IN PURSUIT OF SLOW TIME:

Modern Music and a Clinical Vignette

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Moving from clinical to creative experience, our argument has stressed several points: (1) The difference between psychopathology and creativity depends less on particular mechanisms-for example, splitting-than on the use to which they are put. (2) Psychopathology represents an attempt at defensive mastery, with private and unconscious meaning for the individual concerned, and is purchased at the cost of constricted awareness and functioning. (3) The creative process contributes to the public domain by broadening the apprehension of reality. (4) In any particular case-Picasso, for example-defensive and creative purposes may and often do overlap.

The coexistence within an individual of defensive and creative purposes implies many things-among them, that an ego mechanism such as splitting may be used both to repress private unconscious conflicts and to foster abstraction of certain elements selected from a myriad reality in order to highlight them.

Whether a creative work achieves wordly success depends on many factors beyond our purview. A psychological way of explicating the factor of timing (Kubler 1962) is to say that it

takes a dovetailing of personal conflict and the context of history (Erikson 1958)-a synchrony between the (latent) concerns of the individual and his society-to form a psychosocial bridge: the work transcends the private; the audience, recognizing itself in the work, resonates with it, feels affirmed and completed by it.[11]

Knowingly or unknowingly, the creative artist is often attuned to currents of unconscious thought and feeling within and around him. Thus, music, like literature and art, may well prefigure as well as reflect its times. Music is a creative transformation of feeling into form. It balances the relaxation of constancy with the tension of change. Combining defensive with creative purposes, it may also represent the wishful illusion that the flow of time is controllable-that time is cyclical as well as linear-and in this way, perhaps, serves as an unconscious defense against death.

This chapter attempts to discern what some modern music is "getting at" and foretelling-not by way of examining the personal problems that certain musicians may have attempted to master through their music-but by juxtaposing a clinical vignette to some recent innovations in the musical approach to time. It suggests that some modern music, like some traumatized patients, responds to the anticipation of imminent yet unpredictable violence by altering the perception of time. Creative and defensive aspects of mastery unite to transform and expand perception of this dimension of reality.

The art of the novel treats the stuff of personality as a malleable medium. The novelist reaches into himself to discover the raw material of memory and imagination from which to fashion characters and narrative possibilities corresponding to the potential of some of the "multiple personalities" to be found in each of us.

Music, likewise, treats its material as a malleable aesthetic medium. However, its material being time, and nonverbal, we are immediately confronted with especially formidable problems-

problems regarding the nature of time, as well as the necessity of using language to discuss a nonverbal artform.

The Greeks used two different terms, *kairos* and *chronos,* to refer to different modes of experiencing time and organizing behavior in relation to it. The term *kairos* remained in classical Greek only and did not come down through Latin into the Romance languages. It denotes the human and living time of intentions or goals. It is episodic time with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It has to do with the flux of Heraclitus-a confluence of past memory, present perception, and future desire. All these coexist in the ongoing human experience, along with preconscious awareness and unconscious motivation.

Chronos, on the other hand, is clock-time. It refers to the measurable time of succession, before and after, earlier and later. It has to do with the static atomism of Parmenides, the discontinuous world of fixed and constant entities in empty space. Instead of a range of preconscious awareness and a whole field of unconscious motivational forces, there is a conscious, focused perception of the passage of units of time.

This is not to say that there are two types of time, one real and one unreal. Nor, for that matter, are there three types of time-past, present, and future. There is only one time. It is a mental abastraction, not a thing. It does not do things, such as "flow" in any direction, either linear or cyclical. There are cyclical events, like the seasons, day and night, and serial events, like growth, aging, and death. Whether one experiences time as cyclical primarily or as serial depends partly on one's attitude toward death. The cyclical experience of time denies death; the serial experience of time accepts it.

Chronos and kairos, in other words, are different ways of *experiencing* time as well as of expressing certain truths about the relations between events (Whitehead). For Newton, "true" time was absolute and mathematical time in a uniform flow. For Bergson, this so-called true time

of Newton was a fiction as opposed to Bergson's *duree reelle.* For Cassirer, neither concept sufficed; each represented a partial view into a whole-a particular standpoint of consciousness. Both must be understood *as symbols* that the mathematician and the physicist take as a basis in their view of the outer world, and the psychologist in his view of the inner one.

The conception of the physical world requires only the chronological aspect of time. Both views, however, are necessary for a conception of the human world. Furthermore, while the world is both atomic and in flux, continuous and discontinuous, static and flowing, objective and subjective, concrete and abstract, universal and particular, one cannot experience both of these awarenesses of time cognitively at the same time. Instead, there is an oscillation of awareness between the two, organizing our experience of the world (Jaques 1982).

The dual experience that the cognitive mode cannot accomplish the aesthetic mode makes possible. By treating time as an aesthetic medium, music is able to bridge two different dimensions of time and harmoniously accommodate diversity and unity, change and constancy. Just as the novel treats the constituents of the person as having the plasticity of an aesthetic medium suitable for shaping into new, self-consistent characters, music deals with time as being infinitely flexible while retaining its inner integrity.

Through the use of various devices (ornamentation, the minor key, moving from one key to another, dissonance) it causes delay and arouses the tension of anticipating what will come next (L. B. Meyer 1956, 1967). At the same time, many of the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic variations introduced for the sake of apparent variety are actually repetitions and recurrences in disguise (Bernstein 1976). Being experienced as returns to the familiar, they are associated with the reduction of tension. Thus, in music one may experience the tension of change together with the release of tension that comes with the return to constancy (G. J. Rose 1980). Moreover, since the built-in delays and concealed recurrences act as a steady stimulus to memory as well as an anticipation of what will come next, there is a conflating of past and future. In music, past and

future coexist with the present as a dynamic whole. This whole is built up in an accumulation of wave after wave of intensification. In other words, instead of being viewed as a static measure-divisible into equal parts-of the transient events that give *form* to experience, time is revealed as a dynamic force, reflecting the complexity, volume, and variability of the *content* of psychic life (Zuckerkandl 1956).

How else may one account for the widespread impact of a "simple1' musical structure such as the famous first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" (no. 14 in C-sharp minor, opus 27/2)? One of the most popular pieces of keyboard music, it has inspired at least two novels and several paintings and poems. It has even been arranged for chorus and orchestra with the words of the "Kyrie" as a text. According to Czerny, Beethoven himself resented the popularity of the work. Nor did he have anything to do with its programmatic title. The phrase, "Moonlight, or a boat passing the wild scenery of Lake Lucerne in the moonlight," was applied to the sonata by the poet-musician Rellstab thirty years after its composition.

The three-note melody is itself only a slight variation of its three-note accompaniment. The acompaniment figures gradually become an end in themselves as they rise from the middle to the upper registers of the piano and back to the role of accompaniment. The original melody then returns. The brief coda is based on the rhythm of the melodic motif, which was itself derived from the rhythm of the accompaniment.

Obviously, this structure is devoid of any referential meaning to things outside itself. It has nothing to do with either moonlight or other scenes from nature, let alone abstract concepts such as courage or longing. Rather, the accumulation of three-note wave after similar wave combines near-constancy with minute differences, and this gradual intensification of focused attentions is associated with mounting feeling.[12]

Such emotion, according to Langer (1942, 1953), is the "meaning" of music; it is a

representation of the emotional quality of subjective, lived time made audible-an auditory apparition of felt time. Instead of vaguely sensing time as we do through our own physical life processes, we hear its passage. But it is not a trickle of successive moments as it is in the conceptual framework of classical physics with which we usually operate in practical life. "Musical time is not at all like clock-time. It has . . . voluminousness and complexity and variability that make it utterly unlike metrical time" (Langer 1957, .37). Music sounds the way feelings feel, mirroring their ups and downs, motion and rest, fulfillment and change.

Langer's distinction between discursive and presentational symbols is a helpful one. *Discursive* symbols are readily translatable and have fixed definitions. Music, on the other hand, like all the arts, expresses the quality of emotional life through *presentational* symbols. Presentational symbols are untranslatable; they are understandable only through their relations within the total structure of the work. The meaning of a piece of music lies entirely within the work-that is, in its own formal structure and inner relations. Unlike ordinary language, presentational symbols capture the flux of sensations and emotions.

For example, music can express opposites simultaneously and so capture the ambivalence of content better than words or language. In addition to such simultaneity, the linear unfolding of music in the course of time also mirrors the "shapes" of emotions. Music sets up expectations, interposes delays, and grants hidden recurrences before reaching a final resolution. The frustration of expectations is associated with rising tension, its gratification with release of tension. Tension-release embodies feeling. And it is precisely this element-the balance between tension and release-that has been called the specific dynamic of musical form (Toch 1948, 157).

Artist-analyst Marion Milner's *On Not Being Able to Paint* (1957) and musician-philosopher Victor Zuckerkandl's posthumously published *Man the Musician* (1973) provide important insights into the relationship of language to nonverbal art. Both make a clear distinction between formal, logical thinking, on the one hand, and creative or aesthetic thinking,

on the other. According to formal logic, all thought which does not make a total separation between what a thing is and what it is not is irrational. Thus, according to formal logic, the whole area of symbolic expression is irrational, since the point about a symbol is that it is both itself and something else. Formal logic, then, gives a false picture in aesthetics; this false picture is avoided, Milner writes, only "if we think about art in terms of its capacity for fusing . . . subject and object, seer and seen and then making a new division of these" (p. 161).

Similarly, Zuckerkandl spells out the differences between objective hearing and musical hearing. The "I" that hears music, he writes, is different from the "I" who is the subject of a sentence, who is going to attend to outside signals in order to react to them in one way or another. The listener to music is more like the swimmer who allows himself to be carried by the water as he swims. Language, being firmly tied to subject-object predicate structure, fails us here. The "I" that listens to music is no longer something that "does"-that is, hears and now "has" the results of what it has done; namely, the sensations of tones. Hearing music involves hearing not only tones but also their direction, tension, motion, organic structure. It is the kind of hearing that moves with the tones and draws the hearer into their motion. Thus, it involves an interpenetration of subject and object, within rationality, drawn into the experience of the movement of felt time (Zuckerkandl 1973, 160-62). (The similarity to psychoanalytic listening is so striking as to require no comment.)

Both Milner and Zuckerkandl make clear that aesthetic hearing or viewing is more like creative, nonlogical thinking; also, that both are quite different from objective perception and cognitive, logical thinking. The difference lies in the opposition between subject and object-their separateness--in the case of cognitive, logical thinking, and in the togetherness of thinker and thought--their mutually influential motion-in aesthetic, creative thinking.

Milner summarizes the problem neatly: "Clearly the great difficulty in thinking logically about this problem is due to the fact that we are trying to talk about a process which stops being

that process as soon as we talk about it, trying to talk about a state in which the 'me/not-me' distinction is not important, but to do so at all we have to make the distinction" (p. 161).

Turning now from the psychological to the cultural pole, perhaps nothing less than profound scholarship is able to show satisfactorily how a musical style is part of the expressive life of a culture. For example, Charles Rosen (1980) considers the evolution of sonata form out of eighteenth-century arias and concertos. In the late eighteenth century sonata form changed from being music for the court or church into music for a new concert audience, the rising middle class; musical themes took on the dramatic roles and tensions found in opera and were resolved with classical order and proportion. In the nineteenth century sonata form became something else again: it provided prestige, respectability, and constraint for the romantic impulse and a vehicle for the virtuoso's performance.

A comparable study is yet to be written for modern music and contemporary times. In the meantime, two considerations seem obvious. First, the experience of time has become drastically different from what it was previously. As during other disturbed periods in history, our era is characterized by pervasive, random violence, meaningless death, and bankrupt faith. Man has long known dread of total extinction, of course, but never its actual feasibility through instruments of destruction of unprecedented speed, range, and scope. While previous ages had a wider margin of time to buffer the unpredictability of life and powerful religious ideologies to rationalize the seemingly senseless, our own age is largely lacking in both. Secondly, while it would be impossible to prove that such a profound change in our temporal experience is reflected in contemporary music, it is plausible to assume it.

As representatives of modern music I have somewhat arbitrarily selected Charlie Parker's bebop jazz and Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone atonal music. Both, in reflecting a new experience of time, also contributed significantly to altering the musical experience of time.

A clinical vignette that throws some light on the psychological meaning of this altered sense of time is shown by the case of a woman who thought her appointment was one hour earlier than it was, at 3:00 P.M. instead of at 4:00. She then came fifteen minutes late for the imagined appointment (at 3:15), slept in the waiting room, and left fifteen minutes before the actual appointment was about to begin (at 3:45). As I hope to show, she was uprooting time from its usual matrix in a way somewhat analagous to certain aspects of modern music. But first to Charlie Parker and Arnold Schoenberg.

At the end of World War II, highly educated black people were coming into the mainstream of American society. Even Duke Ellington was not sophisticated enough for their taste. Hindemith and Stravinsky were becoming known to innovative jazzmen. Hindemith's own instrument was the viola, but he had played drums in jazz bands in European hotels before coming to the United States in 1940, and his "Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Weber'' has a strong jazz flavoring. But it was Stravinsky who was the main hero to jazz musicians because he was pushing beyond conventions. The great bebop innovators in America-Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Art Blakey, Kenny Clarke, Max Roach-looked on him almost as a god. (As did the pioneers of modern jazz, like Miles Davis and John Coltrane, who later took their music even further out.)

Despite these connections to the past, however, bebop of the 1940s and early 1950s represents a startling break from preceding jazz styles, and one that still causes some discomfort among today's listeners. Ron Rose (1980), in an unpublished ethnomusicological paper, maintains that the musical changes brought about by the bebop movement strongly reflected the changing black self-image in America. I am indebted to him for what follows on bebop.

> Dixieland had its childhood in New Orleans. It became refined into the smoother and more "literate" styles in the years to follow, reaching its height of polish under the rule of the big band style where improvisation (the original tenet of jazz) became the

> exception rather than the rule. . . . Bebop . . . appears to be a clear and unsubtle black rebellion against the white dominated swing scene, as well as the historically established caricature of the black entertainer as mindless and officiously amusing. . . . The bebop musicians were intent upon creating a music which would allow a complete break from its “illiterate” black predecessor, and their white competitors. The music itself, . . . with its difficult chord changes and rhythmic bridges, often executed at breakneck speeds, helped keep the movement "pure” of musicians not entirely competent, as well as create a new standard for the white establishment.

The leader of the bebop movement was Charlie Parker. (While he was considered one of the major innovative forces in the history of jazz, he himself said that if he could take a year off he would go to Yale to study with Hindemith.) Perhaps his major contribution was his conception of the musical phrase as tied to yet at the same time free from the limitations of meter. Specifically, while the musical phrase had previously been restricted to the bar-lines, he extended it through the bar-lines. This means that, as soloist, he would sometimes speed up, sometimes slow down, to bring the melodic line "out of sync” with the underlying metric foundation, which was all the while being provided reliably by the other instruments. The relationship between the melodic line and the rhythmic pulse was thus rendered much more ambiguous; that relationship was no longer bound to the downbeat. Instead of classic syncopation, with its stress on up or downbeats, melodic emphasis could now be placed on any division of the beat on a sixteenth-and thirty-second-note level. This led other jazz musicians to experiment with unorthodox meters, fragment the beat until the meter became indiscernible, or blur the distinction of the downbeat much as a twelve-tonist avoids the concept of a tonic.

In short, Parker’s restructuring of pulse into what might be called a fluid meter superimposed on a metric foundation turned the rhythmic conventions of Western popular music on end. One far-reaching effect was to shift the functions of the other instruments. The beat could now be displaced to the lighter cymbals, freeing the drum to become a most articulate

instrument on its own. Similarly, the pianist's left hand was freed to pursue a different path.

Just as Parker's rhythmic innovations loosened the relationship between the melodic line and the underlying beat, Schoenberg's twelve-tone scale had already freed musical harmonics from the concept of the tonic. This also had far-reaching effects on the musical experience of time. A brief excursion into musical theory is necessary to show how.

It is possible to consider that the most important fact about music-its basic ingredient-is not so much sound as movement (Sessions 1950). Music embodies, defines, and qualifies movement. Each musical phrase-that portion of music that must be performed in a single breath-is a unique gesture that moves constantly toward the goal of completing a cadence. Everything else-the appropriateness of harmonies, melodic intervals, the details of rhythmic elaboration-depends on it. Hearing music is hearing the dynamic quality of tones-that is, hearing their direction, their movement. (In the same way, seeing a picture involves seeing the force, direction, intention in form and color.)

A musical scale is one of the main ways of organizing the current of motion. The scale is a system of order among tones. It describes the relationship among the tones making up the musical organization of a culture. The scales are based on the physical phenomenon of overtones making up the harmonic series. (It is said that using the overtone series for musical theory actually dates back to the ancient Greeks and Chinese, who found the overtone series useful in establishing the norms of pitch relationships, scale structure, and so on.) The starting point or tonic tone in the key of C is C; the tonic tone in the key of G is G, and so forth. The main or dominant overtone of the tonic is five tones away and is called the fifth. The main overtone or dominant of C in the key of C is G. One may move from the key of C to its main overtone, G, and then take that as the starting point, or tonic, of the key of G. One may move in the key of G to its main overtone or dominant, D, and the key of D; thence to its main overtone or dominant, A, and the key of A; thus on to the keys of E, B, F#, and ultimately back to C, completing the circle. This

moving from one key to another, from tonic to dominant, makes possible a circle of fifths. It is based on the underlying organization of the scale, namely, a stable relationship of tonics and dominants based on the universal *physical* phenomenon of the harmonic series of overtones.

A second point: because of the tonal organization of the scale, the tones strive in certain directions. They have driving qualities. This accounts for one of the main ways in which music sets up a current of motion, a system of expectancies. For example, the tonic tone of any key is the one of ultimate rest and stability toward which all other tones tend to move. The octave and fifths and fourths were already binding forces for the ancients. They were relationships so fundamental that they became decisive points of reference around which to organize tones. Together they defined the space within which melody could coherently move.

In the West, other intervals were gradually incorporated into the service of musical expression-thirds, sixths, sevenths, seconds-and finally, augmented and diminished intervals. Each new conquest was associated with a new struggle. The use of these intervals led eventually to the use of chords and a new dimension in music-namely, tonality-and the modulation from one key to another, as well as major and minor modes. ‘‘Tonality implies a kind of perspective in sound, sometimes compared rather shrewdly to perspective in visual art. For it makes possible a system of relations which are unequal in strength, in emphasis, or in significance” (Sessions, 1950, p. 40).

Thus, because of a combination of the universal physical phenomenon of the harmonic series together with cultural evolution, tones that come before lead the Western ear to expect that certain tones will come after. This is so even though, in order to build up tension, this motion or expectancy may be delayed in various musical ways already mentioned.

Tonal music feels like the natural experience of time flow to Western listeners because it is *learned* so early, but it is far from universal. Training and culture are important factors. For

example, a Western listener interprets the vibrato (a slight fluctuation of pitch often less than a semitone) as a constant pitch with a rich sound. An Indian musician, however, whose native music is based on microtones-intervals smaller than the semitone-may perceive the Western vibrato as a significant fluctuation of pitch probably meant to express agitation. Even the basic ability to distinguish the octave[13] may be lost if one is immersed long enough in another culture where such an interval is unimportant-for example, in the music of Australian aborigines.

Now, if we could set up a series of tones which was lifted out of the gravitational pull of tonics and dominants, the overtones of the harmonic series, we would no longer be in a secure circle of fifths, going from one key to another in an orderly way. Any single tone would no longer carry implications of where it came from or where it is going. In other words, we would be taken out of the ordinary flow of time-from past to expected future.

Essentially, this was what Schoenberg did with his twelve-tone scale. It represents a whole system based on rootlessness from the harmonic series. The twelve tones and their sequence are selected in such a way that no tone has any implications regarding the tone that preceded it or the tone that may follow it; much of the directedness of tones has been rendered inoperative. Each of the tones can be played forward, backward, in mirror-image, or backward *and* mirrored. Since there are twelve tones in the Schoenberg system, we now have forty-eight possible sequences. All of them alter the ordinary experience of time as we know it in the West-not, it must be stressed, by tampering with time directly (for example, through rhythmic changes) but through changes in the tonal system, setting up ambiguous expectancies.

In addition to these changes in tonality that modify our expectancies of what will follow what musically, in much of the music of the twentieth century there is a deliberate dissolution of the ordinary sequential flow of musical events as we have come to know it. Instead of a musical event in a composition depending on at least one previous musical event in order to build up to a climax or resolve tension, each musical event arises independently. For example, the sections of a

piece of music may be put together in any possible sequence from one performance to the next with no set beginning or ending. Instead of development and recapitulation as we know it in sonata form, for instance, a piece of music in so-called vertical time does not purposefully set up expectations or fulfill any that might arise accidentally. The listener is forced to give up any expectation, any implication of cause and effect, antecedents and consequents. The sounds are unhampered and also unhelped by referential meaning. The experience has been compared to looking at a piece of sculpture: each viewer is free to walk around it, view it from any angle, in any possible sequence, and linger as long or as briefly with each, leave, return, whatever. In "vertical time'' there is nothing to direct the way time passes (Kramer 1981).

In other words, in the new temporalities in music, past and future have been collapsed into a present moment which floats in uncertainty. There being no impulsion from the past, the overarching present leads to no-future. More than this: the bond tieing cause and consequence together has been loosened and meanings are cast adrift.[14]

Not only music but art and literature for decades have been foretelling and mirroring a world unhinged from the conventions of time, space, and causality that had traditionally supplied order. Take art: if discontinuity is the key to the new temporalities in music, fragmentation describes much of art history after the turn of the century and before World War ll. Cezanne fragemented the image; the cubists fragmented shape; the impressionists and pointillists, light and color; the surrealists, reality itself.

After World War II, abstract expressionism and then minimalist painting rejected the illusion of three-dimensionality as well as all imagery or symbolism which might permit any conventional meaning to be read into these paintings. Instead, oversize canvases and large expanses of color draw the viewer "inside" the canvas, "enclosing" him. Describing a painting by Robert Natkin, art critic Peter Fuller (1980, 179) wrote: "It is almost as if at this level of your interaction with the work the skin had reformed but this time *around you* so that you, originally

an exterior observer, feel yourself to be literally and precariously suspended within a wholly illusory space which, like the unconscious itself, contains its own time." One is drawn through the skin of paint between successive gauze-like veils of color so that the viewer feels suspended within some interior, timeless space.

The sense of enclosure and oneness is the visual counterpart of auditory immersion into the "vertical time" of some contemporary music. Just as in the painting there are layers of color and light which draw one into a timeless space, in some "vertical time" music there are layers of dense sound; relationships take place between layers of simultaneous sound rather than between successive events, as in conventional music. "The result is a single present stretched out into an enormous duration . . . that nonetheless feels like an instant" (Kramer 1981, 549).

In contemporary literature, one finds analogous discontinuities and fragmentations, resulting in a similar prolongation of the present moment lifted out of the flow of past-to-future. In the handful of years since her work first began to appear in *The New Yorker,* Ann Beattie has become for many readers the representative young American writer. Here are some of the things she said in an inteview with Joyce Maynard *(New York Times,* May 11, 1980):

> BEATTIE: I don't know how to write a novel. ... I would like to take a course on that some time, if I ever take another course. . . . It's very hard for me to work on Monday and Tuesday, and on Wednesday I wonder what I said on Tuesday, let alone what I'm moving toward. . . . That's why all the chapters jump around. I can't think how somebody would move from one to the next, so I have to take a breather and hope that I come up with something. . . . I certainly listen to records a lot. But if I write a story I tend to put on what my husband is playing on the stereo at that moment .... just what's on the turntable .... I really love the notion of found art. Warhol soup cans-that kind of stuff. When I write something, I like to look out the window the night I'm typing and see what kind of moon it was on July the 15th and put it in. . .
>
> INTERVIEWER: Do you write about the relationships between men and women?

BEATTIE: I just assume that there are going to be moments. But when I start to write it isn't with the thought that I want to communicate about the relationship between men and women. I think, "I'd really like to work that interesting ashtray I just bought into a story about men and women. . . ."I read a lot-mostly modern fiction, nothing before 1960 if I can help it. I'm a great time waster. See what a shiny coat my dog has? I go buy him vitamins. I rap with him. I brush him.

INTERVIEWER: And did you actually know somebody who did what the two lovers in *Falling In Place* did, during the early days of their relationship-hold hands uninterruptedly for two days?

BEATTIE: Yes-four days. They've split up now.

Does a clinical perspective give us an inkling as to the significance of these shifts away from the usual principles of sense and sequence? Let us turn to the woman who came late for an appointment she did not have, slept, and left before her actual appointment was due to start. While not "removed" from the flow of time from past to future, this was surely a slippage-whether one thinks of it as backward or forward-a slippage in the racheting of the cogs of time. Let me relate more about her and the clinical situation.

I had seen her years before in analysis. Now forty-seven, she had asked to come in for a few sessions. We greeted each other warmly. She sat down and smiled. I asked how she had been. She struggled with her features and said, "Since Nancy was killed it hasn't been the same," and burst into sobs. Shocked, I blurted, "What:'" Nancy was her daughter, and she would now be about twenty-two. The manner of the patient's breaking the news was not incidental, as we shall see.

Indeed, her twenty-two-year-old daughter had been killed instantly in a car accident a year earlier. The patient had managed to continue all her activities but experienced a numbing disconnection from her feelings. Not mourning her daughter, she felt, was like holding onto her,

not letting her go. She had only recently begun to weep, and this brought some relief from the sense of deadness.

She had entered analysis originally saying that she rarely knew what she was feeling; whenever she was under stress she would disconnect herself from her feelings and hide inside. In this way she could fight off depression and "keep moving and smiling." Convent upbringing had taught her that it was more important to maintain a prayerful attitude than to seek to understand many things. She had cultivated a vague fogginess as a defense against sexual and aggressive impulses. This was modelled partly on her mother. Mother was remembered mostly for her bland smilingness and the way she cultivated stereotyped responses to handle any situation. Father was a powerful political Figure whose family life was characterized by towering rages and emotional withdrawal. Neither parent ever exchanged a single word with their daughter after she married outside the Church. She had been temporarily expelled from the family in adolescence for always getting into "trouble," though she was not sure what the trouble was. She of course knew there was a past, but the quality of herself in it was not available to her, and when it was it was like remembering the feeling of having had a nightmare but not knowing what it was about.

She had married a driving man who became very successful. She married him to get herself "organized" by him and play out the roles he assigned her. She did this very well and became known as a sophisticated hostess, a responsive friend, a generous volunteer worker for good causes, and a natural athlete. A few close friends also knew that she was very bright, had a discerning literary and musical taste, and had graduated with high honors from a top college. She experienced modified analytic treatment as the only calm relationship she had ever known and the first time she had allowed herself to feel that she was taking something for herself instead of being selfless.

The clinical vignette relevant to our discussion has already been related. It was easy to

imagine that it represented a conventional resistance of ambivalence to talking about painful matters, but the form it took seemed unusual.

At the next session, when we discussed what had happened, I asked, on the basis of what I knew about her from the past, whether having come late for an imagined appointment and having left before a real one was a way of expressing something about wanting to reverse what was real and unreal. Whether this was wrong or irrelevant, her answer in any event led elsewhere. She said that repeatedly when she met someone she had not seen for some time, the other person would "surprise" her by asking innocently and casually about her daughter, that the patient would then have to say her daughter had died, that this would always come as a shock to the other person and the patient would have to soothe *her* down. I said it seemed surprising that it always came as a surprise to her that someone should ask innocently about her daughter. Why did she not anticipate this and somehow try to cushion the news and shield both of them from the shock' She replied that everything seemed to come as a surprise to *her* nowadays; *she* was just never ready for anything. For example, although she had been an excellent tennis player, now every time the ball came to her it seemed to come from the blue; because she did not keep her eye on her opponent's movements she could not anticipate where the ball would land, and as a result her return would always be late.

I wondered if she might be turning every moment into a kind of shock and a surprise, ripping each moment out of its context in the flow of time, and in this way perhaps continuously repeating, actively, the traumatic moment when she was informed of Nancy's death. As for coming early and leaving before her appointment was due to start, we might speculate that this was a way of dislocating time, in order to correct and master it, a way of saying, "If only it had been an hour earlier, or later, Nancy would be alive now."[15]

Any analyst would wish for more data regarding this vignette, particularly the role of unresolved transference. But since the episode of the missed appointment arose out of a brief

contact many years following the termination of treatment, this is not possible. This unavoidable omission, however, helps direct our attention back to a neglected area of early psychoanalytic interest: the role of reality and the effect of trauma.

We know that random, meaningless violence can destroy both the sense of self and reality. A less drastic result of trauma is that its reality may be denied and disavowed in various ways. Uprooting the connection between cause and consequence by altering the flow of time from past to future may be one means of blunting the impact of trauma. And, as we have seen in the case of Diana, one may attempt to master past trauma by reliving it in an endless repetition compulsion, transforming the present into that past, thus effectively halting the flow of time.

But what mechanisms help to master and defend against a reality that is not denied or disavowed-that remains well recognized, in other words-and yet flies in the face of common sense and logic? The patient of course understood very well that a head-on collison led to her daughter's death, but this bears so little relation to sense that the mind recoils from such "meaning" as absurd. If it cannot totally sever cause from consequence, past from future, it can at least defensively *modify the experience of time flow*-not halting it like Diana, but sometimes slowing it down and at other times speeding it up. Is this what the patient was doing in coming late for an appointment she did not have and leaving early for one she did? Or in being too slow in meeting her tennis opponent's return, too slow in preparing the ground for breaking the news of her daughter's death, too quick in blurting out the news?

If this seems tenable, we might ask whether such temporal manipulation to deal with past and anticipated trauma is more widespread than is usually recognized. Are the fragmentation, discontinuity, and "timelessness" that characterize so much contemporary art a defensive cultural response to the fear of sudden death which, though largely disavowed, pervades our age?

As previously discussed, some of the new temporalities of music represent even more drastic attempts to cool the flow of time-actually to separate each moment from its historical context, deal with each like rootless tones, without implications, in the discontinuous Now. Thus, in the words of the folk ballad: “We’ll make a space in the lives we’ve planned / And here we’ll stay, / Until it’s time for you to go. / Don’t ask why, / Don’t ask forever, / Love me now” (Buffy St. Marie).

If we were to accept the hypothesis that it was the sudden shocking death of her daughter that led the patient to defensively modify her experience of time flow, could we make a parallel hypothesis about some contemporary music? In short, the question is: should some aspects of modern music and of current clinical phenomena be bracketed together as defensive alterations in the experience of time-attempts to modify and thus “master” its inexorable passage?

The immediate musicological answer might be: “No. The new temporalities in music represent (1) experimentation, (2) reflecting the gradual absorption of music of different cultures (for instance, the Javanese gamelan), (3) making use of technological innovations like radio, records, electronics and tape-splicing” (Kramer 1981, 543-44).

Yet, if all this were true it would not negate one possible meaning of this musical experimentation: like the patient’s reaction to sudden, random death, the new temporalities in music may still represent a deeply felt need to suspend time, to deal with the possibility that any succeeding moment might fracture conventional sense and flood the self. In other words, just as my patient experienced a defensive alteration in her sense of time in response to the life-threatening unpredictability of daily life, some contemporary music (and art), perhaps in similar response to shared anxieties of the age, dissolves familiar frames of reference, temporal (and spatial).

Whatever the cause, it would be misleading to dismiss such apparent dissolutions of

familiar structures as simply regressive. It is a frequent analytic finding that a temporary dissolution of structure may be a prerequisite for further development. Thus, in the case of my patient, if what she went through were to lead to further growth, or in the case of music or art, if it is to be an aesthetic experience, such partial dissolution must regularly be followed by a redifferentiation of the self (G. J. Rose 1980).

This two-phase process-partial dissolution and reintegration-occurring in rapid oscillation appears to be central to creative experience. Much slowed down, it also describes the process of growth. We observe it, too, in that particular form of growth we call psychoanalysis and refer to it there as an alternating movement of therapeutic regression and working through, losing and refinding the self, emotional reliving and thoughtful reflection.

This is an expanded version of Gilbert J. Rose, "In Pursuit of Slow Time: A Psychoanalytic Aproach to Contemporary Music," *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, 10:353-65, 198-1. Cf. also Rose, 0980), pp. 162-66.

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Notes

11 Among the crucial elements that influence creative success—endowment, opportunity, craftsmanship, awareness of tradition and Zeitgeist—the clinician may comment

on one: the fear that treatment will have a negative impact on creative work. My experience suggests that this fear is the expression of some private, unconscious meaning that the individual has attributed to creative activity. Where the work per se presents no problem, the subject hardly arises for clinical exploration.

12 Music is associated with the same physological changes that occur during emotional experience: changes of pulse, respiration, blood pressure, electrical conductivity of the skin, delay in the onset of muscular fatigue (Mursell 1937).

13 The perception of the octave seems to be a particularly basic and primitive skill; white rats were trained to run across a grid to loud only when they heard a tone one octave away from the tone they were trained to respond to, and not to other tones (summarized from Winner 1982).

14 Having stated this boldly lor the sake of clarity, it is now necessary to add that experienced listeners to contemporary music insist that while at first it may sound random, expectancies inevitably emerge and order the musical experience—even that of John Cage. Thus has it ever been with innovation. What is at first disturbingly new becomes even comfortably familiar. The dialectic between new and strange and good old familiar is inherent in any organically evolving process.

15 This hypothesis is supported by more extensive and systematic recent studies which have shown that following psychic trauma, disturbances in all major aspects of time functioning—rhythm, duration, simultaneity and sequence, and temporal perspective—serve adaptive and defensive functions (Terr 1984).