

Musical Silhouette: resemblance, trace, occlusion, self-portraiture

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Abstract

The silhouette is recognized in philosophy and art as a peculiar means of identification and knowledge, not just through its creation of a visual double (a concept often aesthetically unpacked through the terms ‘image’ and ‘resemblance’), but by bridging a phenomenal space between past and future, absence and presence. Acknowledging an indebtedness to Pliny and Plato’s famous myths, this paper attempts to re-build the image of the silhouette as a sonic phenomenon, using several examples of contemporary experimental music and sound art. The silhouette is used as a linguistic and visual metaphor for elucidating how some experimental music might be said to obscure itself, to obscure our perception of it, or, indeed, to be obscured by that very perception.

A brief discussion of photography and notation extrapolates from Pliny’s symbolic image of the outline, uncovering an epistemological and hermeneutical complexity in the idea of capturing the ephemeral. At the same time, notation’s unbreakable ‘belongingness’ to its interpreter through the act of ‘tracing,’ proposes a kind of performative self-portraiture.

The silhouette is then considered as cast by the *listener*, referencing Ceal Floyer’s formal spatio-temporal ‘negative’ musical image, and overviewing key theories of temporal consciousness by Edmund Husserl, Henri Bergson and Robert Snyder. A re-imagined temporality of events through memory tracing is then located in key works by Sophie Calle and Alvin Lucier. Finally, in Graham Lambkin’s idiosyncratic and self-reflexive approach to sound, we might locate a silhouette that conceptually and perceptually blurs the boundaries between subject, object and representation: self-portraiture as itself a form of occlusion.

Keywords

Musical shadow
Silhouette
Obscurity
Self-portraiture
Experimental music



Introduction

“A means or a medium, the trace is first and foremost our fragile link with *the certain place* where the sonorous was and the certain place whence it may be *brought forth* once again”

—François Bonnet, *The Order of Sounds*¹

“Behind every real object there is a dream object”

—Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*²

“The duplication of the self produces the effect of the uncanny”

—Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny”³

The philosopher and musicologist Vladimir Jankélévitch writes of music’s ability to transpose “actuality into the nocturnal dimension of becoming”.⁴ This description of music as inherently ‘self-nocturnalizing’ elegantly expresses music’s processual kind of materiality, as well as (perhaps more notably) its *phenomenal obscurity*. Within the realm of experimental music (and, in some cases, its extension to sound art), such obscurity is at the conceptual core of certain works, exhibited in ever-shifting ‘distances’ and distortions between musical ideas, material, representation and audition.

This paper attempts to describe different manifestations of what I term ‘musical silhouette’, a sub-image of a broader research concept defined as ‘musical shadow’. Artists and thinkers have often mined shadow’s definitively obscuring properties and possibilities as a rich vein of metaphysics, myth and metaphor, exploiting the shadow’s facility for evoking existentially and perspectively uncertain shades of presence and absence. While this author acknowledges that the silhouette’s historical graphic depiction—as a figure that is backlit against a lighter background—may be viewed as distinct from that of shadow, I am using the term in a more general sense: as a dark shape and clear outline cast against its contrasting background. The silhouette thus retains a strong visual aspect but it also has important philosophical, psychological, artistic and literary castings and connotations, providing varied conceptual lenses through which I have viewed or thought through this image.

I will focus on a diverse set of experimental music/sound-based works (by Ceal Floyer, Alvin Lucier and Graham Lambkin, respectively) that arguably suggest my image of ‘silhouette’. Although each work is approached

from different ‘angles,’ a commonality lies in their unusual *perspectival* properties, through their execution in performance and recording, and/or their manifestation in time. Preceding the discussion of these works, I also consider the way in which musical notation, broadly speaking, functions as kinds of ‘tracings’ of a musical event. In approaching these musical examples, I will refer to several visual art works (by Karen Knorr, Sophie Calle, Maarten Van Heemskerck) and/or to key philosophical and aesthetic concepts that deal with the image of shadow in temporal consciousness (for example, those of Immanuel Kant, Plato, Pliny the Elder, Edmund Husserl, Robert Snyder and Henri Bergson). The specific works of these non-musical artists and thinkers have been chosen to demonstrate some small part of the rich history of the silhouette as a symbol in aesthetics, psychology and phenomenology.

Absence and presence

Philosophically, the shadow is most famously instantiated in Plato’s allegory of the cave. It has been understood that the allegory illuminates and epitomizes a rationalist standpoint, where “the effect of education” can free the human “prisoner” from the cave of illusion to finally experience truer forms of reality.⁵ In Western visual art history, the shadow has been associated with the origins of painting and sculpture. Pliny’s *Natural History* describes the “encircling [of] a shadow” in the following story, as the initial catalyst for both artistic mediums:

It was through the service of that same earth that modelling portraits from clay was first invented by Butades, a potter from Sycion, at Corinth. He did this owing to his daughter, who was in love with a young man; and she, when he was going abroad, drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by the lamp. Her father pressed clay on this and made a relief.⁶

As we examine the appearance of the shadow within some cultural and aesthetic traditions, an elusive image of both absence and presence appears and reappears. Both Plato and Pliny use the shadow as a signifier—of knowledge, and of hermeneutics, respectively. Victor Stoichiță, in *A*

Short History of the Shadow, stresses the “mnemonic” function of Pliny’s shadow.⁷ In order to fill the absence of the lost loved one, the daughter in the myth makes a “living double”, albeit a double that is ‘frozen’, stopped in time “like a photograph” (curiously, in its Greek etymology, photography means ‘drawing with light’). By contrast, Gerhard Wolff’s more classical interpretation of this shadow is that it operates as “the insubstantial eidol[on]” of the dead.⁸ Here, the shadow as *representing* absence is connected to an idea of ontological dependency—the shadow must *belong* to someone/something which is now gone. However, Stoichiță sees a further ontological potential in Pliny’s shadow—it “both resembles *and belongs* to the person whose image it is”.⁹

In the history of photography, we can trace a further ontological transformation of the shadow. Henry Fox Talbot’s early experiments with photography were an attempt to ‘freeze’ the ephemerality of shadow, “the proverbial emblem of all that is fleeting and momentary”.¹⁰ Hagi Kenaan suggests that Talbot, through photography, “uprooted” the shadow from its visuo-temporal contingency, enabling an ability to see it as a “code” of “self-sufficiency”.¹¹ Karen Knorr’s photograph *The Pencil of Nature* references Talbot’s eponymous 1844 book (the first photographically illustrated book), and could be said to ‘reframe’ Pliny’s myth. In this sense, it doubly refers to the origins of drawing and the origins of photography through the image of the silhouette. However, its depiction of the outline *not yet drawn* can also be interpreted as a commentary on the shadow’s ephemerality versus its freezing via tracing, a temporal tension *between* the event and its representation.



Fig 1. Karen Knorr, *The Pencil of Nature* (1994), photograph print, 101 x 101 cm. Reproduced with the kind permission by the author.¹²

If we attempt to uncover a similar tension in music and the musical experience, we need to address several different ontological and experiential *loci* for the musical event, including notation, performance and listening, where the shadow operates in a temporal, linguistic and interpretive framework. The shadow phenomenon here can shift from its paradigmatic instantiation in space to that of time. The identification of the musical silhouette also works to re-situate the concept of tracing in a kind of musical portraiture. In the works and concepts discussed below, different forms of composition, and ways of listening and interpreting, are each, in this sense, forms of *resemblance*.

Notation and the extended temporal trace

Silhouettes are defined by their opacity as well as their outline. They appear as occultations, and, in this sense, their content remains unseen. It is thus their *outline* that provides the conditions of identification through form. Musical notation, by comparison, might be conceived as a codified ‘image’ of a musical work, only providing access to a work proper through its function as a mapping or tracing. That is, it outlines temporally extended musical events in a seemingly static, ‘simultaneous’, series of visual/spatial signs and symbols, and can also, to a degree, indicate specific elements or attributes of a possible musical event. But notation is also intrinsically *unfixed*, in its hermeneutic potential and its different presentations of temporality; one only has to consider the different degrees of ‘specificity’ in graphic or standard notation, audio scores, or any other multitude of notational forms, to defend this claim. Stoichiță’s description of the silhouette-trace as both a form of ‘belonging’ and of ‘resemblance’ illuminates the apparent ambiguity of a musical score whose relation of similitude to a musical ‘work’ is equivocal in the face of interpretation, yet which is both uniquely and surely tethered to that particular work. This paper does not attempt to examine the vast diversity of notational systems, languages and modes of presentation of musical notation. Its treatment of notation will be fairly broad and diffuse.

Laurence Louppe explains the impossibility of notation to produce definitive figures, instead producing “acts”.¹³ The vital presence of the act in interpretation is, arguably, perceptually or epistemologically ‘readable’ by the viewer, but it cannot be reduced to a visual sign. The acts of reading and interpreting (as concept and percept) can be delineated, as the latter requires a resynthesis of the act through temporal and physical means. In this way, notation seems provisional, more ‘hieroglyphic’ than textual. Paul Virilio explains that it is not to be ‘read’, but to be ‘traced’, as if a spectre of movement rather than a grid:

This is not the formulation of another language. It is a transformation of re-presentation itself. It is a *trajectory* between the real and the sign. The trajectory is *perturbed* by the presence of a living body, intervening as such. Representation supposes the absence of the object, the absence of being. Here, life inhabits what will never be its icon or its index.¹⁴

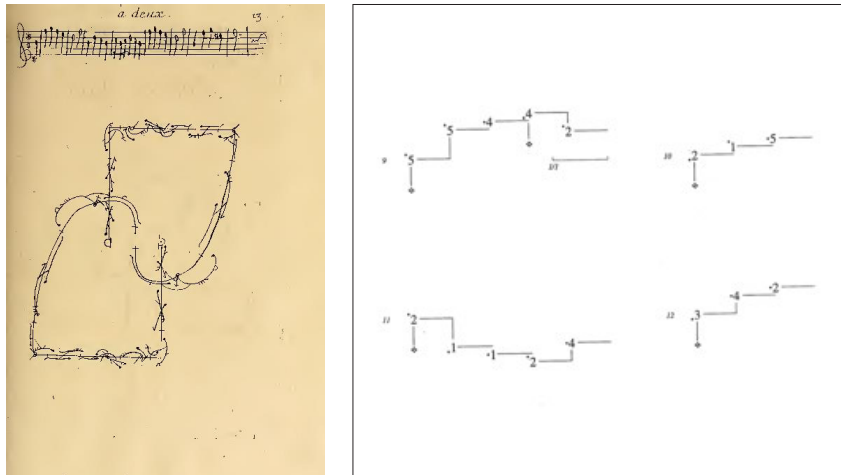


Fig. 2. Raoul Auger Feuillet, *Entrée à Deux* (1700), engraving.¹⁵

Fig. 3. Kunsu Shim, *Primary Piano* (2000), page 2, detail. Reproduced with the kind permission by the author.¹⁶

Can we then take it that the interpretation of notation is one of consciously ‘writing,’ or ‘drawing’? This distinction can clarify how notation is not a ‘freezing’ of time, because, as a *representation*, it does not attempt to exist *in the same time* as the musical event itself. Instead, it proposes *images* of time distinct from the musical experience in time as we experience it phenomenologically. Alfred Schutz, in “Making Music Together,” says that notation, as something existent in “the outer world” is “incomparable to the essential part of music ... the flowing process of inner time.”¹⁷ Schutz’s inner time is consistent with Bergson’s ‘unspatializable’ duration, which emphasizes the impossibility of analyzing time as a homogeneous matrix of divisible instants. In phenomenological theories of temporal consciousness, both Kant and Husserl claim that we are able to experience a temporally extended object/event as being so through a “principle of simultaneous awareness”, where “to be experienced as unified, contents must be presented ... as a single momentary awareness”.¹⁸ Extrapolating from Virilio’s earlier statement about the interpreter ‘perturbing’ notation’s ephemeral, spectral trajectory, it seems there are many ways to imagine the interpretive act as a tracing via interference or ‘occlusion’ between notational and performative “sign systems”.¹⁹ Firstly, tracing can be ‘preobjective’, something the interpreter consciously draws out of the notation. Maurice Merleau-Ponty says that the “line” does not imitate the visible, but renders the visible; it

is a “blueprint of a genesis of things.”²⁰ Albrecht Wellmer similarly reminds us that notation, moreover, is temporally-based, specifically *historically*, through its multiple interpretations. It is not ‘read’ as a static object, but ‘written’ and ‘re-written’ by each interpreting subject:

like the meaning of texts written in a language, the content of all that is notated in a musical text does not have any “being in itself” ... the process of being interpreted is fundamental to their being ... We thus find an analogy between the musical text and *writing*; both attain being from within a particular historical horizon.²¹

Conversely, we can consider interpretation as an *unravelling* of notation through the subjective filtering of musical ideas. Theodor Adorno, known for his idealism regarding the ‘truth’ of the musical score and its ‘disintegration’ through interpretation, agrees that notation is an object changing throughout history, but emphasizes that through this evolution something “has to escape”²²—“it would be wrong to say that reproduction must ‘awaken’ the sedimented content in music, since the substance of music is not that content, but rather the process of its sedimentation.”²³ Here, the interpreter can be seen to shape the evanescent notational silhouette through his/her own subjective tracing.

So notation appears to have a paradoxical existence as both the catalyst for a ‘trace’ we follow, and something that is traced, i.e. outlined by the interpreter, indicating that it is itself not entirely temporally ‘undistributed’. Revisiting Knorr’s capturing of the silhouette’s trace-act in her photograph, we can now draw a connection with how the interpretive act proceeds to trace or fix notation (conceived not as a fixed image, but a moving trajectory between image and event), and in doing so implicates *the interpreter* in the silhouette. Notation is not just an ‘image’—or quasi-ontological entity—of a composer’s artistic conception, it also *belongs* (in Stoichiță’s sense) to the interpreter; indeed, it is shaped and outlined by the interpreter. Interpretation is not purely a tracing of indications in a score, but the tracing of the interpretation of those indications. Notation becomes a form of interpretive self-portraiture.

The silhouette of listening

This tension between the silhouette and its trace can also be postulated in the act of listening to music. The work of conceptual artist Ceal Floyer is principally engaged with “the idea of transition from the subjective to the real world”.²⁴ Her sound/collage artwork, *Goldberg Variation*, takes thirty harpsichord recordings of an aria from Johann Sebastian Bach’s famous *Goldberg Variations*, and layers them on top of each other as playback. Apparently, this constitutes all commercially available recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* at the time of the work’s making. The first notes of the variations all sound at the same time, but quickly the work blisters into a mass of saturated polyphony, where tiny delays and echoes almost blur together. Much of the piece thus sounds chaotic, “a collective gray matter that lies out of reach for articulated consciousness,”²⁵ but one can still listen for (and perhaps perceive) a sense of Bach’s original forward progression in the harmonic blur. Nearing the end of the work, we hear the thinning out of each layer, and the longer variations emerging in a clearing of the texture, until one final variation is left.

On the surface, *Goldberg Variation* may appear as a comment on subjectivity through the proliferation of interpretations of the ‘masterwork’. It is also clearly a play on language, as Floyer makes a ‘variation’ of the variations through highlighting possible interpretive differences, particularly in their rhythmic displacement. However, Floyer also seems to highlight the ultimately asymmetrical nature of interpretation vis-à-vis the score, “disordering the reasoned structure” of Bach’s original.²⁶ By formally ‘spatializing’ the works through layering, Floyer makes it difficult for the listener to focus on much other than the audible *differences* between interpretation, which one could hear as a kind of aural ‘negative space’ between the musical events.²⁷ So we are presented both with multiple possibilities of subjectivity through layering in real-time, and a flattening of the heterogeneous durations of various interpretations into a common ‘spatial’ dimension. In this way, Floyer’s variation is deeply linguistic, presenting a kind of re-notation through the act of *listening*. By focusing on the now spatio-temporal variation between interpretations, the music inside is cast by both composer and listener as only an *image* of music, de-subjectivized, like a fuzzy projection.

The silhouette of remembering

Some theorists of temporal consciousness offer useful insights into the phenomenal experience of music, calling into question the ontological autonomy of the musical event²⁸ and challenging certain presuppositions about its objective linearity or measurability.

Barry Dainton's reading of Husserl takes the philosopher as employing a 'cinematic model' which proposes that, though our immediate awareness itself lacks any temporal extension, past phases of consciousness (within immediate or short-term memory) are somehow still retained in the 'specious present': "The past must be represented in this now as past, and this is accomplished through the continuity of adumbrations that in one direction terminates in the sensation-point and in the other direction becomes blurred and indeterminate."²⁹

This idea of adumbration in memory extends from the Kantian 'retentional model' of explaining how we are aware of experience as an ongoing process. Both cinematic and retentional models of temporal consciousness invoke the 'principle of simultaneous awareness'. With this in mind, a succession of experience does not necessarily equal an experience of succession. More specifically, in the musical experience, it is the strange counterpoint between listening and remembering that most vividly presents the problem of musical experience in time, and the nature of the subject/listener's own 'projection' (or retrojection) of experience becomes a key consideration.

By contrast, Bergson's image of temporal experience is that of a "qualitative multiplicity" that permeates the subject, rather than a quantity that can be measured.³⁰ Here, time is fluidly changing and it is our experience of it that is 'unitary'. Our everyday perceptions are always *perfused* by our individual memory, and in this sense, the psychic intensity of previous states of experience could be imagined as a 'shadow' cast upon a multitude of perceptions and memories, altering their qualities without ever itself coming into view.

So the image of the silhouette significantly recasts the aesthetic notion of shadow as something ephemeral that memory attempts to trace. More than subjectively formed vestigial content and a crucial means of retrieval, the trace also has a tendency towards generating its own kind of obfuscation. Snyder, in *Music and Memory*, explains that the connections between elements of a memory (not the elements themselves) are what

constitute its accessibility and its uniqueness. A critical connection lies between the ‘vivid perceptual aspect’ (from short-term memory) and the ‘conceptual aspect’ (from long-term memory). A listener will perceptually categorize the music he/she hears through a process called ‘chunking’, consolidating small groups of associated memory elements. A single ‘chunk’ is considered a short-term memory, but groups of chunks can be further consolidated into larger chunks in hierarchical order (for example, the small chunking of a short musical motive or sonority can undergo ‘event fusion’ into a collection of motives forming a phrase, then even further ‘chunked’ into a broader structural outline etc.).

As different tiers of chunking are ‘stored’ in the mind, it is clear that long-term and short-term memory do not operate in the same temporal framework. Further, one can gain insight into the structural aspect of our long-term memory through looking at its recall in short-term memory. In recalling a familiar piece of music, we observe that the ‘piece’ does not appear in conscious memory as it originally appeared in conscious experience. In this sense, musical memory ‘outlines’ or ‘silhouettes’ real-time musical experience, with the piece appearing in fragments, ‘jumping’ from one sonic image or chunk to another like a curious Husserlian ‘flicker’. This flickering, with its gaps between images, demonstrates that the chunking process is specifically retained, and indeed recalled, through its event *boundaries*. Here, Snyder gives a simple musical example:

[M]elodic and rhythmic groupings, which consist of multiple separate events in a time order, nonetheless have something of the character of all being available at once ... we detect boundaries between *single* events, whereas at the melodic and rhythmic level, we detect temporally extended patterns consisting of *multiple* events.³¹

This ‘bottom up’/‘top down’ distinction between event boundaries and patterns formed in memory has been phenomenologically expounded in Bergson’s description of provisional and ultimate units in the act of listening. The latter are part of a present cognitive process, whereas the former occur in the memory. Bergson, in accord with Snyder, also demonstrates that in order to measure our own temporal experiences, we would have to give them some kind of ‘numerical’ representation, of which a necessary element is *space*:

The sounds of [a] bell certainly reach me one after the other; but one of two alternatives must be true. Either I retain each of these successive sensations in order to combine it with the others and form a group ... in that case I do not *count* the sounds ... gathering ... the qualitative impression produced by the whole series. Or else I intend explicitly to count them ... and this separation must take place within some homogenous medium in which the sounds, stripped of their qualities, and in a manner, emptied, leave traces of their presence which are absolutely alike. The question now is, whether the medium is time or space.³²

The interchange between percept and concept in memory is not always fully 'conscious'. For example, implicit memory (such as automatic body movements) and 'priming' (recalling something without being consciously aware of it, such as "feeling that there is something familiar about a musical phrase") are not fully 'grasped' in consciousness,³³ and even episodic, or 'autobiographical', memories need not be fully consciously "revived perceptions" (in John Locke's words).³⁴ Snyder notes that "a large percentage of the long-term memory in use at a given time is only semiactivated [sic], and remains unconscious, although it has a large effect in guiding what we are conscious of—indeed, constitutes the meaning of what we are conscious".³⁵

It must be noted here that in the context of music, implicit and episodic memory overlap and become co-dependent, for example, in the 'learning' of a musical score that involves the development of physical, implicit memories (e.g. fine-motor skills) as well as the episodic interpretation of information. An easily recognizable type of 'chunking' occurs in the general recall of melodic phrases in music, where the performer may only consciously remember the first and last note of a fast scale, or struggles to resume playing a work from the 'middle' of a phrase. In such instances, though, one may rely principally on the syntactical structures of one's implicit memory, without consciously using episodic memory (for example, remembering how to play a musical passage using 'muscle memory' alone). Marya Schechtman claims that personal identity *itself* does not even depend upon a "psychological continuity" in which the "precise recall" of past moments of consciousness connects with present ones. Rather, it is brought about by the "smoothing over the boundaries between different moments in our lives".³⁶

These accounts of temporal consciousness by Husserl and Kant (by way of Dainton), Bergson and Snyder, each elucidate an image of ‘tracing’ as a function of memory. Here, the trace has two meanings, as something left behind in memory, and also as a kind of mnemonic action (i.e. a verbal tracing). Both senses allude to the silhouette in its double meaning via Pliny, as both an attempt to capture the fleeting, and an eidolon or vestige.

The trace of memory; the memory of a trace

The next two works discussed (of visual art and music respectively) overtly explore the two-fold trace of memory as a kind of working material. Sophie Calle’s artwork series *Purloined* responds to the heists of five paintings by William Turner, Pablo Picasso, Lucian Freud and Titian from various European museums. In referring to each stolen painting, Calle presents a work where various photographs are set side by side—sometimes of the original paintings, or just their storage cabinets/frames—with a panel of text quoting museum staff speaking of either their relationship to the missing work or describing the work based on their memory of it. Calle is “creat[ing] an extended dialogue with history” through an attempt to re-trace (or even replace) the lost work through the interpretation of (possibly ‘inaccurate’) memories.³⁷ The tracing that informs and constitutes Calle’s series is evoked by Georges Didi-Huberman in his aesthetic image of the *imprint*—“[t]he imprint may well touch us through the adherence from which it proceeds, but this contact ends up, almost fatally, being thought in the element of separation, of loss, of absence ... the foot must sink into the sand ... [b]ut in order for the imprint to *appear* as a result, the foot must also be lifted again.”³⁸

A significant aspect of Calle’s piece is her attempt to resituate the material of the visual artworks in time—the original work is re-presented via the interpretive act of memory. The memory traces documented in *Purloined* are not simply functioning as ‘eidola’ (as Wolff interprets Pliny’s silhouette myth). Their difference and individuality highlight the “influence of self-concept on memory” and, in turn, the influence memory has on life.³⁹ Additionally, the re-presentations of the artworks Calle presents in lieu of the work’s images themselves are sorts of re-notations of the images—‘blueprints’, rather than translations or reproductions—that are then traced and ultimately ‘filled in’ by the viewer, with or without the aid of the original image.

In Alvin Lucier's 1970 text composition *Memory Space*,⁴⁰ the intention is, similarly, to re-trace a spatial (and temporal) environment, one already silhouetted in memory, but which must be 'prompted' into consciousness. The text score states that performers are required to "record" (by memory or a memory aid such as drawing or audio recording) the "sound situations of the environment", and then "recreate" them from memory at a later point on their instrument.⁴¹ As in many of Lucier's works, *Memory Space* is an attempt to summon a physical space by the listening subject through sound. (Other works of Lucier's explore subjective listening more psychoacoustically, for example, 1965's *Music for Solo Performer*). Although Lucier explicitly states that the re-creation must be "without additions, deletions, improvisation, interpretation", the process becomes one of both clarifying a sound situation (i.e. the memory will, in a sense, filter out phenomenal 'excess' of the remembered situation in performance) and obscuring it (i.e. the very act of performance cannot avoid extraneous gesture).

Lucier says that he is specifically interested in the "time delay" between the listening and performing events.⁴² Snyder's theory of priming is pertinent here, in particular the extensive temporal conditions in relation to the formation of memory. However, *Memory Space* presents specific and unusual conditions for the development of the performer's musical memory—he/she must undergo a process of *conscious* listening/memorization (itself a kind of performance in the context of the work), and the sound event he/she is remembering can be construed as not implicitly 'musical'.⁴³ As the interpretive process unfolds, the material space Lucier wishes the performer to trace, comes from his/her conscious positions as listener and performer, and the critical 'time-delay' is another obstruction/caesura between that which is heard and that which is performed. The lack of implicit memory developed through any practical memorization of the work means that the episodic memory is completely 'left alone'.

Both Lucier and Calle employ memory (in a sense not unlike Snyder's account of it) as the very *generative* material of their works' forms. From a representative realist viewpoint, Lucier's work does not simply call for the re-creation of an original sound situation—it essentially provokes the conditions for the tracing of a subjective *representation* (i.e. the memory, the silhouette) of a situation. Emmanuel Levinas describes something similar in his idea of "resemblance" in artistic images:

Must we then come back to taking the image as an independent reality which resembles the original? No, but on condition that we take resemblance not as the result of a comparison between an image and the original, but as the very movement that engenders this image. Reality would not be only what it is, what it is disclosed to be in truth, but would be also its double, its shadow, its image.⁴⁴

For Levinas, the *act* of resemblance is the very relationship between some original thing and its image, but the image is not simply a sign or symbol, because of its “opacity”. In performing *Memory Space*, one is filling in, even “insisting” on the absence of the original event with the “presence” of one’s interpretative sonic material.⁴⁵ So memory does not trace the original event, but traces *its shadow*.

A final and important observation is that *Memory Space* presents to its audience the performer’s subjective and isolated ‘re-creation’ of an event, with no other indicators of its original form. This is a constant preoccupation for Lucier, that “physical phenomena are made explicit only through the participation of people and the activating of perception.”⁴⁶ The trace has two characterizations: as both the prompted performative act, which is in turn always generated by, and in thrall to, the silhouette of memory.

‘Overpainting’

We have begun to establish some possible conditions under which the musical silhouette emerges. A central condition has been the notion of self-projection—of performer, composer and/or listener—the self somehow ‘occluding’ the musical object (for example, through memory, writing and interpretation). The final works to be discussed reveal another dimension of the image of the silhouette shadow in visual art and music as *self-portraiture*, referencing its inescapably multi-perspectival nature and perceptibility.

Maarten van Heemskerck’s *Saint Luke Painting the Virgin* provides an interesting example of the intrusion of the artist himself into his work. The artist actually painted two versions of the same theme, both paintings showing Saint Luke in the process of completing a half-formed portrait, at the stage of shading in the virgin’s flesh tones. In the 1532 painting, the figure of an angel or muse stands behind Luke, purportedly ‘guiding’ the painter’s hand (a not uncommon artistic theme at the time). The fact that the angel’s face is a self-portrait of Heemskerck provides a *doubled* representation of the artist—the painter and his guide—increasing perspectival ambiguity and complexity. In the later painting of the same subject, Stoichiță observes that Saint Luke himself is now Heemskerck’s self-portrait, a further complication of the artist/subject relation.

Another, more subtle, layer of intricacy into these codified portraits is represented by the shadow of Saint Luke’s hand on his canvas, further underlining the artist’s ‘interference’ with his subject, both from outside and inside the work. This shadow has significance, as it not only partly occludes the image depicted in the incomplete paintings-within-the-paintings, but, as Stoichiță notes, also bears a further cryptic symbolism of “the ‘shadow of the hand’ that runs over the ‘shadow of the flesh’”. In any case, in both versions of this well-known subject, Heemskerck “highlights what he should have concealed: the painter’s hand”.⁴⁷

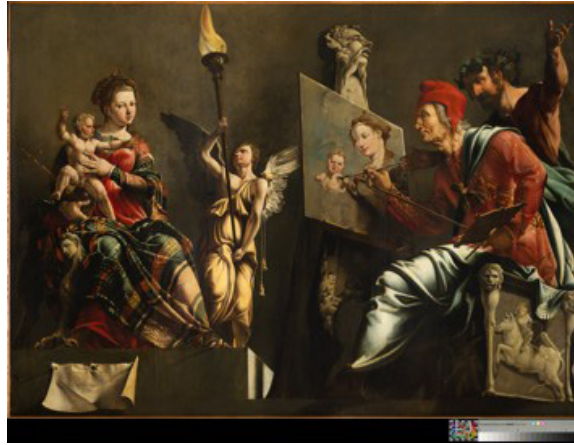


Fig. 4. Maarten van Heemskerck, Saint Luke Painting the Virgin (1532), oil on canvas, 168 x 235 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum. (Photograph by Margareta Svensson. 2014.)⁴⁸

The Fluxus-inspired visual and sound artist Graham Lambkin also inserts ‘himself’ in his work, but, as in Heemskerck’s painting, that self is distorting (and being distorted by) his environment. The work’s perspective is similarly mediated and distorted by the insistent insertion of a ‘Graham Lambkin,’ as is that of the listener. Nearly forty years after Lucier, Lambkin reassesses the problem of the composer and listener’s implication in a sonic environment, but in a radically different way, through the “heavily coded exploration of the psychological properties of shared spaces.”⁴⁹ Two key examples can be found in his albums *Salmon Run* (2007) and *Amateur Doubles* (2011). In both albums, Lambkin records himself listening to other people’s music and ambiguously interacting through incidental noises and discreet actions. *Amateur Doubles* documents a family car trip from inside the car itself, where we hear Lambkin playing two long-form French progressive rock records blending with the sound of the car engine and the occasional muffled sound of his son calling out from the back seat. *Salmon Run*’s most substantial portion, titled “The Currency of Dreams”, consists of a crude audio recording of Lambkin in his house, listening to a recording of Wyschnegradsky’s *Meditation sur deux themes de la ‘Journée de l’Existence*, whilst also taking photos of himself on a digital camera, laughing, breathing heavily and making various unidentifiable sounds. Lambkin derived this idea from the technique of the Austrian painter Arnulf Rainer in his

'overpaintings,' in which Rainer splashes abstract expressionist markings over famous historical artworks. However, the works themselves do not provide such descriptive cues; so, instead, one is struck by both the strange familiarity of certain sounds, as well as the difficulty of their decipherability.



Fig. 5. Graham Lambkin, *Untitled Self Portrait* (2004), acrylic and ink on plastic, 22.9 x 30.5 cm. Reproduced with kind permission of the author.⁵⁰

Nicholas Croggon illuminates the complex subjectivity, experienced by both creator and audience, that results from such a creative process:

As these self-reflexive cues attest, this track suggests that the act of forming and realizing the intertwinings and limitations of a sound world is always ultimately a task of subject-forming, of self-portraiture. And as Lambkin and Rainer have pointed out in a different way in their paintings, the face that appears in such portraits is always inescapably smeared and distorted by its surroundings.⁵¹

Lambkin confesses to a kind of “trespassing” in such work,⁵² perhaps challenging the aesthetic and authorial boundaries of art-music and its commodification. This is similarly felt via a kind of voyeurism on the part of the listener, as if we are spying on Lambkin’s domestic privacy, a vantage point made all the more ‘strained’ by its lack of visual context. This question of vantage point is important in our final interpretation of the silhouette, here particularly Lambkin’s, placed in both ‘inside’ the work as performer (and listener) and ‘outside’ as composer. When listening to Lambkin’s work, what and from where do we ourselves observe? Lambkin himself explains his work as “like looking at something through a window—there’s something there that you can see but you can’t completely put your hand on it”.⁵³ Lambkin, however, is not the ‘window’ through which the environment (the lounge-room, the music, the car) is observed. Firstly, it is not clear what ‘perspective’ Lambkin adopts toward his environment. For example, it is felt that we as listeners are giving the sounds on the recording more attention than do the people on the recording, and, more importantly, Lambkin coheres the positions of performer/composer/listener. Secondly, his very *performativity* (i.e. the laughing and photo-taking in *The Currency of Dreams* or the whistling and turning off of the car music in *Amateur Doubles*) makes us acutely aware of his *interference* with the environment. Is it then the recording device itself that is the perspectival window?

Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, speaks of the photograph’s “disorder” through its invisibility (i.e. its lack of distinction from its referent) and its “dispossess[ion]” of the subject.⁵⁴ In Lambkin’s case, the window (or ‘lens’, if one prefers) is not transparent, and certainly not invisible. The crude audio quality of both pieces makes the recording device audible in itself (for example, tape hiss and crackle) but this also results in a blending with, and compromise of, the ‘ambience’ of the domestic situation (i.e. the sound of the room, the music playing etc.) and even blurs the more clear gestures by Graham (a laugh is “slackened to a textural slur”, and various knocks and creaks become hard to discern in the distorted audio quality).⁵⁵ As listeners, we cannot view ‘through’ this window because of this lack of transparency, problematized further by the fact that this window is sonically *framed inside* the work itself.⁵⁶

Lambkin’s works, in their complex formal framing, can also be ‘viewed’ in multiple temporalities, and this is played out in the different perceptual layers in which we can conceive of the works. Firstly, the music captured *en scene* evokes an aesthetic of nostalgia, with *Amateur Doubles*’ inclusion of generic, soundtrack-like, almost fetishized 1970’s

progressive synthesizer music, and *Salmon Run*'s histrionic interpretation of Wyschnegradsky's post-romantic microtonal work, which is shrouded in the warmth of vinyl crackle. Secondly, Lambkin's interaction with this 'diagetic' music discursively re-historicizes it, through its playful pairing with more contemporary technologies (digital camera clicks, the Honda Civic car engine etc.) and its contextual 'domestication' through a quasi-Fluxus conceptualism. Finally, the exposed nature of all the elements of the recorded situation (which are possibly discernible, if not quite decipherable) moves the listener's temporal perspective outside of the works' internal narratives into an awareness of them as aesthetic artefact. These categories are curiously similar to the institutional history of photography, as outlined by David Company:

Photography became art firstly as homage, then as imitation of the painterly and eventually became modern only within this new concept of art that was tacitly organised and regulated by reproduction. Since then photography has had two roles in modern art history: as an art itself, and as a mute, nameless mediator of all art ... [t]hese aren't so much roles as poles of the general tension between the photograph's objectivity and its subjectivity.⁵⁷

Levinas' earlier description of an inevitably opaque image has become further 'smeared' in Lambkin's overpainted self-portrait.

Ultimately, we are left to navigate the space between the shared spaces Lambkin traverses, which is where the shadow comes alive. If the recording device is that which sheds light upon the subject (albeit a somewhat diffuse light, more like "a prism" than the "lens of a camera")⁵⁸ and Lambkin the occluding object upon the 'surface' of his audible domestic environment, the framing or perspectival problem of the listener seems cinematic in its dimension. Robert Benayoun, in his essay "Remarks on Cinematic Oneirism", says the "screen ... communicates a reality beyond its flat surface. But on the strength of the various artifices of lighting, of framing, of the very *choice* of its various elements, this reality can only be attained in its contingent aspect, one practically impossible to reproduce systematically."⁵⁹ Benayoun also reminds us that cinema is cinematic by virtue of its uncanniness—"unreal by nature, its only function should be to seek satisfaction in the unreal."⁶⁰

Afterthoughts

This paper has put the concept of the silhouette to use in a new conceptual, perspectival and aesthetic positioning—in music—but the intention is not to limit its definition or role to any specific theoretical ‘isms’ of philosophy, psychology or aesthetics. Rather, the emergence of the musical silhouette is intended to elucidate a certain flexibility and ambiguity inherent in the concept of shadow. As the image of the silhouette is unpacked, it becomes clear that *perspective*, particularly that of the listener or interpreter/performer, provides a catalyst for its emergence in certain contexts. This silhouette is, at times, defined by its very perspectival obscurity, which can result from a unique conscious positioning of the listening or interpreting subject, and/or a perceptual/conceptual obscuring within the musical work itself. The psychological, epistemological and even ontological positioning of the musical work and the interpreter are questioned through such investigation.

Notes

- 1 Francois J. Bonnet, *The Order of Sounds: A Sonorous Archipelago*, trans. Robin Mackay (S.l.: Urbanomic Media Ltd, 2016), 7.
- 2 Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. J Benedict (London and New York: Verso, 1996), 117.
- 3 Sigmund Freud, *Art and Literature*, ed. Albert Dickson (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1990), 358.
- 4 Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003), 95.
- 5 Stephen Watt, “Introduction: The Theory of Forms (Books 5–7),” in Plato: *Republic* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), xiv–xvi.
- 6 Hagi Kenaan, “Tracing Shadows: Reflections on the Origins of Painting,” in *Pictorial Languages and Their Meanings*, ed. C. Versar and G. Fishof (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Publishing, 2006), 20.
- 7 Stoichiță, Victor. *A Short History of the Shadow* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 17.
- 8 Hagi Kenaan, “Photography and Its Shadow,” *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 3 (Spring 2015), 548.
- 9 Stoichiță, *A Short History of the Shadow*, 17 (emphasis mine).
- 10 Kenaan, “Photography and Its Shadow,” 555.
- 11 Ibid., 570–571.
- 12 Karen Knorr, *The Pencil of Nature*, photograph print, 1994, <http://www.research.ucreative.ac.uk/id/eprint/237>.
- 13 Paul Virilio, *Traces Of Dance*, ed. Laurence Louppe (Paris: Dis Voir, 1994), 11.
- 14 Virilio, *Traces Of Dance*, 11., (emphasis mine).
- 15 Raoul-Auger Feuillet, *Choregraphie, ou, L'art de décrire la danse, par caracteres, figures, et signes démonstratifs: avec lesquels on apprend facilement de soy-même toutes sortes de dances:*

- ouvrage tres-utile aux maîtres à dancier & à toutes les personnes qui s'appliquent à la dance/Recueil de Danses* (Paris: Chez l'auteur: et chez Michel Brunet, 1701). <http://archive.org/details/choregraphieoula00feui>.
- 16 Kunsu Shim, *Primary Piano* (Germany: UA Duisburg, 2000). Shim's piece, as a quasi-choreographic musical score, has a unique comparability with Feuillet's notation.
- 17 Michael Barber and Jochen Dreher, *The Interrelation of Phenomenology, Social Sciences and the Arts* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013), 235.
- 18 Barry Dainton, "Temporal Consciousness," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2014, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/consciousness-temporal/>.
- 19 James Boros and Richard Toop, eds., *Brian Ferneyhough: Collected Writings* (Amsterdam: Routledge, 1995), 5. Ferneyhough asserts that notation is an explicit ideological vehicle, and its primary field of signification must always remain the respective "opposite" to the sound—itsself another form of signification.
- 20 Henry Somers-Hall, "Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty: Aesthetics of Difference," in *Gilles Deleuze: The Intensive Reduction*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (UK: Continuum Press, 2009), 116.
- 21 Jonathan Cross et al., *Identity and Difference: Essays on Music, Language and Time* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 99.
- 22 Kristof Boucquet, "'Die Uninterpretierbarkeit der Musik': Adorno's Theory of Musical Reproduction," *Dutch Journal of Music Theory* 14, no. 1 (2009): 46.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 "Ceal Floyer - ARTFORUM," accessed August 26, 2016, <http://www.mutualart.com/OpenArticle/Ceal-Floyer/B7E1EE2E7176C8F3>.
- 25 "Ceal Floyer - ARTFORUM."

- 26 Cate Rimmer, “The Sound I’m Looking For Part 2,” *Charles H. Scott Gallery*, 2009, http://chscott.ecuad.ca/exhibitions/2008/the_sound_im_looking_for_p2.html.
- 27 I am here using the term ‘negative space’ as it is understood in visual art, meaning a notable shape around a subject or image that may itself form an artistic ‘image’.
- 28 I am referring to the ‘musical event’ as an object in time (i.e. in performance or audition). Such events are indeed arguably ‘measurable’ (for example, in recording or notation), but the above statement merely proposes multiple methods, or perspectives, of its measurement.
- 29 Dainton, “Temporal Consciousness.”
- 30 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, First Paperback Edition (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2001), 226.
- 31 Snyder, *Music and Memory*, 14.
- 32 Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 86–87.
- 33 Snyder, *Music and Memory*, 74.
- 34 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 150.
- 35 Snyder, *Music and Memory*, 9.
- 36 John Sutton, “Memory,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/memory/>.
- 37 “Paris—Sophie Calle: ‘Dérobés’ at Galerie Perrotin Through January 11th, 2014,” accessed August 11, 2016, <http://artobserved.com/2014/01/paris-sophie-calle-derobes-at-galerie-perrotin-through-january-11th-2014/>.
- 38 Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Imprint* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1997), 181.; The ‘imprint’ is comparable to Peirce’s index interpretant in his theory of signs.

39 Sutton, "Memory."

40 The title is also known as (*Hartford*) *Memory Space*, and each performance of the work is supposed to replace the bracketed place-name depending on the location of the 'memory'.

41 Alvin Lucier and Douglas Simon, *Chambers: Scores by Alvin Lucier* (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1980), 42.

42 Lucier and Simon, *Chambers*, 42.

43 Snyder does not discuss the application of his theories to listening outside of 'musical' contexts. Much might be said here about music vis-à-vis 'sound', a topic unaddressed in this paper.

44 Emmanuel Levinas, *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand, 1st edition (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), 135.

45 *Ibid.*, 136.

46 Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 127.

47 Stoichiță, *A Short History of the Shadow*, 91.

48 Maarten van Heemskerck, *Saint Luke Painting the Virgin*, oil on canvas, 1532, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem.

49 Nick Cain, "Happy Accidents: Graham Lambkin," *The Wire: Adventures in Modern Music*, June 2009, 16.

50 Graham Lambkin, *Untitled Self Portrait*, acrylic and ink on plastic, 2004.

51 Nicholas Croggon, "Stroking Rough Minutes into Smooth Hours: A Short History of the Music of Graham Lambkin," *Discipline*, no. 1 (2011): 68.

52 *Ibid.*

53 Cain, "Happy Accidents: Graham Lambkin," 16.

54 Kasia Houlihan, "Annotation to Roland Barthes' 'Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography,'" 2004, <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/annotations/barthescamera.htm>.

55 Cain, "Happy Accidents: Graham Lambkin," 16.

56 There is a suggestion here of the aesthetic form *mise en abyme*.

57 David Company, "Museum and Medium: The Time of Karen Knorr's Imagery," *David Company*, April 5, 2002, <http://davidcompany.com/museum-and-medium-the-time-of-karen-knorrs-imagery/>.

58 Philip Samartzis, "Captured Space," *Scan Journal of Media Arts Culture*, Sound.Music.Design, 6, no. 2 (September 2009), http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=137.

59 Hammond, *The Shadow and Its Shadow*, 107.

60 *Ibid.*, 108.

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