

Music Between Sounds: Relational Aesthetics &
The Poetics Of Wandelweiser

by

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Introduction, Background, or, How We Arrived Here

To work with an ontology of music is to be engaged in a perpetually renewing object and perspectives. Traditionally, music has been regarded as the organization of sound, and implied in this is an organizing subject. We might identify this subject as a performer or composer or producer or any number of cultural roles, but what remains across all of these distinctions is the act of fixing relations between objects so as to create a specific experiential circumstance. Its objects can consist of pitches, melodies, rhythms, and harmonies, but more broadly any events, processes, and concepts recognized ontologically as a single entity. Fixing relations also includes setting them in a state of possibility as opposed to actuality: rather than a musical event happening or not happening, it may happen depending on the immediate circumstances of performance. Referred to as indeterminate, chance, or aleatoric music, this practice opened up inscription and performance into a continuum¹ of potential music, one of the many paradigm shifts that altered art and aesthetics in the twentieth century.

Composer Michael Pisaro describes these shifts as “truth procedures,” in which a founding event makes recognizable a site of conceptual rupture from which subjects pursue the rupture’s widest consequences and implications.² Among the truth procedures he recognizes is one he calls the “experimental” in which the musical is no longer necessarily contingent upon a knowable outcome. If any singular piece of music did the most to break down music into this

¹ With reference to Adam Harper’s conception of musical variables. This idea will return as a system of mapping qualitative points of musical practice.

² Michael Pisaro, “Eleven Theses On The State Of New Music” (Brooklyn College/California Institute Of The Arts, rev. 2006 2004), 7.

possibility, to embody the founding event of the experimental truth procedure, it is John Cage's *4'33"*, the infamous "silent piece." Not really silent, of course, the composition's open-endedness was the point of origin for a multitude of explorations of the nature of sound, silence, musical notation, and meaning.³

Innumerable pieces of music, art, writing, and philosophy have emerged to surround and branch off of *4'33"*. The most obvious example is the Fluxus movement and participating artists, a significant number of whom attended Cage's classes in experimental composition at Black Mountain College and the New School For Social Research. There, Cage was already interested in breaking down the components of music into instrumental parameters, following European work in information theory and serial composition published in the music journal *Die Reihe*.⁴ From his teaching, the "Happenings" and performance pieces and objects produced by figures such as George Brecht, Allen Kaprow, and La Monte Young, among others, set the stage for conceptual art and performance in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. Through its influence on minimalism (via La Monte Young) and new media art (via Nam June Paik), the experimental music of these decades charted a set of coordinates to explore the infinite path of the experimental truth-procedure.

In the 90s, a new set of investigations emerged. In 1992, composers Burkhard Schlothauer and Antoine Beuger founded a publishing company and record label, Edition Wandelweiser (from which the collective takes its name,

³ G. Douglas Barrett, "The Silent Network—The Music of Wandelweiser," *Contemporary Music Review* 30, no. 6 (December 2011): 456.

⁴ Liz Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the 'Event' Score," *October* 95 (January 1, 2001): 65.

and has become a certain aesthetic descriptor). Cage died the same year, and perhaps because of the ripples surrounding the event of his death, interest in the quiet music of Cage, the late Morton Feldman, and the New York school emerged from the fringes of the new music community. Jürg Frey, Manfred Werder, and Beuger attended the 1991 Boswil Composition Seminar, that year devoted to “*Stille Musik/Quiet Music*,” and the former two joined Wandelweiser in years to come. At the same time, other composers including Michael Pisaro, Kunsu Shim, and Radu Malfatti (again and always, amongst many others) had been incorporating silence as a significant component of their work, and soon found their way to membership and association with the collective. Amongst these musicians was the shared belief that for a long time (and especially where his posthumous legacy was concerned), Cage’s ideas were taken more seriously than his music, and that in *4’33”* and other works, silence was an exciting new material that was overlooked in musical practice, both for its own capacity for an alternative sounding and its disturbance of other sounds when inserted.⁵

Wandelweiser gained momentum with albums and concerts of their increasingly minimal music in Dusseldorf, Aarau, Zurich, Munich, and Chicago, all the while increasing its network with more fellow travelers along the path of experimentalism. More than just a group of silent musicians, the work of the collective addresses not only the American experimental tradition, but the European avant-garde, improvisation, noise music, poetry, and continental philosophy. In a presentation on the collective given by the

⁵ Michael Pisaro, “Erstwords: Wandelweiser,” accessed November 30, 2014, <http://erstwords.blogspot.com/2009/09/wandelweiser.html>.

trombonist/composer/traveler⁶ Craig Shepard, he emphasized the importance of avoiding an analytical trap regarding a generalizing aesthetic of Wandelweiser. He remarked that the nature of the collective is principally formed on the individuals who it consists of; there is no qualification for being part of the collective other than simple association, acceptance, and self-regard.⁷

This thesis explores the Wandelweiser collective's radical challenge to old and new music, and uses the music of some of its composers as a foil for recent work in contemporary art and aesthetics. Studying these compositions in detail affords a new understanding of aesthetic conditions and categories such as "beautiful" or "interesting" by establishing a new relationality between the constituent parts of musical practice. Consider Manfred Werder's *2005¹*, a work of profound simplicity that signals an extreme departure from the typical function of a score. Consisting solely of the words *ort*, *zeit*, (*klänge*), and place, time, (sounds), *2005¹* offers little in the way of prescriptive musical information, instead rather resembling the text scores of George Brecht and other Fluxus composers who provide a conceptual precedent for the form. But as a Wandelweiser work it remains situated in the realm of music, affirmed by the parameters under which it has been realized (documented by Werder on his

⁶ Shepard is perhaps best known for his *On Foot* series, in which he has walked across Switzerland and Brooklyn and written compositions for periodic site-specific performance, invoking a pseudo-monastic practice and its situational effects on compositional outcome.

⁷ Several composers, such as Kunsu Shim, have removed themselves from the work of the collective; others, such as Ulrich Kreiger, retain professional association but are not considered a part of Wandelweiser per se.

website and the label Another Timbre).⁸ Subsequent compositions by Werder continue this trend, invoking a similar pattern of words with minute differences in language and, eventually, in fragments of “found text,” where quotations—often from midcentury literature and philosophy—constitute the score. Text scores by Mark So and Jason Brogan also utilize found text, but differ in methods and intention of realization.⁹ These works resist traditional musical analysis, as they does not adhere to the function of a score as providing a notation that can identify and recall a work’s constitutive identity.¹⁰

Instead, these works are best analyzed through their practice, by recasting their material components as inclusive of the discourse invoked and performed in order to realize the scores as music. Under this framework, the scope of the works is dramatically altered. Beyond the sounds themselves, the human interactions and events that create the music may be considered musical in and of themselves. This is an attitude with historical roots in the thinking of George Brecht, who remarked in an interview, “music isn't just what you hear or what you listen to, but everything that happens...events are an extension of music.”¹¹ Today, however, it carries particular resonance and analogy to contemporary installation art via the concept of relational aesthetics.

For its progenitor, Nicolas Bourriaud, relational aesthetics is a mode of criticism appropriate for understanding contemporary practices in art and

⁸ Available from [http://www.anothertimbre.com/werder2005\(1\).html](http://www.anothertimbre.com/werder2005(1).html)

⁹ Jason Brogan, email correspondence, December 30, 2014.

¹⁰ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Rev. ed (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23.

¹¹ Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics”, 72.

consumerism.¹² The theory arose from his work as a curator in the 1990s, when he observed artworks that were interactive and open-ended in both form and conception. According to Bourriaud, art that is relational takes “as...its point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.”¹³ Thus, as a form of aesthetics the artwork is qualified based on the human relations that are represented, produced, or prompted. Bourriaud does not offer any particular quality of appraisal, but implied in his writings is a utopian stance in which the more connections are made between people, the more that the public can resist being reduced to the passive consumption of signs.

Though the theory’s origins are in the fine arts, the music of Wandelweiser offers a distinctive opportunity to further refine an understanding of relationality in art. One might say that music was already relational at its origin as a function of social ritual, but there is a private and symbolic order very evident in many musical practices. Far from interactivity, there is typically a defined agency and subjectivity in the roles of composers, performers, and audiences. This parceling of the creative experience shapes a permitted reality, a process that Jacques Ranciere calls the “distribution of the sensible”.¹⁴ Ideally, relational works redistribute subjectivity to all who come into contact with them, thus enabling personal and collective fulfillment through a democratic experience of the artwork. Through their attention to listening

¹² Nicolas. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* ([Dijon]: Les Presses du réel, 2002), 7.

¹³ Ibid. 113.

¹⁴ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, Pbk. ed (London; New York: Continuum, 2006), 12.

practices and foregrounding of the interpretative process, I believe that the music of Wandelweiser, particularly its text scores, qualify as relational works, offering a salient example beyond the narrow range of artists Bourriaud draws upon in his writings.

Analyzing the music of Wandelweiser composers as relational instead of as self-contained musical objects not only offers an alternative insight into the music, but also may pose a challenge to the concept of musical works on a larger scale. Lydia Goehr offers a concise summary of how “works” of music are perceived:

Thus most of us tend, like [E.T.A.] Hoffmann, to see works as objectified expressions of composers that prior to compositional activity did not exist. We do not treat works as objects just made or put together, like tables and chairs, but as original, unique products of a special, creative activity. We assume, further, that the tonal, rhythmic, and instrumental properties of works are constitutive of structurally integrated wholes that are symbolically represented by composers in scores. Once created, we treat works as existing after their creators have died, and whether or not they are performed or listened to at any given time. We treat them as artefacts in the public realm, accessible in principle to anyone who cares to listen to them.¹⁵

For Goehr, the “work” of music exists as its own object, a definite set of symbols conditions for realization, rather than the realization itself. She goes on to explain that this conception has become a regulative practice that has set our aesthetic standards for all music, even those constructed outside of the lineage of Western art music from which this “work-concept” arises. And for all its groundbreaking potential, Goehr later makes the argument in *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works* that not even 4’33” escapes fully from the work-

¹⁵ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 2.

concept because of its reliance on a performative setting under the compositional authority of John Cage. Thus, although not all music falls under the regulative practice of the work-concept¹⁶, it is not so easy to extract Wandelweiser from it. If the collective sees itself as an ideological descendent from Cage and other traditions of experimental art music, and Cage and related composers are regarded as conceptually and historically descended from the European new music composers such as Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern (who themselves were descendents of the German art music tradition of Beethoven, Schubert, et al.) then there are grounds for placing Wandelweiser in ambiguous relation with the work-concept. Thus, their music provides us with an ideal subject for a comparative analysis of the work-concept and relational aesthetics: their differences, similarities, and contradictions regarding the nature of music and art. Composer Lauren Redhead makes the assertion that all of aesthetics has to do with relations, and that “an experiential rather than creator-led approach to the art work is most appropriate when assessing works of music, and indeed all works of art.”¹⁷ However, to make this claim is to oversimplify the alleged autonomy of the work of art, its creator, and its materials, simply overwriting the work-concept with a loud statement of the “death of the author” (to use Barthes’ phrase). Bourriaud recognizes human interaction as aesthetic, but he nonetheless privileges the authority of a single creator. Likewise, the composers of Wandelweiser do not create works that are

¹⁶ Ibid. 13

¹⁷ Lauren Redhead, “Relational Aesthetics: A Practice-Lead Investigation Into Their Ontological Basis” (University Of Leeds, School Of Music, 2011), 4.

monolithically relational, or concerned solely with listening. Instead of considering relational aesthetics, the work-concept, and their related theories as absolutes, this investigation is meant to demonstrate their potential to exist as qualities with variable utilization in the creation of new music.

Having provided some background on the areas to be explored, the first chapter introduces the specific scores that will serve as objects of analysis. These include Manfred Werder's *2005*¹, its related scores such as *2006*¹-*2008*², including the "found sentence" scores that followed in the series from 2008 onwards, with reference to "found text" pieces by other Wandelweiser composers. What distinguishes these works is the use of language as enabling indeterminacy or openness. Reading the texts semiotically is important to determine whether or not human relations are regarded as material for these compositions based on how they are utilized to "complete" these open works. Experimental music activates an interaction with not only the objects of the music, but its processes and forms, and the text scores work with a particular set of referential signs to implicate the interpretive gesture as musical material. The music of Wandelweiser, rather than consisting of works of sound affixed by symbols, generates openness and creates procedures and circumstances for possibility. For Bourriaud, a central conceit of relational works is the creation of micro-utopian spaces out of this possibility, thus we must consider how the audience functions within these works politically.

The second chapter brings Goehr's work-concept into play. The compositions analyzed in the first chapter will be shown to trouble the

principles upheld by the work-concept, generating a new politics of spectatorship through realization. These politics also address and expand on critiques of Bourriaud's theories, revealing problematic tendencies in relational art's conception of audiences and materials. Both the work-concept and relational aesthetics continue to rely on a notion of bounded spectatorship, reinforced by the imposed authority of a singular author. But by interrogating the space between sound and silence through experiencing these compositions, the listening audience breaks down its own divide between action and passivity, creating a new set of relations between work, world, and creative subjectivity.

In the third chapter, this collapse of traditional artistic boundaries extends to include basic definitions of musical qualities. The work-concept, having emerged concurrently with Romantic conceptions of the aesthetic, is allied conceptually with certain ideas of beauty. Meanwhile, modern-day relational art requires contemporary aesthetic categories; very often it is interesting but not necessarily beautiful. The aesthetic categories of the interesting and the beautiful, when unpacked using the ruptures provided by Wandelweiser, reveal further friction in the fundamental question of what we seek to accomplish, politically and philosophically, in art and music. These compositions offer a chance, through active listening and interpretation, to radically remake all of our notions and categories of how we understand the world in ways that the present scope of relational aesthetics has failed to consider in its limitations.

No account of any one Wandelweiser work or composer can stand in as a substitute for the whole. Their aesthetic is emergent, rather than intentional. The music presented here is the result of particular research, and is especially informed by reliance on English-language sources and correspondence. Wandelweiser is an international collective, and Craig Shepard noted in his presentation that those composers who are able to work professionally solely on their own music tend to dominate the discourse. Thus, the composers discussed here tend towards those who have already been written about to some degree (to the extent that any scholarly work on Wandelweiser has been written at all that is not self-documentation). Nonetheless, the music examined in this thesis presents a portion of the collective's work that speaks to a strong unified aesthetic among indeterminate and text works, and one ripe with possibility for theoretical exploration.

Manfred Werder's Text Works As Relational Aesthetics

Central to Manfred Werder's work in the past decade is his concept of "non-differential thinking". Differential thinking here includes any number of essential divisions: the subjectivities of composer, performer, and listener, the parameterization of music into harmony, melody, rhythm, timbre, etc., and perhaps most broadly, constructing a separation between music and noise, or the directing of attention to a work of music, simultaneously establishing that which is outside the work. These are concerns that Werder had addressed before in works including his *performers* series, and resulted in the composition of *2005*¹ being a two-year process in order to carefully sort them out and create a wholly inclusive, non-differential music.¹⁸ As opposed to the thousands of pages of Werder's *stuck* (1998), here the care manifests in the most extreme precision of language:

¹⁸ Simon Reynell and Manfred Werder, "Interview 2013," *Manfred Werder Writings*, accessed December 16, 2014, <http://manfred-werder-archives.blogspot.com/2013/10/interview-2013.html>.

ort
zeit

(klänge)

place
time

(sounds)

2005¹
manfred werder

Michael Pisaro notes that much experimental music is concerned with what can be left out of the score, with the implication that so much more can be creatively accessed as a result.¹⁹ Key to the piece's expanded creative access is a poetic license concerning grammar: for example, through the lack of indicative mood, thus not implying any particular agency, the score enables a strategic indeterminacy.²⁰ The text lacks an imperative grammar instructing that the objects of the words be created, and lacks capitalization of the German words which would confirm them as nouns. Immediately in its austerity the language shifts from descriptive to prescriptive, which reorients the whole process of

¹⁹ Michael Pisaro, "Writing, Music," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*, ed. James Saunders (Farnham, England ; Burlington, VT, 2009), 70.

²⁰ John Lely and James Saunders, *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation* (London; New York: Continuum, 2012), 19.

realization from the arrival at a musical object that already existed (i.e. the score as the final resting place for the work's properties), into the score as a point of departure into properties unknown. This austerity extends into the entire score as an object, through even the lack of words itself: Werder states in a declaration, "the lighter the sheet of paper has been inflected by our wish, the more lucidly the reflection of the world on this sheet of paper is manifested."²¹ This concern for spatial grammar is part of a longstanding tradition in unhinging linguistic meaning. Umberto Eco, describing the works of Mallarmé, notes, "blank space surrounding a word, typographical adjustments, and spatial composition in the page setting of the poetic text—all contribute to create a halo of indefiniteness and to make the text pregnant with infinite suggestive possibilities."²² This implied openness is complemented with the absolute lack of imperative grammar in the score: nowhere is there language that commands a performer, or indeed indicates a performer at all. The interplay between absence and presence had the possibility of occurring in Werder's *performers* series due to the instructions in the score ("a lot of time/a few sounds/for itself/simple"), and he gives an account of realizations of *for one or a few performers (2001-)* where the performers' absence or presence was understood as a matter of interpretation as opposed to structure.²³ The shift from this series to *2005*¹ lies in Werder's recognition (or designation) of musical material as the

²¹ Manfred Werder, "Text Scores – Statement (1)", *Manfred Werder Writings*. Accessed December 16, 2014. <http://manfred-werder-archives.blogspot.com/2013/06/text-scores-statement-1.html>.

²² Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 9.

²³ Reynell, "Interview 2013".

general conditions of a situation, regardless of presence.²⁴ Instead, individual agency becomes the framing device of interpretation. According to Werder, to understand it as performance implicates problematic differential thinking:

Already before, I had replaced a term like 'performance' by 'realization' or 'actualization'. I thought that a word like 'performance' would restrict our ideas of a practice of working on sound, by still referring to an object to produce which however had meanwhile become such a thing like the alteration of a given atmosphere. A word like 'actualization' would allude more to a practice of working on situations that are occurring to some extent by themselves, and where the 'performer' finds herself intrinsically as part of a situation (and not as its creator).²⁵

Rather than restricting the range of possibility by indicating action, what is present in the score of *2005*¹ is the signification of a situation; specifically, the situation is rendered as an object of contemplation.²⁶ What makes this situation-object musical for Werder is its engagement with what he calls the “sounding world,” the totality of all sound, audible and inaudible (and maybe even possible). In his essay *The Sounding Of The World*, Werder goes on to describe how out of this totality sound is “articulated”; articulation here referring not to sounds' creation but to the encounter of human senses (particularly listening) with certain sounds, which then results in the actualization of a connection

²⁴ Lely, *Word Events*, 382.

²⁵ Reynell 2013

²⁶ The object state of the situation is affirmed through the repetition of its presentation via nouns. Though the score was written for the appearance of the words as opposed to any translative significance, the repetition and bilingual description is meant to confirm this aspect of their identity (Via Lely 382).

between the listener and sound and place. Notably, he states, “There is nothing that does not interact and therefore all exists in relation.”²⁷

Werder’s words are similar to the vocabulary Bourriaud employs in laying out the fundamentals of relational work, and prove illuminating in understanding how the quality of an actualization might be arrived at. Central to both of their writings is the encounter as a fundamental concept from which contexts of greater signification can be built upon. The encounter, for Bourriaud, is central to the entire notion of form: he describes it as a “lasting encounter” between previously random or parallel elements, brought into interdependency.²⁸ If *2005¹* can be thought of as a series of encounters with articulated sounds, the form would be a sort of meta-encounter in which this state of encounter is encountered, thus bringing into alignment a series of intensive listenings. That is, the form is the duration, the “time” of the score.

Alternatively or even conjunctively, the lasting encounter of *2005¹* might be seen as between the score’s place/ort and time/zeit: this form provokes encounters with sound/klänge in a defined topography, activated by a single gesture of change in the listening patterns of all involved through the composition’s invocation. Thus, performers do not “do” the composition, it happens to them, in a manner of speaking. This is the actualization that Werder speaks of as opposed to performance, where the indeterminacy is effectively closed because the situation is happening and the situation constitutes the

²⁷ Werder, “The Sounding of the World,” *Manfred Werder Writings*, accessed December 16, 2014. <http://manfred-werder-archives.blogspot.com/2012/03/sounding-of-world.html>.

²⁸ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 19.

composition. And within it, traditional relations of audience and performer fall away as our attention is called to the situation itself.

While analyzing the work of Felix Gonzales-Torres as relational art, Bourriaud observes, “the idea of including the other is not just a theme. It turns out to be essential to the formal understanding of the work.”²⁹ An actualization of *2005¹* is an entirely inclusionary environment in which this idea is readily demonstrable. People not only experience the composition, but are effectively elements constituting the place of the piece (and thus the sounds). In this sense, peoples' relations change not only with regards to the sounds, but also to each other as people assume an additional role as sources of sounding. Even when a performer does not sound (which occurs frequently in realizations), their presence alters the space of the world of the composition. A description of Werder performing the piece noted that he appeared to be “someone more still, more attentive than the average person relaxing or waiting somewhere,” suggesting that a participant in *2005¹* can nonetheless differentiate themselves and affect the situation without performing in the traditional sense. Their presence suggests Bourriaud's notion of a social interstice: it implicates the existence of a set of practices (here, of articulated sounding and listening) that exists outside of the interhuman relations that are regulated by everyday life.

Subsequent compositions by Werder exist as new iterations on this interstice. *2006¹* is almost exactly identical to *2005¹*, except for the extension of place/ort into “a place, natural light, where the performer, the performers like to

²⁹ Ibid. 52

be". *2006*² turns place/ort into "places/orte" and time/zeit into "a time/eine zeit", which seems like only a minor adjustment. But the changes are not insignificant at all, as Michael Pisaro notes:

Werder demonstrates that this infinitely rich set of circumstances—which is something like the infinite richness of reality, subtracted by the action of the music—can be approached again and again, each time from a slightly different angle, giving a slightly different colouring to an already present atmosphere.³⁰

*2006*¹ narrows (or perhaps simply readjusts) the range of situations by placing descriptive conditions onto the designation of place, i.e. implying the presence of natural light, and specifying that the performers like the place, which reveals new dimensions of performative affect (and inherently suggesting a range of affective possibility in its opposite: performing in a place one doesn't like). An actualization of *2006*² implicates sounds that are unheard by a single listener through necessitating simultaneous locations, though they may be made audible through recording. The relations rearticulated here do not refer to the immediately social (those perceived by the participants), but begin to incorporate the more broadly social practices of listening into what is negotiated.

What is occurring here is artistic *detournement*, the reuse of practice itself as a material, a concept originating in the writings of Guy Debord and the Situationists in order to construct lived experience rather than alienating

³⁰ Pisaro, "Writing, Music," 63.

spectatorship.³¹ When the concept is utilized, actualization takes on a creative capacity of its own:

In effect, when speaking about the performance of an indeterminate text score, it is not entirely accurate to use the word interpretation anymore. Performing an indeterminate text score is not a simple act of reading, it is a creative act in and of itself. In a sense, the performer writes the text that will live in the world (the performance) as they read the text that lives on the page (the score).³²

Werder also believes in a fundamental disparity between the performance and the score: the score is a specific section of the world, and a performance is a specific section of the score.³³ Yet there is significant room for ambiguity in the identity of a performance: what score might an ambiguous performance be drawn from?³⁴ What we must draw from this ambiguity is a new interstice of artistic relations between performers and composers. As the performer becomes increasingly responsible for the production of reality, the artistry of the composer becomes their poetic language of possible, in which improbable combinations of symbols conveys more information and thus

³¹ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005), 35.

³² Madison Brookshire, "A Shout In The Street: Uncommon Knowledge: Mark So's Text Scores," accessed November 30, 2014, <http://ashoutinthestreet.blogspot.com/2010/10/uncommon-knowledge-mark-sos-text-scores.html>.

³³ James Saunders, "Manfred Werder," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*, ed. James Saunders (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT, 2009), 354.

³⁴ For example, a realization of *2005¹* by Anne Guthrie and John Lely, in which two field recordings from Montreal and Brooklyn from the same time were put into the left and right channels of an audio track, could also be considered a realization of *2006²*. The distinguishing factor is solely in its presentation by Guthrie and Lely.

possibility through their juxtaposition.³⁵ The performer, then, becomes as much an audience as an interpreter, because, as Eco explains:

...the receiver of such a message... can no longer be considered as the final stage of a process of communication. Rather, he should be seen as the first step of a new chain of communication, since the message he has received is in itself another source of possible information, albeit a source of information that is yet to be filtered, interpreted...³⁶

Eco's analysis of the transference of poetic information is prescient in light of the way in which Bourriaud uses the DJ to contextualize contemporary art: he describes the DJ as a creator of linkages, transmitting artistic product to the next producer, into a network of artistic experiencers.³⁷ Thus, the network does not revolve around a singular creator, but gives a sort of inherent agency to all involved. An audience, even in its most passive spectatorship, is producing their own meaning out of the information received, not just through an artwork, but alongside all information from their life. If the line between production and consumption is in fact blurring as Bourriaud claims it to be, then the audience member is an artist for their own viewing:

What we usually call reality is a montage. But is the one we live in the only possible one? From the same material (the everyday), we can produce different versions of reality. Contemporary art thus presents itself as an alternative editing table that shakes up social forms, reorganizes them, and inserts them into original scenarios. The artist deprograms in order to reprogram, suggesting that there are other possible uses for the techniques and tools at our disposal.³⁸

These tools are the expectations and relations that shape how we approach and receive a text. A work such as *2005*¹ enables all involved to

³⁵ Eco, *The Open Work*, 55.

³⁶ Ibid. 67

³⁷ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 41.

³⁸ Ibid. 72

reprogram the experience of sound and music out of what would be normally conceived of as performing a composition. The presence of musical notation, for example, indicates preexisting music that only need move from potential into sounding.³⁹ The presence of the word “sound/klänge” in Manfred Werder’s scores still create the expectation of listening to/and music because he is perceived as a composer, associated with other individuals who create music. It is already a significant departure from the practice of music, but in Werder’s works past 2007, there is evidence of a more radical reprogramming, where we have only the expectation of Werder the composer to work with in articulating sound:

la rareté des énoncés
the rarity of the *énoncés*

cette si proche transparence qui constitue l'élément de leur possibilité
that immediate transparency that constitutes the element of their possibility

(Michel Foucault: *L'archéologie du savoir*, 1969) (transl. A. M. Sheridan/MW)

manfred werder, 2010ⁱ

³⁹ Brookshire, “A Shout In The Street: Uncommon Knowledge.”

Werder, in these recent works, has reached an absolute indeterminacy in which performer choice extends to the very constitution of musical signs in themselves. In the absence of any musical notation, or words with direct indication of music (such as “in the sound environment a hardly distinguishable instrument sound” in *2008⁴*), no aspect of musical practice can be taken as given. Attention is drawn back to the entire construction of a discourse and situation in which to produce a musical object. The object is implied only through this particular situation, yet at the same time the whole scenario brings to the forefront the symbolic production of music necessitated by the object of a score. This score, then, occupies an uneasy position in regards to its own meaning because it cannot depend on itself to create meaning symbolically, only in the moment of its interpretation. Meanwhile in a traditionally notated piece of music, the meanings of notes, staves, and durations have been built via habitual association; the centuries of “common practice” have affixed a collectively understood meaning to otherwise abstract graphic symbols.

C.S. Pierce defines a symbol as “the general name or description which signifies its object by means of an association of ideas or habitual connection between the name and the character signified;”⁴⁰ it is contrasted with the indexical sign, which brings attention to an object without describing it. Using this definition, M. J. Grant characterizes experimental music as indexical because in the self-awareness of its materials, practices, and associations, it draws attention to the processes of making music which have become routine. In this

⁴⁰ M. J. Grant, “Experimental Music Semiotics,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 34, no. 2 (December 1, 2003): 177.

sense, Werder's text pieces fall squarely in this indexical, experimental category. She writes, "Experimental music typically draws attention to things, to phenomena and to relationships which also exist beyond the piece and not just by means of it, but it generally does so by creating the very phenomena or relationships in question."⁴¹ While her examples utilize physical and psychoacoustic effects (such as Alvin Lucier's *Queen Of The South* and James Tenney's *Critical Band*), in *2010*¹ the relationship that is created is social. Faced with the complete absence of material in which to form habitual associations, the whole discourse of interpretation must be constructed from the ground up. Being created in a specific set of social circumstances, the particulars, the *relations*, are the basis from which a new discourse of performing the composition must arise.

G. Douglas Barrett, in his analysis of *2010*¹, hints at the shape these relations take in noting that it "contemplates its discursive potential as a musical work."⁴² The quotation in the score is derived from a longer sentence in Foucault's *The Archaeology Of Knowledge*. Yet by extracting a fragment, Werder draws attention to what is excluded from the score (importantly and ironically, what is excluded a fragment concerning about what is made visible). Barrett reads this cut as a meta-statement on music's ability to discursively speak: the score itself is concealed under a layer of its own performance, and thus indexical reference to an entire discourse of producing meaning is hidden. He raises the concern that the piece, interpreted as such, may never escape from its own self-

⁴¹ Ibid. 184

⁴² Barrett, "The Silent Network," 465.

reflexive interrogation.⁴³ Yet this interpretation of the composition as circular depends on the interpreter's relation to the text. It cannot be assumed that performers of *2010¹* are aware of this cut (the score itself cites the book but not the page), thus from it they draw an entirely different set of conclusions as a result of their non-relationship to the text's non-presence. A possibility of this sort of realization can be seen in commentary on the *études* of Jason Brogan, a contemporaneously composed set of pieces invoking found text:

... a clear difference that exists between our work with found text is that I explicitly sought a new experience of the given material, viz., philosophy. As such, I don't think this constitutes a particularly philosophical practice, but perhaps instead, following the work of François Laruelle, non-philosophical experimentation with existing philosophy. My desire was to use the situation of experimental music as a kind of sandbox within which I could place specific philosophical positions (or decisions). For me, it was about finding ways to experiment with ideas (or concepts) within a context or creative practice within with [sic] I found myself (i.e., experimental music).⁴⁴

Quotation typically relies on the recipient's knowledge of history in order to make the meaning delivered intelligible. The meaning is concealed by the use of the quoted (chosen/found) material, and is given meaning through its relation to the surrounding material and through transformation. An alternative understanding of quotation can be drawn from the use of forms, an application of *detournement* that renders forms and histories as material, approachable rather than autonomous objects that Nicholas Bourriaud characterizes as "inhabiting" a quotation.⁴⁵ From here, the quotation, as material, can be placed into the situation of interpretation that the text score presents us with. As can be

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Jason Brogan, email correspondence, December 30, 2014.

⁴⁵ Redhead, "Relational Aesthetics: A Practice-Lead Investigation," 40

seen through the combination of the commentary of Barrett and Brogan, regardless of knowledge the quotation can be used as a catalyst for relations that inform the practice of realizing the scores.

Realizations of these compositions demonstrate the potential that the quotations hold as materials for inspiring music. Already, as a practice, the found text scores enable radical potential in their shifting of compositional authority from designating forms to enabling encounters with the material, thus redistributing the agency of creative possibility.⁴⁶ Because the performers are responsible for the development of the context, anything may happen. But does it?

Compare two performances of *2010^l*. Barrett offers a rich description of a performance at the Incidental Music Series held at Galerie Mark Müller in Zürich, July 8th, 2010, with Werder, Normisa Pereira da Silva, and Stefan Thut:

After two minutes, your attention wanders to the sounds of birds chirping just outside of the gallery; inside you notice da Silva draw her bow across a small Chinese cymbal; the brittle inharmonic sound is nearly drowned out by traffic sounds outside. Eventually, after slowly turning the handle on the music box held in his left palm, Thut softly ekes out a single clunky tone on his tiny device. Following several minutes of silence, Thut's music box sound transforms into a quiet series of muted arrhythmic clicks overlapping with the return of da Silva's scraped gong. A similar texture continues over the course of the next fifteen minutes: an occasional sound pokes out from the noises occurring inside and outside of the gallery, dotting the otherwise barren expanse of time. Shortly before the performance ends, you see Werder blowing into his toy harmonica and realize that the delicate tone he produces had been occurring all along. Finally, after looking around the space and then at one another, the performers glance toward the audience to acknowledge the end of the piece. You— and the rest of the audience—applaud.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Barrett, "The Silent Network," 466.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 450

This performance can be viewed next to decidedly more minimal actualizations of the composition, such as Werder's solo performance in the gardens of St. Leonard's Church in London, on June 16, 2010.⁴⁸ In the video fragments we observe Werder sitting on various benches, appearing to be engaged in the sort of active listening characteristic of actualizations of *2005*¹, thus articulating the sounds of the church in that time. Other actualizations of the piece consist of both performative concerts as well as listening situations,⁴⁹ yet throughout realizations of *2010*¹ and other related compositions, a consistent aesthetic emerges that is characteristic of the music of Wandelweiser—sound events presented straightforwardly, framed by extensive durations of silence.⁵⁰ This aesthetic is born from the concerns and interests of the members of Wandelweiser as a collective; as a group, they have refined the aesthetic and mapped out its possibilities by the creation of new social and intellectual relations. For Michael Pisaro, the most illuminating relations were created through performance:

...the most important conversations took place not in words, but in the music itself, from one piece to another; with one person going a different direction with very similar material to what the other had used. Seen in this way, it is only by getting inside the individual works that one sees the energy that is at play amongst this group of musicians: where notions of what is similar and what is different are replaced by much more complicated (and interesting) trajectories and tensions.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Viewable at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmaPoolHKEk>

⁴⁹ Viewable at <http://vimeo.com/63067197>

⁵⁰ Nicholas Melia and James Saunders, "Introduction: What Is Wandelweiser?," *Contemporary Music Review* 30, no. 6 (December 2011): 446.

⁵¹ Pisaro, "Wandelweiser."

The compositions of Wandelweiser are constantly accumulating new information regarding their potential identities through their reiteration, both through new performances and new compositions that present new articulations of the central formative principle behind them.⁵² In the case of Werder, this principle is that of the relation to the sounding world, mediated by language (and “found” rather than written to keep compositional authority decentered). Moreover, unlike traditional works of music, this flexibility and adaptation is built into their structure, to the point that the aforementioned ambiguous compositional identity is necessary, even encouraged: in *The Ashgate Research Companion To Experimental Music*, Werder states “A composer not backing up his work against the risk of its disappearance will find himself exploring the potential of his work’s own effectiveness.”⁵³ Similar to Barrett’s statement that *2010*¹ “enunciates a kind of self-cancellation of its own ability to speak,”⁵⁴ these compositions dematerialize into only their forms: the encounter of the relations that constitute the moment of actualization. These relations, in turn, demonstrate a novel mode of engagement with the world and other to the audiences and performers, and invite participation and articulation as a fundamental part of the event that is regarded as musical. The music of text scores does not exist before its performance, therefore the human activity, social engagement with performers, the composer, and discourse, is necessary to

⁵² James Saunders, “Testing the Consequences—Multipart Series in the Work of the Wandelweiser Composers,” *Contemporary Music Review* 30, no. 6 (December 2011): 498.

⁵³ Saunders, “Manfred Werder,” 355.

⁵⁴ Barrett, “The Silent Network,” 465.

realize the music, and serves as the material from which the composition creates new conceptual linkages. What the scores have done is use the ambiguity of poetic language to enable a topography of potential experiences, rather than a fixed, closed space of symbolic meaning. They instantiate a particular critique of artistic autonomy that not only calls into question the spectatorship fundamental to art music, but creates an alternative of renewed listening practices, and as described by Anthony Downey, “give rise to the conditions within which unprecedented inter-human relations can be articulated.”⁵⁵ Criticisms of relational aesthetics frequently address the blindly utopian thinking that Bourriaud puts forward, that the *quality* of the relations produced are ignored in favor of them merely being produced in the first place.⁵⁶ Arguably, in the works above, by drawing increased attention to an individual’s own relation to the world through sounds, the quality of the relation is improved, as Werder considers quality in his works as “the listener’s possibility to live his own experience.”⁵⁷ This enhanced possibility of experience, as rendered through these works, has a specifically positive emancipatory effect, akin to Jacques Rancière’s description of “good” theater as an art that “deploys its separate reality only in order to suppress it, to turn the theatrical form into a form of life for the community.”⁵⁸ Here the musical form of Werder’s composition provide a

⁵⁵ Anthony Downey, “Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics,” *Third Text* 21, no. 3 (May 1, 2007): 268.

⁵⁶ Bishop 65. Arguments concerning the politics of relational aesthetics, including those by Bishop, Downey, and Stewart Martin, will be elaborated upon in the following sections.

⁵⁷ Via Saunders 356

⁵⁸ Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* 274

space in which the audience can simultaneously explore their interests in the world and give themselves over to it. Sounds are reappropriated into our perception, abolishing the conditions of everyday life that set them aside. Furthermore, because the oppositions between the participants who are listening or performing or producing sound are blurred, the very conditions for musical practice begin to become undone. As this happens, a new set of political and aesthetic issues reveal themselves concerning the relation of these compositions to the participants, to the surrounding world, and the discourse of musical works.

Relations As Works, Audiences As Material, Openness As Politics

Broadly speaking, compositions like those discussed in the previous chapter cannot be regarded as “works” of music. The term is in fact highly specific and conceptually loaded, and not entirely in agreement with the structural properties present in most Wandelweiser compositions. However, these compositions do display a work-like character; this is the result not only of their own properties, but also via their approach to the relations at the intersection of artistic creation and reception that affect the status of a work.⁵⁹

The work-concept, since emergently arising and taking on a regulative role in the nineteenth century (this is the principle argument of Goehr’s *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works*), continues to exercise a significant hold on public conceptions of art and music, and thus on the ideological strictures that regulate the production of culture. Avant-garde practices throughout the twentieth century sought to break down these ordinances, moving from Futurism and Dada to mid-century conceptual and performance art, out of which relational aesthetics emerged. However, these oppositional practices are always necessarily located within the framework of capitalism, and therefore still encounter the regulative practices of art and ideology, which continuously threatens to fetishize and commodify the avant-garde. The music of Wandelweiser is no exception: it must be studied in the terms of the work-concept to understand where it may succumb to regulative practice, and where its properties allow for an emancipatory aesthetic.

⁵⁹ Redhead, “Relational Aesthetics: A Practice-Lead Investigation,” 56.

Goehr posits two methods of studying the work-concept: through formal analysis to determine the work's properties as an object, or by positioning and examining the piece of music in relation to the historical ascendance of the work-concept. Ultimately, however, Goehr points out that analyzing a piece of music as a work cannot solely depend on its theoretical parameters; it must also be demonstrable in practice.⁶⁰ This does not discredit one method in favor of the other: indeed, analyzing the properties of the compositions discussed in the preceding pages reveals that historical circumstance upends the relevance of certain existential conditions, and upholds Goehr's claim.

The analytic perspectives of the work-concept are instantly problematic when applying them to compositions such as *2005*¹ or *2010*¹. The theories offered rely on placing the substance of the work in universals: they are unchanging and abstract, associated with material objects yet distinct from them. Nelson Goodman, for example, defines works as having a uniquely specified character within a notational system.⁶¹ Notation takes the place of a Platonic ideal form for Goodman: a "notational language" of a work is absolutely definitive of all performances of a work, and thus vice-versa; Goehr refers to this condition as the retrievability test.⁶² Examples have already been provided of compositions that violate the test: by its very definition, *2005*¹ cannot happen the same way twice because every combination of time and place cannot be repeated exactly. This, of course, relies on our understanding of English and

⁶⁰ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works*, 69.

⁶¹ Ibid. 21

⁶² Ibid. 25

German as language, which is itself a non-notational system because of the vagueness inherent to the process of transmitting meaning through signs. Linguistic systems use various devices such as modality and register to create a “style”⁶³ that is unique to each instance of its inscription, but dependent on indeterminacy, which compels its fulfillment, and as a result reinforces an unfixed relation between the written score and sound in performance.⁶⁴

This vagueness, even if it does lead to musical performance, goes against the principles Goodman lays out for semantic and syntactic compliance in notation, wherein there must be an exact correspondence between a character (or group of characters) and its inscribed meaning. Goehr offers the example of a symbol for musical pitch as a basic character; but there are no pitches to be found in the text scores by Wandelweiser composers. Even in their traditionally notated works, such as the short scores of Craig Shepard’s *On Foot* series, what gives the piece its identity is specific set of governing principles for framing silence (or any ‘outside’ sound) with sound. And what determines these principles (if not their actualization or interpretation) is a particular composer. Presented by Goehr as an alternative theory of musical works, Jerrold Levinson’s places the composer at the center, as well as the historical circumstances of the work’s creation—the original context of production⁶⁵, and contemporary relations to it.

⁶³ Lely, *Word Events*, 8.

⁶⁴ Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics,” 57.

⁶⁵ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works*, 52.

We must consider then, for example, the shift in concepts of musical notation that lead to the creation of text scores. By the mid twentieth century, composers used text as a method for greater control over parameters of sound, moving from musical notes to specifications of pitch, rhythm to the interplay of durations, and dynamics to precise amplitudes. This is attributable to the advent of recording technology and the emergence of studies of electronic music in postwar Europe, and then brought over to America via John Cage. In Cage's classes at the New School, via the theatrical performances and work of his students such as George Brecht and Allen Kaprow, we see the origins of Wandelweiser's study of the "complex topography of silences...that Cage could not see."⁶⁶ Liz Kotz notes that through the use of silences, compositions become distinct "temporal containers" for the events at hand.⁶⁷

In Levinson's theory, these containers bear the composer's touch of creation, and for that particularity are fixed as works, offering another framework alongside Goodman's use of notation with which to determine work-concept compliance. By Levinson's standard, not even John Cage is immune to the reach of the work-concept, as 4'33" the indeterminate composition par excellence, still only exists under his authority. Goehr notes, "it is because of his specifications that people gather together, usually in a concert hall, to listen to the sounds of the hall for the allotted time period."⁶⁸ Arguably, this issue still exists in that while the actualizations of Werder's pieces are constituted outside

⁶⁶ Nicholas Melia, "Stille Musik —Wandelweiser and the Voices of Ontological Silence," *Contemporary Music Review* 30, no. 6 (December 2011): 475.

⁶⁷ Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics," 70.

⁶⁸ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works*, 264.

of the composer's control, Werder has still initialized any performance of *2005*¹ through composing it. This opens up the problem with Werder's desire for a composition to approach its own disappearance in actualization: if the composition cannot be distinguished in the listening situation, can the composer take credit for it? It is here that Levinson's analysis of the work of music falls apart when set against the music of Wandelweiser. The ontological status of Werder's compositions, as well as many other compositions by Wandelweiser composers, is pre-defined by the conditions of its creations, yet these ontological conditions have an intangible relation to their aesthetic properties because of their indeterminacy. Though Levinson posits works as an ontology of initiated types,⁶⁹ thus linking aesthetic qualities to the circumstances of their initiation or creation, situations exist which demonstrate the inability of the aesthetic conditions to comply with this fixed work identity.

The situations that Goehr provides relate to a work's compliance with the conditions of its performance: can an "accidental" performance of a composition happen? What happens to performances of different compositions by different composers that ultimately sound the same? Conversely, what do we make of "versions" of a work, where aesthetic properties can widely differentiate?⁷⁰ Kotz makes the claim that with *4'33"*, Cage "effectively inaugurates the model of the

⁶⁹ Ibid. 51

⁷⁰ Goehr's examples include performances, transcriptions, orchestrations, and arrangements, but in the same way that these trouble the status of aesthetic properties as essential or nonessential, realization of indeterminate works create versions that comply with the stipulations of a score-object, yet bring into question whether there really ever was a set of conditions stipulated by the type.

score as an independent graphic/textual object.”⁷¹ Coming from music, these new textual score-objects utilize the mutability of language to facilitate their transference between mediums (text, performance, documentation) in a way that is characteristic of artistic production of this time. Although such pieces do not conform to the aesthetic conditions of the work-concept, their historical situation requires that they be treated as part of that discourse. Michael Talbot augments this to add a specific situating claim that part of the shift towards a regulative work-concept includes the composer’s (rather than a form or performer’s) ascendancy towards the locus as artistic quality.

Creator-centered thinking has had a lasting impact on artistic production and perception, and it is here that the work-concept continues to have some influence over Wandelweiser, though not pervasively. Though indeterminate works abandon the exact determination of an aesthetic character, we access works through the lens of being created, even in these cases of music in the Cagean paradigm of “removing” the composer. Talbot notes that “we feel that we are not ready to assimilate a piece of music unless we can place it in a frame of reference defined first and foremost by its composer”. This has interesting implications for our listening practices:

The Eroica Symphony is not just a symphony written in the early nineteenth century that happens to be especially good and original because it is by Beethoven: it is one piece of the jigsaw that we assemble in our minds as part of our quest to arrive at the fullest possible picture of Beethoven, the composer of genius.⁷²

⁷¹ Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics,” 57.

⁷² Michael Talbot, “The Work-Concept and Composer-Centredness,” in *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*, edited by Michael Talbot. Liverpool Music Symposium 1 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 180.

Our consumption of works is, in a sense, relational, in that we are concerned with our connection to the composer as a means of validating our choice of artistic experience. But how do we take into account artists who seek to redirect our attention away from themselves and towards the world at hand?

This issue appears not only in music. Throughout his writings, Bourriaud repeatedly invokes a few artists who he views as central to the development of relational aesthetics. Almost metronomically, he invokes the names of artists such as Liam Gillick, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Philippe Parreno, Pierre Huyghe, and Dominique Gonzales-Foerster, as if attempting to singlehandedly create a canon of artists who have made their careers on decentralizing themselves from their work. Based as he is within the system of exhibitions, galleries, and biennials that characterize the artworld, the argument can be made that Bourriaud is firmly stuck within the art-world version of the regulative work-concept, with himself as a genius composer/curator. As Claire Bishop points out. “an effect of this insistent promotion of these ideas of artist-as-designer, function over contemplation, and open-endedness over aesthetic resolution is often ultimately to enhance the status of the curator...”⁷³

Wandelweiser composers display a humbler approach to their practice, evolved from the tradition of Cagean removal, suggesting that they do in fact seek to be at a partial remove from their compositions, only serving as one linkage in the relations of the works. Werder, for example, states, “I aim at

⁷³ Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004): 53.

bringing forth a flat as possible hierarchy within all the incidences.”⁷⁴ For Antoine Beuger, “my idea has always been that as a composer you don’t just write pieces which then are performed in concerts, if you are lucky. What you really (should) do is to invent situations in which people are coming together to hear music.”⁷⁵ These statements suggest that Wandelweiser has accepted a level of complicity with composer-centeredness as inevitable, but through their reemphasis of a group dynamic and identity, it may be effectively reduced. Members of the group serve as not only composers, but as active performers of their works and others, creating a network that expands outwards into a further network of listeners/participants. According to Craig Shepard, ideas for compositions and concerts are freely shared across differences in age and nationality (specifically noting the receptiveness of older members to the ideas of younger ones).⁷⁶ In his workshop, Shepard stated that artistic choices had been made that prioritized the group friendship, that wouldn’t have been made in a less collective situation than Wandelweiser’s. Ideological disagreements occur, but are worked out through the presentation of performances (echoing Pizaro’s remarks that the most important conversations occur in the music). The group dynamics of Wandelweiser takes the music of John Cage as a starting point, but in their navigations of interpretations of Cage and other sources (improvisation or the music of Christian Wolff, for example), they demonstrate a dynamic model of negotiation that may be seen as a model of antagonism,

⁷⁴ Saunders, “Manfred Werder,” 356.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 241.

⁷⁶ Craig Shepard, “On Foot At Wesleyan-Workshop” (155 Lincoln St, Middletown, CT., November 8, 2014).

offering a counter to Claire Bishop's critiques of relational aesthetics. Bishop summarizes antagonism in her article:

Laclau and Mouffe argue that a fully functioning democratic society is not one in which all antagonisms have disappeared, but one in which new political frontiers are constantly being drawn and brought into debate—in other words, a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are *sustained*, not erased. Without antagonism there is only the imposed consensus of authoritarian order—a total suppression of debate and discussion, which is inimical to democracy.⁷⁷

Bishop goes on to take Bourriaud and his associated artists to task for creating relations for their own sake: “the relations set up by relational aesthetics are not intrinsically democratic, as Bourriaud suggests, since they rest too comfortably within an ideal of subjectivity as whole and of community as immanent togetherness.”⁷⁸ These audiences, for Bishop, are not truly representative of realistic social relations: because these works are presented in gallery spaces, as part of series of biennials and exhibitions that are constitutive of global art institutions, they cannot truly escape the power relations of authoritarian capitalism that threaten to subsume any microtopia created by art. If relational aesthetics is regarded as a sort of “anti-art” in which new conditions of life are collapsed in a small space, it must take care that the dissolution of art actually lead into emancipated life, not life affected by capital.⁷⁹ Bourriaud, using Marx's definition of the social interstice, is optimistic about art's ability to inspire new forms of inter-human commerce; if it does not fully bring us out of the structuring rhythms of everyday life, then it at least renders audiences aware of

⁷⁷ Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” 66.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 67

⁷⁹ Stewart Martin, “Critique of Relational Aesthetics,” *Third Text* 21, no. 4 (July 1, 2007): 373.

the lack of emancipation; this is contemporary art's political project.⁸⁰ To show what this inter-human commerce looks like, Bishop quotes an account of Rikrit Tiravanija's solo exhibition at 303 Gallery in 1992, in which there is no friction of a truly holistic society, merely a collection of like-minded audiences who chat but engage in no significant activity (that is, nothing typically political).⁸¹ The politics here are observed by Anthony Downey to be a "call for a pseudo-ethics of communicating with one another (*it's good to talk*)",⁸² menacingly corporate and strictly utilitarian, wrapped up in making the space aesthetic for its usefulness, that is, consigning it to host commodified practices and thus reinforce power relations.

These power relations realign relational art back towards the creator-centered, work-driven concept of the autonomous work of art. It is in bourgeois interests to keep relational art in this framework in order to preserve its hegemony of aesthetic definition, that presents art as absolute and transcendent, brought into immanence by a single genius composer as opposed to decoration made by a craftsman for social occasion. Goehr's historical thesis places the arrival of this regulatory ideology alongside the arrival of Romanticism at the turn of the nineteenth century, exemplified by the character of Beethoven who set the standard for the activity and beliefs of the liberated, autonomous composer. The subsequent mythologizing of Beethoven, or "Beethoven mania," is

⁸⁰ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 17.

⁸¹ Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 67.

⁸² Anthony Downey, "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics," *Third Text* 21, no. 3 (May 1, 2007), 272.

itself is a product of this ideology. Its economic consequence, as explained by Phillip Tagg, cannot be ignored:

These 'works' could then be managed by agents charging entrance fees to concerts or recitals and commodified by publishers in the form of sheet music sold to persons prosperous enough or famous enough to own a decent piano or to put on musical soirées in their parlor...This information corroborates earlier observations about 'work' as a term denoting not the composer's actual labour but the product of that labour from an end-user viewpoint; it also underlines the notion of 'work' as commodity, here in the shape of sheet music, whose use-value for the publisher resides in its potential for capital accumulation.⁸³

The work-concept, then, served as a gatekeeping mechanism for taste: access to works means access to a composer and their newly perceived divine inspiration. Over subsequent centuries, we have seen the formation of a so-called canon (note the divine connotation) of works that are ostensibly transcendent and above historicity, enabling their replication and reiteration throughout culture. Lauren Redhead notes the performative nature of canon formation, explaining how the same economic guiding principles that guided the original bourgeois work-concept dictate canonic practice today:

I believe that an argument can be made that in the twentieth century the formation and perpetuation of canon is essentially capitalist. This is to do with cultural as well as financial capital and can be seen, for example, in the repeated programming of 'big name' composers whose names will sell seats, but also in the idea that a knowledge or appreciation of the work of some composers is necessary to make a claim for the appreciation of music itself.⁸⁴

⁸³ Philip Tagg, "'The Work': An Evaluative Charge," in *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*, ed. Michael Talbot, Liverpool Music Symposium 1 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 160-161.

⁸⁴ Lauren Redhead, "Relational Aesthetics and the Western Canon of Increasingly Historical Works," *British Postgraduate Musicology* 11 (December 2011), 2.

The performance of the modern canon, Redhead observes, exercises itself through the modernist notion of progress, specifically through the idea of development of material towards a universal endpoint, for example, the advent of extended or unconventional instrumental techniques and their placement in the twentieth-century repertoire for “advancing” the material of their instrument.⁸⁵ At first this historical mediation of material may seem contradictory with the transcendent nature of the work-concept, but here the reach of the work-concept contaminates the very progression of historical material itself. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the increased association of music with painting, sculpture, and the other fine arts lead to an emphasis on the materials and products created; the “work” literally being the results of the composer’s labor. Centuries later, the term has become more abstract: Theodor Adorno defined material as “all that the artist is confronted by, all that he must make a decision about”,⁸⁶ opposing it with the subjectivity of the composer and thereby reaffirming the notion of the composer as a genius creator of work who imposes themselves onto historical progress to draw from it. The fixed character of a composed work helps us identify the progression of historical material through its capture in the musical canon.

Since then, however, narratives of progress have fallen away into all kinds of postmodern practices: the blurring of forms and open signification characteristic of relational art, Wandelweiser, and their midcentury influences. Jacques Rancière describes the turn into postmodernism as the fuller realization

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Redhead, “Relational Aesthetics: A Practice-Lead Investigation”: 75.

of what he calls the “aesthetic regime,” a turn away from previous practices of representation in art towards free signification between forms, which constructs art as both autonomous from life yet indicative of it. Modernity capitalized (literally) on the autonomy of art to divide it into forms and situate the aesthetic regime’s turn away from mimesis in a false singular process of history, coinciding with political development and revolution.

Yet with the failure of this political project came artists’ realization of modernity’s false creative teleology. The aesthetic state “where the activity of thought and sensible receptivity become a single reality” was achieved via modernity as Schiller’s “aesthetic education of man,” leading to a free play of forms and conceiving an equality of life that was shown to be impossible politically.⁸⁷ Only now, in postmodernism has the equality manifested as a receptiveness to all forms, but has resulted in an accumulation of heterogeneous temporalities and experiences. Rancière points out that (perhaps enabled by postmodern openness) these processes (including the work-concept) do not simply begin and end as discrete phenomena, but overlap:

Statements or forms of expression undoubtedly depend on historically constituted systems of possibilities that determine forms of visibility or criteria of evaluation, but this does not mean that we jump from one system to another in such a way that the possibility of the new system coincides with the impossibility of the former system.⁸⁸

Modernist tendencies thus continue to surface in the current artistic climate, such as Bourriaud’s identification of the aesthetic regime’s heterogeneous temporalities as, paradoxically, the material of the historical

⁸⁷ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, 27.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 50

moment. It shows the processes of modernism and postmodernism not only coexist but symbiotically develop under Rancière's aesthetic regime (in this case, the state of postmodernism as modernist material):

As a producer of goods, technology expresses the state of production-oriented relationships...In relation to this phenomenon, art's function consists in appropriating perceptual and behavioural habits brought on by the technical-industrial complex to turn them into *life possibilities*, to borrow Nietzsche's term. Otherwise put, reversing the authority of technology in order to make ways of thinking, living, and seeing creative.⁸⁹

The authority of technology that Bourriaud describes impact temporality through uniting two opposite modes of technological existence: the precarious and the recorded. The former is described as the great profusion of ephemeral things: not just disposable, mass-produced goods, but replaceable employees who practice and enable consumption in global capitalism, who themselves embody fluid multiple identities through overlapping trends and virtual bifurcation. These trends in themselves, rather than taking hold in a social sphere and developing, are instantly cast aside or alongside innumerable others.⁹⁰ Conversely, a vast culture of recording and archiving exists in which to preserve all these precarious goods and creations. Bourriaud takes the internet as a model for modern artistic ideology: accessible, hackable, and ubiquitous, but also a heterogeneous accumulation with no clear symmetry or form, far beyond any individual's capacity to experience its entirety. From this great mass comes artworks that deliver slices of it. Bourriaud's conception of these artworks may

⁸⁹ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 69.

⁹⁰ Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009), 79-81.

be akin to Antoine Beuger's comments that any composition is a cut in (out of) infinite noise:⁹¹

Born of general excess, these compositions are in keeping with what the urban landscape has become, a precarious, cluttered, and shifting environment...In a world that records as quickly as it produces, art no longer immortalizes but tinkers and arranges, throwing the products it consumes on the table pell-mell. Millions of people shoot, compile, and edit images with the help of software available to everyone. But they freeze memories, whereas the artist sets signs in motion.⁹²

Despite the contemporary world's democratizing technological possibilities and its opening up of relations of creative production, Beuger and Bourriaud still privileges the artist as the individual capable of asserting true subjectivity through assembling experience, the foundation of relational art practices but in need of a practice to carry it through to a fully egalitarian conclusion. The latter's proposition of DJ culture suggests the possibility of any individual's ability to reinterpret the multitude of signs into unique forms of expression, but the examples he gives throughout his writings nonetheless come from the heights of the international art world. Bourriaud says "this capacity to navigate information is in the process of becoming the dominant faculty for the intellectual or artist. Linking signs, producing itineraries in the sociocultural space or in the history of art, the twenty-first century artist is a semionaut."⁹³ At the same time, though, this semionautic position seems emblematic of all modern life; Bourriaud himself recognizes this in his elevation of the "journey" to the emblematic modern art form, drawing from the globalized model of

⁹¹ Saunders, "Antoine Beuger," 231.

⁹² Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 88.

⁹³ Ibid. 160

tourism and commuting, both physical and virtual. Yet there is something that separates the artists from the masses. Bourriaud faintly acknowledges this when he discusses the gap between developed and developing countries in their access to the “economic center,” further claiming that “the import and export of forms seems genuinely to function only at the very heart of the global circuit.”⁹⁴ Only “brilliant individuals” from the “countries of the periphery” are able to process their own cultural forms; more than vaguely patronizing, it is exactly indicative of Bishop’s critique of a lack of antagonism, a denial of the power dynamics behind relational forms.⁹⁵ Bishop reminds us that “since the 1970s, older avant-garde rhetorics of opposition and transformation have been frequently replaced by strategies of complicity; what matters is not the complicity, but how we receive it.”⁹⁶ Following these strategies, a pedagogical function is returned to the arts, a sort of Platonic community in which the collective reaches an understanding of itself (in this case, its function within global capitalism). Though the concept of the collective active community comes from theater, it readily applies across the arts, as Eco suggests:

Another pedagogical function of this poetics could be the following: the new perception of things, and the new way of relating them to each other, promoted by art might eventually lead us to understand our situation not by imposing on it a univocal order expressive of an obsolete conception of the world but rather by elaborating models leading to a number of mutually complementary results...In this way, even those artistic

⁹⁴ Ibid. 162

⁹⁵ This is why Bishop looks favorably upon Thomas Hirschorn and Santiago Sierra, artists whose work takes as subject matter the inequalities in global production. They also admit their own complicity in this production, which, while unprogressive and potentially problematic, is at least a start for its self-awareness.

⁹⁶ Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” 71.

processes that seem most removed from our immediate concerns may in *fact* provide us with the imaginative categories necessary to move more easily in this world.⁹⁷

Appropriately, this passage comes from a section of *The Open Work* entitled “Form As Social Commitment.” In it, Eco critiques forms as representative of social hegemony; they displace and alienate the original content by creating false boundaries using language exterior to the content. The new language of art for modern times, then, is not just based in the disorder, excess, and the heterogeneity of modern capitalist culture. It must be suggestive, not only demonstrative, of relations in the world from the very conditions of its creation (Eco: “The real content of a work is the vision of the world expressed in its way of forming”⁹⁸).

Thus, if relational works truly are a new form of the twenty-first century, they must be unbound from the work-concept and other creator-centered artistic processes. This is not to say they cannot exist completely separate from these older forms due to the accumulation and heterogeneity of modern temporalities. An intermediate state may be possible for works at this time, or to observe different forms of creative authority, or authorship.

Christy Mag Uidhir puts forth an account of the minimal qualifications of authorship, and from there builds upon the author-relation to present multiple types of authorship. Uidhir’s notion of authorship proposes a three-part logic of authorship in which a creator is responsible for not only a work, but for the conditions under which the work is recognized as such: “*A* is an author of *w* as an

⁹⁷ Eco, *The Open Work*, 150.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 144

F if and only if *A* is directly responsible, at least in part, for *w* as an *F*.”⁹⁹ She then goes on to elaborate the conditions in which works can be produced collectively, distinguishing between collective authorship and collective production, with varying degrees of collaboration. Most notably, collective production does not require the directed intention of all agents, as illustrated in a telling example:

Suppose that Roy Lichtenstein had his graduate students in the art department at Rutgers University physically paint *Image Duplicator* (1963). Lichtenstein remains the sole author despite this (and despite *Image Duplicator* featuring an appropriated image from a panel of an X-men comic illustrated by Jack Kirby). Notice that if those students were instructed to fill in the Ben-Day Dots, then they needn’t also have known, in order to do the work asked of them, anything about pop-art, comic books, Jack Kirby, Benjamin Day, or have even understood the title *Image Duplicator*. So, while *Image Duplicator* may have been collectively produced, most certainly *Image Duplicator* was not collectively authored. Furthermore, sometimes withholding certain information from those employed in the production better promotes the desired result. That is, perhaps in some cases, the less known by those employed in the production about how the products of their activities figure, the less likely their activities will stray from the manner in which the work was intended to satisfy the work-description.¹⁰⁰

This situation seems analogous to those produced, for example, in the gallery works of Rirkrit Tiravanija. In transforming commercial art spaces into living spaces, or setting up impromptu kitchens where visitors can cook and have dinner, audiences are set up to interact, but the course of their actions are influenced by the setting Tiravanija has specifically created, implying a narrow range of possible (or at least recommended, sanctioned) activities. Not for nothing does he include “lots of people” on his list of materials.¹⁰¹ By rendering

⁹⁹ Christy Mag Uidhir, “Minimal Authorship (of Sorts),” *Philosophical Studies* 154, no. 3 (July 1, 2011), 374.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 381

¹⁰¹ Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” 56.

people as material, the participants are divided against themselves as spectators of themselves, effectively splitting and alienating segments of their subjectivity: their subjectivity as an audience is set against their serving as material for the relational work. The subjectivity of the social-as-material, however, is necessarily objectified by the artist's use of the audience, and thus because of this blurring of states, the social becomes fetishized (in the Marxist sense of a displaced perception of value-origin). For the critics of relational aesthetics, "better" works activate an unfetishized spectator subjectivity, in which the audience sees their material state for what it is:

...we are stripped of any delusions that the simple affirmation of the social within capitalist societies is critical of capitalist exchange; it simply draws attention to the social constitution of capitalist exchange, exposing it directly. There is no freedom from capitalist exchange here, merely the confrontation with it, face to face.¹⁰²

This is a troubling state for the artist to place their audience in:

awareness of their situation as spectatorships while ultimately suggesting none of the microtopia possibilities that Bourriaud claims to be inherent to all interstitial artworks. Martin's critique goes on to insist that "without an immanent critique of the capitalist formation of life, dreams of an alternative are prone to be harmless or unwittingly mimetic."¹⁰³ This mimesis is exactly what we see in an installation by Tiravanija, and other relational works that remain indicative of capitalist forms, with the artist-manager dictating our modes of subjectivity production.

¹⁰² Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics," 379.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

A more promising mode of creation exists in Uidhir's conditions for collective authorship. If a work (w) is only seen as such (work-description F) by having a set of particular qualities ascribed to it ($C=\{f_1, f_2\}$), then the intentions of authors A and B (and so on) must figure substantively in the w 's possession of C for it to be perceived as F . As a further qualification, *collaborative* collective authorship entails that the quality f_1 is constitutive of F if or only if f_2 is constitutive of F (collective production is inherently uncollaborative because of the producer's subordination to the author). Open works essentially require collective authorship because of the necessity for interpretation of indeterminate symbols and information: subjectivity here has the upper hand over all of the materials, thus the performers are equally important in conveying the qualities of a musical performance. If a musical performance of a work of music w is F , being performed is a quality of C , which will be f_1 . Yet in the case of a work, performance implies interpretation of a score-object; therefore the existence of a score is arguably quality f_2 in the set C . These conditions readily apply to the compositions analyzed in the preceding chapter, though depending on certain characteristics varying degrees of collaboration are implied.

For example, if 2010^1 is work w , the work-description F entails a piece of music to be performed under the identity of the composition 2010^1 , bearing a C set of qualities. In this set, f_1 is the presence of the Foucault quote chosen by Werder mediating the situation of performance (because it is chosen by Werder, he is substantially responsible for fulfilling f_1). f_2 would entail the composition's realization in performance, the form of the encounter, which is the responsibility

of the performers. Nowhere are there necessary conditions to be met for material or form, so the fulfillment of f_2 is a highly creative act unto itself. Yet its existence as F (a realization of 2010^1) depends on the quote provided by Werder; the authorship of the music is collective though not uniformly collaborative.

With 2005^1 , however, the collaborative lines become extremely blurred. Werder's authorial role here is merely to designate the situation of the composition's actualization (if we regard "the score as incident"¹⁰⁴, it is folded into the conditions of its performance, thus, the work-description would cover the score and performance at once). There is also the authorship of any performers, but most importantly, the authorship of the listener. Recalling Werder's statements, the composition concerns the listener's articulation of their relation to the world. In the introduction to *Participation*, Bishop distinguishes between the social dimension of participation and individual activation through art,¹⁰⁵ yet the argument can be made that listener's individual perception of the world is socially affected because of the presence of other social beings in complex sonic and personal linkages. A listener's personal relation to the sounds can be shared via language or symbols, but never truly conferred because of the inherent unavailability of the experience of others. Because to reach the true experience of another world is essentially an asymptotic process, relations between listeners may be developed forever, to

¹⁰⁴ Manfred Werder, "Statement on Indeterminacy," *Manfred Werder Writings*, accessed December 16, 2014, <http://manfred-werder-archives.blogspot.com/2013/06/statement-on-indeterminacy-february-2010.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Claire Bishop, ed., *Participation* (London; Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel; MIT Press, 2006), 10.

finer and finer intimacies. Thus, in *2005*¹ each listener/participant is the author of their own experience, enabled collaboratively through Werder's text/score.

Uidhir's logic shows how the relations opened up by Werder's compositions differ significantly from those discussed in Bourriaud's writings. Though everything discussed displays some complicity with artist-centeredness, these works do so out of political necessity and their aesthetic lies in how they negotiate their own complicity with the hegemonic features of global capitalism. In short, while the relational art of Bourriaud's writing places the artist in a role in which they fetishize and alienate their own audience as a component of their work, diminishing the power of Bourriaud's utopian/microtopian claims, Wandelweiser engages in a (literally) quieter radicalization of the work of music that is actually productive of new relations to the world, addressing certain criticisms of relational aesthetics (such as Bishop's call for antagonism by relying on difference in circumstance), and entirely bypassing others (invoking a politics of the individual listener rather than grand mimesis of social forms).

In Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, the story of Joseph Jacotot presents a method of education that bypasses (and by doing so abolishes) any pretense of intellectual inequality in an academic hierarchy (i.e. between student and teacher).¹⁰⁶ Through its emphasis on the listener's experience and a de-emphasis of compositional authority (not a complete removal), Wandelweiser's poetics of pedagogy approaches this decentered model. Evidence of its similarities may be found in their collectivist approaches: members assume

¹⁰⁶ Rancière, *The Politics Of Aesthetics*, 2.

multiples roles as composers, performers, curators, publishers, and presenters, in spaces all over the world, rarely official but rather put together as a group activity, the result of human relations propagating themselves further via music. What perhaps truly distinguishes them from the artists in Bourriaud's circle of the professional artworld is that to this day, their artistic labor is truly precarious in every sense. Craig Shepard recalls that Wandelweiser initially made their music in difficult circumstances:

What I respect about a lot of composers, aside from a love of their music, is that a lot of them put something at risk to make this music. Antoine quit a lucrative job as an options trader in order to do this, Jürg Frey, for many years and still to this day was regarded in Switzerland [only] as a clarinet player...Michael continued knowing it would hurt his chances at tenure...he went in knowing this music would hurt his chances. Burkhard put a significant amount at risk financially in getting things off the ground, Markus has also made significant financial decisions. Radu Malfatti had a reputation in loud free improvisation at the time, and when he started making the quiet music at the time, there were some serious fights that happened which put some of his income in jeopardy as well. So there were a lot of risks with that, so people who saw that said 'Okay, that's what's going on', but also at the same time were able to [say] 'okay, this is possible now, and let's do this'.¹⁰⁷

The DIY initiative of Wandelweiser persists out of necessity. Lacking the gallery and labor resources of the artworld, they have had to rely directly on more of a network, a social form more reflective of the relational possibilities of the aesthetic. Through this, and realizing the possibilities through music, they accomplish Felix Guattari's call for a radical aesthetics of new subjectivity of creation in *Chaosmosis* as a foundation for alterity: "the only acceptable end

¹⁰⁷ Shepard, *On Foot At Wesleyan*.

purpose of human activities is the production of a subjectivity that is forever self-enriching its relationship with the world.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Felix Guattari, quoted in Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 103.

Beauty and Interest, Interest as Beauty

The challenges to the hegemony of the work-concept that relational aesthetics presents implicate a broader critique of the traditional aesthetic values of the past several centuries. Calling relational art beautiful (for example, Pierre Huyghe's Arctic expedition) feels very different from calling a Delacroix portrait beautiful. Likewise, Beethoven's symphonies appeal to an aesthetic sense very different from the revelation of world that occurs in *2005*¹. An aesthetics grounded in the production of the social inherently denies art the transcendent merit from which its autonomy as a beautiful object is founded. Relational art then may require alternate aesthetic categories in order to be better understood. Sianne Ngai's conception of the interesting is particularly applicable to relational art, owing in part to her analysis of its conceptual art predecessors. An art and music of the interesting draws attention to its own discourse and practices; this is not mutually exclusive to the possibility of beauty. The music of Wandelweiser, similar to how it exists in complex relation to the work-concept, also demonstrates the negotiations that occur between beauty and interest in these modern arts and music.

The emergence of the work-concept as a regulative practice around the turn of the nineteenth century came about as the result of Romantic thought processes that also lead to the development of the transcendent nature of artistic beauty. Central to this thought process was the shift of musical meaning towards the music's own internal formal qualities, away from extra-musical association (especially with textual and religious functions). Ostensibly freed from social

concerns on the surface, musical works nonetheless continued to be evaluated in terms of a “religious awe,” according to Goehr.¹⁰⁹ Essentially an identical feeling transferred into the secular realm, Willem Erauw explained this shift as a particular phenomenon of the German bourgeoisie: “In contrast to the English or French middle-classes, the German *Bildungsbiirgertum* had not experienced societal and political emancipation, hence its urge to escape into the ideal inner world of art. This new world of pure, absolute instrumental music was indeed the most ethereal realm into which one could escape from the material world.”¹¹⁰ This German origin seems especially relevant when related to Kant’s splitting of the world into the phenomenal and noumenal, introducing his transcendental idealism. In addition, Leibniz’s concept of the possible world was put into aesthetic use by eighteenth-century thinkers, reaching a concise apogee in Ludwig Tieck’s claim in that music is “a world of its own”.¹¹¹ The circulation of these ideas enabled the development of what Goehr refers to as the “separability principle”: elaborated on by subsequent philosophers including Hegel, Frederick Schiller, and E.T.A. Hoffman, it was proposed that the arts were removed from any features of the natural, phenomenal world, or rather, placed just out of reach from the ordinary experience and materials that had regulated the creation of mimetic art. Jacques Rancière places this practice within a *poetic* aesthetic regime in which the arts were defined as ways of doing and making that

¹⁰⁹ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works*, 157.

¹¹⁰ William Erauw, “Canon Formation: Some More Reflections on Lydia Goehr’s Imaginary Museum of Musical Works,” *Acta Musicologica* 70, no. 2 (December 1998), 113.

¹¹¹ Carl Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and the New Music: Essays* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 85.

recognized normative conditions for what representations could be approved as art.¹¹² These ideas moved the mimetic goal of art further away from the world as is, and enabled a striving towards capturing the truth through abstraction and expression of the ideal. Beauty moved out of nature and into this abstraction, waiting to be reached for. Musical form in particular became the principle interface for the transcendent: no longer a “text” to be followed, but an independent object with its own tendencies (that is to say, material).¹¹³

Elaine Scarry notes that this creation of a transcendental world accompanied a division of the aesthetic realm (formerly referred to only as beauty) into not only beauty but also the sublime. The characteristics of the sublime seem to align with those of the transcendental, as formulated by the separability principle:

The sublime occasioned the demotion of the beautiful because it ensured that the meadow flowers, rather than being perceived in their *continuity* with the august silence of ancient groves (as they had when the two cohabited the inclusive realm of beauty), were now seen instead as a *counterpoint* to that grove. Formerly capable of charming or astonishing, now beauty was the not-astonishing; as it was also the not-male, the not-mountainous, the not-righteous, the not-night. Each attribute or illustration of the beautiful became one member of an oppositional pair, and because it was almost always the diminutive member, it was also the dismissible member.¹¹⁴

Beauty, then, became an aesthetic judgment grounded primarily in the real, arising from fleeting moments in the particulars of an object or situation.

Scarry speaks of these particulars often arising out of the observation of one’s

¹¹² Rancière, *The Politics Of Aesthetics*, 22.

¹¹³ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works*, 164.

¹¹⁴ Elaine Scarry, “On Beauty And Being Just” (presented at the Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Yale University, March 25, 1998), 57.

error, or a radical alteration of attention to something. It can be fleeting; and often it is: “At the moment one comes into the presence of something beautiful, it greets you. It lifts away from the neutral background as though coming forward to welcome you—as though the object were designed to ‘fit’ your perception.”¹¹⁵ In this moment of beauty presenting itself, it is unprecedented, and to become preceded it prompts its replication, or its sharing, or the continuing validation of its existence through observing it. This explains one of the reasons why Kant, in the *Critique Of Judgement*, ranks music low among the arts, for it “imposes itself upon the listener for longer than one usually desires.”¹¹⁶ Musical works face this problem with their impressions: since their forms are abstract, one can only take them in moments at a time through listening. Wye Allanbrook describes the sublime as a “thunderbolt” that “strikes the human soul”; in one moment, we perceive that which is astonishing in its vastness.¹¹⁷

Does relational art evoke such a feeling? The preoccupations of the artists described in *Relational Aesthetics*, such as gallery occupations (Pierre Joseph, Julia Scher), gathering the details of strangers (Sophie Calle, On Kawara), or a presentation of the modes of everyday life (Alix Lambert’s *Wedding Piece* or the Premiata Ditta group) do not treat their particulars as beautiful, or as part of an attempt to access the transcendent. If anything, there seems to be an emphasis on their own mundane difference in themselves, which while potentially crucial

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 18

¹¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, quoted in Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works*, 169.

¹¹⁷ Wye J. Allanbrook, “Is The Sublime A Musical Topos?,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 7, no. 02 (September 2010): 264.

for social change, do not function along traditional aesthetic lines. Relational aesthetics, as positioned by Bourriaud as an extension of Guattari's call for new forms of subjectivity, actually does not meet the Kantian qualifications for aesthetic judgment:

(i) Such judgements should be held universally for all persons, such that all private points of view are suspended. (ii) They should be derived from a disinterested attention, such that the viewer takes no interest either in the existence of the object or in the particular concept under which the object falls (what kind of object it is). (iii) Aesthetic judgements should be purposive yet be without specific purpose, for beauty is absolute and not instrumental. If an object looks as if it were designed for a moral, practical, or scientific end, and the viewer takes account of that end, then the viewer is not contemplating the object aesthetically. (iv) Aesthetic judgements should depend upon a modality of satisfaction or sympathy, a reconciliation of all our mental faculties.¹¹⁸

Most critiques of relational aesthetics do not address the Kantian qualities of relational art, but it is oddly implicit in their problematization of relational aesthetics' politics is a concern with their utilization. Critiques such as those discussed in the previous chapter presuppose that Kantian notions of universality and disinterest are inherently not in play in an art that draws principally on the social, especially given relational art's prominence within the sphere of art-market practices.

Martin notes that the merger of art and life frequently leads to art being circulated in capitalist forms and the aesthetization of capitalist life, collapsing notions of artistic autonomy¹¹⁹. While all art objects are affected by these practices, Downey furthermore questions whether relational art in particular

¹¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, quoted in Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works*, 169.

¹¹⁹ Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics," 384.

actually address socioeconomic tensions by revealing them, or further embodies them, indicating an unequivocal instrumentality at work.¹²⁰ Because these artworks use people as material, their interest is inherently part of the work and removes conditions of both universality and disinterest: everybody has a different stake in how they approach the relational artwork. Moreover, the relational work encourages active interest in the objects of the art as commodities, encouraging modification, adaptation, and use aware specifically of the object's labor-value. Compared to Scarry's claim that beautiful objects encourage their own circulation and recreation, in relational art there is no interest in the object as it is. Examples include Felix Gonzales-Torres' candy piles, which he instructed the audience to take from, Rirkrit Tiravaneja's galleries-cum-soup kitchens, and Liam Gillick's bulletin boards. Downey notes that these works by and large rely on provoking a reaction through their use:

Relational art practices are largely defined within a utilitarian hermeneutic rather than, strictly speaking, a contemplative one: in relational art there is, as I have noted previously, not much to see and the interactive (political) use-value of an artwork tends to be advocated over its value as a contemplative (aesthetic) object.¹²¹

A utilitarian function is by definition instrumental, thus challenging the third condition of aesthetic judgment. It is central to relational aesthetics via Bourriaud's "co-existence criterion", which puts forward a set of conditions by which an artwork's quality is determined by how effectively it creates an interstitial space for alternate social possibilities: "Does this work permit me to

¹²⁰ Downey, "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics," 271.

¹²¹ Ibid. 272

enter in dialogue? Could I exist, and how, in the space it defines?"¹²² The emphasis here is on the artwork as productive, and being used to produce.

Essentially the beauty of relational works, if any, lies in their capability to create other objects. They exist with the purpose of production, and what Bourriaud admires in the abstract are the new models of life produced in theory (practice has proven to be much more complicated). Thus, inherent to these microtopic possibilities is a project of anticipated difference, rather than attention to the objects themselves. This approach reveals the issue of appealing to an aesthetic of beauty in relational aesthetics: it lies in the world-revealing potential of beautiful *things*. It is suggestive of the political critiques of beauty as creating indifference to unjust social arrangements. That is, the objects, if not for their utter banality, threaten to overtake our attention to their relations. Aside from the aforementioned banality, Scarry contests such an issue by insisting that beautiful objects necessitate a "constant perceptual acuity—high dives of seeing, hearing, touching".¹²³ Furthermore, she insists on the viewer as adjacent and un-self-interested, a radical decenteredness that keeps the viewer's own relation to the object as one of difference, but compelled to create not objects but relations in a site of beauty.¹²⁴

Nonetheless, an alternative aesthetic of difference proves to be far more effective in understanding relational aesthetics, and much experimental music as well. It is the aesthetic of the interesting that enables a greater understanding of

¹²² Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 109.

¹²³ Scarry, "On Beauty," 42

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 81

the difference that is fundamental to any relation. Ngai classes the interesting as an aesthetic category distinct from beauty and particularly well suited to discussing the merger of art and life in relational aesthetics. Aesthetics such as the zany, cute, and interesting are “minor” for Ngai, as opposed to the “classical categories” of the sublime and the beautiful, because they are “weak,” and “trivial”. More specifically, they are able to adapt and oscillate between different modes of reception, rather than producing the monolithic feeling that results from the uniting of mental faculties that Kant insists on as a qualification for aesthetic judgment.

This ambiguity is particularly suited for the aesthetic of the interesting. It begins with curiosity and wonder, “somewhere between an affect and a desire”, and ends up as a mere difference of information, simultaneously a cultivated style and an external judgment upon it.¹²⁵ The aesthetic of the interesting concerns itself with this unstable connection between what is experienced and what is known: it pertains to a minimal affective intensity that helps to tie interest to rational cognition. Ngai explains it as having to do especially with relations:

The interesting is thus an aesthetic experience that enables us to negotiate the relationship between identity and difference, the unexpected and the familiar. It also enables us to negotiate the relationship between the possible and the actual...it is an aesthetic whose difference from others resides in its indeterminate or minimal affect, its function and structural generality, its seriality, its eclecticism, its recursiveness, and its future-oriented temporality.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012), 116.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 136

The relations that the interesting deals with are primarily discursive. Its origins in the writings of Schlegel on “interessante” concerned the proliferation and mixing of literary and poetic genres, which “begins with the recognition that modern art is not reducible to beauty.”¹²⁷ Ngai extends this recognition to understand the development of the novel, and finds it particularly applicable to the conceptual art of the 1960s. In the latter, the works of art internalize their own theory by making the production of discourse an inherent part of its value, akin to the relational art of the present. The discourse of conceptual art, for Ngai, functions in a productive manner that looks towards the possible in a more inclusive stance than Bourriaud’s:

...the interesting, although noticeably lacking the political (if not always progressive) symbolism of the sublime and the beautiful, is not entirely devoid of a politics of its own: certainly not a revolutionary politics, but rather a liberal, Habermasian politics of expanding the public sphere and the discursive communities built around the particular kinds of circulating forms therein.¹²⁸

This discourse comes about as a result of the gap between the perception of the art and one’s conception of it: interesting art is forced to justify its existence as part of interest’s rational nature. Beauty, on the other hand, is not questioned; Scarry argues that to do would take away an object’s quality of beauty:

A vase may catch your attention, you turn your head to look at it, you look at it still more carefully, and suddenly its beauty is gone. Was the beauty of the object false, or was the beauty real but brief? The three-second call to beauty can have produced the small flex of the mind, the constant moistening, that other objects—large, arcing, flexuous—will more enduringly require. We make a mistake, says Seamus Heaney, if, driving down a road between wind and water, overwhelmed by what we see, we

¹²⁷ Ibid.126

¹²⁸ Ibid. 294

assume we will see “it” better if we stop the car. It is there in the passage.¹²⁹

This may appear to set up a division between interest and beauty, suggesting that interest arises in beauty’s disappearance. But Ngai reminds us that we find things interesting when they are beautiful as well as not beautiful; interest is thus a quality that can coexist with beauty, if in some tension.¹³⁰ This tension comes from the inherent difference of beauty as object-based and interest as difference-based. Both qualities prompt their own reproduction, but interest spreads itself as information around an object, while beauty incites a certain desire to keep the object in existence, through copying it, or simply keeping it within one’s gaze.

In the case of experimental music, particularly the Cagean practice from which Wandelweiser is descended, these circulations exist in complicity with each other owing to the intersection of “interesting” conceptual art with the “beautiful” legacy of art music via Webern and Schoenberg. Is *4’33”* interesting because it calls attention to sounds previously unheard, or is that sound beautiful, even sublime, in its own right? For M. J. Grant, the “mode” of experimental music is purely one of difference:

This drawing attention to processes of cognition which have festered into habit, this making concrete of something which we had hardly need consider before, this indicating of the physicality of sound waves, or of the unnaturalness of silence, or the gravitational pull of a bell, this presentation of the hidden realities of our interactions with the physical and social world around us and the cognitive processes within us - this is

¹²⁹ Scarry, “On Beauty,” 38.

¹³⁰ Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*, 169.

the mode of experimental music. A telephone rings. At the end of the day, it's just a telephone. But there's no such thing as just a telephone.¹³¹

Grant explains that there is no such thing as a telephone because of sound's relational qualities: sounds that have been experienced carry with them their context of audibility, in which they may become routine, losing their potential because of the context in which they are most typically recreated. Scarry claims that beautiful things "always carry greetings from other worlds within them,"¹³² but the other worlds, in music, do not make themselves immediately obvious. Any beauty heard must then necessarily come about as a result of interest, of the possible worlds that are made different through focused observation and elaboration. Specifically, in the case of experimental music, attention is paid to the *process* of difference that arises as a result of indeterminacy, be it in the score or musical material.

In a sense, any indeterminate notation or open work invokes interest. Observing a score inherently brings about the inquiry into its final sounding product; with conventionally notated scores, accumulated expectation has meant that generally the musical result of a score can be precisely imagined. Indeterminacy leaves our expectation the possibility of being at odds with the actual sound produced. Consider Michael Pisaro's *sonnenfern* (*Harmony Series 11c*), in which two musicians play "a very soft, low tone, for the duration of the piece", and a third plays two other tones. The music can be anticipated, but never absolutely predicted. For listeners (both the audience as well as the performers),

¹³¹ Grant, "Experimental Music Semiotics," 183.

¹³² Scarry, "On Beauty," 33.

the music exists in not only wondering what tone will be played next, but what will play with the tone. Experimental music, especially the music of Wandelweiser, invites this potential in manipulating music's mode of reception through the framing of silent and sounding experiences as commentary on each other, each creating anticipation and awareness of the other. The experience of anticipation is central to the aesthetic of interest, as the audience awaits and experiences a series of differences that divert from their notions of listening, fulfilling the alternate possibilities through actualization. Antoine Beuger has said that he does not believe composition to be about creating differences, but rather, the opening up of a whole world of difference.¹³³ A world of difference still operates as a total context of ambiguity (i.e. just because there is more to be interesting does not push it towards the overwhelming affect of the sublime), but the mass of potential difference brings attention to itself in Wandelweiser's mode of articulated listening. This practice is implicitly created in the context of their indeterminate scores, but it is not only the score that results in this process of interesting openness.

Consider Cornelius Cardew's statement that "there can be no indeterminacy in the notation itself...but only in the rules for its interpretation."¹³⁴ He reminds the reader that conventional notation itself is really filled with all sorts of indeterminacy (resisting, that is, an absolute precision of musical parameters of pitch, timbre, volume, etc.), but have been

¹³³ Saunders, "Antoine Beuger," 233.

¹³⁴ Cornelius Cardew, "Notation: Interpretation, Etc.," *Tempo*, New Series, no. 58 (July 1, 1961), 23.

practiced under certain vague assumptions for so long that they are taken as given. These historical tendencies are purely interpretive (as opposed to Adorno's notion of the tendency of material),¹³⁵ that is to say, they are based in the relations surrounding their actualization. In particular, the relation of the score to its interpreters, who bring their experience and techniques into the actualization, is key in establishing the interest of each place's unique articulation. Bourriaud's relational aesthetics produce new interaction in the manner of those preexisting, whereas Michael Pisaro, for example, believes in performance enhancing the relations of sound, place, and people through a score:

The nature of musical material cannot be confined to an idealization of the score or of notation, nor is it sound alone. The score is a virtual space of descriptions of occurrences, of their provisional specification. It is also usually the place where the first decisions are made. Sounds are what they are: they have characteristics, qualities; they are, in Deleuze's terminology "intensities." They are raw. They do not begin the process of abstraction all on their own; they need a push, and therefore have a relationship to guiding set of instructions and conditions.¹³⁶

The interesting relationship is set up as a result of this intersection that is enabled by the score and performers. The difference lies between the sounds and their method of activation, and their framing in composition. Composed with this in mind, Wandelweiser music serves as an interrogation of itself, investigating different relations between sound and silence by putting them into practice in various situations. This investigation is, in a sense, one continuous process via a series of works, a world of worlds that looks back onto itself

¹³⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, A Continuum Book (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 32.

¹³⁶ Pisaro, "Eleven Theses," 9.

through the development of central concepts in order to realize new relations in autonomous situations.

This merging of art and criticism is central to the interesting for its constitution of a reflective state. But then are the sounds produced within this intersection merely interesting as detached intellectual objects, or are they able to be beautiful? Given that the current aesthetic regime, as Rancière describes it, is concerned principally with a modes of being and cultural conditions for art, perhaps the question is no longer relevant. But as mentioned previously, Rancière notes that slippage between different systems of art occurs frequently, so what seems to exist in experimental music is a twofold overlap of an interesting arrangement of sound combined with sound as singularly experienced.

Arguably, certain characteristics of the beautiful (a historical product of the poetic regime) carry over into functions of the aesthetic regime. What the beautiful and interesting have in common is that they prompt their reproduction, as noted earlier. Yet they are concerned with two very different modes of being: the interesting is concerned with change, while the experience of beauty is meant to transcendently access a certain timelessness, or suspension.¹³⁷ Elements of both exist in relational art and experimental music: a permanent formative principle produces changes and interactions and sounds that call attention to themselves via their differences. Because music develops instantly in time (as opposed to the fixity of objects that Elaine Scarry deems one

¹³⁷ Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*, 136.

of the necessary conditions for beauty to emerge¹³⁸) this change, in its continuity, may be regarded as the object of beauty. Michael Gallope, also evoking the Deleuzian intensity of music, describes how the new becomes an established state:

What is musical about music is something that exceeds the boundaries of social formations. Music is really a flux of sensation that is so completely new from moment to moment that it reminds us that a life is becoming new from moment to moment (so new, according to the logic of the virtual, that we cannot even say "I" again, quickly enough—still more intensely—the "I" of my life cannot feel, hear, listen, or sense quickly enough). Music is so powerful, it has already taken us away from our worldly situation, at an enormous speed. 'Music strips bodies of their inertia, of the materiality of their presence: it disembodies bodies.' Our bodies, normally in a kind of inert state of actual function and socially situated relations, are brought into immanently living, but impersonal forces of motion. Music is a disembodied machine; it is a force that overwhelms us.¹³⁹

Whereas Kant thought poorly of music for forcing itself upon our experience, in Gallope's thought music is effective for that reason especially; it serves as a particular collection of intensities that bring us out of our own experience. The articulation of sound is conferred instantly, and renegotiated even by the time we perceive it, as it works on physical, emotional, and intellectual levels (what Scarry refers to as a "radical decentering"). The affective power of music lies, then, in its ability to recontextualize and make new our experience of the world at a much faster pace than our consumption of the visual arts, which must be found and seen before they can be affective.

¹³⁸ Scarry, "On Beauty," 65.

¹³⁹ Michael Gallope, "Is There a Deleuzian Musical Work?," *Perspectives of New Music* 46, no. 2 (July 1, 2008), 102.

For a recontextualization to take place, of course, a context is necessary in the first place. Most musical sound takes place in the context of form: a structuring principle that organizes repetition, or allows for an extended continuity of musical figures. For Adorno, formal relations are directly related to the musical material, but they are also evoked dynamically in order to extend the process of continuation, such that truly “great” forms disguise their origin from themes in an overall symmetry.¹⁴⁰ This symmetry is key to our understanding of the long-form processes that, moment by moment, constitute music but deliver affect that we can only partially grasp on the rational level.

We know the sublime vastness as a container of infinite mystery and novelty, more than we can ever know despite having a grasp of at least the notion of its boundaries. A classical example may be the night sky, but in music formal relations and symmetry seem to embody it (a “mathematical sublime” of rhythmic and melodic organization is central to analytic claims of musical greatness, for example). Symmetry, however, is also the domain of beauty, according to Scarry, though it is also sometimes said that beauty exists in the departures from symmetry, individuating particular objects or instances.¹⁴¹ A beautiful moment in music arrives, and it subsequently enlivens us as distinct from the perspective of the form, which has set up the musical material to arrive at this beauty. In short, form sets up difference, from which we notice the particulars of an object anew. Beauty ripples out of the surface of a form as a result of the observer’s subjective act of perception. Ideally, in music it may

¹⁴⁰ Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 99-101.

¹⁴¹ Scarry, “On Beauty,” 66.

coexist with interest as a point in which interest meets the sublime and is revived, empowered to keep on moving.

Wandelweiser's music brings us a decidedly different kind of form. No longer defined by the movement of harmonic or rhythmic processes, a greater totality is introduced, or rather implied. Pizaro's *harmony* series introduces us to the world of all total combinations of tones, where each combination is a world unto itself (as mentioned early by Beuger, an infinity of cuts into infinite silence). When the pieces incorporate found text, such as poetry in the works of Mark So and the *harmony* series, or constitute the composition, as in Brogan's *études* or Werder's *2010*¹, the whole of discourse surrounding the text or evoked by it becomes the form against which new experiences emerge and are circulated. Referring back to Bourriaud's definition of form as an encounter, these forms bring us into contact with specific situations drawn from these worlds. What mediates the contact is the coexistence of the situations of everyday life, and the relations that constitute those situations. The interest of this experimental music plays out at first as anticipation of contact, and as difference is negotiated, the new is created in such a way for us that we are prompted to share it, or at least engage it in a process of continuation with our own subjectivity. The terms of beauty and interest, as elaborated here, exist in complex complicity with each other, enabled particularly as a result of the openness characteristic of Wandelweiser's music via its notation and its emphasis on the listening process. By moving beyond traditional sites of beauty, Wandelweiser's music invokes the interesting, but the similarities between the beautiful and the interesting lead to

a process of aesthetic experience folding in on itself, into the flux of sensation that reintensifies our relations by radically revising the topography of our possible experience. To refer to topography here is to invoke Bourriaud again, who posits it as a central framework for modern aesthetics, describing the modern artist as a traveler, and the journey as an emblematic aesthetic form for the twenty-first century.¹⁴² For Bourriaud, journey-forms are an attempt to render aesthetic the modern globalized, digitalized experience. Presented with the whole world, full of a myriad of signs and cultures, the artist must carve out meaning through traveling through sites of information and concepts that may be displaced great distances in physical space. But whereas the works he presents in his writings and curated projects attempt to recycle banal experiences, Wandelweiser begins from silence, making the unavailable available:

A beginning of music as beginning which not yet is Music.
This beginning happens in an indetermined field where
pure *incidence* may turn into *coincidence* - (something) *occurs*.
Much later Music and Discourse would follow.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 113.

¹⁴³ Werder, *Text Scores*.

Conclusion, or, New Musical Coordinates

Cage's music, according to Carl Dalhaus, aims for "a kind of everyday life which is not a pragmatic world guided by ends but a challenging and pointless one which holds ideas of meaning and of aims at a distance."¹⁴⁴ Wandelweiser affirms its place as post-Cagean music by engaging in a play of interest in order to disrupt notions of beauty through a constant recontextualization of all aspects of sound and music, starting with the very conditions in which the listener places himself or herself. It moves beyond being aimless in order to facilitate a personal formation of meaning. This approach has been successful for Wandelweiser on two fronts: firstly, it has allowed them to accomplish the goal of engaging with the music of Cage, rather than just his ideas. But at the same time, it has enabled the music to further explore ideas beyond those Cage was proposing. As Lauren Redhead notes, contemporary music is especially apt to "do philosophy" through its inherent semiotic ambiguity.¹⁴⁵ The compositions discussed here take ambiguity to an extreme, and in so doing prove especially effective in explicating, among many concepts, a new form of relational aesthetics. Though relational aesthetics' origins are in the contemporary fine arts and installations, the music of Wandelweiser is actually better able to enact the basic tenets of the theory; it is more readily able to generate new social relations because it engages the listener directly with the world. Nicolas Bourriaud and related artists have given up the arts' pursuit of beauty in favor of submerging themselves in the everyday

¹⁴⁴ Dalhaus, *Schoenberg And The New Music*, 278.

¹⁴⁵ Redhead, "Relational Aesthetics: A Practice-Lead Investigation," 35.

rather than transcending it. But Wandelweiser's ambiguous music exceeds being merely interesting to become a fascinating play of affects and possibilities.

More so than the cosmopolitanism theorized by Bourriaud, the possibility inherent in Wandelweiser's music carries significant political consequences. When Manfred Werder proposes "it is possible to conceive of music as the totality of all sound... far exceeding the thin sliver audible to man," there is an implicit project of making audible what has not been visible, or at least making us aware of it (he follows, "to hear this music, conscious of the presence of all sounds that remain inaudible to us, is to be filled with a great joy...").¹⁴⁶ This joy is the product of an emancipation of the senses, a disruption of Rancière's "distribution of the sensible." Governing this distribution is Rancière's "police," defined as "an organizational system of coordinates that establishes a distribution of the sensible or a law that divides the community into groups, social positions, and functions."¹⁴⁷ The regulative work-concept is a direct example of a musical police, rendering certain sounds, certain situations, more audible as music based on historical circumstance. What we experience in Wandelweiser is auditory emancipation (in the figurative sense as well as Rancière's), the rendering of all sound as equal. Relational aesthetics assists in our understanding of this emancipation through an emphasis on the social: relations are comprised of individuals' experience of the world; Bourriaud's emphasis on the artist and audience as semionauts, assembling the signs overpopulating everyday life into coherence, enables an understanding of new

¹⁴⁶ Werder, *The Sounding of The World*.

¹⁴⁷ Rancière, *The Politics Of Aesthetics*, 3.

organizing coordinates that incorporate the variety of human experience into a musical framework. Because of this incorporation, compositions by Werder, Pisaro, and other Wandelweiser musicians are never the same twice, not only on the level of their perception, but in their very structure. The particulars of a situation inform realization in every respect, from form to instrumentation to location, and any other number of musical parameters that articulated listening makes us aware of.

The increased awareness of previously unconsidered parameters helps point the way towards new musical practices. Practically all factors of a musical event are shown to be variable in Wandelweiser: the use of indeterminacy and text notation especially helps in providing flexibility in their actualization.

According to Adam Harper, traditional music practices have a defined “space” of variables, corresponding to the image, or context, of a musical practice. Thus:

Creating new music could mean widening the range of musical variables in a musical object (or its image), which increases the overall degree of freedom, or adding new constrained variables to a musical object (or its image), which increases the overall number of degrees of freedom...The change that new music requires is arbitrarily small. That ‘new music’ can have such a minute definition is a reflection of the idea that we can’t step into the same river twice. ¹⁴⁸

Harper’s statement allows us to understand the “emancipation” of musical material that Adorno spoke of in reference to Schoenberg, but also suggests that changes can be made that continue stylistic change even when it seems, post-Schoenberg, post-Cage, that everything is permissible as music. Particularly, Harper concisely expands the potential of compositional

¹⁴⁸ Adam. Harper, *Infinite Music: Imagining the next Millennium of Human Music-Making* (Ropley: Zero, 2011), 150.

engagement with variables when he states: “Clearly *there is music beyond sound*...That non-sonic elements don’t seem to be ‘part of *the music*’ is simply a result of the conventions that surround the way we think about what music actually is, especially in the West.”¹⁴⁹ These elements are readily recognized as the social relations that surround, inform, and ultimately constitute music. This could be all manner of factors relating to presentation; already, Wandelweiser has explored the constitution of musical place through their presentations of performances, from the collection of realizations of *2005*¹ from around the world to *3 Jahre—156 musikalische Ereignisse—1 Skulptur*, where Carlos Inderhees established a performances series with the philosophy that “A period of time is constituted through regular changes./A place is constituted through regular changes.”¹⁵⁰ Relational aesthetics lends increased importance to these elements by bringing into focus these differences and changes in performance as examples of new forms of subjectivity. Far from shifting attention away from the sound itself, it brings all variables into more elaborate, revealing dialogue. This dialogue may consist of further indeterminacy, or perhaps an expansion of compositional choices made to include specific social configurations that could enable aesthetic difference in the music itself. Central to the incorporation of relations into compositional aesthetics, is the importance of dialogue. Music has always been concerned with community, but what is offered now is a music that can construct community through a shared pursuit of specific forms of

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 31

¹⁵⁰ M. J. Grant, “Series and Place,” *Contemporary Music Review* 30, no. 6 (December 2011), 529.

composed experience. Wandelweiser offers a model of music-making that retains both the beauty of sound and the richness of interaction, and holds both in high regard as mutually enriching. As Pisaro puts it:

What writing music comes down to, in the end, is care. We create situations. We care about them and take care of them. And we care for the people involved.¹⁵¹

His consideration comes from the collective history of his fellow musicians, based in personal experience rather than manufactured togetherness characteristic of much relational art. Rather than this serving as a rebuke to relational aesthetics, it demonstrates a realm of creativity beyond what Bourriaud conceived of, suggesting how the theory may be expanded upon. It shows that subjectivity does not produce truly effective change when instrumentalized; rather, the change is emergent, based on particular circumstances that provide a basis to make the world anew based on where we focus our care and attention. To truly transform the world involves caring for as much of it as possible, and that involves finding those parts of the world that typically go unnoticed. Wandelweiser opens our ears to this mission through making the unheard heard; struck by the unexpected qualities, we take the role of artist, the creator of relations, into our own hands. Rather than merely combine life and art, Wandelweiser helps allow us to change the world to have more life and more art, not in a simplistic merger but a dynamic play of experience.

¹⁵¹ Pisaro, *Writing, Music*, 76.

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