



Research Article

Crystallization of culture through analysis: Deleuzian and psychoanalytic reflections

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Abstract

Cultures do not exist in isolation, contained within regional or ethnic boundaries, or as immutable, ossified entities. The need to study their changes and interactions gives rise to the concepts of multi-/inter-/cross-/trans-/culturality (for the present purpose distinctions between these terms will not be addressed, with transculturality used as an umbrella term). Transculturality, however, is not (only) something that exists in a given cultural artefact, but arises through collaboration between various actors, and when music is concerned, the important role is played by the listener and the analyst. Different analytical approaches do not only illuminate, but effectively construct different aspects of the work, including those facets that can be ascribed to different cultures. The present essay examines how this plays out in music, with special emphasis on the pentatonic scale. Examples from various genres, regions, and styles will be used, the primary one being the composition *Hadedas* for cello and piano by Serbian composer Srđan Hofman. Freely borrowing certain concepts from Deleuze (and Guattari), I argue that pentatonicism, as part of diverse cultural assemblages, can be highly territorialized, yet possess nomadic qualities. The deterritorialization (“lines of flight”) – reterritorialization processes are “out-of-phase” activities of the composer and the analyst. Further along these lines, we can describe such processes in terms of what could tentatively be called (as per Manuel DeLanda) Deleuze’s ontological dimensions: virtual/chaotic – intensive (“molecular”, related to heat, velocity etc.) – extensive (“molar”, as an object given in time and space). Any cultural activity, whether emphasizing creativity, performance or interpretation, engages a field of interacting forces, where both individual works and individual cultures are established around certain pre-individual singularities, emerging as partially “crystallized” entities with fuzzy boundaries. Finally, in order to account for music’s remarkable predilection for embodying and blending diverse cultural contexts, the essay takes a psychoanalytic turn, and – assuming powerful connections between music and the unconscious – invokes primary-process mechanisms, particularly condensation, and subject-object ambiguity.

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Introduction

Let us begin with some commonplace phrases. The vast majority of cultures do not exist in isolation, within closed homogeneous communities. The studying of culture, or *a* culture, or cultures, almost by definition implies examining connections with other cultures, the way they interact, negotiate, intermingle, perhaps fuse together, or, on the contrary drift apart. Rather than being static, cultures change and evolve; rather than being clearly delineated objects, they manifest their protean character, and fuzzy boundaries. This gives rise to the concepts of multi-/inter-/cross-/trans-

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/culturality. These concepts address several specific areas, such as comparisons of different cultures, results of cultural interactions, cultural traits that transcend individual cultures, and more. My present purpose does not require that I address distinctions between them, and I will use “transculturality” as the word of choice. Going beyond the boundaries, as the prefix *trans-* suggests, whether to reach out to the Other, or to overcome one’s own limitations, is what motivated my choice of this word.

Without losing sight of broader cultural issues, my aim here is to examine how this plays out in music, with a special emphasis on the pentatonic pitch collection. My chief example will be the composition *Hadedas* for cello and piano by the Serbian composer Srđan Hofman (1944–2021), but I will also adduce examples from other genres, styles, and regions. In doing so, I will largely, and sometimes loosely borrow concepts from the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, including his collaborative work with Felix Guattari. Generally speaking, Deleuze is a philosopher who will dismantle any ossified identities; a philosopher of becoming in an affirmative way, dispensing with the Hegelian labor of the negative; a philosopher for whom any system (also culture as a system) must be defined by its challenges, appropriations, external contacts, for whom any concept cannot be dissociated from the external circumstances – a philosopher of that kind helps us think not within the narrow confines of a single culture but looking beyond it, at what it might become, at its rhizomatic relations and productive encounters with the other, its unpredictable future states; a paramount philosopher of creativity as I like to read him. For my own understanding of Deleuze I am also indebted to the Mexican-American philosopher and artist Manuel DeLanda, who interprets Deleuze in a specific way of one who has been brought in the tradition of analytic philosophy. A handful of other authors will also be included. Productive encounters are key.

Pentatonicism Nomadic and Territorial

An important notion from my introductory paragraph is that elements of a culture can transcend its boundaries, or be shared by other cultures, sometimes achieving an almost world-wide distribution. We will first illustrate this with several ethnomusicological transcriptions from various parts of the world (Fig. 1)



a. Round Dance of the Hurons, Canada (Tiersot, 1910, p. 153)



b. Song of the Sámi (Sachs, 1962, p. 166)



c. Inuit song, Alaska (Hauser, 1977, p. 47)



d. Dirge of the Mashona People, Africa² (Hornbostel, 1928, p. 44)

Figure 1³ Transcriptions of selected pentatonic music

² Possibly present-day Zimbabwe (no precise data available).

³ Since this is not an ethnomusicological study – for which I am not sufficiently qualified in the first place – I have omitted texts of the songs, as well as various ethnomusicological annotations, focusing on the parameter of pitch. The choice of examples is arbitrary.

What do these examples have in common? We can identify several things, but I will zero in on their pitch content. All of them contain the anhemitonic pentatonic collection. Some embellishing extras may be included, or only a subset of the collection is used; intonations are non-tempered by default, but basically, we can recognize pentatonicism as their core pitch organization. The sample could easily be expanded to Scotland, the Slavic world, East Asia, and more: some of these other regions will be introduced later on. Making such an observation presupposes the notion of the anhemitonic pentatonic scale as a theoretical construct, and the adaptation of indigenous intonations to the twelve-tone equally tempered system. Furthermore, I have used the term “subset” from Allen Forte’s set theory, even if set analysis is meant for an entirely different repertoire. The appropriateness of this is debatable, but for the time being, what matters is that I have selected a certain set of concepts, and a certain toolbox to produce a certain observation and interpretation. We could even say that I have produced a certain reality of the music.

Clearly, this is just one way to examine this sample. What is most obviously missing from the picture are the cultural contexts in which this music arises. After all, we have been taught that culture is an organic unity in which every element becomes meaningful only in relation to all other elements, right? Well, things tend to become more complicated. A culture can indeed be understood as an organism, and yet its elements can be freely detachable; but even if they are detached and made to function in another culture, that still doesn’t make a culture a mere collection of elements. Cultures must have some stable, well-defined properties – how else could we produce any descriptions thereof? – yet we cannot adequately describe them until we examine their tendencies, becomings, and rates of change. Obviously, we are liable to come up with several competing ways of understanding culture(s).

Here is where the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of assemblage, as used in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987/1980), and *What is Philosophy* (1994/1991), and later discussed by a few other authors (Grosz 2008; DeLanda, 2002, 2016; Buchanan, 2021), helps us negotiate these sometimes contradictory claims. A culture is an assemblage. Assemblage is a whole, but such that decidedly diverges from Hegelian tradition, where a whole is totalizing, where parts lose their independence, and are defined in terms of their belonging together: the relations of interiority. A totality defined by interiority is not decomposable, and everything is subsumed under one general idea. In contradistinction, an assemblage, to begin with, must contain heterogeneous elements. These elements must connect in some ways, yet, at the same time, retain their independence. They can be detached from the assemblage and “plugged into” a different one, possibly obtaining a different function: these are relations of exteriority. Parts interact, otherwise, it would only be a collection. Properties arising from these interactions are emergent: they are not fully predictable, and they are immanent to the assemblage, that is, not governed by a transcendent instance, and by an overarching principle. They are contingent: they do not occur necessarily owing to their inner essences that must be realized, to some kind of Aristotelian *causa formalis* and *causa finalis*. An emergent property disappears when parts stop interacting, and the property’s being immanent to the parts means that it belongs neither to any one individual part, nor to some abstract totalizing whole: they are immanent to elements as a multiplicity, the one-many – Deleuze and Guattari’s favorite example is a swarm or a pack, and DeLanda (2002, p. 47 and passim) uses the term population thinking.

In interactions, parts exercise their capacities, which are virtual, but must be actualized for an assemblage to be produced, with its emergent properties. Note that it is important to distinguish between capacities, properties and possibilities. Properties are indeed defined by their belonging to the whole; possibilities are an *a posteriori* phenomenon: once an event is realized, we can deduce its prior possibility as something waiting to be realized, pre-existing in the form resembling that which will occur in reality. An important feature of the virtual is its *non*-resemblance to the actual; this guarantees creativity, the production of something new. An added value to the concept of assemblage is revealed in the French original – *agencement* – as it contains the word agent or agency, stressing the mobile, dynamic character.

If a culture can more fruitfully be viewed as an assemblage rather than totality, then pentatonicism as a cultural feature can disentangle from its original cultural context, and enter into other assemblages, gaining different social and cultural meanings, and certainly meanings that go beyond its mere acoustic or experiential facticity: effectively, this is what makes transculturality possible in the first place. It can even lose its cultural significance, and become no more than precisely an acoustic fact, and listening impression. When I put the label “pentatonic collection” on the above examples,

I have turned the living cultural activity into a theoretical abstraction. As such, it is located within the field of theoretical discourse, and while this field is highly diversified (hence could possibly qualify as an assemblage in its own right), it still possesses a certain level of homogeneity which would sooner fit the Deleuzo-Guattarian term *stratum* (although we will see that the concept of strata is more complex than that).

Why pentatonicism proved to be so versatile, and to have the capacity to enter into numerous assemblages is the question I will not deal with; others have done that more or less convincingly, and more competently than I could.⁴ Instead, I am moving onto our next batch of concepts. The strength of connections between elements in assemblages is variable; so are the intensity of their interactions, the stability of their relations, the predictability of their emergent properties, all of which constitutes *coding*. (We must always bear in mind that we can talk about codes only as strictly immanent to the assemblage). With low intensity of interactions, no assemblage can come into existence; if there is little variation, if the assemblage acquires a relatively stable identity, we can talk about a highly coded entity, which would amount to the creation of the aforementioned strata. The process of solidifying or stabilizing connections within an assemblage is called *territorialization*: again a concept that goes beyond its spatial and material content, but since no Deleuze's concept ever receives a straightforward definition, we will prefer to enrich its meaning as we go along. A territory must have boundaries, yet cannot be totally closed within itself: there are lines of escape, lines of flight: *ligne de fuite*, in French. These lines enable deterritorialization; they are pathways out of the given territory, as well as tendencies and forces that carry us along these pathways.⁵

Our pentatonic examples demonstrate the processes of deterritorialization – reterritorialization. The pentatonic scales are indeed territorialized in the literal sense: their different varieties have strong connections to certain well-defined spaces or territories. The character of the scales is *nomadic* – another important term from *Plateaus* – as they territorialized on many different locations.

To follow the process further, I will first introduce the composer Josip Slavenski (1896–1955), a Croat by birth, German by distant origin, Hungarian by education, Serb by affiliation as professor at the Belgrade Academy of Music, self-identified variously as a Slav, South Slav, Yugoslavian, Balkan, or Oriental; raised a Catholic but joined the Serbian Orthodox Church – there is transculturality for you – who hails from the Međimurje region (now Croatia), with strongly pentatonic musical tradition. *Songs of My Mother* for string quartet and contralto (or baritone), is a particularly captivating example,⁶ with melodies that are (probably) his own, but closely following traditional demotic characteristics, and with authentic folk texts. Since pentatonicism is part of his musical culture, and since we often conceive of culture in terms of ethnicity or region, no significant changes have occurred in that sense: the music remains strongly tied to the soil from which it grew, but from another perspective, the song, complete with its pentatonicism, has certainly entered into a different assemblage. While not wholly uprooted from its original milieu of the peasant culture, it becomes at the same time part of the culture of the concert hall: deterritorialized from its rustic origins, it is reterritorialized on a work of art.

⁴ For a discussion of perceptual-psychological “advantages” of pentatonicism see Huron (1994); the origins and evolution of the scale is described by ethnomusicological classics like Sachs (1962) and Bose (1989/1953); the question of its universality is addressed in Trần Văn Khê (1977). Apart from that, there is a considerable amount of literature dealing with various aspects of pentatonicism, but it would contribute little to my argument.

⁵ Assemblage and territory refer practically to the same domain, and Deleuze (1987, p. 315) uses the expression “territorial assemblage” suggesting that assemblage is a broader term. The way I distinguish between them is as follows. When we talk about assemblage, we think in terms of interacting elements, their capacities actualized in the assemblage, and their potential to be plugged into another assemblage; the machine-like functioning; properties as they emerge. With territory, we emphasize the properties as having emerged; we think of the framework within which interactions take place, and which gives a sense of direction, tendency, and purpose; regularities become more important, as do repetitions-(with-variations), and boundaries (however flexible, changeable, and permeable). Relative stability and permanence are requisite for territory; territory protects from chaos, but it is also a way of engaging with chaos.

⁶ Pentatonically purest is the third song “A Mother Had Three Only Daughters” available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP0vt_WzBJA For the entire composition visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6duIu7PiKl4>

Figure 2. A. Dvořák, Sonata in G Major for Violin and Piano, Op. 100

In Fig. 2, we are dealing with another level of complexity. Pentatonicism is now deterritorialized to the extent that not only is it not associated with any specific song – rather with an idea of folk music in a more abstract sense – but it involves a double deterritorialization, where the melody is deterritorialized from Slavic, as well as from American culture (such as Dvořák encountered during his sojourn in the United States, or better still, such as was his perception of that culture).

Figure 3. M. Mussorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Promenade

In the Mussorgsky example (Fig. 3) a similar thing occurs, with a new entity (we could cautiously call it assemblage) created from deterritorialized Russian tradition, and also deterritorialized Western functional harmony. The difference with respect to Dvořák can be tentatively defined as follows: Dvořák is probably “at home” with Western harmony and form, into which he incorporates ethnic traditions. Mussorgsky seems to be searching for ways in which to adapt functional harmony to Slavic tradition. It would be fair to say that he goes some way to overcode the highly coded system of European functional harmony.

Hadedas: Analytical Perspectives

We now turn to my principal example, the composition *Hadedas* by Srđan Hofman.⁷ The composition bears the subtitle Presentation and Three Developments, and indeed, it is a four-movement work. However, the first movement, Presentation, is as developmental as the subsequent movements, indeed more so than the third one (the Second

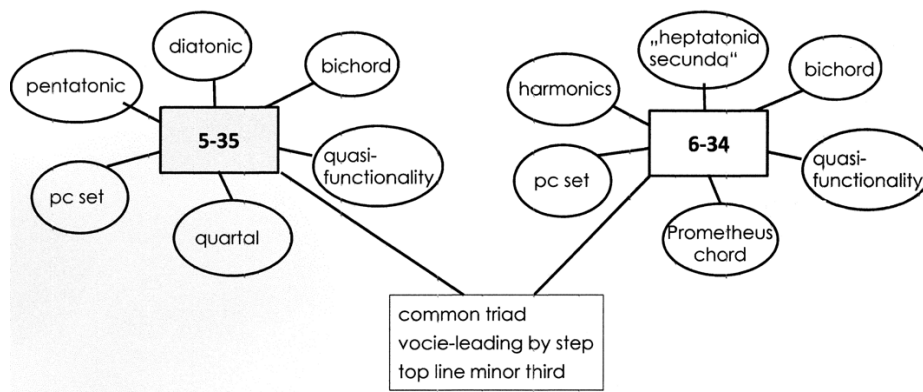
⁷ Composer, Professor Emeritus at the University of Arts in Belgrade. The composition was written in 2004 in Pretoria, while Hofman was serving as Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia. It is dedicated to his pianist daughter Neda and her cellist husband Srđan, both outstanding musicians.

Development) written in the form of theme and variations, strongly alluding to chaconne. The first movement, while definitely not a sonata allegro, at least presents some contrasting materials, subjects them to elaborate developments, and returns to them in their more recognizable forms at certain points, if not in a genuine reprise; the third movement, with its variation form and slow tempo easily qualifies as the inner slow movement in a typical four-movement cycle; add to this partial recapitulation of some of previously stated materials in the last movement, and we come up with something vaguely reminiscent of a nineteenth-century sonata cycle. Except that the musical language (primarily meaning pitch structure) largely contradicts this idea, and so do many formal features of individual movements (except the third). I do nonetheless recognize this path of formal analysis as legitimate: it, at least, demonstrates the diversity of materials, techniques and formal procedures, and if we want to conform to the terminology prevailing in this essay, we can talk about deterritorializing the chaconne, the sonata cycle, and the like.

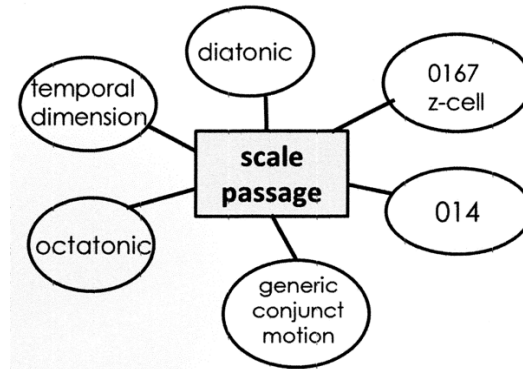
The musical score for the beginning of S. Hofman's *Hadedas* is presented in two systems. The first system features the Violoncello and Piano parts. The Violoncello part begins with a pizzicato chord (5-35) in 3/4 time, followed by a piano chord (6-34) in 2/4 time, and then an arco sul ponticello passage (3-3) in 3/4 time. The Piano part features a complex octatonic (nearly) scale and various chordal textures. The second system continues the Violoncello and Piano parts, with the Violoncello part featuring a pizzicato chord (3-3) and the Piano part featuring a complex octatonic (nearly) scale and various chordal textures. The score includes tempo markings (♩ = 90), dynamics (ff, p, mf, f), and specific chord labels (5-35, 6-34, 3-3).

Figure 4. S. Hofman, *Hadedas*, beginning

Arguably, the role of true presentation or exposition can only be ascribed to the first two lines of the score (Fig. 4): everything that happens later in this movement, and in a great deal of the entire piece can be traced to these several bars. As this example shows, the first two chords, brief moments frozen in time, hardly leave an impression of temporal unfolding, and it is the cello passage that initiates the true musical motion. The chords are given Allen Forte's labels, but upon closer inspection we discover their richness, beyond what these labels can capture. The first pentachord is actually the pentatonic collection, which also contains a perfect fourth-chord. The hexachord is composed of the fundamental A and its partials up to the eleventh one, the tritone. Its actual pitch content is identical to Scriabin's *Prometheus* chord. Well, almost identical, for where Scriabin writes F-sharp – alien to the harmonic series – Hofman "corrects" this, and substitutes E that does belong to the series. We further widen the scope of associations by noting that the 014 tetrachord (cello, bar 3) is ubiquitous in post-tonal music, and that the octatonic scale is one of the favorites of many twentieth-century composers. Generally, what is striking about this beginning is not so much its music in itself, the impression it leaves on the listener (at least, according to my experience), as the plethora of its implications shown in Fig. 5.



a. Implications of chords



b. Implications of passage

Figure 5. *Hadedas*, Implications of the beginning

Possible associations are abundant, but at the same time hardly recognizable to the ear, and this makes the beginning perceptually and semantically opaque. Both initial chords, on the one hand, define many subsequent events, and morph into many materials to be presented later, and on the other, already carry a momentous historical and cultural “baggage” transformed beyond recognition.

What can the analyst do with this material? I already traced the path for traditional formal analysis, but it did not seem to be a promising path. I used Forte names, initially simply as a convenient way of labeling pitch collections. Convenience lies in the fact that certain collections recur, sometimes transposed, reordered, presented horizontally or vertically, and the Forte sets capture their common traits. Can we take it further? After all, this is basically a non-tonal piece, for which the set-theoretical analysis has been devised in the first place. It transpires that conducting an exhaustive set analysis throughout the entire composition does not yield significant results, for we come up with too many significant sets, not to mention the ambiguities of segmentation. Yet, we can appreciate certain relations, especially subcomplex (Kh) relations. I cannot go into details now; suffice it to say that we do discover a coherence and logic in pitch structure, even a logic of goal-directed processes, which otherwise is not really the strongest point of set analysis – not Forte’s forte.

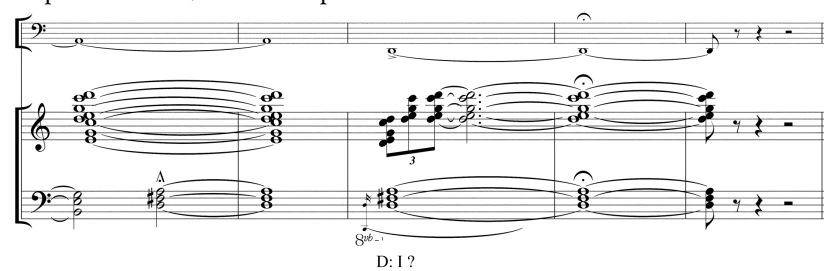
Next, we turn our attention to the following three things. First, as Fig. 6 shows, we have identified moments where vertical sonorities form (quasi)-tonal progressions, however tenuous. Second, some of these progressions span larger portions of music, and even encompass the entire composition.



a. beginning



b. quasi-cadence, III Development



c. end

Figure 6. Possible tonal associations

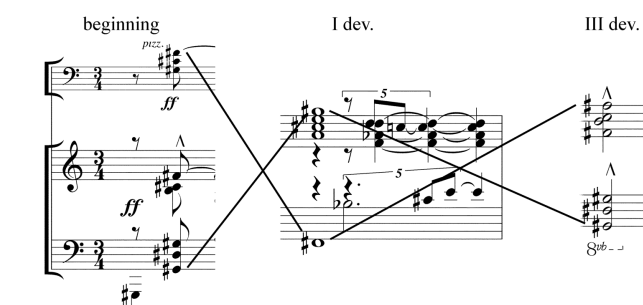
Third, these vertical sonorities are often horizontalized. Is this sufficient to warrant a kind of prolongational analysis? Is there any sense in producing graphs like the ones in Fig. 7?



a. middleground (?)



b. close-up on fundamental line



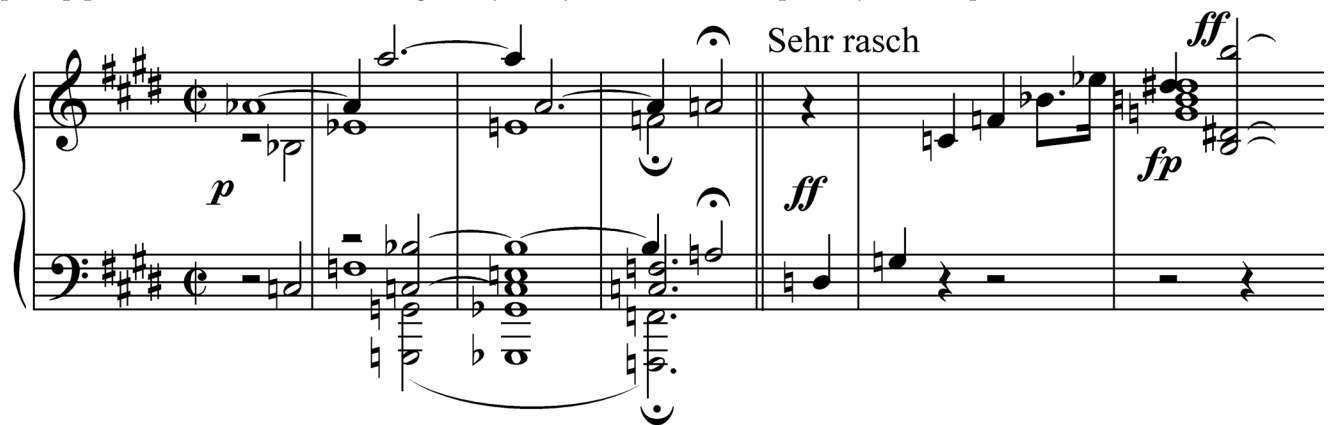
c. voice exchange

Figure 7. Prolongational graph (?)

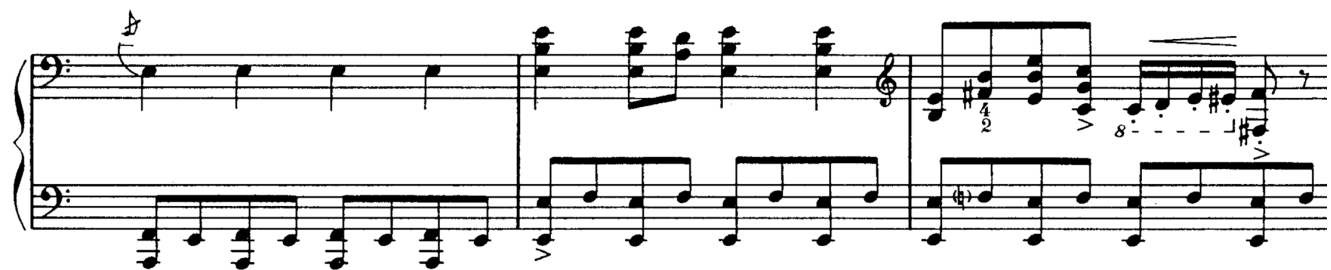
I stand accused of unwarranted deterritorialization of prolongational analysis, and its inappropriate reterritorialization; as a result, we are in danger of being left without any territory, which – as we shall discover in due course – is tantamount to plunging into chaos. Admittedly, the prolongational analysis has serious caveats that I will not even begin to address, but it still says something meaningful about this music, and what it says is by no means identical to the set analysis, or to formal analysis, even if in certain ways they converge, and can be combined.

What I tried to achieve with these analytical sketches is to draw attention to the fact that different analytical approaches can construct different realities. We also understand that we need to tread cautiously when reterritorializing analytical methods on the material they were not meant for. This may bring about productive encounters, the creation of new assemblages, and new territories, but pitfalls are there as well. The analytical process can reach the dead end of establishing excessively coded, ossified relations, with no new insights or, on the contrary, fail in decoding or overcoding, and end up with more chaos than necessary. While the term chaos to some extent conforms to its meaning in everyday parlance, it is a concept much richer, and will be treated later in this essay.

In order to address the issues of transculturality in a more restricted sense, we will first discuss the stacked perfect fourths that feature prominently in the first chord. Obviously, their pitch content is identical to the pentatonic collection (or the subsets/supersets thereof) but quartal sonorities do tend to have a life of their own. Apart from setting up certain interior implications and expectations, some of which are subsequently realized within the composition, they form exterior relations with other cultural contexts (Fig. 8). Prokofiev and Schoenberg, although they both belong to early 20th-century Western art music, are still disparate enough, Prokofiev bringing a transcultural “bonus” by incorporating the tokens of primitivism into sophisticated orchestral textures. Even when you do such a simple thing as pile up perfect fourths, the lines of flight may take you to diverse, and possibly unanticipated realms.



a. S. Prokofiev, *Scythian Suite*, II



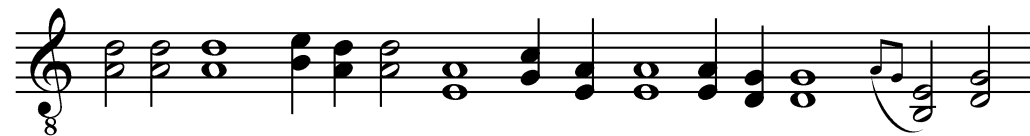
b. A. Schoenberg, *Kammersymphonie* Op. 9, beginning

Figure 8. Quartal harmonies and melodies

Perhaps we could broaden the circle of associations and include music featuring parallel fourths, such as the mediaeval organum, or examples from other ethnic and religious traditions (Fig. 9).



a. *Janko prosi u dalek devojku* [Janko is Wooing a Girl from Afar], folk song from Serbia



b. Buddhist Chant from Japan (Sachs, 1962, p. 177)

Figure 9. Quartal sonorities in traditional music

Returning to pentatonics, it is very important to reiterate the perceptual characteristics of the first chord. We can hardly hear the chords as chords: what we really hear are only the sustained notes that linger after the chords have been struck. But suppose some extremely fine ear could really hear the first chord as pentatonic. The lucky owner of such an ear might say that this recognition territorializes the chord in a way: territorializes on the field of theoretical knowledge, but it still remains culturally neutral. Compare this to a piece of music such as Jack Bruce's riff from Cream's *Sunshine of Your Love* (Fig. 10), in which we immediately recognize the cultural context, if we have a least bit of experience with the history of rock music.



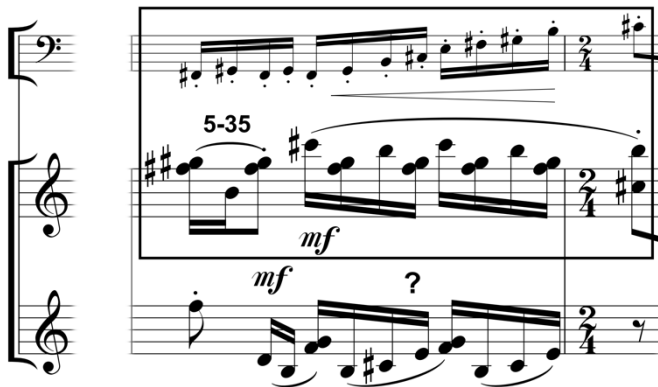
Figure 10. Cream, *Sunshine of Your Love*

By the time the pentatonic scale has reached this stage, it has undergone several de- and re-territorialization, from western Africa, to African-American worksongs, to blues (hence blue notes), to rock.

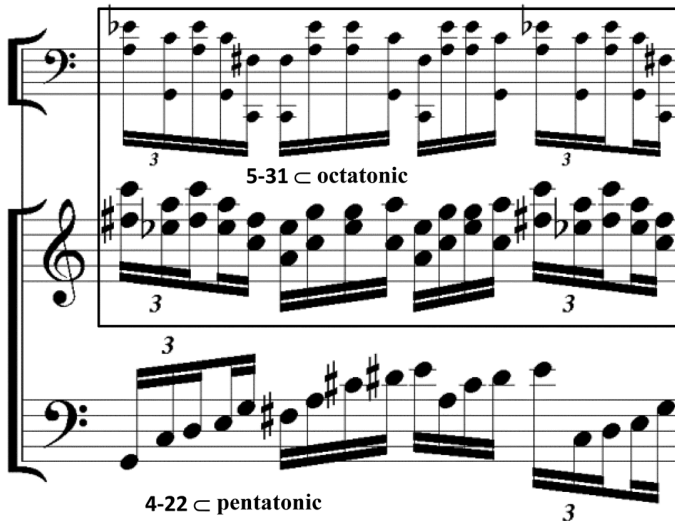
In the *Hadedas* case, any such connection is either severed or obscured. Even when later in the piece the collection returns in a different guise (Fig. 11), it still does not commit itself to any specific cultural context (except, almost trivially, to the cultural context of early 21st century). The collection is totally deterritorialized.



a. subset of the heptatonic collection, Presentation



b. “contaminated”, III development



c. penta & octaton

Figure 11. Pentatonicism in *Hadedas*

The initial structures are dismantled to the point at which anything can happen, and when we reach that stage, we need some kind of regularity; Deleuze and Guattari’s term is the *refrain* (again an idiosyncratic use of words). Elizabeth Grosz (2008) defines it as “rhythmic regularity that brings a minimum of livable order” (p. 52). The refrain is requisite for the creation and sustenance of territory, and pentatonicism plays an important part in that process. The initial, I dare say, confusion of associations and implications in *Hadedas* invites activities of the refrain, establishing of the code: the solidifying of territory. The perceptual and semantic opacity simply begs analytical interpretation. The analyst can remain within the culture of the Western concert hall, or broaden the scope, and search for sometimes unexpected connections. Different analytical approaches illuminate various facets of the work that could in turn be assigned to different cultural contexts.

Why “Constructed” Rather Than “Discovered”: Ontological Perspectives

But the claim I have been making all along is stronger. Cultural affiliations are constructed by analysis. Why do I say *constructed*, and not the more obvious *illuminated*, or *uncovered*? How is this different? It certainly has something to do with specific relationships between artistic creation, perception and analysis. First, we must deprive the creators and their intentions of their special privileges. As the prominent theorist of social systems Niklas Luhmann says, “even the artist can see what he wanted only upon realizing what he has done” (Luhmann, 2000, p. 25); the work of art possesses a degree of independence even from its creator, it “speaks back” (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 68) to him. To put it simply, if we paid too much attention to whether Hofman “really meant” all those associations, we would be committing *intentional fallacy*.

Then, we introduce the analyst. Discussing a composition by Johannes Brahms, Theodor Adorno highlights the role of analysis in the composing of music: “One sees how music in itself would be unthinkable without the analytical process which preceded it” (Adorno, 1982, pp. 171–72). Later in the text (p. 176), he would claim that “an art aware of itself is an *analyzed art*.”

Musicologist Leo Treitler (1966) puts it even more bluntly: the work of art has no existence apart from any interpretation of it (p. 77). This statement already has considerable epistemological, and also ontological implications.

If we follow them, we can engage with various schools of thought. For instance, within the framework of Husserlian phenomenology, there is no denying the existence of the material world outside ourselves (in our case, the composition as existing independently of any performing, listening or analyzing activity), but phenomenological reduction brackets everything else and concentrates on the pure phenomenon, the object of the intentional consciousness.⁸ It is this phenomenological object, pure phenomenon, (neither the composition in itself, nor the subjective experience thereof), that we are dealing with. Ultimately, everything is traceable to Immanuel Kant’s distinction between *noumenon* and *phenomenon*. The objectively given world – *Ding an sich* – is unknowable and inaccessible, and it is the transcendental Subject with its a priori forms and categories that effectively creates it anew. Of course, when we are analyzing a piece of music we are operating on a much narrower scale, and in addition to the a priori forms of space and time, we have some liberty in choosing a given set of analytical premises. Once we make the choice, however, and are immersed in the work, these premises actually function as transcendental categories. The way we construct the reality of the world is replicated on a smaller scale in the way we make sense of music (after all, a work of art creates a world in its own right). It is, then, not difficult to see how the meaningfulness of music resides not in its materiality, nor in the relationships between its elements, nor in the experience of the listener, but somehow floats on the surface, or in-between them, as a medium for their interactions and mutual transformations.⁹

I will now proceed to examine how this plays out in the context of my Deleuzian reflections on pentatonicism and *Hadedas*. First, let us pose the following question: can the composition itself be called an assemblage? Perhaps it is closer to a stratum, but in a weak sense, yes, given the diversity of its materials and techniques; the capacity of materials and techniques to go beyond what is actualized in the piece, and enter into other assemblages; and given the two different instruments. This concept, however, can be put to a better use in a more heterogeneous assemblage made of sound – both its materiality and its expressivity – and the performers, and the listeners, and in the case I am concerned with – the analysts. (Incidentally, every attentive listener is a proto-analyst, and every analyst is an enhanced listener: the borders between the two are fuzzy). As we already know, the composition’s material components can retain their relatively stable identities, and can function in other contexts, but only in the assemblages of this kind can they produce any kind of musical sense. They become a meaning-producing process; a meaning-producing *machine*.

A piece of music in itself, observed in isolation, must be territorialized to a degree (i.e. its boundaries are generally clear; it brings certain order into the material), but as such it would be all but meaningless. It acquires meaning –

⁸ By this, Edmund Husserl means the directedness of our consciousness upon an object. Even to begin explaining Husserlian concepts like “pure phenomenon”, “intentionality”, “noesis”, “noema”, “phenomenological reduction”, or “eidetic reduction” would be beyond the scope of this article. I can only refer to the primary sources (mainly Husserl, 1983/1913, 1999/1950), or to a useful overview in Hardy (1999).

⁹ This line of thinking is largely influenced by Deleuze’s *The Logic of Sense* (1990/1969), but it can be traced back to the Stoics (see also Grosz, 2017).

complete with its cultural references – by forming an assemblage with listeners and analysts, for which it must undergo certain deterritorialization, a loosening of its boundaries; lines of flight must open it to various modes of listening and interpretation. The relationships between the elements, or agents of the assemblage, as well as between sub-elements within the composition (as part of the assemblage) need to solidify enough to form a new territory (if there is no territory, nothing to guard us against chaos, the music is once again meaningless). Narrowing again to pentatonics, we take it to be deterritorialized. It is partially reterritorialized as used throughout the piece (including as a subset of the diatonic collection), thus becoming a sort of code. From the analyst's side, deterritorialization must have occurred prior to analysis, and the analyst must have reterritorialized the abundance of empirical pentatonicism on a more abstract level of theoretical knowledge, where the pentatonic scale is a theoretical construct; but then they need to decode the beginning in order to reterritorialize it on the experience, analytic description and interpretation of the piece. The composer and the analyst are traversing a similar path of de-/re-territorialization, but asynchronously. Their activities are “out of phase.”

Our next step is to further engage with Deleuzian ontology. Territory gives a sense of purpose, and acts as defense against chaos that is seductive, tends to engulf us, like black holes from which we cannot escape. Chaos, however is “not a nothingness but a *virtual* containing all possible particles and drawing out all possible forms;” not absolute disorder, but “a plethora of orders,” (Grosz, 2008, p. 5); an infinite number of particles, moving at infinite speed, vanishing as soon as created. Chaos is something that art, philosophy, and science must confront. It is not only that we cannot escape chaos completely, we *must not* do that: to shut it down – that would be a form of death-in-life. No creativity without chaos. “The artist puts a bit of chaos into the frame in order to create a composed chaos that becomes sensory” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994/1991, p. 118); “extracts vibratory rhythms from the fluctuating self-differentiating structure of the universe” (Grosz, 2008, p. 5); in order to harness the cosmic forces, to render invisible forces visible, and inaudible forces audible; they put a sieve over chaos (Deleuze, 2002/1981, pp. 63–64).¹⁰

The field of intensities arises: a continually varying field of interacting forces, a dynamic field of densities, velocities, heat, defined by differential relations (the rate of change of these parameters). These processes can reach certain remarkable points, points that constitute thresholds, or singularities, around which all that is individual is constituted. Extensive musical structures (the composition as fixed in the score, existing in Euclidean-Cartesian space-time), with their measurable durations, countable bars, determinable frequencies, delineated sections, arise from the field of intensities (velocities, forces, energies). The dynamic flow of matter-energy crystallizes into audible musical events;¹¹ crystallization applies to entire cultures as well. For individual works, the artist is the one who is the chief bearer of responsibility, but it is the same chaos that founds the artist, the listener, as well as the analyst; they part their ways when individuation takes place, but only – as we have seen – to rejoin in a meaning-producing assemblage (machine), so that effectively they converge; they collude to produce a field of meaning, which neither one nor the other alone could produce.

Strict systematization and clear-cut categories are not in the Deleuzian spirit, but it may be easier to understand his ideas if we sum up these processes, as DeLanda does (2002, especially p. 51), by means of ontological dimensions: virtual/chaotic – intensive (“molecular”) – extensive (“molar”). Since the world is not pre-segmented into categories, everything begins as undifferentiated, continuous whole defined by intensities; Deleuze and Guattari borrow from Antonin Artaud the term *Body without Organs*, which could also be called the state of ultimate deterritorialization. *Body without Organs* becomes segmented little by little, creating organs.

¹⁰ In his study on the Anglo-Irish artist Francis Bacon, Deleuze (2002/1981) considers various ways in which painters of the 20th century engaged with chaos: chaos reduced to the minimum, and carefully codified (Mondrian); chaos deployed to the maximum (abstract expressionism of Jackson Pollock), and then there is Bacon himself who pursues a middle path between abstraction and conventional representation: figures are there, but not to represent or tell a story, rather to sustain sensations and affects; as immediate coupling of material to sensation (p. 11).

¹¹ Without ever mentioning Deleuze (and possibly unaware of his writings), Serbian composer and theorist Berislav Popović (1998) frequently writes sentences like this: “The form is ... perceived as the stage on which energy fields are confronted and its meaning is recognized by the interactions caused by the fields” (p. 363), or “the construction of the musical-breathing pulse effectuated by the breathing of the undulating line of energy itself [is] an imperative the composer himself must obey” (p. 238). Musical motifs are “generators and transporters of energy”, musical sentence is “a way of regulating the flux of energy” and so on.

We can now add an additional layer to the thinking about the initial pentatonic chord from *Hadedas*. We are well aware how fleeting it is, and how opaque to our perception. I speculate that the virtual forces that shape both individual cultures and individual works (with the pertaining analyses), seem to be frozen in time. They are at the stage where differentiation has started, but has not yet been accomplished. This chord is then the very moment of actualization: it is no longer an undifferentiated mass, nor is it a fully-fledged musical event that we make musical sense of. It is virtuality captured at the moment of actualization. This bears some resemblance to Deleuze's concept of the crystal image (derived from Henri Bergson) and used by Deleuze primarily in his study on cinema (Deleuze, 1989/1985): a process and place of the exchange that is enacted between the actual and virtual, presenting "an image of the object and its potential at one and the same time" (pp. 69; 81). For my part, I cannot help by thinking of this freezing in time as of an insect captured in amber.

We have seen the beginning of *Hadedas* not as something that is merely there, a given entity, but something to which we can possibly ascribe eons of human history, and a multiplicity of human culture. It forces us to rethink the relationships between nature – let us not forget the harmonic series as a natural occurrence¹² – and history, and how one transforms into other. But it is only possible if we problematize it in a certain way, and analyze it in a certain way.¹³ And while it would be preposterous to deny music, human culture/cultures or generally the world, the existence outside our minds, neither can we be mere passive recipients of whatever influences that world exerts on us. We listen, we analyze, we reflect on, and without that, cultural references cannot gain their actuality.

An Additional Example and Concluding Thoughts

What cannot escape our attention is music's extraordinary predilection for transculturality. By now have seen various ways in which it can be manifested, and I will add one final example showcasing an amazing series of deterritorializations and reterritorializations (again, pentatonicism is in question).

In the early 1960s, the Japanese song *Ue o Muite Arukō*, commonly known as *Sukiyaki*,¹⁴ became a hit in Europe, North America and Australia, possibly as the first product of Japanese popular culture to earn such a status. In the true nomadic spirit, its pentatonicism was not only deterritorialized from whatever cultural context in which it functioned, it was deterritorialized even from its status as a theoretical construct and overcoded as a token of East Asian culture for Western Europeans and North Americans: an Orientalism as I presume Edward Said would have called it. But when the Japanese composer coded it into his song, it may not have been at all the case of the pentatonic scale "coming back home." This type of anhemitonic pentatonicism is not so characteristic of Japan, only for the Western (or even westernized Japanese?) consumer it does convey "East-Asianism" well enough; just enough Asian to exude an exotic aroma, just enough familiar not to disrupt the peace of the complacent consumer. Some Western tonal harmony is added into the mix, to make it more palatable for Western markets. On top of everything, the title – *sukiyaki* is a Japanese dish – has nothing to do with the song, it just sounds Japanese enough for Western listeners. (Nobody understands it anyway, so why bother). Although such transformations can be hailed for their production of novelty, all this ultimately ends up being coded into a stratum of popular culture, and even if we take the concept of stratum in an enhanced sense – not simply as a homogenizing of elements but also as a way of problematizing these relations – we are still left with very little creativity. Very little by way of chaos.

In the process of examining our sample of compositions with a strong focus on the pentatonic pitch collection, Deleuze (with or without Guattari, often refracted through the lens of Manuel DeLanda, and with a significant boost from some other scholars) was of great help in offering a specific perspective on the relations between heterogeneous cultural milieus, individual compositions, composers, listeners, and analysts; highlighting the production of any sort of meaning as a collaborative effort of all these agents in ever changing arrangements; engaging the concept of territory

¹² It is tempting to treat even the pentatonic scale itself as a natural phenomenon, given its omnipresence across the globe.

¹³ The said mutual transformations, and the way of problematizing appearances is exactly what the Deleuzian scholar Ian Buchanan (2021) sees as the defining characteristic of strata, rather than satisfying himself with a simple view of strata as a homogeneity of elements. In defining strata we are also taking examples from geology, and treat them as historically produced layers of either material things or non-material ones, like meaning.

¹⁴ Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C35DrtPIUbc>

which – while recognizing its material and spatial character – is affirmed as a process of transforming materials and spaces in order to make them expressive and creative; we have come to understand chaos as being not so much a state of affairs as an “existential condition” (Buchanan, 2021, p. 85): all this with a grounding that is non-systematic, non-totalizing, condensed to the point of inscrutability, yet in its way rigorous.

For all this, we are aware that the intricacies of art and culture can never be fully grasped. Remaining forever intrigued by music’s unique ability to bring together what is extremely disparate, I will reserve the last portion of this essay for a considerably different perspective. A psychoanalytic one. This may seem incongruent with the previous discussion, given the sometimes harsh criticism to which Deleuze and Guattari subject some of Freud’s ideas (the very title of their book *Anti-Oedipus* speaks volumes). I contend, however, that my Deleuze-cum-DeLanda-cum-Zatkalik perspective could even provide something like ontological underpinnings precisely to the most relevant psychoanalytic aspects; thus, I expect no major misunderstandings to ensue.

Psychoanalytic postscript

A strong link exists between music and the unconscious mind. Substantial research¹⁵ demonstrates a significant degree of isomorphism between musical structures and processes, and unconscious primary processes characteristic of the mental organization in early infancy (but surviving in adulthood, generally as deep unconscious strata of our mental structure). Namely, according to Freud’s topographic model of the mind,¹⁶ mental functioning (to put it simply and schematically) is divided into primary and secondary processes. The primary process is unconscious, preverbal, pleasure-oriented, seeking immediate discharge of tension; it involves internal-external ambiguity, i.e. the fluidity of boundaries between oneself and the world, echoing the original oneness with the mother (Rose 2004, 20), sometimes called the “oceanic feeling”. The secondary process, emerging at later phases in individual development, is reality-oriented, involves verbal-conceptual mental faculties, and respects formal logic.

Primary-process mechanisms (particularly as revealed in dreams: the royal road to the unconscious as Freud famously said) – condensation, displacement, conflation of opposites, fragmentation, representation of the whole by some part of it (*pars pro toto*) – are regularly found in various aspects of music: thematic procedures, formal processes, elaborations of fundamental structures, and more (Zatkalik 2023; Zatkalik & Kontić 2013; 2015; 2018).

Given the existing literature, including my own contributions, I will not go into details as to why this is so. It has something to do with the paramount role of sound in early infancy, and even in the prenatal period, when the visual image of the world is fragmented (or in the pre-natal period non-existent), and the verbal-conceptual apparatus is a long way away. In these earliest periods of life, the world is chiefly represented through auditory images; associated with them are powerful primordial, “vitality” affects (Stern, 1977; 1985). Sound, and by extension music carries over certain aspects of these processes, and to a greater extent than do visual, and especially verbal arts (dependent on later developmental acquisitions). Music activates archaic mental states: for Ernst Kris this was “regression in the service of the ego” (Kris, 1952; Knafo, 2002). Gilbert Rose (2004), a musically competent therapist, links music with interplay between primary and secondary processes, and the ability of human mind to fluctuate between the two. As a result, aesthetic experiences are conducive to the reintegration of feelings with thought and perception, and for this phenomenon he coins the terms “feelingful thought” and “thoughtful feeling” (p. 159).

We cannot overemphasize condensation as a major primary mechanism: fusing, conflating of percepts; integrating the sensed with the sensing; subject with object. In the dream of the famous Freud’s patient Sergei Pankejeff (The Wolf Man), the image of the wolf is conflated with sheep, dogs, and foxes; with the tales of the Red Riding Hood, and The Wolf and the Seven Little Goats, and ultimately with the father.¹⁷ I believe that a very similar mechanism operates in

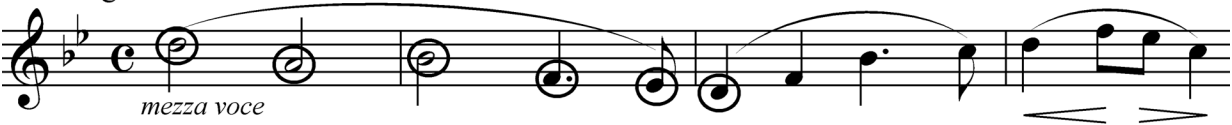
¹⁵ I am following the line of thinkers that originates with Sigmund Freud, who wrote next to nothing about music, but laid the foundation for a great deal of subsequent research. Ernst Kris, Heinz Kohut, Stanley Friedman, Martin Naas, Stuart Feder, Pinchas Noy, Michel Imberty are just a few of the contributors that followed. This century has seen a number of important publications; the ones by Gilbert Rose (2004), Julie Jaffe Nagel (2010), and Roger Kennedy (2021) being especially conducive to the ideas I am promoting. A different approach – although also ultimately traceable to Freud – is the one by Jacques Lacan, followed by scholars like David Schwartz, and Kenneth Smith.

¹⁶ For 21st-century perspectives on this old model see (among many others) Brakel (2004; 2007), Holt (2009), Zatkalik & Kontić (2013; 2015).

¹⁷ This Oedipal aspect is Deleuze-Guattari’s major issue with Freud’s interpretation. However, we can concur with their position, and still recognize the mechanism of condensation in other aspects.

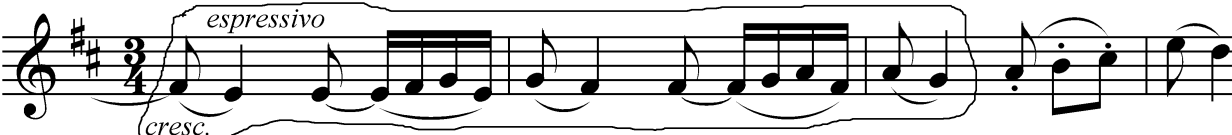
music. Think how (apparently) effortlessly J. S. Bach or Josquin combine different versions (augmentation, diminution, inversion, retrograde) of the same material. The nearest comparison in painting would be something like Picasso's Dora Maar portrayed simultaneously from different angles: a great work of art, but how different the effect! How Ligeti condenses some fifty or so orchestral lines (I cannot find a better description than a musical black hole). Or the three disparate themes ultimately sounding together in Wagner's overture to *Meistersinger*, or Mozart's quadruple invertible counterpoint in the finale of his C major (Jupiter) Symphony, or (fill in the blank with hundreds of other works). Would that be comparable to reading two poems or novels at exactly the same time? Going further, James Joyce creates his portmanteau words, and the effect he produces is highly recognizable and striking. When Beethoven elegantly weaves the material from the second theme into the variation of the first (Fig. 12) in the second movement of his Ninth Symphony, we barely notice the trick.

Adagio molto e cantabile




a. first theme

Andante moderato



b. second theme

Tempo I



c. variation of first theme

Figure 12. L. v. Beethoven: Symphony No. 9, II movement

When a dominant seventh is enharmonically reinterpreted as a German chord, it is not only a single entity belonging to different tonalities, but a single entity expressing two opposite tendencies. Where is formal logic with its law of non-contradiction to prevent that?

Thus, seamlessly welding disparate thematic materials, harmoniously unfolding several simultaneous lines, expressing opposing tendencies within a single event: these are feats music effortlessly accomplishes, whereas visual arts, and especially literature can only struggle at best.¹⁸ It is, then, only natural that amalgamating different cultures could be well within music's reach. I hope that some of the examples presented in this essay testify to that.

Finally, there is the aforementioned "oceanic feeling." While this is presumed to be the experience of the infant, later in life we can re-experience it at those rare moments of aesthetic peak experience. It is only to be expected that music induces such a state much more commonly than other forms of art. And if through music we achieve the feeling of being absorbed by the work of art, of the dissolution of our own personality, and of becoming indistinguishable from the surrounding world, then why should we be surprised if music – in addition to all its culture-specific traits – possesses capacities to transcend transculturality itself, and dissolve even the boundaries between the human, the animal, the mineral, and the cosmic?

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¹⁸ When I make this claim, I am by no means suggesting that one form of art as such is superior to any other. I am simply saying that arts, in addition to sharing many aspects, also manifest certain differences, with differences in their respective media of expression being related to differences in underlying psychic structures.

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