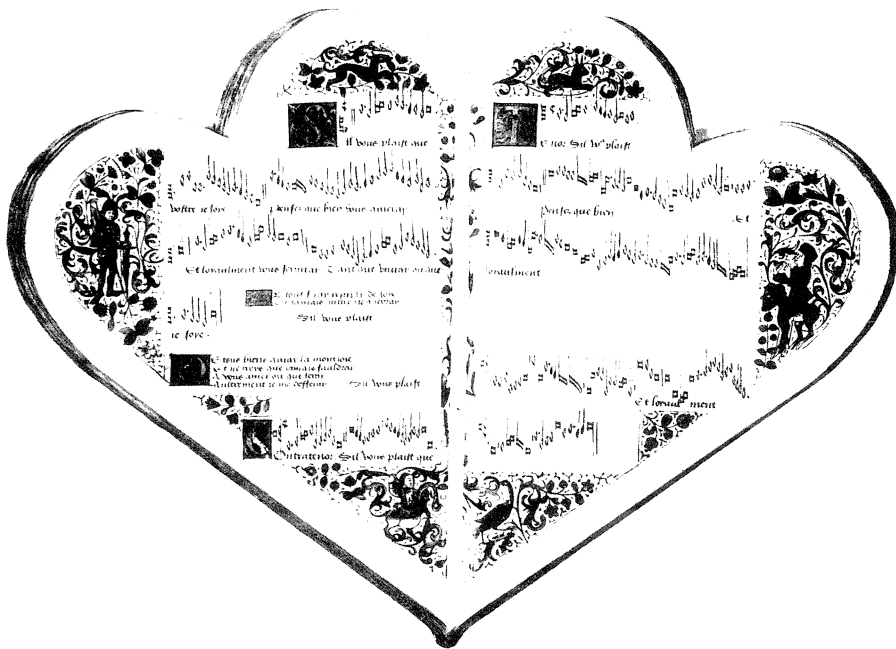


PLATE 2: Johannes Regis, *Le Chansonnier Cordiforme*

extra-musically informative meaning that is apparent to the eye but not to the ear. (Symbols include, for instance, the use of blackness in notes with many, particularly thickly drawn beams for concepts such as “darkness” and “death.”)

The production of manuscripts by Baude Cordier is famous in this genre; see particularly his three-voice rondeau “Belle, bonne, sage,” a love song whose staves and text together create the form of a heart. My own favorite in this genre is a four-part untexted canon by Bartolomé Ramos de Pareja (c.1440-1491), in which the single staff containing the musical sequence is bent into a circular shape and set, in golden ink, against a background of deep sky blue (see Plate 3). Wind spirits blowing into the notes from the four sides of the page (which represent the four points of the compass) indicate the entry of the four voices, while the calligraphy fitted into the circle betrays the composer as a music theorist,



PLATE 3: Bartolomé Ramos de Pareja: Four-part Canon

who informs singers about the modes they will detect in the four-part harmony resulting from the proper execution of this canon.⁸⁰

Opera as a genre typically relies on integrating a verbal text into the composition in such a way that both elements, lyrics and music, seem to be lacking an essential complement when represented separately. However, the degree to which the component parts of opera—the libretto on the one hand and the “pure” music on the other—are capable of also functioning independently is often greater than in the cases Lund mentions. While the hour-glass shape of a poem is really nothing but an empty line drawing (and usually a fuzzy one, for that matter) once the words are taken out, the same cannot be said for librettos. Many of them may be rather more unimaginative when taken as dramatic works; but, as testified in the now established term “Literaturoper,” there are a number of literary works that originated as dramas and continue to stand as such, before and after they are used by a composer. And as, for instance, Hindemith’s symphonies *Mathis der Maler* and *Die Harmonie der Welt* prove, even the music (or part thereof) can sometimes function as a fully valid artistic testimony when taken on its own. Yet these cases are exceptions rather than the rule, and the “music alone” or “drama alone” typically differs from the corresponding component that forms a constituent part of the opera.

This brings me to Lund’s third definition.

In the third category—which I call *transformation*—no pictorial element, however, is combined with or integrated into the verbal text. The text refers to an element or a combination of elements in pictures not present before the reader’s eyes. The information to the reader about the picture is given exclusively by the verbal language.⁸¹

⁸⁰Ramos de Pareja’s manuscript, illuminated by Gherardo and Monte da Giovanni del Fora, is today held by the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence (Ms. Banco Rari 229, Magl. XIX, 59, fol. C.111.b). Another famous example of a canon in circular notation is that by Baude Cordier, estimated to stem from the late 14th or early 15th century. Composed in the form that we know as *caccia* (a word that means “hunt” but, like *figa*, also has implications of being chased), this canon is notated in two concentric circles. These are accompanied by four blocks of text, placed in the four corners of the page and themselves encircled by two delicately drawn concentric circles. The text block in the upper left-hand corner, containing the lyrics, is itself written on concentric circles, while the three blocks containing accompanying words (commentary, as it were) appear in normal, horizontal script.

⁸¹Lund, *Text as Picture*, p. 9.

This, then, resembles the case of a poem or painting being transformed *into* music—the focus of this study. Where *transformations* appear in poetry or prose on painting, they are referred to as ekphrasis. In music, such ekphrasis can take as its object a work of literature (as is the case in Ravel's piano piece *Gibet*, briefly described above) or a work of visual art. The compositions investigated in parts II and III of this study deal respectively with these two sides of musical ekphrasis.

When transformation of a work of visual art is brought onto the theatrical stage and wedded with the miming aspect of that genre, we speak of *enactments*. Among the musical works chosen for part IV, the three compositions based on serial paintings can be shown to contain distinct elements of enactment. This is particularly intriguing given the fact that neither composition is strictly theatrical in its focus. Music knows a few cases where something corresponding to the typical dual transformation—from the visual to the verbal to the mimed—occurs outside the opera. However, since the operatic environment is the characteristic one for this sub-genre, I would like to introduce musical enactment using as an example the three scenes from act VI (“Sechstes Bild”) of Hindemith's opera *Mathis der Maler*.

In the first of these scenes, Hindemith's painter Mathis attempts to soothe the distraught young girl Regina with a narration of what he claims to see in a picture portraying three angels. His verbal depiction leads us to one of the second-tier panels of the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, the masterpiece of the operatic protagonist's historical model, Grünewald. At this juncture, Hindemith the librettist puts into the mouth of his character Mathis a most intriguing tripartite description and interpretation of the panel that the historical “Master Mathis” painted ten or more years prior to the year into which this fictional conversation is placed. In the way in which Mathis tells Regina about the “pious pictures,” no mention is made of who created them; the narration appears guided by the idea and intention of what is portrayed rather than by an attempt to describe the visual composition in all its details. Mathis focuses on the spiritual aspect of this angelic concert—and so does the music in which Hindemith sets this scene.⁸²

⁸²For a detailed analysis of how Hindemith's music reflects, relates to, portrays, and interprets the relevant panels of Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*, please refer to my extensive study on the subject, *The Temptation of Paul Hindemith: Mathis der Maler as a Spiritual Testimony* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1998).

This “narrated portrayal” of the *Angelic Concert* is complemented in the scene that follows by an enactment-cum-narration based on one of the two rear panels of the altarpiece, *The Temptation of Saint Antony*. The events presented on stage function on three levels here. First, in the larger context of the operatic plot, Mathis’s encounter with human tempters and monstrous tormentors appears like a bad dream—or a vision, given that he perceives himself as the Egyptian hermit Antony. Second, the verbal onslaught by the seven human tempters functions as a multi-layered interpretative embodiment of what is, beyond the reference to the pictorial representation in the altar panel, both the inner story of the temptations of Saint Antony and a dramatic portrayal of the plight in which Mathis is caught. Third, the physical attack by the monsters is at the same time a *tableau vivant*⁸³ of Grünewald’s depiction and its ekphrasis: the choir does not only accompany with insults and spiteful interpretations the assault by hellish monsters to which Mathis/Antony is subjected in the center of the stage, but simultaneously narrates the scene as painted by Grünewald. All images evoked in this scene also reflect a deeper spiritual meaning since they can be understood as provocations, as torments that emerge from the victim’s own doubting mind. They represent his spiritual nightmares and the internal enemies that haunt his soul.

The third scene in this sequence, entitled “The Visit of Saint Antony in the Hermitage of Saint Paul” after the Grünewald panel to which it relates, limits the enactment to the visual recreation: stage design, costumes, position, and posture of the two actors. No narrative relates what we see and hear to the painting, thus allowing us to focus all the more on the symbolic significance of the scene. The older hermit Paul (“embodied” by the operatic character, Cardinal Albrecht) acts as a spiritual adviser to Antony (= Mathis). While his verbal admonitions deal unequivocally with the reality of the artist in the time of the Lutheran Uprising and the Peasants’ War, the scenic setting binds the conversation into the larger conflict of conscience that is, both literally and figuratively, through the ekphrasis of the altar panels, the subject matter of the

⁸³The term *tableau vivant*, “living picture,” denotes a scenic reinterpretation of a pictorial work popular as a genteel pastime. Participants would choose a work of art, dress in imitations of the depicted garments, find props that matched those in the paintings, and assume the poses of the portrayed characters. For integrations or descriptions of *tableaux vivants* in the literatures of the 18th and 19th centuries, see the “attitudes” of Lady Hamilton and Goethe’s *Wahlverwandschaften* (Elective Affinities). More recently, Lily Bart in Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth* (1980) enacts Sir Joshua Reynolds’s *Portrait of Mrs. Lloyd* (painted in 1775).

opera. Hindemith's music adds a wealth of nuances that corroborate and enhance this interpretive layering.

Another fascinating case of such mediated enactment of a pictorial narrative exists in Stravinsky's opera *The Rake's Progress*. The stimulus here is a series of eight engravings etched in 1735 by William Hogarth, after an equal number of paintings he had completed a year earlier. Stravinsky, inspired by these prints, followed Aldous Huxley's recommendation to ask Auden for a libretto that would dramatize the tale told in the etchings and on which he could then base his opera. Auden accepted, and with the help of Chester Kallman told the story of the rake in a style that aimed at once "to recapture the myths and language of an earlier, more optimistic world, and to examine that world from the perspective of our own. [...] the libretto is Auden's attempt to adapt certain poetic styles to the conditions of twentieth-century literary life, to imitate or parody older models in much the same way that Stravinsky's music casts new light on earlier operatic techniques."⁸⁴ This case of *musical enactment of a pictorial source* is similar in principle to the texted example I will be examining in part IV of this study. Even more than in the other cases, the Auden/Kallman libretto is a literary ekphrasis in itself, of which Stravinsky's music then gives a setting. The texts Honegger uses for his oratorio on Holbein's *Totentanz*, while "authored" by Paul Claudel, are actually compiled from the Bible. As such they constitute something akin to a verbal embodiment of a parallel source to that which inspired the artist and the composer, a rather specific kind of ekphrastic reaction to Holbein's artistic rendering. The situation is very similar in the case of Janáček's composition on Josef Kresz-Mecina's panels *The Lord's Prayer*, which the composer based on five *tableaux vivants* he had devised himself. Here, too, the prayer text predates both the art and its musical transmedialization.

Having discussed this special case of transformation—ekphrasis as enactment—I will now return to the general case for some further differentiations and clarifications regarding my choice of case studies.

- The "representation in one medium [here: music] of a text previously represented in another medium [here: poetry or painting]" can theoretically apply to a piece of high art as well as to a mass-produced effigy or slogan; I will focus on the former.

⁸⁴Williard Spiegelman, "The Rake's Progress: An Operatic Version of Pastoral," *Southwest Review* 63/1 (Winter 1978), pp. 28-40.

- According to the definition of ekphrasis, the suggested primary representation may be real or fictitious; since my specific interest is with analytic comparison, I will limit myself to extant works.⁸⁵
- The compositional genre can be of any duration and scored for any instrumental setting. Given that I have written elsewhere at great length on musical ekphrasis in the piano repertoire, I will focus on orchestral and ensemble works here.⁸⁶
- Musical ekphrasis like its literary counterpart may cross-reference selected components of what is being represented to historical data and layers of meaning not expressed in the primary text itself; this, if it can indeed be established, will of course be particularly fascinating.

Finally, the composer's interest in a musical transformation of a given work of verbal or pictorial art may inspire a creative artist working in yet another medium to expand the ekphrastic process even further, adding still another transformation. Here again, cases in which a composer's work is most clearly an after-thought of a pre-existing transformation from one medium into another, while occasionally engaging and often charming, are least pertinent to the aims of this study. To give a few examples of such cases: Musical transformations of *tableaux vivants* could potentially be very interesting; but pieces like Alexander Borodin's 1880 symphonic poem *V srednei Azii* (On the Steppes of Central Asia), written as an "accompaniment" to the representation of *tableaux vivants*, actually falls into the genre of overtures and incidental music. Compositions based on ekphrastic poems—poems that are themselves transformations of pictorial texts—can be little more than mere settings. Francis Poulenc's songs on Guillaume Apollinaire's *Le bestiaire*, whose poems are in turn based on woodcuts by Raoul Dufy, fall into this category. So do Poulenc's settings of Paul Éluard's poems *Travail du peintre*, which

⁸⁵See the fascinating compilation of poems on non-extant visual representations which Hollander discusses in his chapter on "notional ecphrasis" [sic], in John Hollander, *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 7-32 and 34-37.

⁸⁶For musical transformations of poems in the French tradition, please refer to my *Images and Ideas in Modern French Piano Music* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon: 1997). Since writing that book I discovered a similarly motivated piano composition from another tradition, Edward MacDowell's *Gedichte nach Heine* (Six Poems after Heinrich Heine, op. 31).

verbally represent the style and characteristics of various contemporary painters,⁸⁷ and Reynaldo Hahn's similarly motivated *Portraits de peintres* after poems by Marcel Proust. Two works that share the title, *La victoire de Guernica* for choir and orchestra after a text by Paul Éluard, are also musical settings of ekphrasis (see the compositions by Georges Auric, 1950 and by Luigi Nono, 1954). Moreover, Poulenc also set Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, which are not "poems on pictures" but rather "poems in the form of pictures"—a feature that is by necessity lost once the text, now used as lyrics for songs, is fitted between the staves of musical notation. At the other end of the spectrum, verbal ekphrasis may indeed stimulate further musical ekphrasis in an independent musical work. Thus Debussy's piano piece *Clair de lune* in *Suite Bergamasque* was apparently inspired by Paul Verlaine's ekphrastic poem (by the same title) after Antoine Watteau's painting, *Fêtes galantes*.

The cases of dual ekphrasis that will be most intriguing to examine as instances of transmedialization are those involving three *different* media each: pictorial-verbal-musical, pictorial-choreographic [visual/kinetic]-musical, or poetic-musical-choreographic [visual/kinetic]. An example for the first kind is Honegger's oratorio, *La danse des morts*, written (with the mediation of a text that Claudel compiled from the Bible and other sources) on Holbein's *Totentanz* series. Hindemith's *Nobilissima Visione* (on Giotto via Massine's choreography) is one example for the second instance, while the two ballets written on Debussy's and Hindemith's Mallarmé-based symphonic compositions present a case for the third category.

The Challenge of Verbal Mediation

One final feature distinguishes musical ekphrasis from its literary model: at various levels, a medium that is not the one of secondary representation is needed for communication *about* what is being seen, read, and heard.

In literary ekphrasis, the verbal text refers to the visual image directly. The poetic title is part of the same medium, and even discussions of particular cases of ekphrasis also happen in the same medium: language. The only deviation, as it were, from this clear-cut division between

⁸⁷The seven artists depicted in the cycle are Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Georges Braque, Juan Gris, Paul Klee, Joan Mirò, and François Villon.

the primary = visual and the secondary = verbal representation is the caption accompanying the pictorial work: a verbally cast pointer at the visually presented contents.

In musical ekphrasis of literary works, both the medium that establishes the connection to the appreciator (the titles of the literary and musical works, telling us what is being represented) and the medium used to analyze (interpreting the “how” of each representation as well as of the relationship between the two) belongs to the verbal, not the musical sphere. Even more obvious is the case in musical ekphrasis of works of visual art. Here the two artistic media involved—the visual and the sonic—need a third, the verbal, as mediator both to establish the “what” and to deliberate about the “how.” Titles provide crucial information for the orientation of audiences; they function as what William Labov terms the “abstract”: a summary of the story. The title adds narrative function even where pictorial or musical representation may at first seem ambiguous or inaccessible. As Labov defines it, “the abstract not only states what the narrative is about, but also why it is told.”⁸⁸ Authored mostly (though not exclusively) by persons other than the creative artists, critical discussions and analyses complement the summary function of the Labovian abstract by exploring every detail of each work of art in light of its connotations, symbolic references, etc. Language thus used descriptively must be distinguished from language used as part of the work of art, as the medium for literary representation.

In language thus used, terminology is of crucial importance. If the application of the concept *representation* constitutes a first challenge, and the decision to name the musical equivalent of the literary phenomenon known as *ekphrasis* simply *musical ekphrasis* a second, finding the appropriate term for the process that is involved in the transition from an artistic representation in one medium to another presents a third. Three of the five terms frequently used by literary scholars may create problems in the musical field, since they are tied up with music-specific meanings: *transposition* (occupied by its usage for movements from one key to another), *transformation* (used for developmental procedures happening to themes or motifs), and *transcription* (understood as denoting arrangements for a different instrumentation). Of all these, *transformation* would be my favorite since it has the least baggage in the way of music-specific usage, encompasses notions of emulation as well as metamorphosis, and

⁸⁸William Labov, *Language in the Inner City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), p. 370.

allows for the greatest freedom of relationships between first and secondary representation: transformation.

A fourth term, *translation*, is not predetermined in music; yet both *translation* and *transcription* seem to presuppose a high degree of one-to-one equivalency that can be “right” or “wrong,” and therefore seem unnecessarily restrictive when applied to the creative relationship between a first representation of a scene or story and its ekphrastic rendering in another medium. *Transmutation*, used only rarely outside the very specific distinction made by Roman Jakobson,⁸⁹ may appear ideal at first. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb “to transmute” as “to alter or change in nature, properties, appearance, or form; to transform, convert, turn”; this seems fitting for our purpose. Yet closer inspection reveals a distinct pitfall: the tacit implication is that (1) something ceases to exist in its first state as it changes to a new stage of development, and that (2) there is a difference of quality between the former and the latter;⁹⁰ neither pertains in the case of ekphrasis. A sixth term that could be added here is *transfiguration*; Jorge de Sena, author in his *Arte de Musica* of forty-four poems on musical subjects, refers to the enterprise of reacting poetically to works of music sometimes as “transposition,” more often as “poetic transfiguration of music.”⁹¹ However, as with *transmutation*, I am troubled by the understanding that the stage of “transfiguration” might be perceived as more elevated than that present in the object to be transfigured, an assumption I consider unjustified in the cases of ekphrasis (regardless from which medium into which).

I therefore venture to suggest a term of my own, which I feel would capture the essence of what is at stake without allowing for any of the above-mentioned tacit misreadings: *transmedialization*.⁹²

⁸⁹Jakobson distinguishes “three ways of interpreting a verbal sign”: “intralingual translation,” the “*rewording*” of a text within the same verbal language; “interlingual translation,” the recreation of a verbal text in a different language; and “intersemiotic translation or *transmutation*,” the “interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems.” (*Selected Writings II: Word and Language* [The Hague: Mouton, 1971] p. 261.)

⁹⁰When *transmutation* is used in alchemy, it is implied that a baser metal changes *into* gold. When physicists speak of transmutation, they mean that one element or isotope changes *into* another by irradiation or bombardment, or one subatomic particle *into* another.

⁹¹Jorge de Sena, *Poesia II* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 1988), pp. 208-209.

⁹²Both the German and the French languages know terms linking an adjectival “-medial” (derived from the artistic medium, *not* from media!) in combinations such as “intermedial” and “transmedial”; I am thus not really suggesting that we invent or make up an entirely new word, but that we introduce an anglicized form into our vocabulary.

Finally on the question of distinguishing carefully between the various “trans-” words, Claus Clüver raises an important point when he reminds us that reading a work of art as ekphrastic does not mean that we must establish its status as such before we can allow ourselves to proceed. As he observes correctly, “we are not likely to use it as we are obliged to use translations of verbal texts from languages we do not know.” Rather, he reassures us, interpreting an ekphrastic work can be likened to reading the translation of a poem by people familiar with the original, that is by those who need it least and can therefore appreciate it best. “Its achievement and particular thrust can only be gauged by holding it against the original.”⁹³

In the same vein, the aim in my readings of the case studies in this volume is less to *prove* that these compositions represent instances of musical ekphrasis than to read them *as such*. The questions to which this study is dedicated are questions regarding the scope and nature of the interartistic, intersemiotic transmedialization:

- What choices do individual composers make in their quest musically to transmedialize a pictorial or literary representation?
- Do the choices made by the composers of a certain historical and cultural context allow to distinguish and describe a newly emerging “convention” of intersemiotic transformation?
- Does the range of stances adopted by composers to works of literature or visual art parallel those observed in ekphrastic poets?

I will return to these questions at the end of this study and offer some answers. My approach towards these answers engages first verbal, then visual representations in a dialogue that explores, through various composers’ eyes and ears, their relative position on the balance between depiction and narration, as well as music’s role as mediator or end in a multipartite transformative process.

A further problem with the verbal mediation occurs in the descriptive analysis and interpretation itself. While I am fully aware of the many pitfalls, I can no more escape the dilemma than Carl Dahlhaus felt he

⁹³Claus Clüver, “On Intersemiotic Transposition,” *Poetics Today* 10/1 (Spring 1989), p. 70.

could when he wrote, with regard to what is fundamentally the same problem:

The practice of giving Wagnerian leitmotives names which fix an identity to them once and for all is as questionable as it is unavoidable: questionable, because the translation of musical expression into precise verbal terms is never satisfactory; unavoidable, because the idea of wordless, instinctive understanding of musical motives, without the need for mediation through language, is an illusion.⁹⁴

On the path along which I will be pursuing these questions in part II, which deals with non-vocal music transmedializing poetic texts, I begin with two compositions transmedializing the stasis of a symbolist drama (Martinů and Loeffler on Maeterlinck). I then explore a single composer's varying solutions to the transformation of poetic text into music (Schoenberg on Dehmel and Maeterlinck). Finally, I conclude with Elliott Carter's more recent orchestral compositions on two versions of "the American narrative," in the epic poems of Hart Crane and Saint-John Perse.

Part III, which explores music transmedializing visual art, begins with three paintings that were combined by a composer in such a way that the artistic message of each is transcended in an overarching larger narrative (Respighi on Botticelli). I then turn to musical renditions of symbolic characterizations (McCabe and Gilboa on Chagall), before I conclude with three composer's ekphrastic compositions on the same work by Paul Klee.

Finally, the tripartite examples in part IV come in two groups. In the first, music acts as the instigator of the process of transmedialization, engaging, as it were, a third sister art as a go-between: Honegger responding with the help of Claudel's biblically rooted texts to Holbein's woodcuts, and Hindemith reacting via Massine's choreography to Giotto's frescoes. In the second group, music is the primary transmedializing agent, resulting in a composition that is subsequently further developed in dance: from Mallarmé to Debussy and on to Vaslav Nijinsky, and from Mallarmé to Hindemith and on to Martha Graham. (Please note that biographical sketches of the composers, poets, artists, and dancers discussed, as well as brief comments that aim to situate the works analyzed in this study in the respective oeuvre, are assembled in an appendix.)

⁹⁴Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979/1971), p. 61.

The three central parts of this book, then, will be devoted to the luxury of an immersion into the wealth of individual, ever-different solutions of musical ekphrasis. Only then do I return to the question of methodology, in an attempt to categorize the modes of various composers' transmedializations and to assess the value of an understanding of the ekphrastic relationship for both the work of art or poetry and for the musical composition.