

Can we – without any discussion of the historical development of the concept – assert that Kant uses the word ‘theme’ (*Thema*) in a present-day sense as musical theme? Kivy does so (p. 50). There are, however, good reasons to believe that the concept ‘theme’ in Kant’s discussion of ‘... free fantasies (without a theme), and indeed, all music that is not set to words’ (p. 50) must be understood as ‘sujet’ (a concept referring to content) rather than as ‘musical theme’ (a (later) concept referring to material and structure).

And is it tenable to translate the word ‘pathological’ in Hanslick’s famous rejection of musical listening aiming at emotional response into ‘subjective’ (p. 63)? Judged by etymological consideration and confirmed by a close reading of the passage in question, it much rather refers to notions of ‘Fremdbestimmtheit’ (being submitted to external determination). Hanslick’s juxtaposition of ‘genuine aesthetic enjoyment’ and ‘pathological excitement’ (pathologisches Ergriffensein) is a matter of being or not being in control of oneself. Thus it is also a contribution to the lively 18th- and 19th-century discussion of music, character, and ‘ethos’.

‘As far as I know’, Kivy states in the preface, ‘a history of musical formalism has never been written’ (p. viii). His handling of the historical documents testifies the need for a new major work on this issue. But much has already been written, some of the best by Carl Dahlhaus. Is Kivy’s neglecting of this a matter of prejudice? And/or are my problems with the book a matter of prejudice? I do not hope so.

Actually I have profited from the reading; less, however, from its development of its theme, and more from its persistent standing by a refreshingly ‘different’ position. As a music historian of ‘relativist’ or ‘constructionist’ leaning I am inclined to view the struggle scrutinized by Kivy not as matter of true or false assertion of essential musical properties but as a matter of competing interpretative strategies. I also look differently at the relation between aesthetic discourses on music and music itself. I do not view the aesthetic discourses only as a bundle of more or less correct statements about essential musical properties inert to discursive interference. I am convinced that aesthetic discourses – as historical negotiations of what music is, or will, or can be – interfere with these properties!

Across this epistemological abyss, however, I have learned from the reading of Peter Kivy’s *Antithetical Arts*. However ‘hermeneutically’ inclined I may be, I willingly accept that not every interpretation is plausible, and however ‘constructivist’ I may be, I concede that music cannot be constructed arbitrarily.

‘No’ is a nice two-letter word. And Peter Kivy is an excellent teacher in the noble art of using it.

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Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen
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Musical meaning – i.e. how and why we invest music with meaning – has been a key issue in musical aesthetics for centuries. In the 19th and early 20th century, the question was mostly related to discussions about musical representation (e.g. in early musical hermeneutics and in the ‘War of the Romantics’ between Eduard Hanslick and his rivals). In the middle of the 20th century the issue was generally taken in a more epistemological

and psychological direction with Susanne K. Langer's semantic symbolism and Leonard B. Meyer's semiotic gestalt approach as two of the most prominent examples. The sociological approach to music that became popular since the late 1960s explores different socio-cultural constructions of musical meaning. And in recent years, the aesthetic issues (i.e. senso-perceptual construction of meaning) in regard to musical meaning has gained new academic interest, for instance, in phenomenological and psychological research in the perception of sound and music and, in particular, with the rapidly expanding field of cognitive science and neuroaesthetics.

In *Lyd, litteratur og musik: Gestus i kunstoplevelsen* (Sound, Literature, and Music: Gesture in the Art Experience), Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen takes up a number of important issues concerning music and meaning. The main purpose of the book is thus to build a 'vocabulary' for the particular 'experiential potential' (oplevelsespotentiale) associated with music. Indeed, books with the explicit purpose of unfolding a theory of musical meaning appear only rarely, even more so in Danish where *Sound, Literature, and Music* is one of the first of its kind. For this reason alone, it is a highly relevant and much-welcome publication. And moreover, Stougaard Pedersen does not confine her investigation to music alone. The meaning and experiential potential of literature is examined with equal priority and compared to music throughout the book. It is thus, also internationally, an ambitious project of cross-disciplinary aesthetics that Stougaard Pedersen has initiated.

The book alternates between theoretical parts and parts focusing on single aspects (voice, presence, rhythm etc.) through analyses of individual works. As often indicated in the book, Stougaard Pedersen approaches the question of musical and literary meaning from a mainly phenomenological perspective, without restricting herself to phenomenology as a specific philosophical discipline. Throughout the book Stougaard Pedersen draws on several well-known theorists within philosophy, linguistics, literature theory and musicology such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Susanne K. Langer, Leonard B. Meyer, Northrop Frye, Émile Benveniste, K.E. Løgstrup, Thomas Clifton and Horace Engdahl, to name just a few.

In contrast to the relatively broad theoretical perspective, Stougaard Pedersen has chosen a rather small empirical material for her analyses consisting of just a few musical and literary examples: John Cage's late number piece *Five* (1988); three haiku-inspired poems by Gunnar Björling from the 1930s and 1940s; the first movement from Maurice Ravel's *Piano Trio in A Minor* (1914); and two short stories – 'The String Quartet' (1921) and 'In the Orchard' (1923) – by Virginia Woolf.

Stougaard Pedersen probably has chosen a relatively sparse empirical material so as to allow herself to go more into detail with each work in its own right. But the examples are both too few and too briefly examined to provide an adequate support for her main objective, that is, the formulation of a vocabulary for the experiential potential of literature and music. Furthermore, the examples belong, or are treated as though they belong, within the same aesthetic (and partly historical) paradigm of 'discreet subjectivism' that characterizes much impressionist music and literature from the late 19th and first half of the 20th century. Following the musical phenomenologists Thomas Clifton and Lawrence Ferrara, music and literature is in Stougaard Pedersen's perspective understood as having a 'potentially existential' (p. 120) character. Throughout the book, works are repeatedly described as constituting a sense of 'presence' by expressively 'addressing' the recipient in the act of experience. A work is something that 'insists on being heard' (p. 54), it 'wants something with us' (p. 33). Music, in other words, is basically understood as an expressive, anthropomorphic phenomenon, a (re)presentation of another subject.

This particular understanding of the aesthetic object influences both Stougaard Pedersen's theoretical reflections and her analytic inquiries. A notable example of this is found in Stougaard Pedersen's rather idiosyncratic use of the term *intentionality*; a use that seems to be a direct product of her latent anthropomorphism. Hence, Stougaard Pedersen repeatedly turns the meaning of the term – a well-established concept in modern phenomenology – upside down by making intentional directedness an attribute of the aesthetic object rather than the experiencing subject.¹ The inversion enables surprising conclusions such as: 'The mutually harmonic course of the voices makes up a kind of intentionality ...' (p. 36); and 'the dissonances and the voice's character of voice and not instrument are both intentional factors.' (p. 46).

Such a subjectification of the aesthetic object may be acceptable in regard to the specific examples Stougaard Pedersen has chosen for her investigation. However, one might ask oneself how the book's conclusions relate to works of music and literature outside the anthropomorphic-expressive paradigm. In fact, Stougaard Pedersen explicitly confines her musical investigation to Western art music (p. 110), which in effect would say a particular variety of Western art music. But is it possible – when analyzing and theorizing about musical and literary meaning in the beginning of the 21st century – to make such harsh empirical restrictions?

Despite such objections, if one accepts the book's rather narrow focus, *Sound, Literature, and Music* nonetheless offers many fine observations and interesting reflections. This is especially the case in regard to Stougaard Pedersen's more specific purpose, indicated in the book's subtitle, of analysing gesture in the experience of music and literature. Indeed, the analyses of gesture – made in ongoing dialogue not only with Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein but with many other philosophers and musicologists as different as Julia Kristeva, Giorgio Agamben, Richard Middleton and Robert Hatten – produce the best passages of the book. Here, Stougaard Pedersen continually demonstrates how a focus on gesture can highlight important aspects of the music in question; aspects that can otherwise be hard to locate and describe properly.

One of the reasons for Stougaard Pedersen's interest in gesture is an explicit wish to avoid the tendency, observable in much western musicology, to focus on the score at the cost of the sounding music (p. 109f.). But the focus on gesture also aids her, otherwise rather abstract and quasi-metaphysical, idea about the addressing and communicating character of the work. The idea of a speaking presence now becomes much more concrete by being related to a set of specific dynamic qualities in the sounding material that are invested with gestural meaning by the experiencing subject during the aesthetic event. Music (and literature) thus becomes a sounding body – a concrete body with a materialized voice – speaking to the listener through dynamic variations in rhythm and timbre. When viewed from this perspective, *Sound, Literature, and Music* draws attention to important aspects in modern music that are otherwise difficult to indicate, and introduces a vocabulary so as to encourage us to start talking about it.

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1 Intentionality is one of the most important concepts in phenomenology since Husserl. Both in Husserl and later, intentionality refers to the fundamental 'directedness' of human consciousness toward something in the phenomenal world; consciousness is always already consciousness of *something*. Obviously, Stougaard Pedersen is well aware of the inverted meaning in her use of the concept, but she only comments on it briefly and, rather confusingly, quite late in the book (pp. 80, 99).