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# Translating Bodies

## A Spatial Approach to Words and Music

### *Introduction*

In his 1986 book *Arctic Dreams*, Barry Lopez describes the resonant bone structure of the narwhal in its ocean environment, which it navigates largely by sound. Lopez considers “[h]ow different ‘the world’ must be for such a creature, for whom sight is but a peripheral sense, who occupies, instead, a three-dimensional acoustical space. Perhaps only musicians have some inkling of the formal shape of emotions and motivations that might define such a sensibility.”<sup>1</sup> Aside from the challenge of imagining another creature’s acoustical-affective world, thinking about human sound-making in three-dimensional space allows for analysis of more than words on a page and notes in a score. As urban sound researchers Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue have noted, “no sound event, musical or otherwise, can be isolated from the spatial and temporal conditions of its physical signal propagation,” and “sound is also shaped subjectively depending on the auditory capacity, the attitude, and the psychology and culture of the listener.”<sup>2</sup> This article seeks to bridge the gap between such spatial awareness in sound and in text, the threshold at which word and music studies holds its richness and challenge. The long-established spatial turn in literature, combined with a current focus on performativity and materiality in sound studies, can be combined to include listener/viewer experience, in a dynamic, three-dimensional, rather than horizontal, two-dimensional interaction. The question of what and how musical-textual experience *means* can also counter reductive thinking about passive sensual and affective intake in performative-material space. A methodology that amplifies word-and-music analysis in participatory space yields surprising hermeneutic gray zones, in which text blurs into tone and music carries with it traces of the word.

As Lars Elleström has noted, conceptualizing physical space as a model for intermedial analysis, every medium has three dimensions: the embodied, the technical, and the qualified or social.<sup>3</sup> In performativity studies, the current emphasis on sonic materiality and immersive acoustic environments has tended to minimize additional inquiry into what—and how—sound in space *means* within larger physical, social spaces. The field of word and music studies, with its tradition of inquiry into text-setting

- 1 Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), 131.
- 2 Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue, introduction to *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds*, ed. Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue, trans. Andra McCartney and David Paquette (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 4.

and musical aspects of text, is ripe for such inquiry. Applying a spatial approach to this hybrid field can illuminate both its material and semiotic aspects, from investigations of text-based music in performance to studies of sound-art installations involving language. The long tradition of "Raumsemiotik" or spatial-semiotic studies, from Giambattista Vico's 1725 "Poetic Geography" to Gaston Bachelard's 1958 *Poetics of Space* and more recent work by Niklas Luhmann on space as invisible medium, can certainly shed light on material-semiotic interplay in acoustic spaces. In order to focus on these spaces' boundaries, this article draws on Yuri Lotman's 1982 essay "On the Semiosphere" to demonstrate that embodied experience of words and music in three dimensions allows for contingent and variable "translations" by listeners and spectators.

As Aleksei Semenenko of Stockholm University has pointed out, Lotman treats his semiosphere as a metaphor, in contrast to Vladimir Vernadsky's physical "biosphere" that inspired it and also to the "noosphere [earthly layer of thought], which is a three-dimensional material space." At the same time, Semenenko notes, Lotman insists that the semiosphere is "real and concrete" in its shaping of meaning and dialogue.<sup>4</sup> Lotman describes the "structural heterogeneity of semiotic space"<sup>5</sup> and its slippery peripheral zones, in which several "languages" overlap. These languages can, for the purposes of this article, include established musical codes. Such a complex and overlapping web of text and sound relates to Jørgen Bruhn's term "heteromediality" in intermedial studies, used to indicate a "mixed character" not only of obviously multimodal forms such as film, but also of "texts and media which have traditionally been considered pure, without traces of other media."<sup>6</sup> The idea of the "pure" performance or art exhibit, available to passive recipients, has long been questioned by Brecht, Cage, and many others, but much academic discourse on word and music tends to maintain a conservative focus on the work-in-itself, without considering its less obviously shared media and its spatial-material dimensions. This gap may result partly from the lack of control experienced in three-dimensional spaces, as Sybille Krämer has noted in her recent study of flat surfaces (see Krämer's contribution to this volume). Applying Lotman's metaphor to literal sound-spheres provides a map for such complex, dynamic environments and their negotiable borders. In addition, Lotman's idea of a "constant game of positions" between text and readers, in which the actual reader has an effect on the "ideal" reader,<sup>7</sup> de-hierarchizes this ideal (in this case, of listener or

3 See Lars Elleström, "Modalities of Media: A Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations," in *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, ed. Lars Elleström (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 28–43.

4 Aleksei Semenenko, *The Texture of Culture: An Introduction to Yuri Lotman's Semiotic Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 114.

5 Yuri Lotman, "On the Semiosphere," trans. Wilma Clark, *Sign Systems Studies* 33, vol. 1 (2005): 214. See also Lotman, "Vnutri mysliazhchikh mirov" [Universe of the Mind], in *Semiosphera* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 2000).

6 Jørgen Bruhn, "Heteromediality," in Elleström, *Media Borders*, 227–28.

7 See Lotman, "Universe of the Mind," 204, as explored with reference to live musical performance in Yana Alexandrovna Lowry, "From Massenlieder to Massovaia Pesnia: Musical Exchanges between Communists and Socialists of Weimar Germany and the Early Soviet Union" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2014), 165.

spectator) and allows for semiotic-material translation as a form of participation in a given sound-world.

The language of sound-art theory is also helpful in relating embodied space to words-and-music study. Now moving beyond long-running debates about hierarchies of visibility and sound,<sup>8</sup> much sound-art theory echoes Lotman's image of a semiosphere with negotiable borders. Giancarlo Toniutto's essay "Space as a Cultural Substratum" also draws on bio-physiological models to relate space to perceptual phenomena, noting that even the word "comprehension" arises from "spatial semantics"<sup>9</sup> and expressing particular interest in "perturbations" of the sound-field, in dialogue with the organic subject's morpho-kinesthetic map.<sup>10</sup> Kristen Kreider's newly released *Poetics and Place* works toward an intersubjective, material poetics of art spaces, taking into account not only non-linguistic sights and sounds but also "the performance of the verbal message: its embodied enactment through the reciprocal acts of 'speaking' and 'listening.'"<sup>11</sup> Brandon LaBelle's 2013 *Background Noise* takes into account sound's occurrence "among bodies," with a "multiplicity of acoustical 'viewpoints'" as it "performs with and through space ... [and] escapes rooms, vibrates walls, disrupts conversation."<sup>12</sup> LaBelle moves from analysis of John Cage's "open" works, which expose the boundary-transgressive aspect of sound,<sup>13</sup> to 1970s and 80s sound art and musical-poetic compositions that "drag" linguistic material into immersive soundscapes,<sup>14</sup> blurring the conventionally imagined line between word and music or "mere" sound, and finally to contemporary architectural and digital experiments with sonic space. Christopher Dell's *Replay City* reverses this approach, applying musical form metaphorically to a study of improvisational urban spaces.<sup>15</sup>

The three works under consideration here—an extended-technique piano work based on Joyce's *Ulysses*, a sound-art installation on the music of Hanns Eisler, and a space-designed symphony responding to Peter Weiss' novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance*—all function within literal acoustical spaces in which material-semiotic interaction occurs. In each case, text is layered or "dragged," to use LaBelle's term, into the soundscape either implicitly or explicitly. How that text is perceived depends largely on listener/spectator participation, which becomes an act of translation as well. Reading program notes or moving through the sound-space in an art gallery allows the audience to bring semantic-associative readings into the performance space, complicating its immersive materiality. In this perceptive encounter, to use Lotman's simile, "the border points of the semiosphere may be likened to sensory receptors, which trans-

8 For a review of sound studies in relationship to visibility and other subfields of "sensory studies," see Jonathan Sterne, ed., *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 8–12.

9 Giancarlo Toniutti, "Space as a Cultural Substratum," in *Site of Sound: Of Architecture & the Ear*, ed. Brandon LaBelle and Steve Roden (Los Angeles: Errant Bodies Press, 1999), 39 and 40.

10 Ibid., 40.

11 Kristen Kreider, *Poetics and Place: The Architecture of Sign, Subjects and Site* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co., 2014), 21.

12 Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), x–xi.

13 Ibid., 24.

14 Ibid., 104.

15 See Christopher Dell, *Replay City: Improvisation als urbane Praxis* (Berlin: jovis, 2011).

fer external stimuli into the language of our nervous system, or a unit of translation, which adapts the external actor to a given semiotic sphere."<sup>16</sup> Lotman's project imagines a single semiosphere with semi-permeable boundaries; here each work under consideration is taken as *a* semiosphere in its own right. Three factors set the stage for each of these spheres' semiotic instability: varied languages, in Bakhtin's sense of heteroglossia; optional meta-texts, or translation agents, such as program or gallery notes; and the listener/viewer's embodied, participatory experience, which can vary according to background knowledge of the material and responses to spatial sound effects such as reverberation, distortion, and physical movement. What results from analyzing textual-musical experience in this three-dimensional framework is an overlapping border between what are usually conceptualized separately as "text" and "sound."

### *Openings/Rhapsodies*

Musical resonance is a phenomenon as material as it is invisible. Sound or pressure waves at varying frequencies course through instrumental and human bodies, along the contours of the surrounding room or outdoor surfaces, and sometimes through amplifying technologies as well. Sung, spoken, or recorded text adds another resonant-material as well as semiotic element into the acoustic complex. What happens if text is *implicit* in a musical work that moves through a concert grand piano into a recital hall? American composer Curtis Curtis-Smith's 1973 work *Rhapsodies* asks the pianist to interact with the instrument's interior, in an extended-technique piece based on lines from the "Sirens" chapter in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The text is never sung or spoken aloud. The score includes elaborate instructions for threading, bowing, hammering, and picking a grand piano's strings (see Appendix, figure 1); the piano's body is literally mapped on the page and thus exposes its function as resonant space, or what Niklas Luhmann calls space-as-medium.<sup>17</sup> Each movement begins with an unheard text-fragment (limited to score and program notes) from the Joyce chapter. The first, "... a swift pure cry ..." refers directly to sound and plays out in conventional keyboard playing, with "swift" and "pure" qualities marked in "accelerando" tempo markings and notes to the pianist such as "clear sound (scarcely any Ped. created sonorities)."<sup>18</sup> The second movement begins to open the piano's body to bow and mallet, with the epigraph "*But Wait! Low in dark middle earth. Embedded ore*";<sup>19</sup> this text itself evokes a spatial location. In the third movement, the pianist responds to the text-fragment "*And a call, pure, long and throbbing. Longindying call*" with bowings meant to "begin imperceptibly if possible—they must always *emerge* from the previous sound."<sup>20</sup> How close this evocation of a "call" is to Joyce's imagined sound is of course contingent, not only dependent on the pianist's skill but also on the listeners' expectations and associations.

16 Lotman, "On the Semiosphere," 209.

17 See Niklas Luhmann, "Unsichtbarkeit des Raums als Medium," in *Texte zur Theorie des Raums*, ed. Stephan Günzel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013), 430–32.

18 Curtis Curtis-Smith, *Rhapsodies* (Paris: Éditions Salabert, 2006), 1.

19 Ibid., 5.

20 Ibid., 9 (italics in original).

In the *Rhapsodies'* fourth movement, with its title line "*Listen! The spiked and winding cold seahorn,*"<sup>21</sup> listeners would once again have to read these words in the program notes or in the score to know that they inspired the music. Perhaps this movement's complex play of overtones, with metallic sounds emerging from a brass mallet dragged across the piano's lowest strings, combined with the pianist's own whistling, can evoke associations with words such as "spiked," "winding," "cold," and "horn." The "Listen!" invocation may also become visually embodied, as the pianist leans into the instrument to test the partials the composer notes should "emerge" from bowing and picking the strings. But with so much performance contingency (does the pianist tilt her head to listen? does the audience member bother to read the program?), the sound-space becomes semiotically unstable, allowing for a variety of hearings and interpretations. At the border of this "semiosphere," various agents of translation appear: not only the program notes but also the composer's visually detailed maps and instructions in the score. These border guards are unpredictable, however, and allow individual readings of the music to enter its space. Whether or not a listener has read Joyce's "Sirens" chapter, or for that matter the *Odyssey* that inspired it, certainly influences his or her experience of the music but is not essential to "hearing" its implied text. The text becomes implicit in the pianist's sound material, becoming more embodied, just as the music enters specific literary spaces in the audience's field of response.

"Imagine a room in a museum," writes Lotman, "where exhibits from different eras are laid out in different windows, with texts in known and unknown languages, and instructions for deciphering them, together with explanatory texts for the exhibitions created by guides who map the necessary routes and rules of behaviour for visitors. If we place into that room still more visitors, with their own semiotic worlds, then we will begin to obtain something resembling a picture of the semiosphere."<sup>22</sup> Applying this museum-image to the literal concert hall, performer and listeners encounter Curtis-Smith's *Rhapsodies* as a layering of more-or-less familiar text and sound, mediated by the score (in the pianist's case) and program notes. The "semiosphere" exists in layers of shared and individual cognition, as well as in the literal spaces of piano, performing body, and larger acoustical environment. As Nicholas Cook has noted, the individual performer works as more than a mere conduit for pre-composed music<sup>23</sup> and brings his or her embodied sense of the unheard text to bear in its sonic interpretation as well. If this semantic layer is "dragged" into the material-acoustic sphere,<sup>24</sup> just as the pianist's mallet is dragged across the strings, that layer manifests differently with each performance. Curtis-Smith's score instructions for the pianist allow for contingency and change: in the fourth movement, unstable overtones require some flexibility on the performer's part: "Due to the highly variable nature of the overtones produced by the bowing of the low strings, one may not be able to produce an overtone within the

21 Ibid., 13.

22 Lotman, "On the Semiosphere," 213–14.

23 See Nicholas Cook, "Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 239–61.

24 LaBelle, *Background Noise*, 104.

whistling range—in that case the whistle is best omitted” (see Appendix, figure 2).<sup>25</sup> To evoke “[t]he spiked and winding cold seahorn,”<sup>26</sup> within the performance space requires translation, at the far border of language, on the part of the performer as well. For the audience, text and music are likely to blur through the “remanence” effect, or lingering of sound in the imaginative ear, an effect that results both from musical overtones and poetic echoes such as alliteration, “whether the reading is silent or not.”<sup>27</sup>

### *A twelve-tone walk*

To literalize Lotman’s museum metaphor, imagine an art gallery housed in a former train station, with twenty-four pillars and no seating except at each end of the main hall. The space is warm, clean, and filled with light, its usual sculptures removed. Visitors’ steps and voices echo between twenty-four loudspeakers, each one playing a tone recorded on an individual instrument, spatially displacing twelve-tone-inspired film music by Hanns Eisler, composed between 1926 and 1947. Twelve prints of Eisler’s scores overlapping with his FBI file, during his McCarthy-era surveillance and eventual hearing by the House Committee on Un-American Activities,<sup>28</sup> appear on the gallery walls. This sound-installation, *Part File Score* by Scottish artist and vocalist Susan Philipsz, works with Eisler’s own idea of aesthetic displacement to unsettle the traditional concert- or film-music experience.

Just as Eisler juxtaposed catchy tunes against troubling texts (often by Bertolt Brecht) and set Marxist workers’ choruses to formal parodies of Bach, opening a space for both performers’ and listeners’ critical engagement with text and music, Philipsz’ installation encourages questioning and participation. *Part File Score* requires visitors to keep moving rather than to receive the music, images, and text from a passive seated position. The lack of explicit connection between the FBI file images and the split twelve-tone rows creates a space for critical inquiry; the viewer/listener becomes a participant in the gallery experience, trying to piece together a connection between musical form and the subversion of political force, whether or not he or she is aware of Eisler’s efforts (through parody, interruption, and dissonance) to undermine the use of music for mass narcosis. It is impossible for visitors to hear Eisler’s three consecutively played pieces (*Prelude in the Form of a Passacaglia* [1926], composed for Walther Ruttmann’s *Lichtspiel: Opus III*; *Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain* [1941], for Joris Ivens’ film *Regen*; and *Septet No. 2* [1947] for Charlie Chaplin’s *The Circus*) as anything but fragments. The *Septet*’s literal, historical interruption by Eisler’s deportation from the USA does link the music more directly to the installation’s visual aspects—if visitors read that information. The FBI files’ blacked-out sections add another element of displacement to the semiotic space, which Philipsz conceived as a commentary on transit and surveillance.

25 Curtis-Smith, *Rhapsodies*, 13.

26 Ibid.

27 Augoyard and Torgue, *Sonic Experience*, 90.

28 Hanns Eisler’s career was marked by political disfavor, from his and Bertolt Brecht’s Nazi-era exile to Eisler’s 1948 deportation from the U.S. for suspected Communist sympathies, and later to his censure, for a carnivalesque Faust opera, by Party ideologues in 1953 East Germany.



On one level, *Part File Score* works as a vivid example of heteromediality, highlighting the visual aspects of music by displaying Eisler's scores. As Lawrence Kramer has noted, musical "text" works at a visual-semiotic border: "The score-hieroglyph is both code and image. It can be deciphered only by filling the pictographic gap, only by correcting the imperfect relation between the reduced symbol and its meaning."<sup>29</sup> This idea relates back to Lotman's image of the semiospheric border zone, where codes require translation. Kramer goes on to include an "embodied subject" in the deciphering process, as well as his own spatial image: "[m]usical experience arises from an act of restoration that turns the symbol, formerly a pyramid-like tomb of its meaning, into a house where the meaning dwells."<sup>30</sup> If we literalize this image to apply to sound-art spaces, the symbol—in Philipsz's case, a space evoking both transit and spectatorship—becomes an *open* room in which meaning not only dwells but changes depending on participants' engagement. The code may not be easily broken, as Lotman indicates in his own museum metaphor: "Texts appear to be immersed in languages which do not correspond to them, and codes for deciphering them may be completely absent."<sup>31</sup> That said, he also notes that such a hetero-semiotic space "creates reserves of dynamic processes" allowing for "the creation of new information inside the sphere."<sup>32</sup> Here text and music are mediated by visual aspects of bureaucratic text, as perceived by moving gallery visitors in three-dimensional acoustic space.

On another level, *Part File Score* works as a porous container for recorded sound, which changes depending on where the spectator/listener stands and how slowly or quickly she moves. Ongoing debates about live versus amplified or digital sound tend to exhibit what Bruhn has called "mediaphobia," or suspicion of sensory perception not traditionally recognized as immediate or unmediated.<sup>33</sup> In her otherwise compelling application of Merleau-Ponty's "being honeyed" to intersubjective sound-space, Salomé Voegelin discounts radio sound as a "dark serendipity" that "grants no room."<sup>34</sup> Jürgen Müller's classic text on intermediality offers a more generous perspective. Taking what sounds very much like a heteromedial approach even to the radio-play script, Müller notes that "[d]ie Schrift bleibt hinter den Tönen zurück" ["the written script remains in back of the sounds"] in the "Überlappen von gesprochenen Worten, Musik und *bruitage*" ["the overlapping of spoken words, music and noise"].<sup>35</sup> This explicitly spatial model of radio sound becomes even more em-

29 Lawrence Kramer, "Rosetta Tones: The Score as Hieroglyph," *Word and Music Studies* 14 (August 2012): 4.

30 Ibid.

31 Lotman, "On the Semiosphere," 213.

32 Ibid., 214.

33 See, for example, Clemens Risi, "The Diva's Fans: Opera and Bodily Participation," *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* 16, no. 3 (2011): 49–54. For a discussion of "mediaphobia," see Jørgen Bruhn, *The Intermediality of Narrative Literature: Medialities Matter* (New York: Palgrave, 2016).

34 Salomé Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 8.

35 Jürgen E. Müller, *Intermedialität: Formen moderner kultureller Kommunikation* (Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 1996), 252. Translations mine unless otherwise indicated.

bodied and intersubjective when Müller describes the voice's timbre, speech rhythm, and prosodic-paralinguistic features in terms of "Klang-Körper" ["sound bodies"] that begin to create a world of sound itself, destabilizing the storyteller's traditionally privileged role. Here, again, the difference between "word" and "music" blurs. This sound-world, or radio semiosphere, approaches the "Klang-Welt des Hörers" ["listener's sound-world"] until the borders between them loosen, performer/listener agency is blurred as well, and "[w]ir partizipieren ... in einer fiktiven Welt, die wir mit Hilfe der Stimmen und akustischen Zeichen des Hörspiels selbst konstituiert haben und fortwährend konstituieren" ["we participate ... in a fictive world that we ourselves have set up, and continually set up, with the help of the voices and acoustic signs of the radio play"].<sup>36</sup>

As Semenenko has noted, Lotman's semiosphere actually reverses the usual semiotic order of Language > Text > Dialogue to begin with the "dialogic situation" (in this case, the "Klang-Welt" or sound-world), which then leads to "real dialogue," then "text," and then "language."<sup>37</sup> Without taking the time here to parse these categories, it is important to note that even recorded sound-spaces—often carefully engineered—can be thought of as preceding, by housing, the words and music that occur there, just as a singer's body creates and shapes resonant text. As Eisler's twelve-tone music loops through separate speakers, instrument by instrument, in the gallery space, that space provides gaps between the physical speakers and the tissue of sound they release. Additional spaces between the instruments' voices and the texts (with their own blacked-out gaps) on the walls allow for further spectator/listener entry points, into which one brings knowledge of Nazi-era history, curiosity about dissonance as a political stance, or mental images of the films for which some of this music was scored. Written information provided in the gallery meets the spectator/listener partway, as a Lotmanian "border guard" or translator, but each participant's experience is slightly different. The material-semiotic gaps in this installation function similarly to Eisler's own musical endings, in which the "halb-Schluss" or "half-cadence" leaves room for the listener to engage critically with music, text, and the unresolved tensions between them.<sup>38</sup> This spatial-semiotic gapping recalls the "ubiquity effect" in theatre, in which actors speak in different locations, and/or audience members move from place to place, de-hierarchizing the stage.<sup>39</sup> In the unstable sonic-textual environment of *Part File Score*, "authority"—that of governmental power and of the composer himself—comes into question. Each instrumental voice in its separate speaker seems to do just that, to speak with slippery autonomy amid efforts to silence it, as if in code, once again blurring the line between music and word.

36 Ibid., 253.

37 Semenenko, *Texture of Culture*, 113.

38 See Fritz Hennenberg, "Zur Dialektik des Schließens in Liedern von Hanns Eisler," in *Sammelbände zur Musikgeschichte der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, vol. 2, ed. Heinz Alfred Brockhaus and Konrad Niemann (Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1971).

39 Augoyard and Torgue, *Sonic Experience*, 141–42.



*In the virtual museum*

Before Berlin's famous Pergamon Altar was closed in 2014 for a five-year restoration, visitors could approach it not only as a towering visual experience, with its writhing marble body-fragments and unexpectedly steep stairs, but also as a sound-environment, with voices in many languages echoing through the far-larger-than-human space. A similar overlapping of voices and languages occurs in Finnish Kalevi Aho's musical work *Pergamon*, scored for four orchestral groups, four reciters, and organ. Notes for a 1994 recording of the work describe it as follows:

*Pergamon* is spatial music which takes as its point of departure the architectural form and acoustic of the Helsinki University Hall. The orchestral groups and narrators are placed in different parts of the hall. Sometimes the sounds they produce are allowed to circulate around the hall, whilst on occasion musical signals may be thrown straight from one side of the hall to the other.

The text is a dramatic depiction of the Pergamon Altar ... by Peter Weiss (1916–1982), a German author who emigrated to Sweden during the Nazi regime. The image comes from the beginning of Weiss' masterpiece, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* (*The Aesthetics of Resistance*). Each of the narrators recites the same excerpts simultaneously in four different languages: German, Finnish, Swedish and ancient Greek.<sup>40</sup>

The spatial scattering of sound in *Pergamon* embodies the polyphonic, centrifugal movement Mikhail Bakhtin maps at the textual level in Dostoevsky—movement that resists one-voiced ideology<sup>41</sup> and echoes the de-hierarchizing “ubiquity effect” of Susan Philipz' *Part File Score*. Peter Weiss' three-volume novel is itself richly polyphonic, with an unnamed narrator engaging in conversations with other young Germans about forms of resistance to fascism. That these conversations take place largely in art galleries gives them a spatial dimension within the text. The novel's first volume opens with this complex description of the Pergamon Altar, here in the translation included with Aho's musical work:

Around us the bodies arose from the stone, squashed together into groups, intertwined or scattered in fragments, with a torso, a supported arm, a broken hip, an encrusted lump indicating its shape, always in the posture of war, getting out of the way, springing back, attacking, defending, stretched up high or bent over, here and there snuffed out, though still with an independent, forward-pressed foot, with a turned-around back, with the shape of a calf constrained in a single, common motion.<sup>42</sup>

40 Kalevi Aho, *Symphony No. 8. Pergamon*, with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Osmo Vänskä, recorded August 4, 1994, Grammofon AB BIS, BIS-CD-646, 1994, compact disc. Notes by Anne Weller, 5.

41 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 270–73.

42 Aho, *Symphony No. 8*, 26, Grammofon AB BIS translation of Peter Weiss' *Aesthetics of Resistance*, opening paragraph, by Andrew Barnett.

In his introduction to the 2005 English translation of Weiss' novel, Fredric Jameson claims that the work is not itself a "monument" but rather "a machine for reliving ... sheerly corporeal agony" and describes this machine in spatial terms: "a peculiarly juxtaposed set of materials: sparsely selected yet vivid landscapes along with interiors and rooms which have a different function; the visual lessons of many paintings; and finally the sheer suffering of bodies whose primary sexuality ... is replaced by pain."<sup>43</sup> In Kalevi Aho's musical adaptation of the Weiss text, this spatiality is given multiple voices whose movement and linguistic audibility reacts to their performance space. The machine for re-traversing historical pain begins to breathe. This sensory geography becomes even more complex if listeners take in its double locality: the concert hall and the echoing museum space it evokes, with the steep steps of the partially reconstructed altar looming over entering visitors, who must walk and climb and crane their necks to see the agonistic body fragments in the marble surrounding them on three sides.

Visitors to the literal Pergamon Altar may or may not know Weiss' novel and, even if so, may or may not recall his intensely layered phrases as they view the ancient struggle between gods and giants, in the context of German appropriation of Greek art and Weiss' attempt to reclaim these images in his words of protest. The overlapping voices in several languages in Aho's musical work evoke this variable subjectivity: Even if the spoken texts are not understood, their voicing in echoing space gives listeners the experience of heteroglossia, in which they can imagine the words forming in their own minds taking shape as well. What museum-goers and concert listeners bring to their experience of the altar and its musical evocation occurs in the semiospheric border zone. As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it, "To be listening is always to be on the edge of meaning" occurring in space, as this "resonant meaning" or "the shared space of meaning and sound" not only vibrates and spreads but can also work as "an intersection, mixture, covering up."<sup>44</sup> At the semiotic level, previous readings may cross over with and even obscure what viewers/listeners experience in approaching the Pergamon Altar and/or its musical enactment. In a spatial sense, the difficulty listeners may have in understanding Weiss' text in its variously translated, overlapping, echoing recitations recalls the experience of overhearing conversations in many languages in a large museum space. Though architectural reverberation is "easily associated with various functions of power (religion, justice)," speech in large spaces "paradoxically ... reduces the intelligibility of the message."<sup>45</sup> Bringing both together, in Lotman's "vision" of the semiosphere, the Pergamon-Weiss-Aho constellation offers an unpredictable, participatory experience in which spoken text can blur into pitched tones more akin to music.

Hearing Aho's *Pergamon* via a sound recording that can only approximate the experience of a concert hall or museum space, the work's spatial element may seem materially absent. Returning to Jürgen Müller's treatment of the radio play, however, we can begin to hear words and music in terms of "sound-worlds" and "sound-bodies" that

43 Fredric Jameson, introduction to *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, vol. 1, by Peter Weiss, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), ix.

44 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 7–8.

45 Augoyard and Torgue, *Sonic Experience*, 116.

move beyond their explicit textual roles (for example Weiss' narrator or Aho's four reciters) to interact with the imagined sound-spaces listeners create. These listeners may catch a word in German or Swedish as the voices they hear overlap and blur the line between text and material sound. They may recall a visit to the Pergamon Museum or an image they have seen of fractured marble bodies; they may associate percussive sounds with violence or minor-second dissonance with film-music suspense; they may hear in the solo bassoon an almost-human voicing of lament. These musical-semantic associations, combined with fragments of reverberating, overlapping text, create yet another gray zone between "word" and "music." Applying spatial semiotics to word-and-music studies can include not only physical spaces (or those spaces re-enacted elsewhere) but also virtual sound-spaces into which listeners can re-create three-dimensionality through imaginative response.

### Conclusion

If word and music studies easily remain limited to object analysis in horizontal, linear space, a three-dimensional, spatial-semiotic approach can help to open musical-textual works, particularly those in performance or installation spaces, to more participatory readings that blur the line between "word" and "music." Combined with recent sound-art theory, Yuri Lotman's "On the Semiosphere" provides useful spatial metaphors for approaching musical-textual meaning and translation, much of which occurs in literally resonant spaces. The three works considered here provide examples of text and music operating in overlapping semiotic and material space. In Curtis Curtis-Smith's *Rhapsodies*, the piano's body works as a resonating chamber evoking text-fragments by Joyce, which performer and listeners "translate" from score and program notes into the non-verbal sound experience in the recital hall's larger space. Prepared-piano overtones and implicit alliterative and rhyming textual passages (explicit if read in the program notes) yield similar remanence effects, lingering in the ear and raising the question of how much of this work is text and how much is tone. In Susan Philipsz's installation *Part File Score*, twelve-tone music by Hanns Eisler plays in a museum space, the sound broken down instrument by instrument in a series of speakers as visitors pass Eisler's FBI file texts, also broken by blacked-out sections of each page. Here musical code seems to speak from each amplifying body as if protesting acts of surveillance and silencing, which spectator-listeners reconstruct from physical evidence in an act of intermedial translation. In Kalevi Aho's symphonic-vocal work *Pergamon*, a museum space is re-imagined in a concert hall, with overlapping voices and languages evoking the tortuous physical bodies in sculpted in marble and textually re-mediated in Peter Weiss' *Aesthetics of Resistance*. Semantically blurred spoken text begins to sound more like music than word. Even in an ostensibly non-spatial, recorded version of this musical work, sound-materiality in tone, word, instrumentation, and echo plays out in re-imagined space that the listener can only provisionally "translate" from textual notes or through snatches of one or more of the spoken languages he or she understands. Overall, a methodology of words and music that includes spatial dimensions de-hierarchi-

zes the “expert” or “ideal” listener and opens analytical space for varied, participatory readings. This approach also foregrounds the materiality of text and the textual resonance of sound. Though the examples given here are not participatory art in the truly “hands-on” sense, they do reveal their contingent, translatable borders when viewed in spatial terms, also de-hierarchizing the work of art itself as an easily objectified entity.

### Appendix: Curtis Curtis-Smith’s *Rhapsodies*

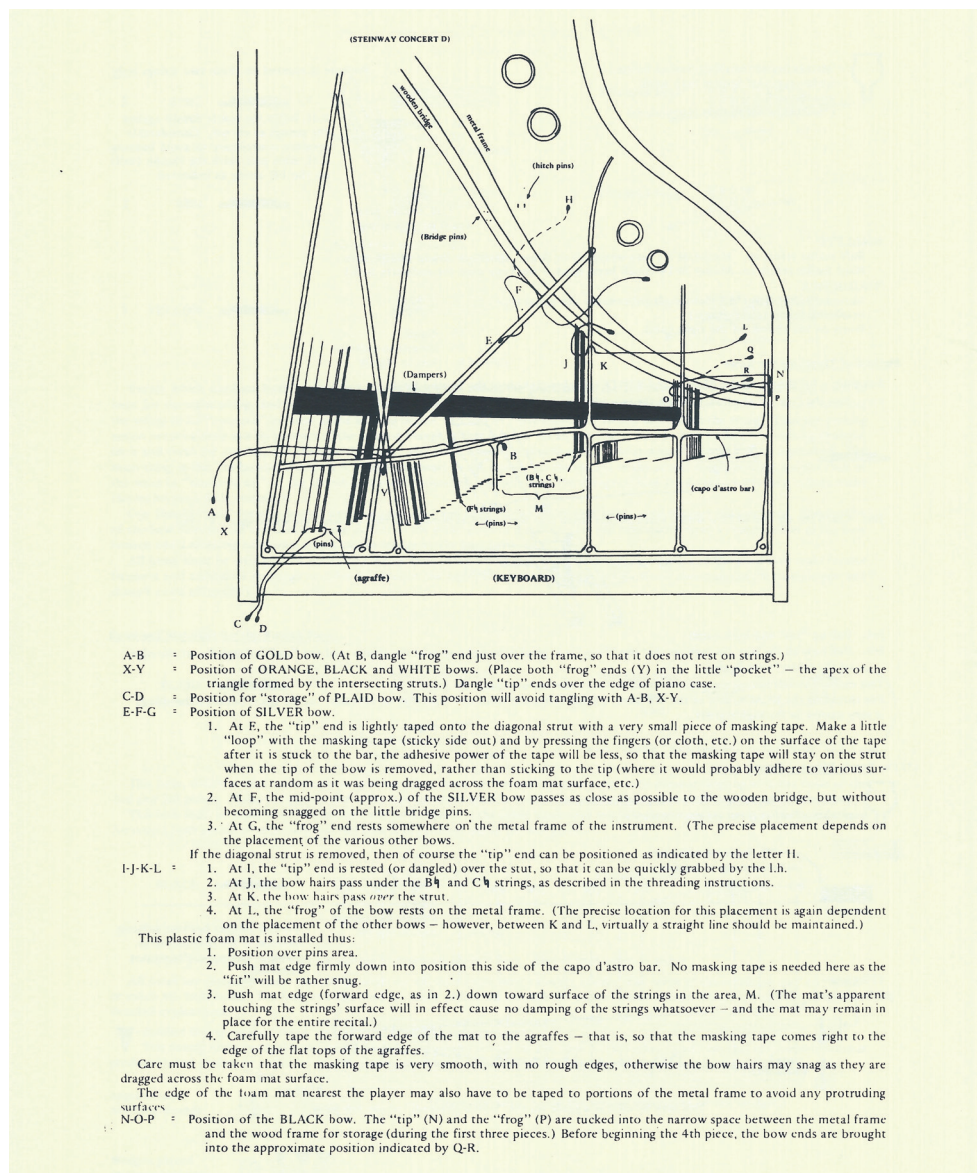


Figure 1.



**IV**

*"Listen! The spiked and winding cold seahorn."*

Zone 0: right at the very end of the string – right up against the agraffe.  
 Zone 1: the last 1/4" of bare wire before the copper winding begins.  
 Zone 2: the first 1/2" of the wrapping.  
 Zone 3: 1/2" - 2" into the wrapped string.  
 Zone 4: Approx. the last inch before the first metal frame, and including right up against the metal frame. This latter position will produce the fundamental (A $\flat$  or A $\natural$  or both) if bow speed is *slow*.

**Performance Instructions:**

- Between dampers and first metal frame:**
  - soft mallet (Golf ball)
  - hard mallet (2" from agraffe)
  - accel during gliss.
  - Zone 1
  - Zone 2
  - Zone 3
  - Zone 4
- Other instructions:**
  - "This phrase must 'float' on the previous sound mass."
  - "This bowing sound must emerge imperceptibly from the previous sound mass."
  - "The bowing sound must emerge from the golf ball sound."
  - "(Use full, quasi flautando bow here in this 3/16 measure)"
  - "Alternate Whistle: (PLAID)"
  - "(dynamies as above)"
  - "no break! (let sound)"

**\* Due to the highly variable nature of the overtones produced by the bowing of the low strings, one may not be able to produce an overtone within the whistling range – in that case the whistle is best omitted. The pitch of the whistle should exactly match one of the existing overtones (a strong overtone), and then gradually slide (glissando) very slowly down (or up) less than a 1/2 step (a 1/4 tone might work well) to produce difference tones. The choice of which of the two versions to use depends mainly on the strength of the overtones produced by the bowing at that point in time. If the overtones are very strong, the first version may function well. In either case, the whistling must *not* be heard as an entrance as such – it must sound as part of the overtone texture and enrich it (through difference tones, etc.). If this cannot be achieved, the whistling is best omitted entirely. Thus:**

Approx. whistling range:

Version without whistling:

Figure 2.