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ROMANTIC REMNANTS:
GLOBAL MUSICAL ATMOSPHERES
AND THE REALLY LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

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Acknowledgements

No one starts their PhD thinking it will take ten years to complete. Many have taken as long or longer and will in the future. There are those among us who struggle not only to traverse the zone of exploitation and manufactured scarcity that is graduate work but also to shift something in its terms and structures while maintaining a shared fidelity to the scene of gathering evidence and theorizing in orbit around an object. They envision a future of intellectual labor and pedagogy outside the hold of the university. I dedicate this dissertation to us.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the persistence of Romanticism in contemporary soundtracks and easy listening. Drawing from a transnational archive of recent music for films and TV shows as well as acoustic instrumental genres marketed as classical, ambient, and New Age, the dissertation traces the emergence of a musical and affective "really long nineteenth century" in global musical atmospheres. In my examples, the drawn-out collective attachments to historic Western genres and styles are accompanied by suppressed moods and soft and slow atmospheres. What is historical and ongoing also registers alongside a pervasive sense of melancholy, of impasse, and of affective and political-economic recession, etc. The dissertation thus listens for inarticulate but musical knowledges of what it's like to live on in the present as a situation of belatedness and loss. While holding out for something other than the ongoing, the familiar, and the romantic, the dissertation makes a case for attuning to the remnant genres, styles, and fantasies that open up to a shared, if melancholic, here and now.

Chapter 1 considers how the romantic-style soundtrack of *Cloud Atlas* (2012) underscores the film's cosmopolitan totality and emerges within the plot as the privileged affective vehicle and infrastructure for the film's ambivalently affirmative and structurally-melancholic liberal cosmopolitics. Chapter 2 turns to the piano music of globally-successful New Age artist Yiruma and traces Koreanness as it simultaneously emerges and disappears through colonial and post-colonial mimicry in music, language, and space. Chapter 3 listens for the entwined melancholy strains of recent minimalist soundtracks and the music of Franz Schubert; in and around their repetitions and allusions, the chapter traces a collective art of dysthymic persistence.

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Introduction: End-Historical Romanticism

> Meanwhile, music also includes history in a more thoroughgoing and irrevocable fashion, since, as background and mood stimulus, it mediates our historical past along with our private or existential one and can scarcely be woven out of the memory any longer.[1]

Tokyo Sonata (2008) is a film by Japanese horror director Kiyoshi Kurosawa about an apocalypse, but a gentle, middling kind. The film follows the four members of a middle-class Tokyo family as institutions around them crumble and fall away, starting with the middle-aged father's nondescript corporate office job. At the start of the movie, Ryuhei is pushed out of his position as the company outsources jobs to younger, cheaper workers from China and India. As the film unfolds, Ryuhei struggles not only with the loss of his job but along with it the loss of his identity as capable *petit bourgeois* patriarch. We see that Ryuhei's predicament is general: Tokyo's parks and breadlines are filling up with suited men who find it easier to keep up the salaryman act than to tell their families the truth and find a job that is more than likely less suited to what has turned out to be a brittle, fleeting fantasy of corporate class mobility. Ryuhei finally accepts that there is no place for him in the rapidly contracting white-collar job market and takes up a janitorial position at a mall. He shows up in his suit and finds himself bunched among other middle-aged men in suits waiting to clock in and pick up their cleaning gear. Together they continue to show up in their bourgeois costumes before changing into bright orange onesies to scrape up the gum

[1] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 299.

and wipe down the shit left behind by customers. After work, they suit up again and disperse out into their fake middle-class ordinaries, back to playacting the gainfully employed salaryman-husband-father for their neighbors and families.

Figure 1. Ryuhei joins the unemployed.

While a secret, Ryuhei's unemployment leads to and coincides with crises unfolding at other levels of family and urban life. The elder son, Takashi, slogs through a string of part-time jobs and the soulless, directionless muddle created by his parents' generation as society. Kenji, the younger child, begins to chafe against the disciplinary rituals of school and family. Meanwhile, Megumi maintains a tidy home and exquisite kitchen and continues her role as mother, wife, and glue in a nuclear family comprised of an increasingly disenchanted and intransigent crew. But we catch her, in between, eyeing a red convertible or lying on the couch with her arms midair, frozen, waiting for someone to help her up and out of a life that has become a string of habits emptied of aspiration.

Figure 2. A salaryman-father, a housewife-mother, a student-son, intersecting for a silent supper. Everything in its right place.

The people of *Tokyo Sonata* trudge through the early 21st century as a time of affective depletion and never-ending socioeconomic recession—of a slow and inexorable crumbling and fraying of the institutional supports and fantasies of "the good life."[2] The good jobs are disappearing and the nuclear family is ossifying and fissuring under material and affective burdens. The state, too, is shrunken by austerity: the cute name of the Japanese government-run employment service centers ("Hello Work!") belies the oversaturated and under-resourced drear of ineffectual bureaucracy; the center's winding staircases are daily packed

[2] I learned to historicize and theorize from amid the lived zone of good life fantasies and infrastructures and their crumbling away from Lauren Berlant. See the chapter "After the Good Life, an Impasse: *Time Out, Human Resources,* and the Precarious Present" in Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 191-222. In the American historical and aesthetic context, the fraying of good life fantasies "specifically attached to labor, the family wage, and upward mobility" has attained recent heightened presence in the aftermath of the 2008 Great Recession. In Japan, the common historiographic and vernacular referent for the loss of national-economic hope is the so-called "the Lost Decade(s)," an unending period of recession beginning in the 1990s. For an evocation of the affective atmospheres of unease, burnout, and loneliness of the period following the Bubble burst in 1991, see Anne Allison, *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 74-81.

with a multigenerational swarm of the perpetually un(der)employed. Suicide is endemic. At one point in the film, Ryuhei reunites with an old high school friend at one of the free meal stations frequented by bums and unemployed salarymen (the old and new unemployed mingling). Having been even more successful than Ryuhei, the friend's downward trajectory is all the more precipitous and dramatic. After having joined for a homemade dinner at the friend's glitzy abode, in an evening of salarymen charades and empty office gab intended to parry the wife's growing suspicions, Ryuhei returns later to learn that the couple have committed double suicide, leaving behind their young daughter (in all-black, she casts a knowing glance at a stunned Ryuhei).

Those who remain fantasize other ends. But the grown-ups remain stuck in their old roles, leaving the burden of questing to the youth.[3] The boy Kenji finds a vehicle for moving through the world, differently, in the form of a piano. Trudging home after school one day, he perks his ears at the sounds of the instrument. He sees a lesson underway, at the home of a piano teacher. Something about the absorption of the student in the music, or the absorption of teacher in student, instills an absorptive pause in the normally listless Kenji; though his shoulders remain slumped, he stands for a minute outside the piano teacher's home, staring and listening intently banal beginner's etudes and scales. "No," Ryuhei replies, when Kenji floats the thought that he might take up piano lessons. Megumi suggests that he practice at the school classroom—but what Kenji wants is something outside the rhythms and spaces of his stultifying ordinary.

[3] In his last onscreen appearance, Takashi asks his mother about Ryuhei: "Why don't you divorce him?" Megumi says, "If I'm gone, who would play mother in the family?" *Tokyo Sonata*, directed by Kiyoshi Kurosawa (2008: Entertainment Farm and Fortissimo Films), 56:30.

Figure 3. Kenji sees and hears the piano.

Against the practical injunctions of his father, Kenji decides to take matters into his own hands. He squirrels away his lunch money to pay for lessons, skips out on school, and studies diligently with the diaphanous Miss Kaneko. At home, he hides in his room, banging out chords on a broken, mute synthesizer he picked up from under a bridge. (As we will see, the strains of Kenji's piano playing are saved for the end of the movie's heightened questing.) Meanwhile, Takashi, the older brother, dreams up an even more daredevil escape. He enlists in the American "War on Terror" as a Japanese national volunteer. Against Ryuhei's enraged invocations of private happiness ("I raised you so you can lead a happy life, this couldn't be farther from that goal!"), Takashi says: "I should care about more than my own happiness; I should care about making the world a better place."[4] "When is that giant earthquake coming," a friend asks Takashi, after a stint on the latter's

[4] *Tokyo Sonata,* 49:47. Ryuhei's response, taken from the postwar oriental survivor's parenting playbook: "The world? What's that? I'm not worried about the world. I'm worried about you."

motorbike—"the one that will turn everything upside down, crush all those arrogant bastards so that I can become Prime Minister… and pass a No Helmet Law."[5] The diminutive punchline contains a big wish: to upend the world's banal slow death; to jumpstart, from catastrophe, a new life.

In the film-fantasy of *Tokyo Sonata*, everyone seems to get their wish: in a climactic sequence, the psychic tensions and social contradictions underlying the characters' exhausted worlds irrupt into their lives as so many concurrent near-endings. Ryuhei discovers an envelope of cash while cleaning shit and piss off a toilet. He freaks out at his good fortune and the simultaneous realization that he's come to consider swiping what is likely someone else's severance pay and life line as good fortune; he spends the rest of the afternoon and evening compulsively sprinting down the streets and alleys of Tokyo until he is hit by a truck and is left bleeding out in an underpass. Meanwhile, Megumi is held hostage by another desperate middle-aged-daddy-turned-thief. Realizing that Megumi's ostensibly middle-class household is just as strapped for cash as he is, and hearing police sirens approach the house, the desperate burglar takes Megumi at knifepoint for an impromptu road trip in a stolen car. The car turns out to be the same model as the convertible Megumi had eyed at the dealership earlier. Her abduction starts to feel like an escape; in the driver's seat, Megumi transforms into an accomplice. Meanwhile, the young Kenji conspires to help a friend who has decided to run away. After losing his friend to the father and witnessing an overfamiliar episode of manhandling and discipline, Kenji also resolves to flee and attempts to stowaway in a bus. As Ryuhei lies unconscious and Megumi engages in a fraught one-night-stand by the sea with her depressed, spiraling thief-turned-

[5] *Tokyo Sonata,* 41:50.

lover, Kenji refuses to cooperate any longer with the adults and their rules, stays mute at the police station, and ends up spending the night in jail.

A film invested in endings as such might have ended there, with Ryuhei's life draining away; or maybe a few hours later, when Megumi awakes alone in the middle of the night to find parallel tire tracks in the sand riding up to the waves. But the sequence turns out, like so much else, to have been an episode in the world's ongoingness. Kenji is released the next day and is first to return to a home in shambles. Ryuhei wakes up as if from a long nap, shakes off the dried leaves, and trudges home (after he deposits the envelope of cash at the mall's lost and found). Megumi enters last, her hair undone, and sets the table for breakfast. Without speaking, they assume their customary positions around the table and eat in their customary silence, alone in their thoughts but also together in a disorganized weariness that is out in the open on their faces and uniforms for the first time.

Figure 4. The morning after, undone and together.

The film could have ended there too, with the subtle hint of a looser and more wobbly worlding—but *Tokyo Sonata* opens this dissertation because it closes, instead, with the promise of a Romantic-miniature-turned-soundtrack, a full five-minute performance of Debussy's "Clair de Lune."[6] A few months after the confluence of events, Kenji auditions for a music school. We catch the tail end of the preceding student's performance, a rather impressive romp through a sonata-allegro full of scales and stately chords. Then Kenji comes up, and in its closing scene, the movie becomes a concert recording: the camera frames Kenji's performance, from the right profile (the pianist's preferred angle since Liszt); the camera also alights upon the faces of the audience, including Miss Kaneko, Megumi, and Ryuhei. A growing crowd gathers behind the judges' table, drawn in by Kenji's performance. Everyone sits and stands in silence while the film audience also hears Kenji play for the first time. After the final cadence, the audience continues to sit or stand in rapt silence, and the camera also remains fixed with the piano in the center; Kenji gets up and walks to the judges' table to sign out; Megumi and Ryuhei enter the frame and accompany Kenji as they all exit the scene, which soon fades out into the movie's credits.

[6] "Clair de Lune" was originally published in 1905 as a part of the *Suite bergamasque* but was likely written around 1890. For a concise and comprehensive scholarly discussion of the movement's genesis and cultural significance, see Gurminder Kaur Bhogal, *Claude Debussy's Clair de Lune* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Figure 5. Kenji plays "Clair de Lune."

For the jury and the audience on screen (and off screen, in the know), the performance of "Clair de Lune" is a surprise, and not just because the film, for the most part, lacks background music.[7] "Clair de Lune" is not your standard audition piece.[8] As one of the most enduringly popular examples of classical music, it is more often encountered as easy listening background music, and, indeed, in movie soundtracks. And while the classically-educated may argue for listening not just to the single movement but to the entirety of the more imposing and varied *Suite bergamasque* (1905), in global mass culture it

[7] Kazumasa Hashimoto's minimal, ambient electronic music appears, occasionally, in stylized transitions between scenes and acts, functioning more as interlude than underscore.

[8] On the classical stage, when it is not performed as part of the larger *Suite bergamasque*, "Clair de Lune" belongs solidly to the realm of encores, where virtuosos can indulge themselves and their audience in simpler, more democratic pleasures. See the chapter "Miniature Magic: The Untold Story of the Recital Encore" in Zachary Loeffler, *Speaking of Magic: Enchantment and Disenchantment in Music's Modernist Ordinary* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2018), 99-100. "Clair de Lune" also falls squarely within what Pierre Bourdieu characterizes as "middle-brow taste, which brings together the minor works of the major arts." "Middle-brow taste" is the favored realm of secretaries, technicians, and teachers and sits squarely in between the "legitimate taste" of professors and engineers (who favor "legitimate works" such as Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*) and the "popular taste" of domestic servants, manual workers, and shopkeepers. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 16-17.

sits more comfortably sandwiched between New Age piano tracks like Yuichi Watanabe's "Flower Garden" and Yiruma's "Wonder Boy" in *Healing for Heart* (2014), an easy listening album released by the South Korean New Age label, Stomp Music; or right before Ennio Morricone's piano theme for the film *Cinema Paradiso* (1988) in Decca's 2001 compilation album *Movie Adagios*.[9] As characterized by Gurminder Kaur Bhogal, "this music sits just as comfortably in the background as in the foreground of our listening experiences, and often at the same time. […] "Clair de lune" does not hold its listener hostage, ensuring that every note is heard."[10] Hovering between classical work and popular soundtrack, the miniature underscores a sense of ease, comfort, and coextension with a room and its people in a way that the preceding sonata could not.[11]

Figure 6. Album covers for Movie Adagios (2001) & Healing for Heart (2014).

[9] *Movie Adagios.* Compiled in 2001. Decca, compact disc; *Healing for Heart*. Compiled in 2014. Stomp Music, compact disc.
[10] Bhogal, *Debussy's Clair de Lune*, 2.
[11] Any self-respecting middle-class oriental who grew up with piano lessons would recognize the preceding audition piece as Friedrich Kuhlau's G major Sonatina (1820), a mainstay in childhood lessons and therefore also of competitions and auditions. In Korea, Kuhlau's Sonatina has entered the pedagogical canon through *Sonatina Album*, leading music publisher Segwang's collection of late-18th and early-19th century sonat(in)as—along with Hanon's exercises, the bane of many a child's love of the keyboard.

In the end, it is Kenji's performance of "Clair de Lune" which concludes the intertwined dreams of ends and new beginnings that create the musical structure of *Tokyo Sonata*. As a coda, it is not as revolutionary or earth-shattering as the directly preceding glimpse into Takashi's budding, militant anti-colonial politics.[12] The kind of militant and subversive solidarity Takashi discovers is relegated to an unnamed country in the Middle-East, beyond the realm depicted in the film. Instead, "Clair de Lune" enters *Tokyo Sonata*'s exhausted middle-class metropolitan sensorium both as a symptom of its global resilience and as a tentative promise of inhabiting it differently, in the meanwhile. On the one hand, as a canonic exemplum of Western Art Music, it enables Kenji's bid for a place among educated and cosmopolitan model minority elites; it can even, in the aftermath of Ryuhei's more middling salaryman dream, function as a vehicle for continued class mobility and cultural distinction. On the other hand, as soundtrack and miniature, "Clair de Lune" signals a desire for ease, attunement, and a light touch. The relationality that "Clair de Lune" enables doesn't approach the textured solidity of a community or even the looser holding of a collective: but it opens up an atmosphere for a crowd to share, and where Megumi and Ryuhei can practice different ways of being in the room with each other, with themselves, and with Kenji. After the performance, Ryuhei lays his hand on Kenji's shoulder before following him off stage, touching without grabbing or hitting, for the first time.

[12] In the scene preceding Kenji's audition, Megumi reads a recently-arrived letter from Takashi, addressed to her. The letter is heard as a voiceover right before we cut to Kenji's audition. "I've learned that America isn't the only one that's right. That is why I've decided to stay in this country a while longer, so I can understand them better. I've come to the conclusion that the best path for me is to fight alongside the people of this country, in order to find true happiness. Please don't worry about me. I'm doing fine. I'll write again." (1:45:55) Godspeed, Takashi—you are an inspiration. Thanks to Maki Matsui for watching the scene and confirming the accuracy of the translated subtitles.

*

This dissertation examines the persistence of nineteenth-century European musical genres and styles in the backgrounds and atmospheres of contemporary global mass culture. Its examples draw from soundtracks for movies and TV shows as well as from the increasingly porous clustering of acoustic instrumental genres such as "classical," "ambient," and "New Age." At times, as in *Tokyo Sonata*, the examples are historic works themselves, embedded within seemingly novel and foreign contexts; at others, they are new tracks or cues that reproduce and gesture towards a historic Euro-American style. In both cases, what renders them historic or historical often goes unremarked. Within the expansive matrix of a transnational and digital mass culture, these atmospheric musics seem to conjure a global and historical continuity, obfuscate cultural and historical differences, and situate disparate locales within a stylistic and affective consistency.[13]

But while the presence of musical romanticism in and as background is ubiquitous to the point of being taken for granted, the dissertation's cases and scenes present the seemingly neutral aesthetic of their soundtracks as traces of a collective struggle with the

[13] Borrowing and learning from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Lauren Berlant, Kathleen Stewart, Patricia Clough, and Ben Anderson, this dissertation mobilizes "affect" and "affective" to move laterally among moods, feelings, and emotional and embodied states that circulate in varying conditions of lexical looseness or precision. The language of affect allows materialist cultural critics and historians to unmoor a bit from the vertical hierarchies of conscious-unconscious/base-superstructure and to approach aesthetic and political forms as they appear and shift, incommensurately, in concert. Affects can manifest as named emotions just as well as pre-discursive sensations or structurations thereof that overflow or underwhelm our linguistic categories. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Patricia Ticineto Clough, *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Teletechnology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), especially 1-21; Ben Anderson, *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014); and Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart, *The Hundreds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

ongoingness of the past. In different chapters' examples and their overlapping but different figurations, the past emerges variously as colonialism and national identity, (the idea of) a family, or, in the case of the first chapter, villainous personifications of various oppressions ranging from slavery, exploitation, incarceration, sexism, and reproductive heteronormativity. As in *Tokyo Sonata*, institutions and habits have lost their currency and yet remain the structures that hold up whatever still seems to count as a life worth having—though, as we will see, different examples land differently on whether or not the narrative and affective closure sometimes provided by a remnant romanticism feels hopeful or optimistic therefore. Even at their most aspirational, though, the musical examples that follow remain attuned to the knowledge of the present as a contemporary situation of belatedness and loss. Rather than reproducing the triumphalist and universalizing rhetoric of a historical European Romanticism, the dissertation's romantic remnants project a fraying edge upon the forms and fantasies they float beside.[14]

Romantic remnants are therefore a specific subset of soundtracks and miniatures that emerge within and alongside the more general archive of romantic and late-romantic tone poems, adagios, salon music, character pieces, parlor songs, movie music, and what

[14] For an example where the transhistorical and transnational appearance of Debussy's music in another Japanese film is discussed as emblematic of the music's universality, see "Other Cultures, Other Sounds" in Matthew Brown, *Debussy Redux: The Impact of His Music on Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 134-153. The dream of a universal music was of course one articulated and shared by Debussy as well. On Debussy's metaphysical concept of "Nature" and its subsequent elaboration through the composer's colonial encounters with oriental musics, see Caroline Potter, "Debussy and Nature" in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 137-151. The dissertation's own approach to the universalizing aspirations of European musical romanticism owes much to the hermeneutic precedents of Carl Dahlhaus and Berthold Hoeckner. Both render thick descriptions of romanticism's aspirational undertones and the worlds thus made and delimited. See Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) and Berthold Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

originated in the Euro-American boomer sensorium as "Muzak" and "beautiful music."[15] Much historicist writing on film music, easy listening, and music as background continues to focus primarily on early- and mid-twentieth-century American repertories and to treat them as paradigmatic.[16] This dissertation draws instead on a more recent crop of audiovisual and easy listening musical examples from the opening decades of the twenty-first century. Compared to their historical precedents, these examples tend towards the minimal, ambient, and repetitive. They outline a more sonically and affectively recessive but no less pervasive millennial atmospheric aesthetic that derives from and infects our personal and political sensibilities.

Nonetheless, by evoking the "lyrical ripple" of historical Romantic genres, styles and exempla, these soundtracks and miniatures also outline a spatial and temporal totality that stretches between 19th-century West European and North American urban industrial metropoles and an expansive 21st-century post- and neocolonial global network of liberal cosmopolitan cities and suburbs.[17] Tracing this totality as it takes shape through musical and affective resonance requires a loose but careful attention to dispersed atmospheric styles that often go unnoticed or unremarked. The trick is to be attuned to shared attachments and soundworlds as they rise up without mistaking their generality and consistency for a smooth, ahistorical universality. At times, as we will see, this attunement enjoins an

[15] Joseph Lanza's book remains the best available comprehensive history and criticism of Muzak and mid-century easy listening. See Joseph Lanza, *Elevator Music: A Surreal History of Muzak, Easy-Listening, and Other Moodsong; Revised and Expanded Edition*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004)
[16] Two emblematic examples from recent film music scholarship that claim to be emblematic: David Neumeyer, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) and James Buhler, *Theories of the Soundtrack* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[17] Romanticism's "lyrical ripple" is a pejorative phrase in Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (London: Continuum, 1994), 84.

ambivalent and equivocal thinking and feeling with/against the avowed liberal cosmopolitics encasing some of our objects.[18]

The material and political terrain from which the dissertation thus originates and which it addresses is the world of high cosmopolitanism and globalization.[19] As a period in the expansion of Western liberal hegemony, it coincides with what Francis Fukuyama in 1989 dubbed the era of "the end of history"—a time no longer of the contested rise of an economically, culturally, and militarily ascendant liberal capitalism, but of its inevitable global consolidation.[20] Articulated a decade earlier by Margaret Thatcher in the motto "There is no alternative," the idea that no viable structural and ideological alternatives remain other than those of liberalism pervades the room unnoticed and unremarked. But, as Seth Brodsky notes, even in later sections of Fukuyama's own writing, what remains after history's end is not a haughty Hegelian figure of the bourgeois-triumphant but rather, shrouded in "the unbeatable kick of an eonic melancholy," something more approaching the spent, recumbent shapes of Nietzsche's "cold monsters."[21] Fukuyama's end of history

[18] As such the dissertation throughout remains committed to Eve Sedgwick's rejoinder that we practice a paranoid and reparative mode of cultural and political criticism, together and at once. See "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction is About You" in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
[19] By "high cosmopolitanism" I refer to the era, presently coming to a close with the twin assaults of the COVID-19 pandemic and global warming, of unfettered international air travel for elite business and pleasure. Between 2002 and 2019, the passengers carried by air transport more than doubled from 1.627 billion to 4.397 billion. "Air transport, passengers carried," The World Bank, accessed March 2, 2021, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IS.AIR.PSGR.
[20] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006). I encountered the article that later became the book in Seth Brodsky's graduate seminar, *Musics and Modernisms*. Seth's work and teaching has helped me think speculatively, dialectically, psychoanalytically about musical structure as affective structure as historical structure (with variably loose or tight conjunctions in between).
[21] Seth Brodsky, *From 1989, or European Music and the Modernist Unconscious* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 98. Nietzsche, in Thomas Common's unparalleled translation: "A state, is called the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly lieth it also; and this lie creepeth from its mouth: "I, the state, am the people." / It is a lie! Creators were they who created peoples, and hung a faith and a love over them: thus they served life. / Destroyers, are they who lay snares for many, and called it the state: they hang a sword and a hundred cravings over them. / Where there is still a people, there the state is not understood, but hated as the evil eye, and as sin against laws and customs." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Digireads.com, 2016), 51.

isn't so much the dawn of a new era as it is a reflection upon the drawn out end of a really long one; it is as much a space and time of a global exhaustion as it is one of liberal certitude, replete with a sense of an ending that is also a longing for that which never seems to come.

The romanticism traced by this dissertation, too, is end-historical: its recessive and sometimes depressed atmospheres are symptoms of the inability to detach from whatever seems to work, even though it isn't really working out, because whatever is already there is all there seems to be. But like with Kenji's "Clair de Lune," these musical atmospheres also contain the knowledge that the interval opened up by a familiar, habituated, and remnant romanticism is not necessarily an invitation to the familiar, habituated, and remnant therefore. What is old and worn can be a vehicle to what is tender and surprising. That is an observation, an argument, and a wish.

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The following sections will offer an overview of three concepts rooted in the dissertation's scholarly archive and which emerge from as well as condition each chapter's encounter with their specific examples: musical atmospheres; the really long nineteenth century; and globality. Each of these concepts charts contiguous and overlapping but incommensurate musical, historical, and spatial realms through which romantic remnants circulate. The remainder of the dissertation emerges from their shifting triangulations.

Musical Atmospheres: Around the Classical (and Post-Classical) Soundtrack

One day, after having taught *Mildred Pierce* (1945) as part of an undergraduate film music course, I noticed anew how Claudia Gorbman opens her magisterial *Unheard Melodies* (1987) with a counterfactual involving exactly that movie.[22] Gorbman asks the reader to imagine growing up in a world where movies have no background music or underscore, all music existing solely on-screen as part of a performance or recording in the room:

> Let us imagine for a moment that the commercial narrative cinema had developed a bit differently: let us imagine movies having no background music. […] Then one day, brought up in this relatively nonmusical tradition, we attend a screening of a film from another dimension—say, *Mildred Pierce*, with Max Steiner's lush and insistent score full of dramatic, illustrative orchestral coloration. What sheer artifice this would appear to the viewer! What a pseudo-operatic fantasy world! What excess: every mood and action rendered hyperexplicit by a Wagnerian rush of tonality and rhythm![23]

Gorbman's goal is to help the reader who is thoroughly accustomed to the classical Hollywood underscore to encounter the music anew, as a foreign object. What struck me upon re-reading this passage was that my students had had precisely the response that Gorbman attributes to her fake listener: in discussing the function and impact of Steiner's iconic underscore, some students honed in on what they perceived to be the "excess," "sheer artifice," and "Wagnerian rush" of its lush and incessant music. The soundworld of

[22] The course was "Listening to Film," taught by my advisor Berthold Hoeckner at the University of Chicago in Spring 2019 and TA'ed by Elizabeth Alvarado, Ailsa Lipscombe, and me. That Spring Quarter also saw the first graduate worker strike on campus.
[23] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1.

classic melodrama was as strange and noteworthy as was the preceding week's encounter with the "silent" film *City Lights* (1931), with its "hyperexplicit" articulation of onscreen action as offscreen music (the famous "stinger" which is no longer quite as prevalent, along with the quaint comic effect of "mickey mousing"). Gorbman's counterfactual turns out to be quite factual.

Of course, plenty of movies and TV series continue to bear the classic Hollywood aesthetic, with its richly-scored and recurring themes and near-operatic, constant instrumental canvas. What the students perceived and articulated, however, was a shift that has taken place in soundtrack style and function since Gorbman's discipline-defining monograph was first-published in 1987. A comparison of Max Steiner's score for the 1945 *Mildred Pierce* and Carter Burwell's music for HBO's 2011 miniseries from the same source material proves instructive.[24] In *Unheard Melodies*, Steiner's "lush symphonic style" features not only in the book's opening gambit but also later as a "paradigmatic" model of "classical Hollywood practice."[25] As Gorbman discusses, Steiner's score features no less than five major themes, each corresponding with specific characters, moods, and events. Most notably, the title theme, associated with the eponymous heroine, repeats "fifty to a hundred times," beginning with the film's opening credits. The richly-scored E-flat-major theme is played by a full symphonic orchestra featuring strings, winds, a full battery of brass, and timpani. The sweeping melody spans large intervallic leaps and an arpeggiated ascent, and signifies the heroine's turbulent fate, perhaps, as well as her resolve as mother-martyr and entrepreneur extraordinaire during the Great Depression. The melody returns, again and

[24] Both the film and miniseries are based on James Cain's 1941 hard-boiled novel of the same name. James Cain, *Novels and Stories* (New York: Everyman's Library, 2003).
[25] *Unheard Melodies,* 91-98.

again, in different guises, switching key, tempo, timbre, and volume as the heroine herself undergoes drastic transformations throughout the film. This is the sonically and semiotically luscious style of classic Hollywood melodrama, a style that lends itself to so much symbolic play and close-reading.

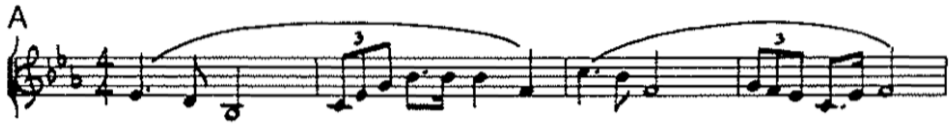

Figure 7. Steiner's Mildred Theme ("Theme A") as transcribed in Claudia Gorbman's Unheard Melodies (1987).

Compared with Steiner's music, Carter Burwell's score nearly seventy years later is hardly as Wagnerian or functionally and affectively melodramatic, not to mention nowhere near as present. In the first of five of the miniseries' hour-long episodes, after the opening title, Burwell's music accounts for barely over five minutes of screen time. Depression-era records of standards like "Milenberg Joys," "Mood Indigo" and "The Mooche" take up more time, both as the diegetic music performed or played onscreen as well as the nondiegetic underscore performed by entities from beyond the narrative realm (around the episode's 11-minute mark, a serenade by Gordon Macrae from the 1924 Broadway operetta *The Student Prince* makes a brief appearance too, from a radio in Mildred's kitchen).[26] Scored for a sparse sextet consisting of harp, piano, bass, clarinet, flute, bassoon, Burwell's main theme for the series appears only once in the first episode after its initial presentation over the opening credits. The score is minimal not only in terms of its more diffuse presence

[26] *Mildred Pierce,* episode 1, "Part One," directed by Todd Haynes, starring Kate Winslet, HBO, 2011, 11:18. On the musical and visual borders between the diegetic and the non-diegetic, see Michel Chion, *Film, a Sound Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 247-262.

within the series but also in its sparse textures, limited melodic range, repetitive harmonic and motivic structure, and overall suppressed mood:

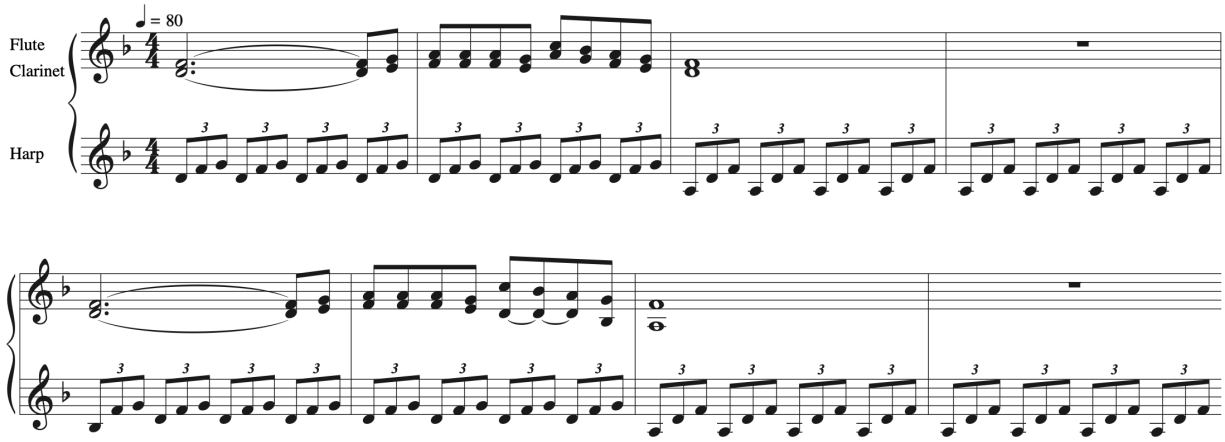

Figure 8. Carter Burwell's Opening Theme, in a reduction featuring harp accompaniment and wind melody.

The excerpt above encapsulates the more minimal style of Burwell's underscore: the accompaniment and tune linger within overlapping, constrained registers; the flute repeats its melody verbatim, with minimal variation in the clarinet; the harp, with its slow, cyclic harmonic rhythm and steady triplet stream, could have been lifted from Philip Glass. The music hovers around D minor, but rarely settles into a comfortable root-position cadence. The triplet ostinato dithers around suspensions and inversions, unsettling an otherwise familiar and static tonal territory.

Together, Steiner and Burwell's *Mildred Pierce*s demonstrate a shift from classical symphonic melodrama to a more sparse and suppressed aesthetic.[27] Melodrama, of course, is not just a style of soundtrack, but also a whole way of coordinating dramatic events with

[27] Even the opening titles convey contrasting aesthetics, the earlier film presenting "Mildred Pierce" in cursive flourish over crashing waves, the miniseries presenting the same letters in a gray, all-caps san serif font against a black background.

an underlying moral code through music: to follow Peter Brooks's formulation, in melodrama, music confers "additional legibility" to the "grandiose struggle" between good and evil, makes the conflict sensible.[28] We can trace the shift away from melodrama between film and miniseries in their plots. Where the earlier film crescendos to a dramatic gunshot and murder and ends with the villain's comeuppance (as mandated by the Hays Code), the miniseries charts a much more staid narrative and affective arc (no gunshot, no murder, no moral or judicial comeuppance).[29] From the high drama and moral clarity of the earlier film the miniseries brings us closer to the flat affect world of James Cain's original novel and also towards something that rhymes with the "dissociative poetics" of *Revolutionary Road* (2008). There, too, Thomas Newman's music, with its "breathy ambient haze," accompanies Kate Winslet (HBO's *Mildred Pierce*) as she moves through a more recessive and austere affectworld.[30]

This style of soundtrack is atmospheric, as in everywhere (apart from Carter Burwell and Thomas Newman, other notable practitioners who have scored major films include Jóhann Jóhannsson, Rachel Porter, Max Richter, Ryuichi Sakamoto, and Gustavo Santaolalla) and also atmospheric as in sparse, thinly-textured, like air, lacking the thickness

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[28] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 48, 81. Brooks's memorable name for the metaphysical realm of cosmic struggle that underlies the literature and theater of melodrama is the "moral occult." Throughout his book, Brooks avoids casting the Manichaean conflict unfolding in the moral occult in the elementary terms that I use above, opting instead for more sophisticated characterizations like "conflict between light and darkness, salvation and damnation" (5), and so forth.

[29] The "Hays Code" is the popular name for the Motion Picture Production Code, a set of industry guidelines that held sway in Hollywood from 1934 to 1968. See Nora Gilbert, *Better Left Unsaid: Victorian Novels, Hays Code Films, and the Benefits of Censorship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013). For a pithy and comprehensive retrospective, see Bob Mendello "Remembering Hollywood's Hays Code, 40 Years On," *NPR,* August 8, 2008. https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93301189.

[30] Michael Quinn, "Thomas Newman Revolutionary Road Review," *BBC Review*, 2009. (https://www.bbc.co.uk/music/reviews/fp9x/). "Dissociative poetics" is a phrase gleaned from the talk, "On Wanting Life Without Wanting the World," delivered by Lauren Berlant on the University of Chicago campus in November 2014 as part of a lecture series sponsored by the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities.

and duration of the classical underscore as well as its emphasis. A lot of this music is slower, softer, and more repetitive. Compared to the "hyperexplicit" and "dramatic" classical Hollywood underscore, these atmospheres at times seem to recede even further into the background.

Prior soundtrack scholarship tends to narrate the gradual shift away from the classical Hollywood underscore as a turn toward a "post-classical" style.[31] The emphasis is frequently on the speed and proliferation of new media technologies and consumption habits. Carol Vernallis, for instance, opens *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema* (2013) with a depiction of the "accelerating aesthetics" of "the media swirl," nothing that "many of us traverse from the videogame "Angry Birds" on a cellphone, to a YouTube clip, to a feature film in a big theater or on a desktop computer, to Facebook, and then a music video."[32] Vernallis goes on to locate the source of a contemporary "intensified audiovisual aesthetics" in music video style, with its foregrounding of "striking audiovisual effects" whereby musical and sonic events come to supersede and direct visual ones.[33]

The literature of the post-classical soundtrack also tends to cast an approving glance upon what it perceives as a novel inversion of the classical audiovisual hierarchy. Whereas in the classical Hollywood style, music "regularly takes a back seat to other elements of the

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[31] For a representative take on the "post-classical" turn in film music practice, see K. J. Donnelly, "The classical film score forever? *Batman*, *Batman Returns* and post-classical film music" in Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds.) *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 142-155. A common referent in "post-classical" film music scholarship is David Bordwell's concept of "intensified continuity," an effect achieved by "rapid editing, bipolar extremes of lens lengths, reliance on close shots, and wide-ranging camera movements" (121). Bordwell locates the origin of these practices in the rise of television; shrinking and increasingly multiplexed film theaters; video-based and, later, digital filming and editing technologies, etc. David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[32] Carol Vernallis, *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

[33] Vernallis, *Unruly Media*, 33, 42. The section also includes a discussion of Michael Bay's *Transformers* (2007) where she argues that "much of the Transformers' meaning and power stems from the soundtrack" (50).

film" (as "unheard melodies" in the background, to return to Gorbman's canonic formulation), in the zany MTV world of post-classical cinema it is "foregrounded" and even "dominates" visual and narrative proceedings.[34] The audibly and structurally dominant soundtrack of post-classical cinema is tied, often explicitly, to a recuperated or discovered spectatorial agency or practice of "amplifying and refashioning the self."[35] Alternatively, as in Steven Shaviro's analysis, the intensive affective flows of post-classical media mimic the impersonal and inhuman flows of multinational finance capitalism and produce a fractured subject incapable of extracting itself from the web.[36] Both the liberal recuperation of musical agency and practices of the self as well as the counter-neoliberal analysis of material and subjective subsumption assume that the affective and musical response to a post-classical world will be not just symptomatic but also mimetic of its structural and material acceleration. In the realm of post-classical soundtrack and new media studies, everyone's high on speed and keeping up with the world.

In this dissertation, the sense of occupying whatever "post-"ness in the aftermath of the classical soundtrack registers less as a vital, innovative excitation and more as a sense of belatedness, exhaustion, sometimes even affective and political diminishment. Obviously, the speed with which things and humans and information zip through the air; the manic

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[34] Donnelly, "*Batman, Batman Returns* and post-classical film music," 148.
[35] Vernallis, *Unruly Media,* 279. For Paul Reinsch, the "centrality of music" in the post-classical rock and roll soundtrack of *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) isn't just symbolic but actually mimetic and productive of teenage rebellion and rejection of stuffy grown-up/classical norms. Paul N. Reinsch, "Music over Words and Sound over Image: "Round Around the Clock" and The Centrality of Music in Post-Classical Film Narration" *Music and the Moving Image* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 3-22.
[36] Steven Shaviro, *Post Cinematic Affect* (Washington: O-Books, 2010), 2, 131. The more dystopian scenario haunts Vernallis, too, for a moment: "I have a dystopian picture of how multimedia and work will be coupled in the future. Then, I'll sit at the computer doing my tasks. A device will read my biological outputs and the computer will measure my workflow. An algorithm will inform me to stop and participate in a multimedia clip […]. These forms, shaped to my attention, will help me break, refocus, and return to the task at hand. We'll all feel pressured to participate in these practices because we'll desire to become more employable." "Practice" here derives from a corporate rather than individual agency. Vernallis, *Unruly Media,* 279.

hustle between miniscule gigs that flit elusively like the golden snitch; the sense of being constantly ground-up and exploded into a scattershot of skills, measurable outcomes, and experiences that don't add up—all these feelings of fragmentation, acceleration, and abstraction are very real.[37] The literature on post-classical styles and affects teaches us that a substantial body of soundtracks and movies are engaged in the project of mapping out what it means to inhabit this new terrain of speed and fracturing.[38] But in this dissertation's examples, the post-melodramatic present is experienced as an atmosphere of slowness. Their techniques skirt closer to what Jean Ma calls Chinese art cinema's melancholy drift; the subtractivist styles that Paul Roquet detects in ambient-musical accompaniments to low-affect living; or the neutralizing spareness of Erik Satie's furniture music, in which Slavoj Žižek hears the soft, gentle intimacy of an egalitarian communism to come.[39]

The fact that this atmospheric aesthetic is palpable, lived, and yet difficult to name or grasp suggests that it works like what Raymond Williams calls "structures of feeling." As shifts in collective styles and "changes in presence," structures of feeling "do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures."[40] As

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[37] Like the heuristic of the "neo-liberal," the "post-classical" participates (sometimes knowingly, sometimes inadvertently) in the nostalgic construction of the prior dominant era (whether an unprefixed "liberal" or "classical" place and time) as one of prelapsarian patience, spaciousness, and a less cramped-up or besieged political and aesthetic sovereignty. This is not to pile onto paleo-liberalist critiques of neoliberal critique, however; if anything, I would invoke the very much potent and therefore continually exorcised ghost of a paleo-communism against liberalism *in toto*. See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994), especially "Conjuring—Marxism," 61-95.

[38] On cognitive and affective mapping, see Shaviro, *Post Cinematic Affect*, 138; Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping" in Caryl Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 347-360; Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[39] Jean Ma, *Melancholy Drift: Marking Time in Chinese Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010); Paul Roquet, *Ambient Media: Japanese Atmospheres of Self* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 141-149; Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2011), 379-383. For a discussion of the "esthetic archive of the manifestly underperformative" that identifies and models an "implosive ostentation," see Lauren Berlant, "Structures of Unfeeling: *Mysterious Skin,*" *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 28 (2015): 191-213.

[40] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132, 134.

structured formations "at the very edge of semantic availability," they do not need to be named, or known as codes and categories, to work upon the senses. The challenge posed to analysts of structures of feeling, then, is to think and write what is palpable and audible, yet often skirts around fully-fledged language. Frequently, when practitioners and creatives are made to speak or write about the musical atmospheres they generate, they often default back to the language of melodrama and the classical Hollywood underscore.[41] Carter Burwell, for instance, describing his music for *Mildred Pierce*, emphasizes the sonic and stylistic continuity between his soundtrack and the those of 1930s "domestic drama"; he also states his intention that the music "pulse with Mildred's ambition" and be "darkened by the tug of her disappointments and betrayals."[42] It is certainly possible to hear expressively gothic and melodramatic undertones of ambition and fate in Burwell's theme, and to follow up on them through a semiotic analysis of dark, obsessional, and compulsive tendencies as they manifest in the music's primary and secondary parameters.[43] Such a discourse would place Burwell's music within the scope of a Gorbmanesque hermeneutic of the classical Hollywood underscore. At the same time, something atmospheric remains. The soft, repetitive strains of Burwell's music underscore less ambition and drama and more the wandering pace and tone of HBO-Mildred's episodic and cyclical struggles. *The Scotsman* pronounces the show "a strange, slow, pallid, neutered affair," words that get at something essential about Burwell's style—which has also, by the way, provided the background to the

[41] The Korean New Age pianist and composer Yiruma is something of an exception, who is often unafraid to model a kind of vague, questing, talking and writing around the affective impact and intention of his work. His music and words form the primary examples of the second chapter.
[42] "Mildred Pierce," Carter Burwell, accessed March 4, 2021, http://www.carterburwell.com/projects/Mildred_Pierce.shtml.
[43] In common music-theoretical parlance, primary parameters denote "pitch intervals or metric hierarchies" while secondary parameters refer to "loudness, register, and timbre." See Zohar Eitan and Roni Y. Granot, "Primary versus secondary musical parameters and the classification of melodic motives" *Musicae Scientiae* 13, no. 1 (March 2009): 139-179.

wonderfully cold, understated film adaptation of *Twilight* (2008).[44] Regardless of how Burwell himself might describe it, the music augurs a drift through a structure of feeling whose affective vocabulary has shifted from melodramatic clarity to something else, from classical (or post-classical) underscore to something more like musical atmosphere.

Throughout the dissertation, prior writing on affects and the way they animate our encounters with objects, people, and scenes ("affect theory") serves as a conceptual and stylistic archive through which the dissertation attempts to tune into what is atmospheric about its soundtracks. In Lauren Berlant's analysis, atmosphere is both a medium and container for collective experience prior to its articulation as genre as well as the genre *par excellence* of this articulation's ongoingness.[45] People live out their dramas within a shimmering totality of affects that don't always amount to a big plot or structure but that are nonetheless shared. Atmosphere comes to name a generality that is capable of responding the waning of concrete monolithic lived and theoretical social constructs (the "everyday" in French Marxist theory, for instance) while something collective and material persists; it falls short of the political and intellectual legitimacy of a system but manifests as a "shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges."[46]

The dissertation does not claim to name or identify "the" structure of feeling and corresponding musical atmosphere as a dominant or representative aesthetic of the new

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[44] Cited in "Mildred Pierce: Season 1," Rotten Tomatos, accessed March 3, 2021, https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/mildred-pierce/s01. On Burwell's cult following among *Twilight* fans on account of his weird "Bella's Lullaby," see Meredith Goldstein, "Lullaby Man: Carter Burwell's return is the sound of *Breaking Dawn*" *Boston Globe* November 16, 2011, https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/2011/11/13/lullaby-man-carter-burwell-return-sound-breaking-dawn/X5Y5Pfd27nXHa4mX37ZuhP/story.html.

[45] In "Thinking about Feeling Historical," atmosphere is a container for collective thoughts and feelings that have not yet been grounded in event. Lauren Berlant, "Thinking about Feeling Historical," *Emotion, Space, Society* 1 (2008): 4-9.

[46] Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 1.

globalized millennium or whatever. At any given point we are inhabiting and accounting for the present as a convergence of multiple overlapping and incommensurate structures of feeling, including what post-classical soundtrack and new media studies invokes as intensified continuity and affective flows; what a materialist social and affect theory talks about as precarity; what a feminist Xicanx cyborg musicology describes as the junky sci-fi pleasures of El Pasoan *rasquachismo*; etc.[47] HBO-Mildred, too, inhabits her uneven patchy world as a confluence of diverse soundtracks, whether jazz, Broadway operetta, or the more historical realm of Italian *bel canto*. Like Burwell's underscore, the dissertation's musical atmospheres crop up around and among these multiple and incommensurate structures of feeling and musical styles and recede into the background. They exude soft and gentle strains that are intuited as shifts in the air, even though, as Gorbman said of their historical precedents, they might not always be always heard. And even when they are, they often sound atmospheric—as if their quiet, repetitive strains were always there, hovering around the room like a familiar ghost.

The Really Long Nineteenth Century

First published in 1990, *Piano Sogokjip*—"An Anthology of Piano Miniatures"—was one of those commonplace items I saw in lots of middle-class households with pianos or keyboards.[48] The photograph on its cover depicts a scene in a British park (I'm guessing)—

[47] On precarity as structure of feeling, see Ben Anderson, *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 126. On *rasquachismo*, see "Borderscapes, Monstrous Music, and *Rasquachismo* Cyberpunks" in Elizabeth Alvarado, *Songs of Science: Musical Worlding in the American Space Age* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2020), 132-186.

[48] Segwang—or *Segwangeumakchulpansa*, "Segwang Music Publishers"—started in 1953 as a popular music and song publishing house. In 1967, it published the first Korean editions of instructional "piano method" books

two white men in suits bearing black umbrellas flank a woman in a cream jacket and skirt with a Thatcher hairdo. In the background behind the grass and trees there is a large Victorian-era building with telltale chimneys and spires. The people and their surroundings look dignified, historic, European.

According to its preface, *Piano Sogokjip* is intended to serve as an entry-level primer for beginning pianists, to be used jointly with method books and children's etudes by composers like Ferdinand Beyer (1803-1863) and Friedrich Burgmüller (1806-1874).[49] For the willing child, it presents a veritable cornucopia of short, beginner-friendly transcriptions of an incredible range of music, opening with Henry Bishop's "Home, Sweet Home" (1821) and presenting, among others, the theme from Haydn's "Surprise" Symphony (1791); "Heidenröslein" (1815) by Franz Schubert; "The Cuckoo Waltz" (1918) by the Swedish composer J. E. Jonasson; "La Cucaracha"; the popular "black-keys" piece of unknown origin known in Europe and North America as the "Flea Waltz," in Mexico as "The Little Monkeys," and in Korea as the "Cat Dance"; minuets by Bach, Mozart, and Boccherini (c.1725~1780); Johann Strauss Jr.'s "On the Blue Danube" (1866); the Neapolitan song "'o Sole Mio" (1898); "Csikós Post" by Hermann Necke (1895); the opening of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" (1801), as well as the same composer's "Für Elise" (1810); A. P. Wyman's "Silvery Waves (1912); Tekla Bądarzewska-Baranowska's "A Maiden's Prayer" (1856); two songs, "Rainbow" and "Spring in my Hometown" by the colonial-era Korean

by Ferdinand Beyer (1803-1863) and Carl Czerny (1791-1857), the latter better known in the West as one of Beethoven's pupils. These along with other classical music anthologies for beginning and intermediate pianists (such as the aforementioned *Sonatine Album*) soon came to be Segwang's trademark publications, as the demand for printed piano repertoire increased throughout the 80s and 90s along with South Korea's growing "middle-class." "Hwesayeonhyeok" (History), Sekwang, accessed March 1, 2021, https://sekwangmall.co.kr/_wg/import/sub/page_03.html#anchor.

[49] Pak Se-won, ed., *Piano Sogokjip*, (Seoul: Segwangeumakchulpansa, 1990), 2.

composer Hong Nan-pa (c.1827-1829); and closing with "Chopsticks," published in 1877 by the British one-hit-wonder Euphemia Allen under the alias "Arthur de Lulli."

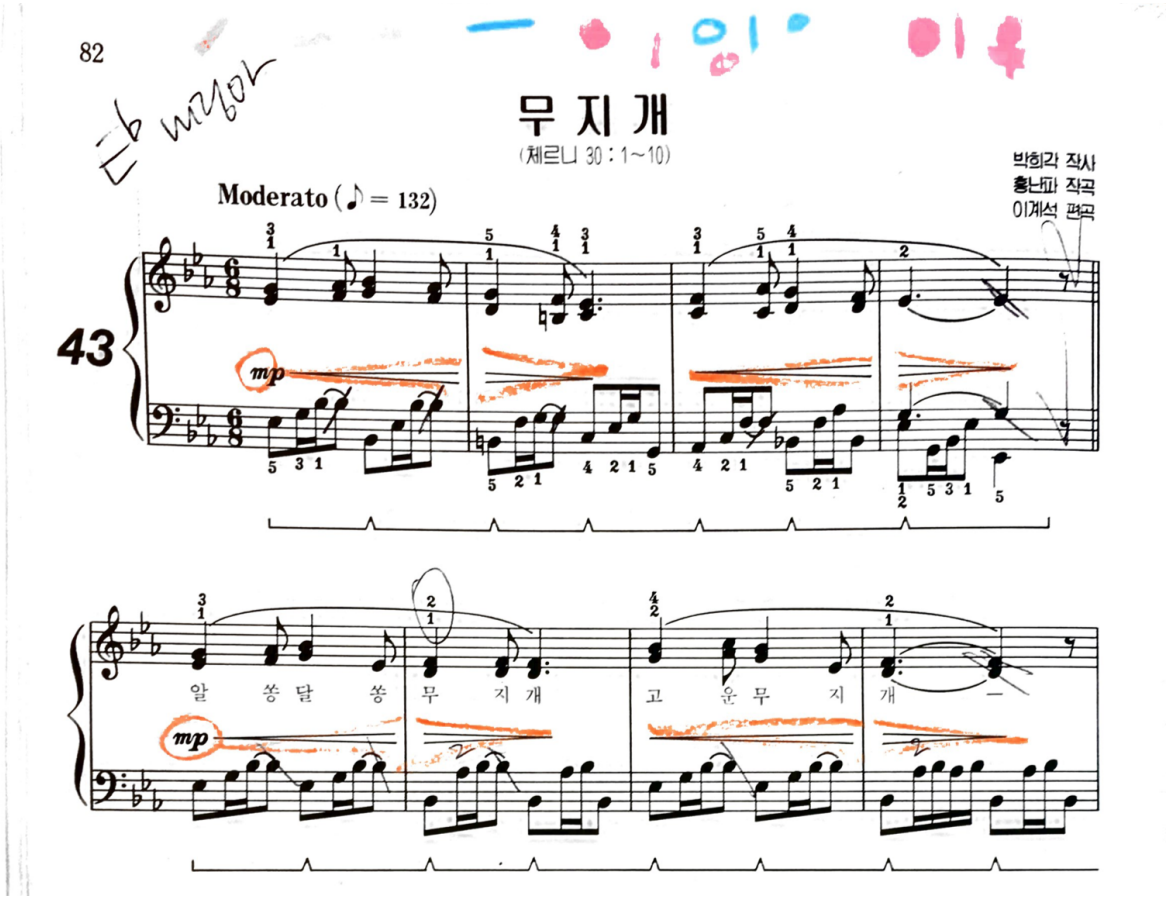

Figure 9. The opening measures of an arrangement of the well-known Korean children's song "Rainbow" (c.1927-29) from my personal copy of Piano Sogokjip (1990). *Judging from the dates written in by my piano teacher for the pieces before and after this in the collection, it seems like I learned this piece sometime around May 1997, when I was nine. I seem to have tested a pair of blue and pink markers on the top margins by writing out my name in both colors, partially.*

Piano Sogokjip presents a cosmopolitan array of miniatures emanating from the nineteenth century. Practically all of these pieces fit squarely within what West European and North American historians commonly call "the long nineteenth century": in Hobsbawm's influential use, the period stretches from 1789 to 1914, opening with the political and industrial "dual revolutions" and closing with the onset of World War I and its

disruption of the imperial world system.[50] The collection thus seems to affirm what musicologists already know: that the long nineteenth century continues to serve as the foundation for a dominant transnational bourgeois musical culture. Children entrain to these pieces at the keyboard and learn the rudimentaries of Western classical harmony and musicianship—how to identify scales and tonalities, how to play loudly, softly, and legato, how to affect a ritardando and diminuendo, etc. A recommended "curriculum" at the end of the collection features a six-stage progression starting with *Piano Sogokjip* and Beyer ("Beginner I") and culminating with Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Chopin etudes, Beethoven variations, and the like ("Advanced 6"). The overall goal is perhaps less for everyone to aspire to virtuosity but more to instill enough skill for a substantial degree of literacy and appreciation. Child willing (or perhaps even if not), they will attain the musical techniques and disposition that allows them to access historic spaces of intellectual and cultural distinction. I am here am I not?

Figure 10. Frontispiece from Piano Sogokjip (1990)*, featuring floating busts of European composers. My best guess from left to right: Brahms, Schubert, Tchaikovsky, older Beethoven, Bach, and younger Beethoven—but perhaps it is not important* who *the individual faces are supposed to be so much as* what *they represent as a collective—a group of great white men who look upon the young oriental aspirant with somber dignity.*

[50] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

But the actual musical archive of *Piano Sogokjip* conveys another, quieter story than the discourse that frames it. The miniatures in *Piano Sogokjip* are certainly adjacent to the historic Great Works of the long nineteenth century, and in some cases (such as the first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" or Schubert's "Heidenröslein") overlap with the performing and scholarly canons of the concert hall and university.[51] But the vast majority of these pieces and the tunes on which they are based are not themselves likely to be heard or studied in those spaces. Instead, they are more likely heard in ads, as school bells, at middlebrow pops concerts held in outdoor public venues and televised every week; more likely to be played at home, by yourself (or, god forbid, a visiting relative) than played on stage, for an audience.[52] They thus form a personal and domestic "canon," a shared body of tunes heard and played by people at home for their own or their family's pleasure, a musical thread running from the "piano girls" of the nineteenth century to children in the present.[53]

And these miniatures don't just draw from familiar tunes—they render them in styles and gestures that will themselves become familiar. While some of the children who graduate "Beginner I" will move up through the enhanced rigors of Bach, Chopin, and Brahms, many will hover somewhere in between, moving laterally into genres that, like the miniatures of yore, are less likely to be found in the official channels of bourgeois

[51] See William Weber, "The History of Musical Canon" in Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, eds., *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 336-355.
[52] As the prime example of the latter, the Korean Broadcast Station's "Open Concerts" (*Yeollineumakhwe*) started in 1993 and continues to this day. Pieces like "A Maiden's Prayer," little known now in the West, remain mainstays in the Korean ordinary not only as piano miniatures but also as, for instance, simple digital melodies that function as school bells to signal the beginning and ends of periods, etc. "A Maiden's Prayer" tops a video that ranks "Top Ten School Bells": "Hakgyojongsori TOP10," uploaded by Ipshideokhoo, October 25, 2019, YouTube, accessed March 1, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cF3KgRDxyM.
[53] "Girling at the Parlor Piano" in Ruth Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California), 85-117.

intellectual and cultural distinction, more likely to be caught off the radio, in restaurants or cafes, in backgrounds of movies and TV shows, etc. The techniques and sensibilities gleaned from a piece like the transcription of Hong Nan-pa's "Rainbow" will allow the child as a teen to play stuff like Yanni's "In the Morning Light" from his Grammy-nominated, platinum-rated album *In My Time* (1993); George Winston's "Thanksgiving" from *December* (1982); Yuhki Kuramoto's "Second Romance" (1996); Ryuichi Sakamoto's "Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence" from the 1983 film by the same name that no one watched; the main theme from the movie *Love Letter* (1998); "Piano Solo" from Ennio Morricone's soundtrack to *Love Affair* (1994) or Yiruma's piano solo transcription of the same composer's "Gabriel's Oboe" theme from *The Mission* (1986); Yiruma's own compositions, like "Wait There" from his 2001 debut album *Love Scene*; and the same artist's soundtrack for the film *Oasis* (2002), and…[54]

In Korea, "New Age" (*nyu-eiji*) is the genre most often used to describe this capacious collection of easy and atmospheric instrumental music. Both "easy" and "atmospheric" are doing double-duty here: they describe not only stylistic qualities (slowness, softness, repetitiveness, restricted range in melodies and accompaniment) but also functional ones (pervasive, backgrounding, easy to tune into while chilling out or doing something else). Though originating in the woo-woo orientalist soundscapes of the countercultural 60s and 70s, New Age now designates, in Korea as well as abroad, music written primarily for solo piano and occasionally featuring small chamber or electronic

[54] The movie *Love Letter* was originally released in 1995 in Japan, but only in 1998 in Korea after the left-leaning Kim Dae-jung administration began to relax the wall-to-wall legal ban on Japanese cultural imports. This was accomplished gradually in four stages between 1998 and 2004. The first stage opened the market to manga and films that had won awards from select international festivals and academies and brought *Love Letter* many a date happening in theaters over the winter of 1998.

elements.[55] But because New Age is primarily a marketing category used by labels and consumers rather than artists (sorry, Yanni, Harold Budd, Yiruma…[56]), it has come to name any and all musics that are caught in the vicinity of one another while listeners cruise for musical atmosphere in whatever space, medium, or genre, including not only self-described New Age but also music by film composers as well as soft and slow movements by canonized long nineteenth-century men like Beethoven and Debussy.

For the purposes of this dissertation, New Age is read less as an exceptional musical formation and more as an exemplary and symptomatic one. New Age exemplifies how an affective orientation towards instrumental music makes genres porous. All of the dissertation's examples have, at one time or another, hovered within the zone of New Age, whether in record stores, online streaming services, or playlists and compilations, without being heard only as New Age. History becomes leaky too. The sounds and affects learned from New Age facilitate encounters with more diminutive classical exempla across cultural

[55] The anthology *Korea's Favorite New Age Piano Collection: The Definitive New Age Collection 64 Songs* includes transcriptions of pieces by artists such You Hee-yeol (better known as performer, composer, and producer of K-pop), Kim Gwang-min, Hisaishi Joe, Brian Crain, Yuhki Kuramoto, Yiruma, Kevin Kern, Ryuichi Sakamoto, George Winston, Andre Gagnon, Enni Morricone, Isao Sasaki, David Lanz, Secret Garden, Scott Joplin, and Hoagy Carmichael. Choi Woo-jin, ed., *Korea's Favorite New Age Piano Collection: The Definitive New Age Collection 64 Songs* (Seoul: Score, 2013). Korean print publications of New Age transcriptions and scores often exhibit a questionable legality and quality, with companies producing their own unlicensed transcriptions of tracks often riddled with mistakes (perhaps to evade copyright lawsuits). A collection I have of Yanni's piano music, for instance, has an ISBN but no publication date. Once enough people began spending money on printed scores to not just listen but also play this music, the more recent generation of artists who became active after New Age became a properly established marketing category in the 90s have tended to take a more active hand in ensuring scores of their music circulate if not primarily at least also in licensed editions. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the music and career of millennial New Age artist Yiruma.

[56] The self-described "soft pedal" piano artist Harold Budd was reportedly incensed anytime someone called his music New Age (or Ambient, for that matter). Yanni's words, on the vicissitudes of being an instrumental recording artist outside the solid institutional and generic haven of the classical: "The difficulties of my quest to be heard were compounded by my music being called something it isn't. When I recorded *Optimystique,* my songs were called 'electronic' because they were performed with synthesizers. Unfortunately that wasn't considered 'real' music. It was thought of as rubber music. Cool. Repetitive. Techno. Droning. Mine wasn't anything like that, but because I used synthesizers I got lumped with that group. Next my music was called New Age, a label meant to conjure visions of artists who say 'Ommmmm' a lot and use the ambient sounds of tree frogs, crashing waves, and waterfalls to enhance meditation. That's never been me either; it's just not what I do." Yanni, with David Rensin, *Yanni in Words* (New York: Hyperion, 2002), 128.

and class registers, and vice versa: hence, the presence of "Clair de Lune" in Stomp Music's *Healing for Heart* (2014) and the presence of Yiruma's "River Flows in You" and Ludovico Einaudi's "I Giorni" in Deutsche Grammophon's *Klassik für Unterwegs* (2014). For the learned bourgeois aspirant, the permeability between New Age and classical can be a source of irritation or a source of hope that the simplified mass pleasures of the former will act as a gateway to cultural ascension.[57] But for most listeners and amateur practitioners of whatever piano and small ensemble instrumental music goes by New Age (or classical), what emerges is less a riven franken-genre but an atmospheric totality that stretches out from the long nineteenth century onwards.

The really long nineteenth century is what happens when the nineteenth century persists not only as a historic legacy in the official discourses and structures of dominant bourgeois institutions but also as an ongoing affective infrastructure and background for mass-mediated personal and collective styles. Of course, as any professor knows, the discourse of institutions and styles of mass media are not always in sync. The former is often stodgy and conservative, old-fashioned even in its appropriation of memes and tiktok. The goal here is not to become hip and contemporary (we're talking about New Age and classical music after all) but to make a case for attuning to how historical styles persist in the

[57] A particularly irate example: @ethanjamesescano at *Talk Classical*, titled "Hate Beethoven? How about hating on Yiruma." "Yiruma's melody on his music is very cheezy. / It lacks dissonance I think / Zooey Deschanel's bittersuite is even better than any of his composition / What I hate more is his fans… / They are angry at us (or maybe most) because we (most of us) do not agree it's classical music / It's clearly pop music / not because you play something on the piano it is classical // PS // I like Beethoven." https://www.talkclassical.com/26116-hate-beethoven-how-about.html, accessed on March 14, 2021. See also Joseph, "Are contemporary classical composers cheating?" January 1, 2011, accessed on March 14, 2021. https://listentobettermusic.wordpress.com/2013/01/11/are-contemporary-classical-composers-cheating/.

shadows within and around public institutions, in personal as well as private domestic infrastructures.[58]

So while many of the dissertation's examples draw from recent music for film, this is not just a film music dissertation: in tracing the echoes of recessive historical genres and practices that thread the really long nineteenth century, it identifies a feedback loop between 19th-century miniature and 21st-century soundtrack at the core of an emergent atmospheric aesthetics. The dissertation thus owes to prior musicological scholarship that has pried the interstices of the dominant symphonic and operatic styles of bourgeois society for its smaller and quieter genres while questing for a scholarly idiom more commensurate to its subject matter. Margaret Notley's work documenting the struggle for words and articulation around slow movements in nineteenth-century discourse publics; Allan Hepburn's aphoristic essay that saturates the scene of the miniature with cosmic compaction; Ruth Solie's work on domestic piano playing as separately private and personal affective infrastructures that gave young women in aspirationally middle-class households the means to deploy space within and around their domestic duties—among others, this scholarship has modeled how to approach and inhabit the zone of middling, minor genres suspended between the bourgeois and the proletarian.[59]

The dissertation focuses on moments when the really long nineteenth century not only describes an ongoing historical, material situation but also begins to delineate a structure of feeling. In the aftermath of crises that are themselves long, drawn out, and

[58] On the emergence of personal life as a realm distinct from the increasing productive and reproductive economic pressures placed on the private and domestic, see Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 65-77.

[59] Margaret Notley, "Late-Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music and the Cult of the Classical Adagio," *19th-Century Music* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 33-61; Allan Hepburn, "Piano Miniatures: An Essay on Brevity," *Gettysburg Review* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 89-105; Solie, "Girling at the Parlor Piano."

ongoing, the really long nineteenth century can creep up as a feeling that whatever has been going on has been going on for a really long time. The nineteenth century starts to feel really long when the purported arrival of a new, emergent era—the short twentieth century, the whatever new millennium—doesn't lead to new life genres that feel emergent. Instead, we have an endless lingering in the historical as the familiar and repetitive that feels sometimes restful, sometimes miring, etc., and that in turn produces a range of affective and political responses, but rarely and increasingly less a collective apocalyptic fervor.[60] In this dissertation, the really long nineteenth century is primarily a musical-stylistic matter. But as we will continue to see, a persistent and atmospheric music can bear the knowledge that despite a constant and overfamiliar affective and material attrition, the world of our political attachments too has remained diffuse and unchanging. Those of us who live in and around the penumbra of the world's oldest and most resilient bourgeois constitutional democracy are reminded daily that the empire never ended.[61] The dissertation would like to offer a hammer but for now substitutes the numbing complacency of "it is what it is" with the sometimes tender, sometimes indignant curiosity of "what's going on?"

[60] Knowing more than Marx, we might say, "History repeats: first as tragedy, second as farce, and so on and so forth until the repetitions form a shitstorm that settles into a slow-moving sludge of liberal platitudes and electoralism."

[61] For example, in a speech given at the 2018 University-wide Convocation, the Dean of the Humanities cited Winston Churchill ("The empires of the future are the empires of the mind") to little or no perturbance among the hooded participants of ritual. "The Empire never ended" is a phrase lifted from Philip K. Dick's 1981 exegetical novel *VALIS*. Philip K. Dick, *VALIS & Later Novels* (New York: The Library of America, 2009), 392. For an account of American empire unmatched in its thoroughgoing account of financial history as geopolitical history and vice versa, see Michael Hudson, *Super Imperialism: The Origin and Fundamentals of U.S. World Dominance* (New York: *Pluto Books*, 2003). American empire, of course, is also always a scene of military violence and destruction deployed in the name of economic and therefore human flourishing. See Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live* (New York: Routledge, 2009). For an American account of the Korean War as a war of American imperial aggression and colonial occupation, see Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2010).

Globality in Globalization

Clearly, the dissertation is interested in presenting a transnational archive of movies, words, and music. But it does not present an archive that is global in the sense of providing a representative coverage of cases from around the world, as might be expected from a world music survey course. The globe that emerges is instead one that remains focused on cultural production from the North American and West European metropoles with forays into Japan and Korea. The resulting map looks a lot like a map of OECD member nations, or of the United States and its military allies—countries with which the US has signed mutual defense treaties, etc.

This is the postwar globality that remains the primary target of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist action and discourse within its own borders as well as in the so-called Second and Third Worlds, in areas covered historically by the Comintern, the Bandung nations, and member nations of the Non-Aligned Movement—virtually all African, Asian, and Latin American countries with the exception of Japan and the "Four Tigers" (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan).[62] Within the liberal imagination, this globality continues to serve as the repository of real-life evidence that bourgeois democracy—with its combination of *laissez-faire* liberal governance and robust civil society of private persons—remains the only viable option for the short- and long-term flourishing of humanity. This narrow, misshapen globality of NATO and its model minority familiars forms the staging

[62] I reeled from Richard Wright's account of anti-colonial Afro-Asian solidarity at the Bandung Conference, even if, as a South Korean, I felt majorly left out. "The Color Curtain" in James Baldwin, *Black Power: Three Books From Exile* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008). 429-630.

ground of Fukuyama's end of history.[63] It is the globality that serves as the agent and beneficiary of globalization.

In the discourse of a leftish anglophone humanities, the globe appears primarily as an antagonist, something to isolate, break apart, and displace via critical thought. Emblematically, Gayatri Spivak describes the globe and globalization thus:

> Globalization is the imposition of the same system of exchange everywhere. In the gridwork of electronic capital, we achieve that abstract ball covered in latitudes and longitudes, cut by virtual lines, once the equator and the tropics and so on, now drawn by the requirements of Geographical Information Systems. […] The globe is in our computers. No one lives there.[64]

Spivak speaks from a Comparative Literature in the year 2000 which she deems too high on the multicultural and comparativist dreams and methods of "U.S.-style world literature" and therefore symptomatic of a globe-trotting upperclass cosmopolitanism and casual disregard for the particularity and idiomaticity of non-hegemonic languages.[65] Against the abstracted and homogenized figure of the globe, Spivak raises the "underived alterity" and "textured collectivity" of the planet.[66] The utopian foil of "planetarity" is idiosyncratically

[63] Francis Fukuyama doesn't *happen* to be an assimilated third-generation "Asian American." People need their token triumphalist whipping boy to derive from the most pliant and simultaneously most alien subject population. Fukuyama's deracialized and universalizing liberalism travels and reaffirms the conduits not only of his own class privilege but also of the ongoing American erasure, exorcism, and genocide of anti-liberal oriental communists. As I write these words, "Asians" in America continue a hapless struggle between a dehistoricized drive towards whiteness and ravaged historical pasts amputated from them by colonizers or their own comprador kin and brethren. Either path runs the gauntlet between white gratification and racial resentment. On the "Asian alien" as "the embodiment of the abstract evils of capitalism," see Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
[64] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). The book was originally delivered as a series of lectures at the University of California-Irvine in May 2000.
[65] Ibid., 39.
[66] Ibid., 46.

Spivak, but the assessment of the globe as the scene of dehumanizing and dehistoricizing abstraction ("No one lives there") is a common trope.

In music studies by way of ethnomusicology, globality and sameness is likewise abandoned to critique. Here it is not the "planet" and its "underived alterity" but the more familiar figures of "world" and "difference" that act as conceptual and political alternatives to globalization. The concept of "world" draws from a dual source in ethnomusicological discourse, one more historical and one more contemporary: first, from a cosmopolitan conception of irreducibly plural musics and practices that comprise humanity; and second, from the Western pop-industrial genre formulated in the 1980s by record labels to sell exotic and hybrid musics to a predominantly upper-middle-class white audience.[67] In its first, more historical conception, "world" refers to the irreducibly plural totality of the "world's musics" or "world of musics." As the latter genre, world music is often critiqued as shot through with the homogenizing and appropriative impulses of globalization; but even in this form, the discourse of "world" is distinguished from the aspirational consistency of the globe in its production and commodification of difference and locality.[68] The ambivalent significations of "world" in "world music" on the one hand and in the irreducibly plural "world of musics" on the other thus allow music studies to toggle between a paranoid

[67] For a pithy discussion of an Enlightened cosmopolitanist world music's historical and philosophical source in the writings and activities of Johann Gottfried von Herder, see Philip V. Bohlman, *World Music: A Very Short* Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 36-41. On an emblematic discussion of the world's musics as irreducibly plural, see Bruno Nettl, "Is Music the Universal Language of Mankind? Commonalities and the Origins of Music" in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-Three Discussions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 31-46. On the origins and operations of the commercial world music genre, see Simon Frith, "The Discourse of World Music" in Georgina Born and David Hesmondalgh, eds., *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 305-322.

[68] For a discussion of the dialectical commodification of difference within a homogenizing global pop industry, see Veit Erlmann, "The Aesthetics of the Global Imagination: Reflections on World Music in the 1990s," *Public Culture* 8 (1996): 467-487.

critique of the globalization and the reparative recuperation of expressive and at times subversive indigenous and hybrid agencies capable of countering globalization's flattening.[69] At either end, "world" frames a totality constituted through a difference that is musical—whether subaltern, commodified, or emerging from a dialectic between the two—and the globe remains a mute and unblinking plane.[70]

In this dissertation, too, the globe is the realm of sameness, assimilation, and capitalist gridwork. But where pro- and anti-globalist projections toggle between seeing the homogenous abstracted globe as either good or bad, the dissertation struggles to hear the hum threading its scenes and objects.[71] For the globe, too, has its soundtrack, through and around which fictional characters and people entrain, attune, and adapt to its cosmopolitan and prolonged Euro-American style. By attending to the atmospheric hum and white noise that glides beneath performances of ethnic or national identity-as-difference, the dissertation aims not to reconstitute globality in the image of the "world" as a realm of hitherto

[69] For certain scholars, the toggle between resistance and commodification is also internal to practices that unfold within commercial world music markets: see for example the chapter "Strategies of Resistance" in Tim Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997). For Jo Haynes, the split can also be traced between, for instance, how industry personnel, listeners, and creators of commercial world music mobilize and respond to commodified difference: Jo Haynes, "World Music and the Search for Difference," *Ethnicities* 5, no. 3 (2005): 365-385. Martin Stokes identifies the toggle as a political and methodological split between "pessimistic Marxian critique on the one hand and an optimistic radical liberalism on the other," a split that further manifests as "an opposition between global and local, system and agency, pessimism and optimism, top-down and bottom-up approaches to globalization." Martin Stokes, "Music and the Global Order," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 50. This framing has the critical drawback of making it seem as if Marxism and liberalism are somehow equal, rival forces in ethnomusicology. They are not. And neither of them accounts for or articulates an ambivalently mournful/joyful and militant Marxist (not "Marxian") theory and praxis of internationalist class struggle and solidarity. For a nuanced and symptomatic expression of what the author presents as a tightrope walk between attending to "representation, performance, and aesthetics" on the one hand and "material conditions and history" on the other, see Carol Silverman, *Romani Routes: Cultural Politics and Balkan Music in Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. 39-56.

[70] Thanks to Adrienne Alton-Gust and Laura Shearing Turner for helping me think through the multiple operations of "world" in the irreducibly plural discourses and practices of world music(s).

[71] The hum as a soundtrack hovering between nature sounds and hymn is borrowed from Lauren Berlant's reading of an untitled poem by John Ashbery, cited in full and discussed in Berlant, *Cruel Optimism,* 28-35.

underappreciated difference or subterfuge, but to model a heightened awareness of the atmospheric strains of sameness that continue to pervade and underscore peoples' lives.

Part of this is selfish: I would like for myself and people around me to better attend not to the erasure of Koreanness, but to the erasure that Koreanness is.[72] Korea and Koreans are overpresent in discourses of globalization, whether celebratory or critical. Consider the following two excerpts, worth quoting in full:

> If we picture a future in which all nations have made the transition from poverty and fear to material and political comfort, some will have contributed more than others in ways crucial to the benefit of the whole. Some will have given us values and ideas; some will have come up with the best systems and technologies; and some will give us the best cuisine, music, literature, and beloved personalities. At such a time, ironically, it may be natural for national boundaries to melt and for the rules we live by to be set at one end by regional and global government and at the other by local government. Nations may remain for purposes of identity and selecting World Cup teams, but they will no longer need weapons. We don't hear this often said, because the current issues seem so intractable. But it is obvious to me that such a world will come. Wealth and comfort are not for the few. All nations will catch up. I didn't believe this until the Koreans showed the way.
>
> This to me is the significance of their story.[73]

> Korea is the ground zero of the world, a blueprint for the future of the planet. […]

[72] You can replace Koreanness with Asianness. For the anglophone audience of this dissertation, the sentence would read the same. This is a banal complaint and also a gesture of solidarity I extend to my oriental friends.
[73] Michael Breen, *The New Koreans: The Business, History and People of South Korea* (London: Rider Books, 2017) 15-16.

> After colonization and wars, after dictatorship and starvation, the South Korean mind, liberated by the burden of the natural body, smoothly entered the digital sphere with a lower degree of cultural resistance than virtually any other populations in the world. This, in my opinion, is the main source of the incredible economic performance that this country has staged in the years of the electronic revolution. In the emptied cultural space, the Korean experience is marked by an extreme degree of individualization and simultaneously it is headed towards the ultimate cabling of the collective mind.
>
> These lonely monads walk in the urban space in tender continuous interaction with the pictures, tweets, games coming out of their small screens, perfectly insulated and perfectly wired into the smooth interface of the flow. In order to get access to the interaction, the individual has to adapt to the format, and his/her enunciations have to be compatible with the code.[74]

The two excerpts differ wildly in politics and tone, the first offering a globalist panegyric and the second a left-melancholy dirge. Yet common referents abound. A nation's rise from the trauma of war and poverty; the far-reaching implications of technological transformation; the impending dissolution of borders and boundaries and corollary emergence of individuals into networked society; and, running through all this, the exceptional and exemplary status of Korea and Koreans as harbingers of a coming order of the same. We are overpresent, yet as props in the variably triumphalist or melancholy fantasies of white men who are also caught up in a world that is a globe.

[74] Franco Berardi, *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (London; Brooklyn: Verso, 2015), 192-193.

In order to begin articulating a shared knowledge of Koreanness (and Asianness) as a form of erasure, we will need to start by acknowledging and accounting for its genres of occurrence.[75] The dissertation's examples have ended up drawing from Seoul and Tokyo, because, among others, those are the places where the soundtrack of the globe continues to hum the strongest. Yes, we too have our folk and punk and hybrid styles, resuscitated genres through which we world in/as a simultaneously disruptive and commodified difference. You can hear those beats in a *samulnori* line at school, at a cultural center, at a park under the first full moon of the new lunar year, at a rally for immigration reform funded by nonprofits and PACs, at a strike coming to a campus near you.[76] But the dissertation asks that we lend an ear and part of our brains to the music that plays when the world is caught up in the story and the space of becoming global. Because, *pace* Spivak, people live there. Because whatever we want to bring about after the end of the globe, these are the melodies we've known and the fantasies we've shared—and what comes after will need to account for that.

Chapter Summaries

The first chapter, "Love, in the Classical Style: *Cloud Atlas* and Global Musical Atmosphere," builds around the 2012 science fiction global romantic drama film *Cloud*

[75] I originally wrote disappearance, then appearance, then realized what I wanted to invoke was neither but whatever the coming to be of spectral apparition is. So for now I settle for another placeholder word; but in the meanwhile, look forward to holograms and ghosts and Asianness and gender in Dan Wang, "😑" in *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Affect* (forthcoming).

[76] For a loving, attentive primer on the resuscitated percussive culture of *samulnori* and a white scholar's enfleshment of Koreanness as a vivid and embodied folk practice, see Nathan Hesselink, *SamulNori: Contemporary Korean Drumming and the Rebirth of Itinerant Performance Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

Atlas.[77] The chapter explores how the movie's Romantic-style soundtrack, originally portrayed as emerging from the classical music soundworld of a subplot set in *fin-de-siécle* Europe, comes to both figure and act as the movie's prime unifying force. The movie features a sprawling plot made up of six interlocking stories that take place in distinct locations, periods, and genres spanning the really long nineteenth century. Its narrative and cinematic ambitions are matched by its cosmic-scale cosmopolitan politics, encapsulated in a character's cliché-turned-catechism, "all boundaries are conventions."

Two cues in particular are invested with the ability to not only convey but also embody and manifest the shared strand of history that threads the film's characters and plots. The "Cloud Atlas Sextet" predominates in the film's first half and is in fact the fictional masterpiece after which the movie is named. By crisscrossing the diegetic and nondiegetic border and acting both as disembodied soundtrack and music alternatingly composed and performed by characters onscreen, the "Sextet" pinpoints the historical and stylistic origins of the movie's transhistorical and global musical atmosphere. The "Cloud Atlas March," on the other hand, functions exclusively as nondiegetic underscore; and yet it is the "March" which overwrites the "Sextet" as the movie's main theme, in both how the film's shifting musical atmosphere abandons the latter for the former, and how the "March" gets taken up by listeners in subsequent re-encounters with the film's musical atmospheres and affects. The chapter thus follows and mimics the movie's method as it models a mode of what French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre called "rhythmanalysis"—a style of thinking and feeling attuned and entrained to the strains that pulse through shared historical scenes and fantasies.

[77] I made up "science fiction global romantic drama." It is a very specific genre that includes *2046* (2004, dir. Wong Kar-wai) and *The Fountain* (2006, dir. Darren Aronofsky).

The second chapter, "Yiruma and "I": Nocturnes, New Age, and Koreanness," turns to the piano music of the globally-successful Korean New Age composer and pianist, Yiruma. It opens with a piece called "I" from Yiruma's 2001 debut recording. As the chapter demonstrates, the style of "I" evokes and mimics the style of nineteenth-century European nocturnes—albeit in a simplified form that renders it even more accessible to amateur pianists. "I" is a twenty-first-century Korean New Age echo originating in a nineteenth-century European genre. Still, there's a lot in between. So the chapter asks, where does "I," and other oriental New Age nocturnes like it, come from?

To answer this question, the chapter traverses domestic scenes of piano-playing in mid-nineteenth-century Euro-American middle-class households, the music and discourse of early-twentieth-century colonial mimic and composer Hong Nan-pa, and the cultures of individuated healing and easy listening/easy playing piano that emerged in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis (the "IMF"). In doing so, the chapter traces Koreanness as it emerges in (post-)colonial personal and domestic infrastructures such as the room (as in the fabled space of a "room of one's own"), the English language, and musical genres like nocturnes, New Age, and children's songs. It follows the ellipses in Yiruma's writing and music and learns to linger in a Koreanness that suffuses the room as a neutral and generic quality, at times barely noticeable, "like air."

The third chapter, "Minima Melancholia: Schubert, Minimalism, and Dysthymic Soundtracks," closes the main body of the dissertation with the entwined melancholy strains of minimalist soundtracks and the music of Franz Schubert. The comparison of Schubert

and minimalism derives from two sources: Theodor Adorno's early essay on Schubert and repetition, which the chapter reads for lessons on minimalism's musical and affective structures, and the chapter's minimalist musical examples themselves, which cite, circle around, and echo Schubert's music. The chapter's primary examples of melancholy minimalism draw from German-British composer Max Richter's work, including his popular instrumental track "On the Nature of Daylight" (2004) and his soundtracks for the depressing movie *The Congress* (2013) and depressing TV series *The Leftovers* (2014-2017). But the depressive musical and affective tendencies the chapter tracks are generalizable across a range of minimalist musical atmospheres, such as those composed by Carter Burwell, Clint Mansell, Michael Nyman, Ludovico Einaudi, Ólafur Arnalds, Philip Glass, Rachel Portman, Ramin Djawadi, Ryuichi Sakamoto, etc.

The chapter calls these soundtracks dysthymic, because dysthymia is the once-name for depression as a persistent state that often flies under diagnosis and manifests less as expressive episodes and more as a structure of feeling you intuit but cannot shake or articulate. But where a clinic might treat this, the chapter sees it working as an art of living on. In the chapter's examples, people are holding onto relationships, styles, and affects that are repetitive and persistent in a way that is exhausting but nonetheless maintains a scene and landscape for personal and political encounter. The chapter calls what the characters and people do in these landscapes dithering; for, suspended between the world as full of fraying attachments and a dimming, retracting horizon, they know not what to do, apart from tread and wander. As they do this, they are haunted and accompanied by strains that

repeat, internally, as motivic and rhythmic structures, as well as between historical and contemporary atmospheres, as echoes and allusions.[78]

[78] The title of the final chapter contains both a name for this musical and affective style as well as a love note to T. W. Adorno, whose thinking and writing has modeled the at times irritating arts of persisting in a melancholy that is personal and political. The allusion is not specific, however—*Minima Moralia* might give us Yoda-esque aphorisms like "wrong life cannot be lived rightly," but what really remains is the general attitude of someone who stays sitting in the aftermath of a long and convoluted sentence that is probably a bad translation but nonetheless opens up to a migrant thought.

Chapter 1. Love, in the Classical Style: *Cloud Atlas* and Global Musical Atmosphere

I. Underscoring Global Musical Atmosphere

"Underscore" has a simple etymology: "to draw a score or line beneath; to underline," from "under + score (v.)."[1] The way we use it now, it has a more figurative meaning: "to point up, to emphasize, to reinforce."[2] (You could be seen and understood as underscoring a point without literally having to draw a line under it.) When it comes to movies, of course, the word becomes a technical term, referring to the nondiegetic, frequently orchestral music that accompanies action on the screen. Maybe the first soul in Hollywood to use the word this way grabbed onto the pun between "score" (as in sheet music) and the literal line on a piece of film that contained the music and sound as a track running below or under (if you turn your head the right way) the images. The score (music) is a score (line). Plus, in the standard audiovisual hierarchy of film, the music seems to accompany the images rather than vice versa; you might say, the music unfolds beneath—or under—the visuals, as a description of which of the senses predominates. And furthermore, the music that is a line under the visual film also points up, emphasizes, and reinforces the narrative events represented in the moving image. The word is a literal, figurative, and technical triple whammy. This chapter plays around with a fourth meaning: the underscore as a musical and affective strain that pulses through the really long nineteenth century and its spatial counterpart, the globe.[3]

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[1] Entry for "underscore, v." in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* http://www.oed.com.
[2] Ibid.
[3] On the really long nineteenth century and globality as a scene and structure of feeling in liberal regimes of globalization, see the dissertation's introduction ("End-Historical Romanticism").

The idea of an affective strain owes to Henri Lefebvre's notion of "rhythmanalysis."[4] Like this dissertation, Lefebvre sees a geographically and temporally extended historical realm stretching onwards and outwards from the European political and industrial revolutions of the late 1700s: "After the [French] Revolution, against the values of the revolutionaries… a new society was installed: that socio-economic organisation of **our** urban-State-market society."[5] The bolded "**our**" preempts a projected reader's surprise at the insistence that our "present" is in fact coextensive with the historic past of post-revolutionary European society.[6] Lefebvre is unapologetically structural and Marxist here: the claim of historical continuity is based on the continuity of whatever "socio-economic organisation" he shorthands as the "urban-State-market society." But *Rhythmanalysis* doesn't ask that the reader take the Marxist at his word, or behold the economic base of a modern capitalism as it emerges as a concrete monolith of steel pipes and equations. Rather, something persists, as a sensed and intuited entity that can, at times, take the shape and feel of a structure, totality, or *longue durée*.

Lefebvre calls this something rhythm, and refers to "a moving but determinate complexity" that is neither object nor subject, nor a relation.[7] For Lefebvre, the discipline of attending to and elaborating on these rhythms—rhythmanalysis—is primarily a matter for sociology. While drawing and learning from Lefebvre's intervention, this chapter takes a

[4] Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: Continuum, 2004).
[5] Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 6. All bolds and italics and such emphases in this and the following citations are in the original.
[6] "Present" is in quotes because the colloquially available idea of "the historical present" is always a mediated thing that emerges in the moment of enunciation and which floats genre and narrative for a situation of contemporaneity, while often demanding to be taken as self-evident or presumed. See Lauren Berlant and Jordan Greenwald, "Affect in the End Times: A Conversation with Lauren Berlant," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 20, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012), 71-89.
[7] Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 12.

more literal-minded approach to rhythm and rhythmanalysis. Here, whatever pulses through and unites seemingly disparate places and times within a sensed and intuited totality is a music. The chapter starts from the thought-experiment that history has a soundtrack—one that, through its shifts and variations in tempo, texture, or style, maintains enough continuity to evoke the experience of a spatial and historical expanse.

Previous film scholars such as Caryl Flinn have written extensively and richly about the continuities between late-romanticism and classical Hollywood film practice. For Flinn, the persistence of late-romantic style was also a persistence of ideology: of the individual as creative genius, for instance, or of Woman as the object and/or site of lost maternal plenitude.[8] For Flinn as well as scholars working with more recent examples, the "classical" cinematic penchant for late-romantic style has been overtaken and replaced by new trends such as the pop soundtrack or the "post-classical" underscore.[9] This dissertation and chapter, too, tracks and presumes a stylistic and affective shift between the classical melodramatic underscore and the more sparse and atmospheric instrumental textures of many contemporary movies. However, shifts are not always ruptures or breaks (however much we would like them to be, for want of something new or simply else). Something distinctly classical persists and underscores sensed historical and affective continuities.

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[8] Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[9] Flinn, *Strains of Utopia*, 3. For an interesting attempt to grasp the stylistic and cultural specificities of "post-classical" trends in orchestral nondiegetic screen scoring, see Nicholas Reyland, "Corporate Classicism and the Metaphysical Style: Affects, Effects, and Contexts of Two Recent Trends in Screen Scoring," *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* 9, no. 2 (2015): 115-130. Reyland's neologisms ("corporate classicism" and "metaphysical style") have the advantage of attuning to significant stylistic and atmospheric shifts in instrumental textures in more recent films such as *The Dark Knight* (2008) and *American Beauty* (1999). The two "styles" strike me more as tropes or topoi, however; and as "post-classical" exempla they gain specificity primarily in contrast to a melodramatic "classical" style that remains the normative aesthetic—and political—reference point for such analyses (see Reyland's closing discussion of the "problematic… distractions created by [post-classical] filmmaking practices," ibid., 126-127).

This chapter explores how a strain of classical romantic-style film music underscores the transhistorical and global plots, fantasies, and atmospheres in the 2012 film *Cloud Atlas*, directed by Tom Tykwer and Lana and Lilly Wachowski. As we will see, the soundtrack of *Cloud Atlas* plays a central role, as object and atmosphere, in conveying the film's vision of cosmopolitan totality stretching from nineteenth-century Europe to a global (and post-global!) future that extends beyond the 2010s "present" of the time of the film's release. The movie is ambitious, sprawling; at times, it tips over into the politically-hubristic and stylistically-overwrought. But in its own literal-minded pursuit of a transhistorical globality, the movie serves as a symptom of globalization's normative aspirations as well as a mirror for the dissertation's interest in what pervades and persists, musically and affectively. Plus, the movie has its rhythmanalytic method: in its plot and soundtrack can be heard strains that underscore—underli(n)e, reinforce, accompany, and pulse through—what it presents as **our** global musical atmosphere.

II. A Musical Map

Cloud Atlas (2012) opens with a whirlwind juxtaposition of settings and period-styles, a five-minute montage that cuts between six different sets of characters and locations no less than twelve times. It starts slowly, with a scene taking place in an unidentified outdoors beneath a starlit night sky. A low monotone drone in the soundtrack conjures an atmosphere of suspense. A scarred and wizened man played by Tom Hanks huddles by a fire. Dappled by the shadows cast by flames dancing in the wind, the character delivers a monologue in a weird pidgin which presages the rest of the film to follow: "Oh, lonesome night. And babbits bawling, the wind biting the bone. Wind like this… full of voices.

Ancestry howlin' at ya. Yibberin' stories. All voices tied up into one."[10] The film transitions to a sunlit and gravely beach, which is being traversed by a dapper nineteenth-century man (played by Jim Sturgess) in top hat, pantaloons, and tail coat. As the soundtrack's drone swells to a dominant chord, the dapper nineteenth-century man walks up to and addresses someone who turns out to be… Tom Hanks, playing a different character.

With that revelation, the soundtrack strikes up in a melody, and the montage begins in earnest: in the remaining three minutes, the movie cuts from nineteenth-century man and beach to a woman (Halle Berry) driving a vintage Beetle and speaking into some outdated dictation device; from there to an old man with a English accent (Jim Broadbent) typing away at his desk in a nice suburban English house with a 2000s feel; from there to another English-accented man (Ben Wishaw), younger but in decidedly more antiquated (and dilapidated) surroundings, sealing a suicide note written in fountain pen, then reaching for a tell-tale Luger pistol; from there to a high-tech future interrogation room where magnetic handcuffs shackle an oriental woman (Doona Bae), who sits across from a man who is made up to look oriental (James D'Arcy).

[10] *Cloud Atlas*, directed by Lana Wachowski, Lilly Wachowski, and Tom Tykwer, (2012: Warner Bros. Pictures), 0:40.

Figure 11. The six places and times of Cloud Atlas, *in order of appearance in the film (from left-right, top-bottom): Big Isle, 106 "After the Fall"; the Pacific Isles, 1849; Cambridge, 1936; San Francisco, 1973; London, 2012; Neo Seoul, 2144.*

In the remaining minute, the montage quickens yet another notch, whirling among the different periods and locations as their respective characters begin to present their budding dramas. The montage then culminates in a presentation of the film's title: six white lines zoom in from the edges of the dark screen and converge in the center, tracing the words *Cloud Atlas*. In the background, a map of the world flickers in and out.

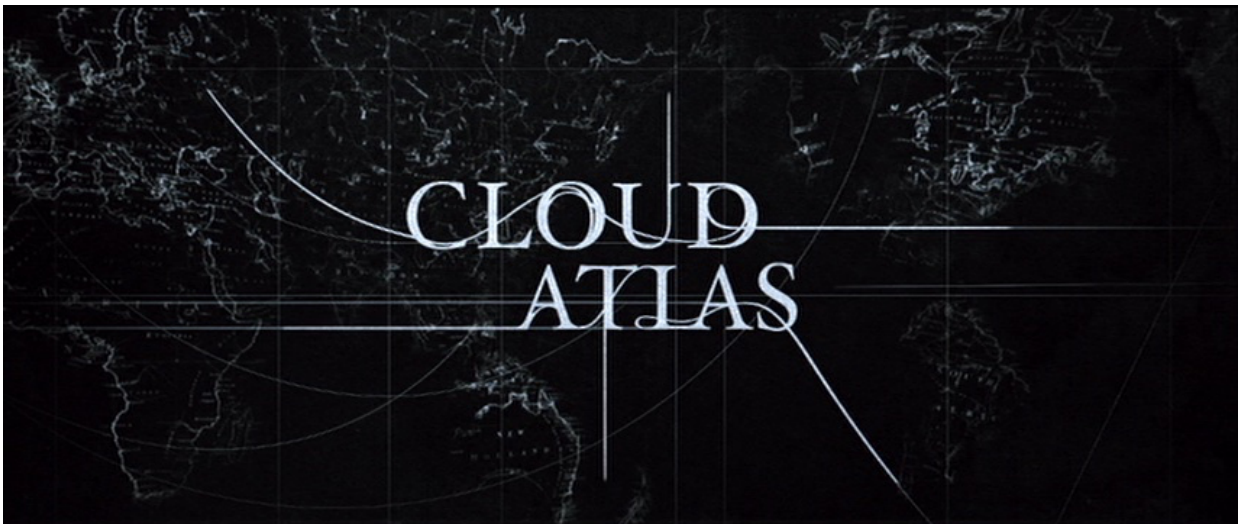

Figure 12. Title shot, the word "Cloud Atlas" superimposed upon an atlas of the world.

The opening sequence discloses a number of features which characterizes *Cloud Atlas* as an unusually ambitious, self-reflexive, and recursive film. First, it's a story about storytelling—about catching and conveying the yibberin' voices and stories flying through the air. Second, this story unfolds across space and time in six disparate periods and locations. The movie emerges as the totality of all six subplots—"all voices tied up in one"—as they intersect and converge in surprising ways. Third, while the movie shifts among different tones, period styles, and genres associated with each of the six subplots, two things remain largely consistent and ensure narrative and aesthetic continuity and coherence: the actors and music. Like Tom Hanks who blithely appears as two different characters across contiguous shots, the actors who play significant characters in each subplot appear again and again, in different versions and reincarnations. Different actors and their characters undergo varying degrees of moral transformation. On the one end of the spectrum, Hugo Weaving appears as an antagonist in all six subplots: as a British slave-trading capitalist, a Nazi composer, a hitman, a tyrant nurse who terrorizes the psych ward, an oligarch of a dystopian corpocracy, and, finally, an evil demigod. On the other end, Tom

Hanks appears as variously murderous, opportunistic, and virtuous characters, reincarnating as the most morally good version of himself in the plot set in the farthest future. The actors thus come to form a network of "souls" or "metacharacters" whose fates and relationships crisscross and unfold across the six plotlines.

An Overview of the Plots, Places, and Times of Cloud Atlas

1	Big Isle 106 "After the Fall"	A post-apocalyptic story set in what is now Hawaii ("Big Isle") in a far-future. Tom Hanks stars as Zachry, a member of a peaceful tribe which struggles to survive in a brutal world. Zachry must aid Meronym (Halle Berry) in her quest to re-establish contact with the "Off-World Colonies" to ask for help. The movie starts at the tail end of their story, after Zachry and Meronym successfully migrate to a pastoral extraterrestrial habitat which they have populated with groves of children and grandchildren (to whom Zachry is speaking, in the movie's first lines).
2	Pacific Isles 1849	A maritime swashbuckler and abolitionist story set in the Pacific. Jim Sturgess stars as Adam Ewing, a young gentleman representing his father-in-laws interests in talks to establish the trade of Pacific Islanders as slaves. On his trip back to England he must fight to preserve the life of a stowaway slave, Autua (David Gyasi), as well as his own from the scheming and rapacious Dr. Henry Goose (Tom Hanks). In one of the movie's final scenes, an ill but living Ewing reunites with his wife (Doona Bae).
3	Cambridge 1936	The rakish composer Robert Frobisher (Ben Wishaw) is shunned by his family and the musical establishment for his voracious and extensive sexual appetites. Much of his story is told in voiceovers of letter he writes to his true love, Rufus Sixsmith (James D'Arcy). He studies with the ailing composer Vyvyan Ayrs (Jim Broadbent) and provides sexual favors to Vyvyan's wife Jocasta (Halle Berry). After shooting an increasingly exploitative and manipulative Vyvyan, Frobisher flees to London where, in abject poverty, he composes the *Cloud Atlas Sextet*.
4	San Francisco 1973	This hardboiled political drama stars Halle Berry as tabloid journalist Luisa Rey. Luisa gets caught up in a conspiracy of monumental proportions involving a corrupt CEO (Hugh Grant), the oil industry, and a plan to rig the failure of a much-vaunted new nuclear reactor. In the course of her adventures she runs into the cadaver of the whistleblower, Dr. Rufus Sixsmith (the same character played by James D'Arcy), as well as a nuclear scientist who falls in love with her (Tom Hanks) before getting blown-up in a plane.
5	London 2012	A situation comedy set in modern-day Britain starring Jim Broadbent as the hapless Timothy Cavendish. Cavendish is a bumbling and broke editor and publisher who happens upon a windfall when one of his authors (Tom Hanks) kills a critic at a public event. He gets tricked by his brother (Hugh Grant) into signing himself over into the custody of a nursing home staffed by an abusive led by Nurse Noakes (Hugo Weaving). He teams up with three elderly housemates and engineers a dramatic escape
6	Neo Seoul 2144	A dystopian narrative set in "Neo Seoul," the capital of a vast corpocracy that relies on a female clone workforce called Fabricants. Doona Bae stars as Sonmi~451, a sentient Fabricant who witnesses and experiences harassment and abuses. She is broken free by rebel agent Hae-Joo Chang (Jim Sturgess) and comes to realize the full extent of the corpocracy's subterranean genocides. She becomes the rebellion's spiritual leader, and her teachings are transmitted as religious catechisms into Zachry's post-apocalyptic future.

Cloud Atlas is a rare case of a film about music that is also a film about soundtracks. In a rather unusual move, we see the film's soundtrack as it emerges from the hands of a character who happens to be a composer: the film's title itself is taken from a fictive musical work composed by one of the main characters of the film, Robert Frobisher, a rakish lad composer trying to make it big in Europe in 1936. As in David Mitchell's original 2004 novel, the Sextet in the movie functions as a central plot element as well as a synecdoche for movie's polyphonic coordination of six storylines.[11] So while the six subplots are knit together by other fictional and cinematic devices (the "stunt casting" of a recurring network of actors across different subplots; shots focusing on a comet-shaped birthmark shared by all six central protagonists), it is the Sextet which acts as the central symbol for interrelated historical totality portrayed in the film.[12]

But the Sextet is more than symbol: it also pulses through the film's expansive atmosphere as its atmospheric nondiegetic soundtrack. The composer Frobisher thus comes to occupy a rather singular status, as a character with the ability to underscore the rest of the film. In one sequence, we see Frobisher auditioning for the role of amanuensis to the enfeebled but once-mighty Vyvyan Ayrs. Frobisher aims to use the doddering fool to his advantage in order catapult his own stagnant artistic career. As the lackaday motif dictated by Ayrs is transformed by Frobisher into a sumptuous prelude, the imagetrack cuts from the over-wrought interior of Ayrs's Edinburgh country chateau drawing room to a nighttime

[11] As described by Frobisher himself in the novel: "[O]verlapping soloists: piano, clarinet, cello, flute, oboe and violin, each in its own language of key, scale, and color. In the first set, each solo is interrupted by its successor: in the second, each interruption is reconstituted, in order." David Mitchell, *Cloud* Atlas (New York: Random House, 2004), 445.

[12] See also the discussion of "musical buoyancy" in Berthold Hoeckner, *Film, Music, Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 87-92.

industrial cityscape.[13] Simultaneously, Frobisher's limpid piano melody morphs into a distorted electric guitar rendition of the Sextet theme. The multiplicity of jarring juxtapositions creates a momentary maelstrom of audiovisual and historical dissonance: the sudden intrusion of city into country; the mashing together of disparate musical styles and timbres; the music's functional shift from diegetic onscreen performance to nondiegetic offscreen underscore; the dizzying traversal of space and time, etc.

Figure 13. Frobisher initiates a descending scale on the piano which…

… teleports us to "San Francisco, 1973."

[13] The mise-en-scène of the exchange between Frobisher and Ayres indirectly alludes to the BBC biopic *Song of Summer* (1968, directed by Ken Russell), which portrays the relationship between the composer Frederick Delius and his amanuensis, Eric Fenby, in the final six years of the composer's life.

Shortly after the cut, subtitles place the subsequent music and scene in San Francisco, 1973. But a canny viewer/listener might already have oriented themselves to the nighttime silhouette of the Golden Gate bridge and the unmistakable four-to-the-floor beats and guitar/bass tune of a disco soul anthem—an evocation perhaps of LaBelle's "Lady Marmalade," with which the Sextet-disco theme shares not only tonality (G-Dorian) but also rhythm, texture, and melodic contour:

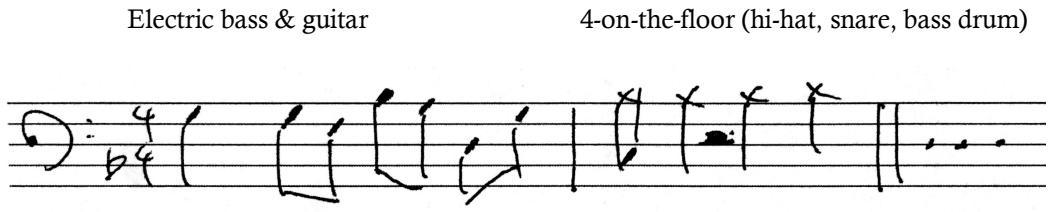

Figure 14a. Opening riff of Cloud Atlas Sextet, disco/soul version (2012)

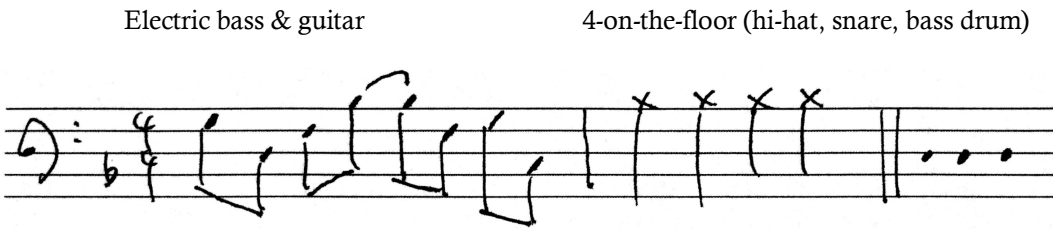

Figure 14b. Opening riff of "Lady Marmalade" as performed by LaBelle (1974)

Even without being able to pinpoint the allusion to the LaBelle hit single, many viewers would recognize the musical color and atmosphere of the disco era, a nimbus of associations, styles, and affects that together comprise an instance of 70s period-style. Scholars of operatic realism might deploy the language of *tinta* here to describe the "characteristic color, atmosphere, or ambience" that allows one to place a song or a tune within a larger cultural context and network of geographic and historical associations,

"something along the lines of […] the French notion of *couleur* or *couleur locale*."[14] If the Golden Gate bridge serves its usual function as a classic landmark, the music serves as a "timemark" of sorts, the *tinte* of *Cloud Atlas*'s pseudo-Lady Marmalade conjuring a nimbus of associations that with the emplaced and localized 70s period-style.

But through the movie's diverse cosmopolitan soundworlds, the Sextet maintains a consistent thematic profile that allows it to function as a continuous musical strain through all of its stylistic variations. According to the composers of the film score (which includes one of the film's directors, Tom Tykwer), part of the intended pleasure of *Cloud Atlas* involves tracking the Sextet's cosmopolitan dissemination throughout the film's multiple subplots and settings, like a musical game of "Where is Waldo?"[15] Like the recurrent star-studded character-actor network, whose recognizable faces appear again and again throughout the film's six subplots in various guises, the Sextet itself undergoes multiple generic and stylistic variations throughout the course of the film: as a late-Romantic piano prelude and chamber work (1930s Belgium); in a four-to-the-floor disco version and as a symphonic transcription on an old long-playing record (1970s San Francisco); a smooth jazz tune being performed live at a fancy publishers' gala and then as easy listening mood music piped into a nursing home cafeteria (2010s London); a religious hymn sung by Fabricants on their unwitting procession towards mass-execution and also as a folksy melody played by a blind *erhu* player on the streets of a neo-orientalist slum (2140s NeoSeoul).

[14] Andrew Davis, *Il Trittico, Turandot, and Puccini's Late Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 254n4.
[15] Mike Gencarelli, "Reinhold Heil talks about co-composing the score for "Cloud Atlas"," *Media Mikes*, January 12, 2013, https://mediamikes.com/2013/01/reinhold-heil-talks-about-co-composing-the-score-for-cloud-atlas/.

Throughout the film, Frobisher's Sextet encourages the audience to practice a rhythmanalytic attunement to the goings-on in the film's nondiegetic and diegetic musical atmospheres. And as a part of this training, the audience members come to recognize and catch a musical style and composition troped as emerging from a specific period and locale as the film's unifying strain. The first time the audience encounters the Sextet, as the primary cue which underscores the opening five-minute montage, it is delivered in its most typical form, played by Western classical rather than oriental strings. In a later sequence, when the acousmatic organ cadence that concludes an extended cue unfolding across Sonmi's 2144 storyline and Frobisher's "present" coincides with the concluding flourishes of his quill upon the score of his magnum opus, Frobisher's status as a really-late-romantic composer converges with that of the disembodied and transcendental sonic entity that claims omniscience over the psychological goings-on in the film. Omniscience in this case is figured in Frobisher's transhistorical, cartographic musical imagination, in his ability to sense and map out the asynchronous but converging narratives that prefigure the film's own transhistorical schema, embodying it simultaneously as fictional *magnum opus* and ambient musical atmosphere.

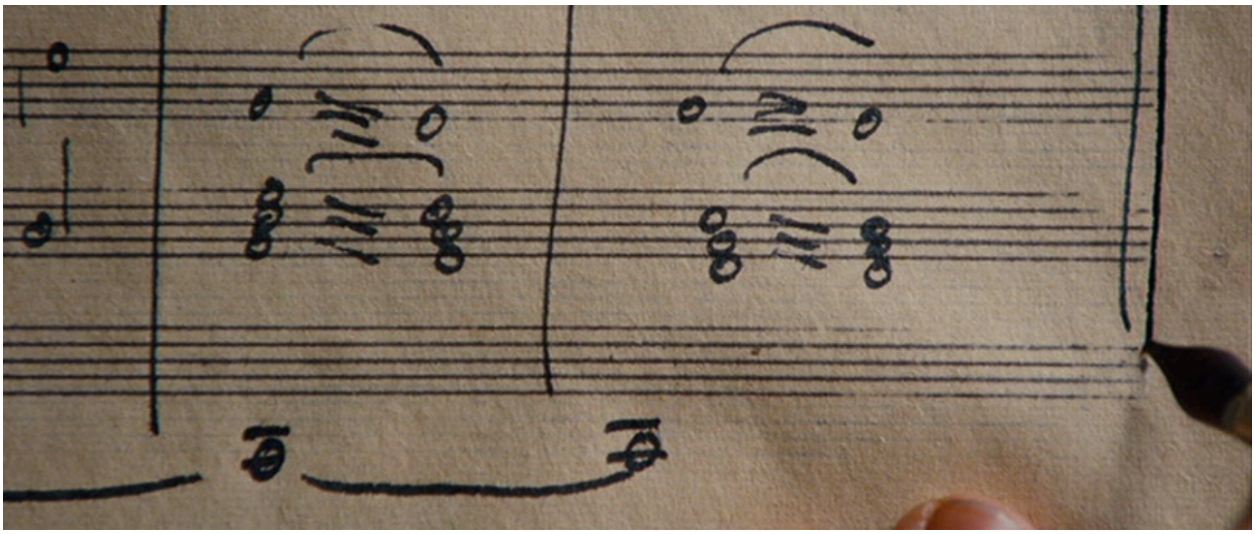

Figure 15. As the organ's disembodied cadence lingers in the movie's nondiegetic atmosphere, Frobisher puts the finishing flourishes on the Sextet.

At moments like these, *Cloud Atlas* enacts the birth of the soundtrack from the spirit of late-Romantic classical music. Historically speaking, this is not far from the truth. The first major composers of Hollywood's Golden Age were classically-trained late Romantics whose historically belated penchant for lyricism found its apotheosis in classical Hollywood cinema.[16] So the film's symptomatic conflation of what constitutes the self-avowedly "cutting-edge" musical avant-garde around 1936 with a belated rearguard aesthetic serves a larger aim: to incorporate the formal and material conventions of the Hollywood film score into the transhistorical sweep of its narrative, to make possible an experience of an exemplum of a classical Hollywood underscore as emphatically classical.

[16] Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-50.

III. Thinking about Feeling Classical[17]

Like Lefebvre and this dissertation more broadly, *Cloud Atlas* is interested the repetitions of political antagonisms that sometimes, within a given scene or narrative, take the form of affective deadlock. Despite the fact its earliest subplot—Ewing's maritime swashbuckler—takes place two hundred years ago, the movie traces common ideologies, structures, and political antagonisms threading through the very *longue durée* of *Cloud Atlas*'s transhistorical narrative. In the struggles of the movie's multiracial, multinational, and gender-fluid cast and characters, we see the portrayal of familiar scenes of oppression, abjection, and exploitation that thread our own transhistorical and transnational political and economic infrastructures.

But the movie does more than portray shared situations; it seeks to portray characters as they engage in parallel struggles against related structures and tendencies through a shared archive of attitudes, mantras, and habits. As the generation of shared musical atmosphere becomes an element of plot, other conventions that might pass as neutral or ambient are transformed into a project and object of praxis. *Cloud Atlas* thinks about classical and cosmopolitan feeling, a lot. Within film's material and aesthetic representation of a sublime register of global conventionality, the cosmopolitical is articulated alongside a particular classical soundworld that is troped as universalizable, not just across the globe but also throughout history. While styles of conventionality no doubt shift across space and time, *Cloud Atlas*'s attention is trained on a thick zone of convergence between the

[17] The section's discussion of affective encounters with "feeling classical" and their subsequent elaboration in dialogue and music owes to Lauren Berlant, "Thinking About Feeling Historical," *Emotion, Space, and Society* 1 (2008): 4-9.

conventional, the classical, and the cosmopolitan. The rhythms of these three "c-"zones create recursive polymetric circles that encompass the planet.

In the 1970s plotline, when Luisa Rey encounters a symphonic rendition of Frobisher's Sextet playing in a record shop, the cocktail combination of familiarity, pleasure, and positive aesthetic appraisal prompts her to stop and think and talk:

Rey	I called about an old recording written by a man named Robert Frobisher?
Clerk	Oops! Busted! I know I shouldn't be playing it—I was checking it to make sure it wasn't scratched—but, honesty, I can't stop listening to it.
Rey	This is the Cloud Atlas Sextet?
Clerk	It's the Symphony.
Rey	It's beautiful. But I think I heard this before.
Clerk	I can't imagine how. I doubt there's more than a handful of copies in all of North America.
Rey	But I know it. I know I know it…[18]

Rey's encounter with the Sextet is a cinematic rendition of an oft-repeated "real life" encounter with classical music, like when one enters a store or gets stuck on hold (or watches a movie) to be suddenly seized by a sense that you know this song, or at least that you know you know it. If you were, say, a musicologist or classically-trained musician, chances would be you simply know it, and that you would subsequently revel in the pleasure of knowing not merely that you know it or know you know it but that you know you know exactly what it is. But the petty pleasures of name-dropping notwithstanding, an

[18] *Cloud Atlas,* 56:56.

encounter with the classical is more than an encounter between a sovereign consciousness and an object of expert knowledge.[19] For Rey, it is an encounter that induces a verbal and and intellectual stumble, in which her vague recognition of the music sets off groping adumbrations on its familiarity ("I think I've heard this before") and the presence of sensed knowledge at the periphery of conscious knowing ("I know I know it"), while also converging with classic aesthetic judgment ("It's beautiful").

The characters of *Cloud Atlas* are always experiencing situations and people as echoes of something vaguely familiar, as if the fictional ruse of reincarnation had embedded itself deep within each of the characters as a framework for attachment. Their bodies express irrepressible proof of this tendency in the form of the comet-shaped birthmark that the six primary protagonists share (the practice of bodily inscription also ties together the two "primitive" societies depicted at the historical extremities of the film-world, the indigenous population of the Pacific Islands and the Valleysmen of the Big Isle). In addition, characters are always providing verbal commentary, both on-screen and in voice-overs, on the sense of being caught up in familiar situations. Take the following voice-over, which occurs as the hapless Cavendish, fleeing his creditors in London by train, pulls into a station: "We cross and recross our old tracks like figure skaters. And just as I was reading a new submission, a powerful déjà vu ran through my bones. I had been here before, another lifetime ago." (52:32-52:57) Isaac Sachs, the character played by Tom Hanks in the 1976 subplot, feeling a strange and powerful attraction towards Luisa Rey at their first meeting, mumbles something about Carlos Castaneda and reincarnation before trailing off. Of course, the

[19] Neither, to be sure, are the densely overdetermined social and intellectual pleasures of name-dropping. Kray Thorn-R, "On Name-Dropping: The Mechanisms Behind a Notorious Practice in Social Sciences and the Humanities," *Argumentation* 29, no. 3 (June 2015).

viewer recognizes that Tom Hanks and Halle Berry are also, in the meanwhile, entwined in another love plot that takes place in the future between Zachry and Meronym, but the characters themselves, caught up in the moment, are not quite privy to the narrative conventions that subtend their repeated encounters. Generally speaking, the principles of continuity editing, which ensure the coherent progression of narrative not only within each location but also across plotlines, elude them. Relatively early on in the film, while sleeping Zachry has a garbled flashback/flashforward of events that speaking historically had happened earlier but in terms of the narrative organization of the film have yet to transpire. (37:03-37:34) The sequence takes place immediately after a rather startling meeting of Zachry and Meronym's eyes, so that a causal relation is implied between the eye-to-eye encounter with his "soul mate" and the subsequent anamnesis. Zachry experiences his dream as supremely disorganizing and runs to the Abbess, the village elder, for guidance. Zachry's flashback/forward, however, is experienced differently by the viewer of the film, who is armed with the narratological understanding of how such montages in films work and is therefore better prepared to parse out the barrage of images that portend crises in all six subplots. It's not that Zachry doesn't recognize his dream as in anyway related to his encounter with Meronym–on the contrary, Zachry immediately associates the impending sense of doom augured in his vision with Meronym's appearance at the village, which contributes to the primary antagonism of the sixth subplot between his paranoia and his generosity. But his unconscious recognition of Meronym's gaze both draws from and gives rise to narrative strands that he cannot yet fully grasp.

When Ayrs shows up for the scene discussed above, following on the heels of Frobisher's off- and on-screen rendition of the *Sextet,* it is a few nights after he had shown up

excitedly at Frobisher's bedroom, having experienced a strange dream-sequence of his own, albeit one that is only recounted by Ayrs and not shown. The setting of his dream is clearly Papa Song's Café, the workplace of Sonmi~451 in the 2144 Neo Seoul plot:

> I've heard a melody, boy! For violin. Quick! Find a pen! I heard it in a dream. I was in a nightmarish café, blaring, bright light, but underground, and no way out. And the waitresses they all had the same face. There was music playing, but unlike any music I've ever heard in my life. It began… it began… It was so clear a minute ago. Help me, Robert! Help me! It's slipping away… I've lost it…[20]

Ayrs struggles to recall the music but fails. Hearing Frobisher's rendition of the Sextet in the later scene, however, compels Ayrs to claim that the Sextet was the music from his dream that he must have "somehow given" to Frobisher. Frobisher coolly responds that he had been working on the piece for weeks and that Ayrs must have "incorporated the music" into his dream. What's interesting about Ayrs's cluelessness is how it allegorizes Gorbman's theory of the film viewer's experience of the underscore, who likewise "forgets" that the underscore had actually been placed there by an external figure and instead experiences it as a spontaneous expression that is projected from within. Ayrs's musical amnesia moreover trumps his attempts to produce the music independently, proving him capable only of recognizing it when presented to him. Is it furthermore not possible that Frobisher's nightly renditions of the theme, which provides both conscious and unconscious accompaniment to Sonmi's daily routines (as state-religious hymn and as non-diegetic underscore), actually set off Ayrs's visions, in the same way that Zachry's encounter with Meronym's familiar-yet-unknown face set off his?

[20] *Cloud Atlas*, 1:14:30.

There is thus a kind of recognition in *Cloud Atlas,* whether of faces, places, or music, that registers as an affective event that exceeds the subject's cognitive powers. Characters often have a sense of something as emergent and on the horizon, as an intuition, a gut feeling, as something that runs through their bones and makes a mark on their skin. Furthermore, it is an affective event that presumes a sensed knowledge and orientation towards its recurrent nature, as a penchant towards the habituated, the preordained, and the previously legitimated.[21] Classicist James Porter describes this sense as that of "feeling classical."[22] Characterizing the phenomenon of classicism as a "structure of feeling" and "habitus" that eludes attempts to characterize it first and foremost as a coherent logic, Porter describes "feeling classical" as an "inarticulate knowledge… that lies on the verge between an articulation of a very high order […] and everything that escapes this reflection and in escaping seems all the more to confirm the results of conscious judgment." For Porter, "classicism" is as much a matter of feeling and entraining to embodied and affective rhythms as it is an ability to generate and participate in expert talk. Reframing classicism thus allows us to attend to the "nonintentional, preconscious, and often purely bodily […] dispositions" and "unwitting or half-witting identifications" that accompany the intellectual operation.[23] Porter's characterization of "feeling classical" as "structure of feeling" and "habitus" turns us to the realm of social coordination, in which "feeling classical" isn't just a matter of isolated libidinal activity between classicist and classical object but a matter of

[21] The tautological nature of classical pleasure is not only registered in but also expressed in the often circular logics of hermeneutics: "The classical is something that resists historical criticism because its historical dominion, the binding power of the validity that is preserved and handed down, precedes all historical reflection and continues in it." Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004), 288.
[22] James Porter, "What is Classical about Classical Antiquity? Eight Propositions," *Arion* 13, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2005): 27-61.
[23] Porter doesn't claim to be injecting a radical revisionist theory of classicism. He takes his cue from classical classicists Dionysius and Aristotle, who both speak of a "faculty of irrational sensation" and *alogon kritêrion* when it comes to adjudicating the classical.

group erotics. It turns our attention to a shared history of encounters that accrue around the enunciation of aesthetic judgment ("it's beautiful").

Cloud Atlas's wants its romantic musical strains to not just feel classical; it wishes for feeling classical to be made available as a shared repertory of habits, beliefs, and attachments that are, in the long run, liberatory. Like with the dream of a global classical strain, the fantasy of shared habits that propel characters towards each other and collectively to something better is given discursive elaboration. *Cloud Atlas* is full of scenes where characters expound, whether in dialogue or voice overs, their views on the feeling of caught up in shared rhythms that pulse through and below their conscious intentions. Cavendish: "We cross and recross our old tracks like figure skaters"; Frobisher: "At this point in my life, all I know, Sixsmith, is that this world spins from the same unseen forces that twist our hearts"; Sonmi: "Our lives are not our own. From womb to tomb, we are bound to others"; Sachs: "Our lives and our choices, like quantum trajectories, are understood, moment to moment. At each point of intersection, each encounter suggests a new potential direction"; and so on. The characters of the film are constantly training themselves to intuit unintended rhythms.

Even though these rhythms and styles are not always intended, they are available for characters to recognize ("I know I know it") and to share. In *Cloud Atlas*, "feeling classical" emerges as a translocal praxis that allows characters to collectively intuit a sprawling cosmopolitan totality as it is sensed, affectively and musically. The classical strains of the Sextet both symbolizes and enacts—for the audience as well—the event of shared recognition, underscores a continuity that allows characters to partake of a shared struggle against adversity and oppression towards the utopian horizon of something else. At the

same time, a certain style and convention emerges as privileged in the first-half of *Cloud Atlas* and is granted the ability to roam its vast sensorium as the cosmopolitan underscore: Frobisher's Sextet, a musical work that emerges within the narrative itself as classically-(late-)romantic. As we will see in the following section, other ways emerge of feeling classically-romantic; not only musically, but sexually as well.

IV. The Rhythms and Boundaries of Love

Just as there are privileged musical styles that circulate classically, within *Cloud Atlas* there are affective rhythms that emerge as privileged vehicles of transnational conveyance. Within the film's cosmopolitan sensorium, the corresponding classical affective genre is love. Love is the not-yet fully cognized but obdurately sensed structure of feeling that not only accounts for the events of recognition outlined above but also makes possible the slight but significant variations that ultimately uphold the film's liberal political message. This is encapsulated in the gradual evolution of the characters depicted by Tom Hanks throughout the film from murderous opportunist (Dr. Henry Goose) to virtuous and brave romantic partner (Zachry). What grants "him" (the metacharacter figured in Tom Hanks and who enjoys meta-diegetic continuity) the power to turn "himself" around are the choices that Zachry makes, which are more than partly compelled by the sense of preordained destiny augured to him in his flashback/flashforward. His physical gestures that intervene in Meronym's premature death precede the dawning awareness of his romantic feelings for her. Love can force your hand even before you can subjectively comprehend your own motivations; it is an affective attachment that predestines and prefigures a properly

emotional one (though love is clearly also that in the film, as when the characters declare their love).

As Eva Illouz remarks, romantic love has unwaveringly upheld the promise of utopia through the vicissitudes of capitalist modernity, even as other forms of collective organization and styles of individual attachment were deemed to have failed in that regard. Romantic love is not just the dream that floats above consumerist activity but the support that sustains it through the multifarious situations of contemporary global capitalism: "love as become an intimate, indispensable part of the democratic ideal of affluence that has accompanied the emergence of the mass market, thereby offering a collective utopia cutting across and transcending social divisions."[24] In *Cloud Atlas,* too, love is the dream that keeps life afloat. Moreover, it is a dream predicated on the ceaseless individuation of desire and its object, what simultaneously instigates as it purports to transcend the cosmopolitan neoliberal state apparatus. The total identification of state and consumer culture is vividly illustrated in the 2144 Neo Seoul subplot. Consumerism reigns as the supreme and sole allegiance, represented by the Fabricants' First Catechism, "Honor thy Consumer." Their lingua franca, though reaching our ears as ordinary, contemporary English, is called Consumer, giving the filmmakers a chance to make a thinly veiled jab at the predominantly monolingual inclinations of North American film audiences.

[24] Eva Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia* (Berkeley: Univesity of California Press, 1997), 2.

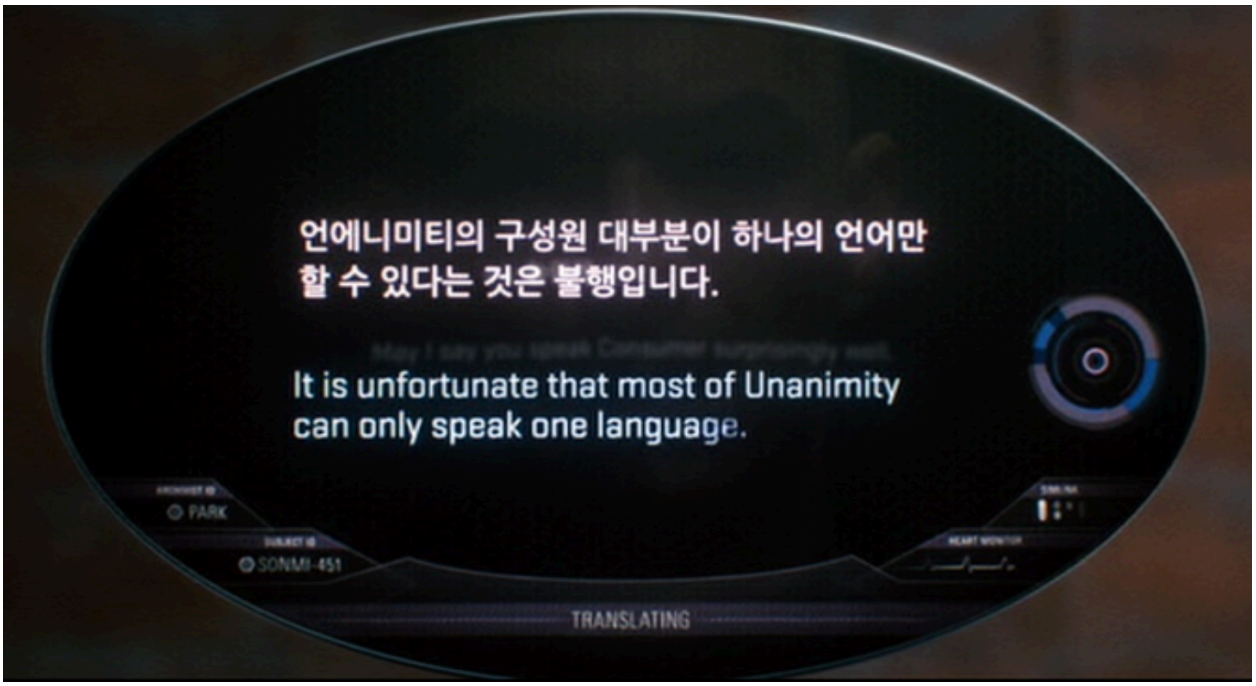

Figure 16. A subtle subtitle burn directed towards the cultural and political hegemony of "Unanimity."

The undercurrent of sameness that enables the uninhibited circulation of value is symbolized not only by the cloned Fabricants that provide the backbone of the service economy's labor force but also by the dull, gray concrete floors and walls that are shown to underlie the colorful interiors that are magically projected over them. This is true for the garish interior of Papa Song's Café, the scene of systematically subordinated female labor, as it is for the more tasteful options that Hae-Joo chooses for Sonmi's new abode after her escape.

Cloud Atlas thus presents a reflexive critique of neoliberalism's inassimilable and mutually constitutive internal antagonism between difference and repetition–even as the same antagonism subtends the film's own utopian aspirations for love. It is after all a slight adjustment that is needed to get from Unanimity, the totalized neoliberal corporate-state that controls by marketing choice, to Union, its dissident underground outfit that advocates free will for all. Indeed, the novel reveals the Union rebellion to have been a ploy of

Unanimity all along, engineered to provide the state with "the enemy required by any hierarchical state for social cohesion," and so ultimately expresses a much darker viewpoint on the possibility of taking up a position beyond capitalist realism.[25] This also colors Hae-Joo and Sonmi's relationship in a much less pastoral light, as Hae-Joo turns out to be a double agent whose mission was to offer up Sonmi at the altar of the state. In the film, however, Hae-Joo and the rest of Union are portrayed as completely sincere in their revolutionary intent. Moreover, while the film does depict Unanimity forces quashing Union in battle and capturing Sonmi, subsequent depictions of icons of Sonmi (clearly in the mold of the Statue of Liberty) that appear in the command center atop Mauno Sol suggest that the "Off-World Colonies" to which Sonmi's broadcast her manifesto had taken up the mantel of resistance and may have even outlived the neoliberal corporate-state on Earth.

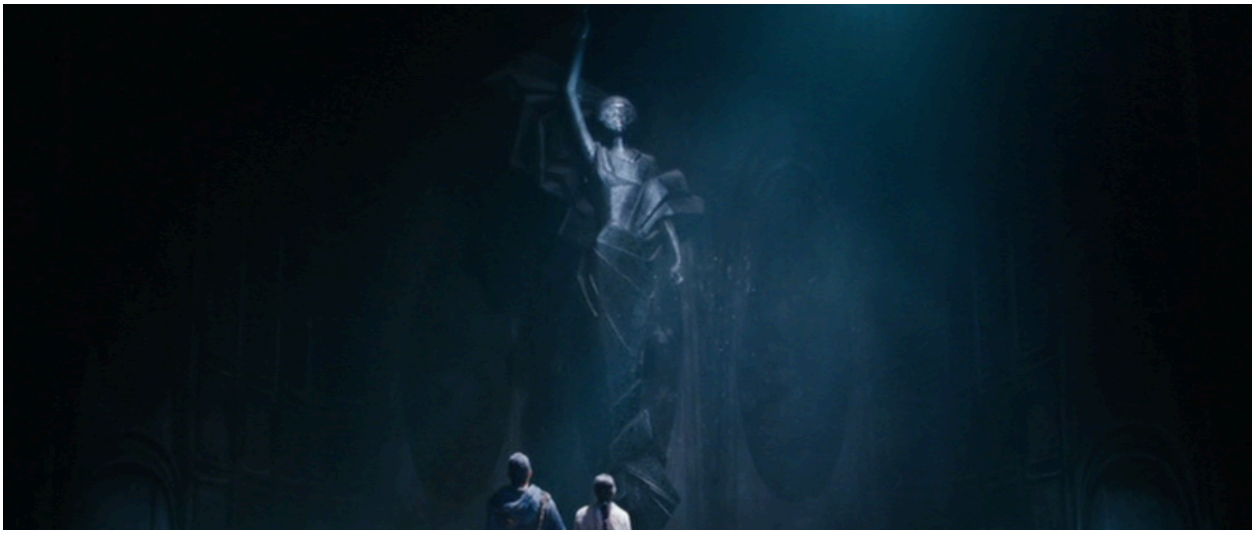

Figure 17. Sonmi as a statue, at the summit of Mauna Sol.

[25] David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas,* 348.

The promise of hope that is figured in the monumental statue of Sonmi is later objectified in the form of Zachry and Meronym's hybrid offspring, who serve as visible and incontrovertible evidence of the reproductive vigor and extension of futurity that is the proper domain of a cosmopolitan heterosexual romance. The addition of this reproductive aspect, completely absent in the novel, is perhaps the single most monumental shift affected by the film. Political freedom is embodied in the freedom to repeatedly affirm eternally monogamous heterosexual romantic attachment, whose utopian promise is literalized in the ceaseless reproduction of future generations.

So while Sonmi somewhat mournfully protests to Union's leader that she "is not genomed to alter reality," we know that is simply not true.[26] The power to induce positive change in the oppressive atmosphere that the characters inhabit is explicitly preordained, as the film constantly reminds us with recurring shots of the comet birthmark that the protagonists all share. And it is inextricably tied up with their ability to sense romance, if not always to sustain it due to tragic circumstances (which are in turn defined with regards whether or not they allow romance to thrive). Ironically, though he creates the musical strands that subtend the cosmopolitical romantic attachments that repeat throughout most the film, Frobisher is the only protagonist that fails to attain a "happily ever after" in at least one of the six subplots. He commits suicide, choosing death over the abject life of a scorned queer. Meanwhile, Timothy reunites with Ursula; Sonmi and Hae-Joo die but reunite as Adam and Tilda; Sachs dies but reunites with Meronym as Zachry.

If we use the film's depictions of sex as sifters that allow us to see what styles of romantic attachment are figured as variously tenable and untenable, a really complicated

[26] *Cloud Atlas,* 1:56:25.

nexus of cultural prejudices, tendencies, and appetites emerges. For instance, in one of the opening scenes, we know that Frobisher and Sixsmith had slept together, but all we get is a good look at Frobisher's ass as he flees the hotel proprietors. Later, Frobisher starts to go down on Jocasta, but all we see is her relatively restrained face at the very beginning and the camera soon turns away. Meronym and Zachry, though shown to engage in gentle sexual banter in their advanced age, are never shown engaging in anything remotely erotic. The most intimate gesture is perhaps when Zachry draws a blanket over a sleeping Meronym. Cavendish and Ursula are rudely interrupted from consummating their young love, and when exposed by Ursula's parents cover their genitals with frantic efficiency. The penis, vagina, and breasts are censored from our vision. Not to mention, the dedication to evading penetration in these scenes (by either arriving too late, averting the gaze, or bursting in too soon) paradoxically makes it a thing, reifies penetration as the event of sex, makes it obscene.

The later scene transpiring between Sonmi and Hae-Joo, however, is perhaps the only sex scene that also qualifies as a love scene, for three reasons. One is that unlike the sex between Yoona and the manager, it is an act that consummates the preordained romantic love between two souls who had once been united in matrimony (to reiterate, Sonmi and Hae-Joo are also Adam and Tilda Ewing). Another is the psychoanalytic understanding of the conventional love scene posited by Žižek: "a love scene is always built around a certain insurmountable limit; all cannot be shown."[27] While the scene no doubt capitalizes on the thrill of the exposure of Doona Bae's breasts, and while the viewer also witnesses Sonmi, on top, slowly bearing downwards upon Hae-Joo, the scene also respects the conventional

[27] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) 110.

mainstream limitations placed upon screening the location of the penetrative act. The transgressive aspects of the scene are nevertheless consciously highlighted when Sonmi initiates it with the line, "I know it is forbidden." Likewise with the ensuing voice over, in Frobisher's voice, that ties together this and several other sequences unfolding in different subplots:

> Sixsmith,
>
> I climb the steps of the Scott Monument every morning, and all becomes clear…
>
> I understand now, that boundaries between noise and sound are conventions.
>
> All boundaries are conventions waiting to be transcended.
>
> One may transcend any convention if only one can first conceive of doing so.
>
> At moments like this, I can feel your heart beating as clearly as I feel my own, and I know that separation is an illusion.
>
> My life extends far beyond the limitations of me.[28]

As with love elsewhere in the film, the ultimately constitutive tension between structure and its shattering proves to be a source of pleasure rather than *jouissance*. Conventions in the form of class, racial, and historical boundaries are being experienced as transcended by the subject whose fantasies of becoming-general are paradoxically bound up with the fixity of the film's conception of romantic love. In a phantasmatic sequence that is interspersed between Sonmi and Hae-Joo's love scene, Frobisher and Sixsmith rendezvous in a hall bedecked with shelves full of porcelain bowls and vases. As Sonmi and Hae-Joo's pace of love-making accelerates, the gay lovers start shattering the porcelain around them in slow motion. As the film shows the fragile artifacts slowly dispersing into a thousand fragments,

[28] *Cloud Atlas,* 1:59:46.

what gets caught in our ear are strangely spectral and yet supple tonal filigrees that sound in place of what would have been the cacophonous noise of breaking matter.

Figure 18. Frobisher dreams of a musical shattering.

But this is a wish: Sixsmith awakes shortly after on a train, suggesting that his dream of shattering without breaking–of shattering aesthetically rather than existentially–was just that. Sixsmith arrives a hair too late and witnesses, aurally, the self-inflicted shattering of Frobisher's brain matter.

Which leads us to the third element that constitutes this as a love scene: the musical underscore, which also acts as a screening membrane that not only sublimates the shattering of china but also overshadows Sonmi and Hae-Joo's sex sounds. The boundaries between noise and sound are conventions indeed, but romantic love and soundtrack mark the horizons within which conventions are constantly staged and staged as broken. Here, the cue that is titled the "Atlas March" on the soundtrack album gets its first complete rendition: whereas the March had shown up the film previously, often in conjunction with

the Sextet, this is the first time it appears in its major-mode incarnation.[29] Compared to the often dense and meandering Sextet cue, the March is limpid and easy; a simple piano part predominates over an accompanying string orchestra, conveying a simple, diatonic melody. The Sextet and March continue to appear and function in tandem; but from Sonmi and Hae-Joo's love scene onward, the score gradually transitions away from the Sextet's polyphonic, melancholic braid to the March's melodic and textural transparency.

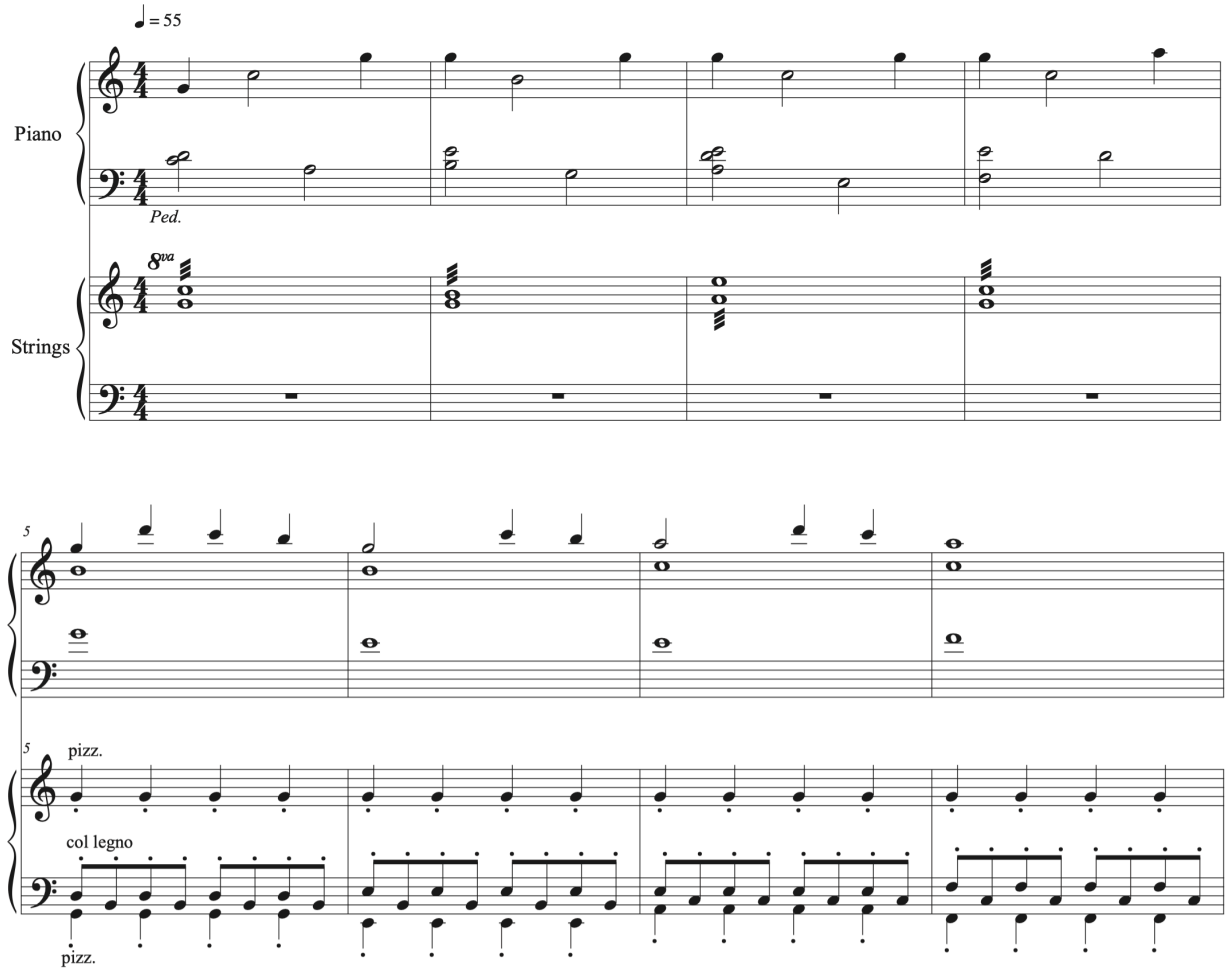

Figure 19. The beginning of the Cloud Atlas March as it appears in the cue, "All Boundaries Are Conventions." The piano part of this opening segment also features as the opening track of the original soundtrack album ("Prelude: The Atlas March"). (Continued on following page)

[29] The album producers' decision to place the Atlas March at the very beginning as a "Prelude" to the rest of the recording is also interesting. It shows that the original soundtrack has more than one way in which to function as a retroactively ontologizing force for the underscore.

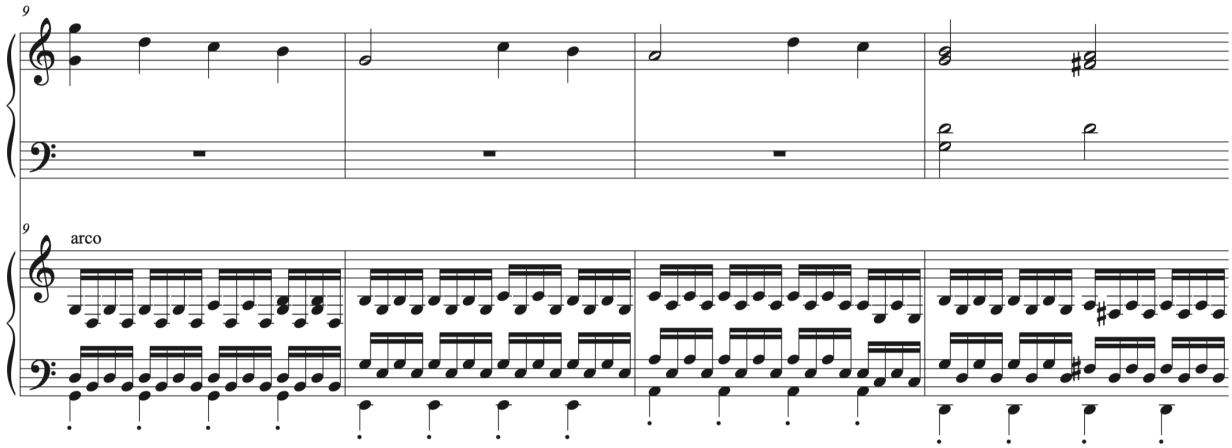

Figure 19, continued.

The relative popularity of the tracks featuring the C-major Atlas March can be discerned by the number of ticks that measure a track's popularity on Spotify and iTunes. The most popular track is not the "Cloud Atlas Sextet," but rather the "Cloud Atlas End Title," an extended rendition of the Atlas March. The other popular tracks ("All Boundaries are Conventions"; "Cloud Atlas Finale"; "Prelude") likewise feature the Atlas March in its C-major form.

▲	Name	Artist	Time	Popularity
1.	Prelude: The Atlas March	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	1:14	
2.	Cloud Atlas Opening Title	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	3:46	
3.	Travel to Edinburgh	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	1:42	
4.	Luisa's Birthmark	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	3:00	
5.	Cavendish In Distress	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	1:23	
6.	Papa Song	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	4:15	
7.	Sloosha's Hollow	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek, ...	2:59	
8.	Sonmi-451 Meets Chang	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	3:33	
9.	Won't Let Go	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	4:09	

Figure 20. Titles and popularity ticks on the iTunes page for the Cloud Atlas soundtrack. (Continued on following page)

10.	Kesselring	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	1:54
11.	The Escape	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	5:43
12.	Temple of Sacrifice	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	2:03
13.	Catacombs	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	1:35
14.	Adieu	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	4:15
15.	New Direction	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	1:46
	All Boundaries Are Conventions	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	2:38
17.	The Message	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	2:13
18.	Chasing Luisa Rey	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	4:53
19.	Sonmi's Discovery	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	3:23
20.	Death Is Only a Door	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	3:48
21.	Cloud Atlas Finale	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek ...	4:17
22.	The Cloud Atlas Sextet for Orchestra	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek, ...	4:57
23.	Cloud Atlas End Title	Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek, ...	7:56

Figure 20, continued.

Why is the musical reencounter favored by fans of the film with the March rather than with the Sextet? The transition towards the March within the film accompanies the corollary affective and political transition to reproductive romantic love. If eternally monogamous heterosexual romantic attachment comes to stand in for the blatantly optimistic liberal cosmopolitics, and if the trajectories of all six subplots are gradually saturated with scenarios celebrating this form of love, the simple but affirming major-mode melodies of the Atlas March comes to symbolize and express the love that, in the end, trumps the melancholy meanderings of the Cloud Atlas Sextet. The repeated affirmation of love acts not only as movie's proof of transcendence but also as the affective strains that pulse through the shared erotic disposition of the movie's characters and their audience. And as long as the fantasy that underscores the film's homogenous and heteronormative global *longue durée* is also what conveys the film in our historical present, its rhythms can be caught time and again.

Epilogue: In the Wake of *Cloud Atlas* and Love

A musician who goes by the screen name "Alph Hertz" has uploaded an independently produced, extended piano and synth remix/arrangement of the Atlas March for the u/eu/youtopian transnational public of Youtube.[30] He mistitles the track as the "Sextet (extended version)." This makes sense. On the one hand, the *Sextet* is the highlighted musical presence within the film, singularly composed and sung by a variety of characters across plotlines. On the other hand, the March is the music that is featured at a climactic moment, featuring the onscreen consummation of love. As of March 24, 2021, the video's racked up five million views. Alph Hertz radicalizes the music's repetitiveness, reduces variation, makes it all theme and no variation. It is a willful ossification, an aesthetic decision (intentional or nonintentional) that thrusts repetition to the fore, a pleasurable encounter with what repeats. The repetition is also affective, not just musical. I've screen-captured below an exchange in the comment section, started off by user @ali mamoer's expression of anguish:

[30] "Cloud Atlas - Sextet (extended version), uploaded by @Alph Hertz, *YouTube,* December 11, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdiLxyGH8Lg

Figure 21. Men discussing love and loss around the March.

Outside the fictions of *Cloud Atlas*, the movie's musical and erotic rhythms vibrate around and open up a romantic wound. Reencountering the Atlas March allows @ali to inhabit the zone of heartbreak by allowing him to move through the delicate firstness around his ex and the film while also feeling stuck in his loss. He is in a relation of

mourning with his love (the subtle historical displacement of the "ex") and also of melancholy (not knowing where the fuck he's got to go). ali's interlocutors, a nascent cosmopolitan men's therapy group woven around shared and familiar rhythms of heartbreak, affirm what is already latent in his gesture of return: a nonetheless persisting orientation towards fantasies of romantic love. There's an astounding faith in the plasticity of the lovelorn subject and in the inevitability of alighting upon "The One," "the Woman," that will share and understand your rhythm, your day-to-day, your soundtrack. His double-movement through music back to the event of consummated love and forward through the wake of its loss creates the scene for love's eternal recurrence. The casualties in a relation such as this are multiple and recurring. As are the lives that unfold in its pulsing strains. As @Darren Nietling summarizes, "When I listen to this music, I feel the ethereal universe, and to attach this same similar feeling to a woman, and then subsequently lose her, all the despair is in this action. The wounds of all such movements, I am sure in my heart, as it can relate, are unbearable." And all this to be able to love, emphatically, in the classical style.

Chapter 2. Yiruma and "I": Nocturnes, New Age, and Koreanness

> Every time I write music, I want to write music like the air that you breathe, all the time—it's around you. I want my music to be like that. It's always played around you and surrounds you. I want to stay in someone's memory, like air. [1]

I. Nocturne Atmospheres

"I" is the opening track of the Korean pianist Yiruma's 2001 debut studio album, *First Love*.[2] The right hand outlines a simple, stepwise lyrical melody with a limited range, the thumb and index occasionally filling in harmonies. The left hand traces an arpeggio arch and ascends and descends across the measures in a repeated pattern, almost always starting on a strong downbeat iteration of the bass. Despite lacking pedaling instructions, Yiruma's piano music generally presumes a steady sustain pedal, depressed at the beginning of each measure to catch the bass, and lifted as the harmonic rhythm requires. Or not at all—a lot of amateur pianists just keep their foot down, from beginning to end.

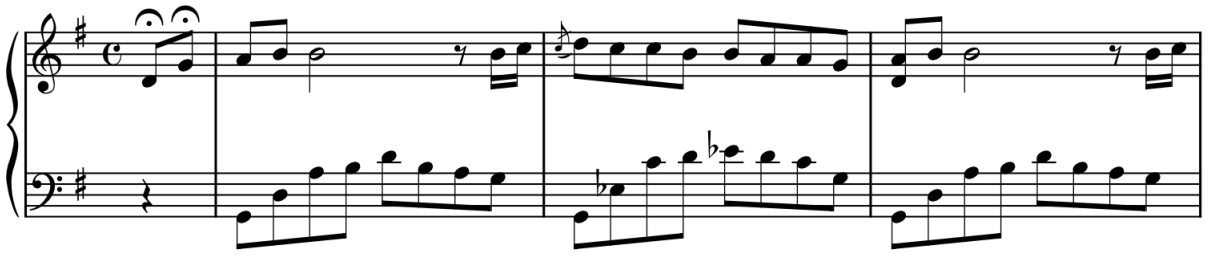

Figure 22. The opening of Yiruma's "I" (2001). (Continued on next page)

[1] Yiruma, "Yiruma Interview with K-Colors of Korea." Interview by Esther Klung. *ColorsOfKorea*, K-Magazin, April 14, 2013. Video, 8:09. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzUyQh--KUk.
[2] The track in its entirety can be heard in the following link: https://youtu.be/0K3o8hFuNEw.

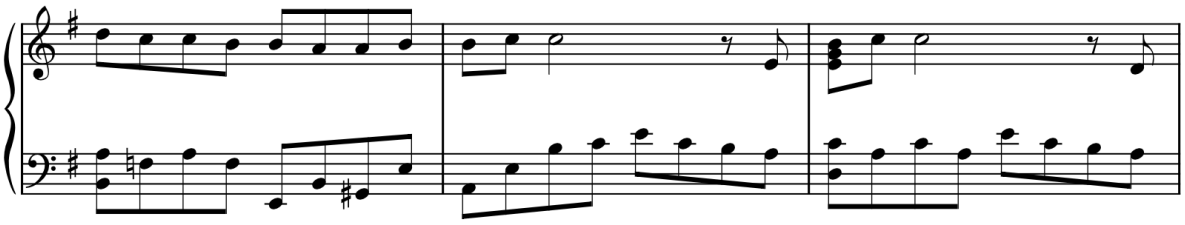

Figure 22, continued.

The piece's slow harmonic rhythm picks up occasionally for chromatic moves, in this case for the submediant secondary and tertiary dominants. The "minor four" modal mixture in the second measure unsettles the strong G-major tonality—but only slightly. Formally, "I" exhibits what we could characterize as an extended ternary A:BA:, with the second repeat of the B and A sections presenting almost exact repetitions, as if the repeat button were left on (the resulting form is ABABA, which one could also characterize as a simplified verse-chorus form that evokes the more even-keeled structural repeats of ternary song). The B section initiates a gentle tonal leap into the subdominant and presents a developing variation of the A theme, in a higher register and with more dynamic harmonic changes.[3] The repeat of the A section and the reiteration of familiar melodic material brings with it chromatic *fioratura* embellishments—the music is more virtuosic, but still well within the capacity of an amateur pianist (see Figure 23b below).

For the many fans who listen to and play Yiruma's music, "I" is a repository of familiar gestures, engrained in their hands and ears through repeated practice and listening, not only at the keyboard but also through recordings, movies, TV shows, and ads. The archive extends beyond a single Yiruma piece or his whole oeuvre and encompasses

[3] On "developing variation," see Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, edited by Leonard Stein (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 397.

temporal and geographic displacements that are pervasive, palpable, and sometimes still surprising. A comparison of "I" with a John Field Nocturne, for example, first published around 1830, displays striking stylistic similarities: a shared harmonic language as well as resemblant gestures and trajectories in both hands; appoggiatura embellishments that ornament *cantilena* stepwise melodies; fioratura passages at equivalent harmonic locations, extending piquant secondary dominants with accelerating melodic turns…[4]

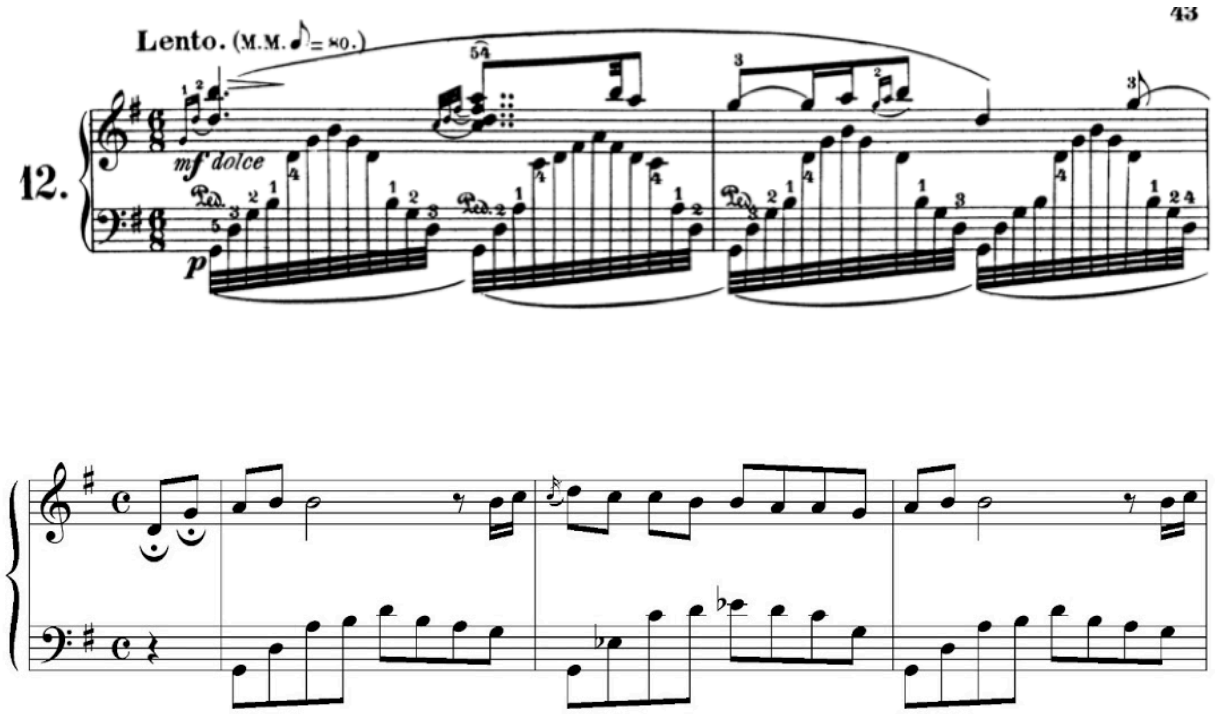

Figure 23. A comparison of the opening measures from John Field's Nocturne in G major (c.1830; above) and Yiruma's "I" (2001; below). The melodies of both pieces begin with an arpeggiated ascent to the third scale degree, feature grace note embellishments, and tend towards stepwise cantilena *lines. In the left-hand, undulating arpeggios span wider than octaves and articulate a G pedal while inner-voices outline harmonic shifts.*

[4] Susan Stewart summarizes the stylistic signature of the nocturne genre as "floridly ornamented tunes, widely spanned broken chords, downbeat accents, harmonically static beginnings, subdominant related keys, and return to the opening theme at closure." Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 285.

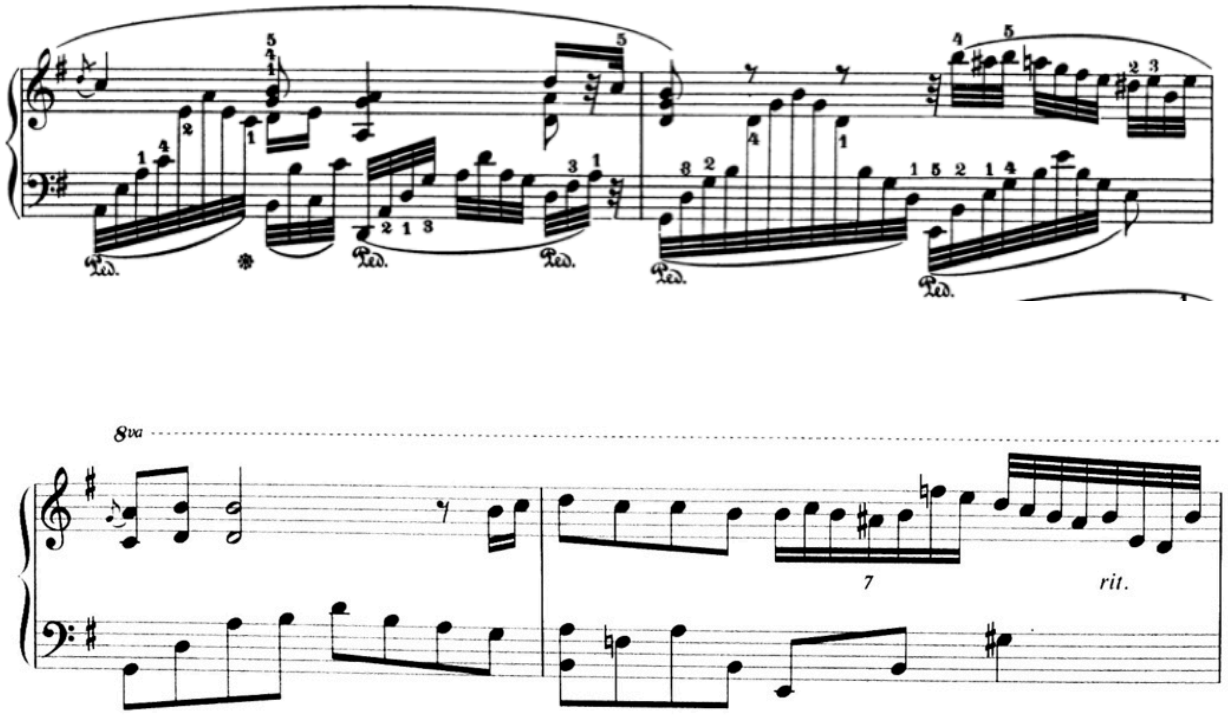

Figure 24. A comparison of fioratura *passages from Field's Nocturne in G major (above) and Yiruma's "I" (below). Both ornamental passages occur over E-minor chords, the secondary dominant to the mediant.*

"I" is a nocturne put simply, a rendition of a European Romantic genre that conveys its definitive features but in a form that is easier to play. In "I" (and overwhelmingly throughout his music) Yiruma's left hand, at the same time as it is slower and simpler than Field's, exhibits what Nicholas Temperley identifies as the two hallmarks of the nocturne style: 1) arpeggios "beyond the stretch of the hand" and 2) a bass "entrusted solely to the care of the pedal" and played once, at the beginning of each expanded arpeggio, rather than repeated.[5] By combining these two features in his nocturnes, Field addressed a pervasive technical problem facing performers and composers at the piano, this most novel and

[5] Nicholas Temperley, "John Field and the First Nocturne," *Music & Letters,* 56, no. 3/4 (July-October 1975): 337-339.

popular instrument of an ascendant European and North American bourgeoisie: "how to combine an expressive melody in the treble with well-spaced harmonies maintained at a constant dynamic level, all under the hands of a single player."[6] The novelty of this solution is all the more palpable when compared with the other transitional styles between the classical "Alberti bass" and the nocturne's undulating *brisée* accompaniment that often exhibit one of Temperley's two hallmarks but seldom both.[7] But with the aid of a burgeoning print music industry and rapidly expanding transnational middle-class social milieu of public concerts and amateur musical performance, the invention became habit; the nocturne soon became "a style that was to represent one kind of romanticism for nearly a century in the music of Chopin, Liszt, Grieg, Fauré, and Skryabin, among others."[8]

The presence of the nocturne in Yiruma's music suggests an expanded historical and geographic scope for the "kind of romanticism" evoked by Temperley and exemplified in a list of composers that starts with canonic European figures and opens up to an indeterminate realm of vague "others." At the same time, the genre continues its modulation from a discrete formation to an elusive historical trace that doesn't always obtain the concretion of a named or recognized tradition; rather, it disperses, drifts, and floats as a collection of gestures, a style become habit, that overflows its initial historic exempla and infects music more generally. In Yiruma's oeuvre, the nocturne is sometimes named as a genre, as in the four "Nocturnes" of his seventh studio album *Stay in Memory*

[6] Ibid, 337.
[7] I would argue for a finer generic taxonomy of nineteenth-century piano music that distinguishes, for instance, between the romance and nocturne, with the former exhibiting more contrapuntal intricacy and collaboration among the soprano and inner voices over a simple and harmonically fleet-footed bass. The romance genre predominates in Schumann's lyrical piano music and, unlike the nocturne, derives from idioms of chamber music rather than those of vocal genres. While the romance also persists in mass-mediated popular music (e.g. the output of popular New Age pianist Yuhki Kuramoto), this chapter focuses on the nocturne and its trace.
[8] Temperley, "The First Nocturne," 337.

(2013). More often than not, however, in tracks like "I," "Wait There," "Love Me," and "Kiss the Rain," the nocturne remains unnamed but is heard, felt, and intuited, particularly by those amateur pianists whose ears and hands retain the sense memories of nocturnes from before.

In contemporary Korean popular culture and the globalized mediasphere more broadly, these uncanny music-historical displacements and continuities tend to be gathered and marketed under the category of "New Age." While originating in 1960s Counterculture as an eclectic orientalist mélange of astrological themes, musical exotica, and electronic instruments, New Age has shifted gradually since the mid-1980s to incorporate solo acoustic instrumental music as well, with a focus on the piano in particular.[9] In the Korean context, where New Age was popularized throughout the 1990s through solo piano albums such as George Winston's *December* (1982), Yanni's *In My Time* (1993), and Yuhki Kuramoto's *Reminiscence* (1998), the genre has come to name almost exclusively solo piano music that is not only easy enough to listen to (as in, soft downtempo tracks that serve well as background in commercials, TV shows, or other activities) but also easy to play. Most (in)famously, George Winston's take on the Pachelbel Canon ("Variations on the Kanon") was featured prominently in the Korean rom-com *My Sassy Girl* (2001), where the actor Jun Ji-Hyun woos Cha Tae-Hyun by performing said piece in a packed college auditorium in commemoration of the couple's 100-day anniversary (*baegil).* (In the preceding scene, Jun

[9] The humble beginnings of Windham Hill Records and its gradual acceptance and ascendancy within the New Age market speaks to the genre's gradual drift towards acoustic genres such as classical and jazz. Windham Hill's generic indeterminacy is emblematic of the New Age genre: "The sound of Windham Hill records was different from most music on the market at the time. Almost all solo, acoustic guitar or piano, it was difficult to classify - some said it resembled classical music, others said folk music, still others said jazz." Scott Bronstein, "Making Money Out of Mellow," *New York Times*, May 4, 1986, https://www.nytimes.com/1986/05/04/business/making-money-out-of-mellow.html.

calls Cha on the phone and asks him what his favorite piece is, to which he replies: "You know, that piece that George Winston plays" and proceeds to sing the melody out loud in the campus library, causing much chagrin.[10]) The cinematic representation of an egregiously public performance of a piece usually heard as unobtrusive background tinkering or played in solitude was both a culmination of Korea's rapid study in the lessons of love and the piano as well as an epicenter for renewed commitment on part of countless amateur pianists to the dream of becoming, themselves, virtuosos of romance.

This chapter looks toward Yiruma's music as an atmospheric clustering of cosmopolitan styles, structures, and practices that issues from and underscores the becoming-global of Koreanness.[11] My interest in cosmopolitanism as a sociocultural and musical phenomenon in South Korea is focused particularly in how it emerges from early-20th century colonial occupation and how it persists in more lateral and globalized forms of neocolonial extraction in the wake of South Korea's rapid political economic and cultural liberalization in the 1990s.[12] Born in 1978 in Seoul, educated abroad in England, and popular globally, Yiruma models a transnationally mobile and successful migrant life and career that has become normative and aspirational for Koreans caught up in the net of globalization, (neo)liberalization, and the corollary desiccation of national material and

[10] *Yeopgijeogin geunyeo,* directed by Gwak Jaeyong. 2001; Seoul; Shinssinae. The scene can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/7bKFSm2hJdQ.

[11] Unless otherwise noted, all instances of "Korea" in this chapter refer to South Korea (the Republic of Korea).

[12] For the purposes of this chapter, I locate the beginning of the Korean national project with the declaration of the Korean Empire in 1897, when the project of modernization under the aegis of the modular nation-state began to be undertaken in earnest by ruling elites. On the modular nation-state see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991); Manu Goswami, "Rethinking the Modular Nation Form," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 4 (October 2002): 770-799. For a comprehensive introduction to modern Korean history that is attuned to the historical and ideological overdeterminations of nationhood and "nation-building," see Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 2005).

affective infrastructures. Yiruma's international success and popularity is touted in the South Korean press and the marketing of his music; a profile of the artist prefacing the first licensed publication of his scores in 2003 bears the title, "Yiruma, a New Age Artist Striking Out Towards the World!"[13] Yiruma's name is frequently accompanied by the modifier "global" (*segyejeok*)—a term that has come to denote prestige and excellence since its ascendance in the technocratic and vernacular vocabulary throughout the 1990s.

The beginning of Yiruma's career dovetails neatly with the unsettling of the national economy and personal affectworlds that is now historicized as the Asian Debt Crisis of 1997.[14] Colloquially, Koreans dubbed this cluster of lived and abstract financial, material, and affective losses and constrictions the "IMF crisis" (*aiemepeu wigi*)—or, simply, "IMF." (We named it thus in honor of the pallid English-speaking figures of the International Monetary Fund delegation who presided over the diagnosis and management of what had already sharpened into a structural crisis prior to their arrival but took shape as an austere and precarious ordinary after. In this way, we sought to periodize, to personify, and to contain the breakdown and unsettling of socioeconomic infrastructures, including the state, corporations, and families.) Abstractions like "neoliberal restructuring," "family breakdown," "labor reform," and "deregulation" took hold in the collective imagination and vocabulary like so many arcane signposts marking the pervasive and banal miasmas of household financial ruin. As if to compensate for the drying out of resources and infrastructures, Yiruma's music arrived in the summer of 2001, promising "healing" and an

[13] "Segyero jinchulhanun nyueiji atiseuteu Yiruma," *Yiruma Piano Album* (Seoul: Dodeulsaegim 2003), 6.
[14] The South Korean government announced the "end" of the crisis in 2001 once it had settled its accounts with foreign debtors, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF). On the material and affective impact of the IMF crisis on subjects caught in the web of national identity and encroaching global austerity regimes, see Jesook Song, *South Koreans in the Debt Crisis: The Creation of a Neoliberal Welfare Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

image of post-national flourishing.[15] His name, uncertain in its nationality but also somewhat familiar and vaguely oriental (many initially thought of him as Japanese), seemed to augur a kind of personhood available to those who would adapt to the times, take up English, and learn the piano.[16]

Like Koreanness itself in the wake of the IMF crisis, New Age is an amorphous, even vague category, constantly undergoing transformation and on the cusp of being absorbed into other genres (classical, jazz, electronic, folk, world, alternative).[17] But in its indeterminacy, it also names and holds open the space of overlap and incommensurability between classical and popular, historical and contemporary, and, in the cases of this chapter, Korea and the West. Rather than enforcing the distinction between any of the aforementioned terms, New Age embraces the slippage created by the ongoing vernacularization and globalization of the classical, as it continually circulates and disperses through technologies of mass mediation.[18] Yiruma's music in particular, with its

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[15] Cf. the New Age compilation album, *Healing for Heart* (2014) in the dissertation's introduction. "Healing" (*hil-ling)* is a pervasive catchword in post-IMF Korean mass culture, functioning even as a genre for music, literature, and activities marketed as therapeutic. See "The Pursuit of Well-Being" in Song, *South Koreans in the Debt Crisis*, 135-140; Jeon Myung-su, *Nyu-eiji undong-gwa hangook-eui daejungmoonhwa* (Seoul: Jipmundang, 2009); and Song Jeong-rim, *Gamdong-eui seupgwan* (Seoul: Books on Wednesday, 2011). For a discussion of an analogous cultural trend in Japanese mass culture ("healing" or *iyashi*), see "Healing Style: Ambient Literature and the Aestehtics of Calm" in Paul Roquet, *Ambient Media: Japanese Atmospheres of the Self* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016),

[16] Even in Korean, Yiruma's name is an unusual combination of syllables. His decision to anglicize his name as one word rather than as "Lee Ruma," following the convention of separating last and first names, also contributes to this mystique. "Yiruma" is the form in which his name appears on Korean releases of his recordings and scores.

[17] For Dennis Hall, New Age best exemplifies the protean quality of life in postmodernity, in which people have experienced "shifting relationships in occupational, domestic, and recreational life […] driven by the accumulation of vast surpluses of capital and productive capacity, a multitude of technological developments in communication in transport, and a radical reshaping of organizational structures." Dennis Hall, "New Age Music: A Voice of Liminality in Postmodern Popular Culture," *Popular Music and Society* 18, no. 2 (1994): 18-19.

[18] Monographs such as *Why Care About Classical Music* and *The Meaning of Classical Music* are more written against this vernacularization of classical music than against any other nonclassical genre. Such professors of culture grasp correctly the threat that the diffusion of classical music sounds in non-classical media and spaces poses to the monopoly that classical institutions such as the university and concert hall hold over aesthetic distinction and intellectual divagation. The pervasive anxieties against "passive listening" in music studies and

cosmopolitan, classical air and stylistic consistency around the nocturne, frequently gets categorized as "classical" by producers, distributors, and consumers alike. With ease, his music slips between New Age and Classical and can be found in those ambient playlists and compilations—collections of music intended to be enjoyed as atmospheric background at the same time as they pervade global commercial sensoria—that place popular "New Age" artists such as Yiruma and Ludovico Einaudi alongside canonic "classical" composers. In a Deutsche Grammophon release from 2014 titled *Reisen Sie Entspannt: Klassik für Unterwegs* (*Travel Relaxed: Classics for the Road*), for example, Yiruma's "River Flows in You" headlines a track list that features, among other classical works, nocturnes by Chopin and Fauré.

Through the New Age-nocturne wormhole, Yiruma's music casts a lingering backward glance at 19th century music while also drawing its styles and conventions towards a globalized contemporary audience. The presence and scale of this audience is, on the one hand, difficult to ignore: in 2020, Yiruma topped the Billboard Classical Albums Chart, with *The Best: Reminiscent 10th Anniversary* (a "greatest hits" album released in 2011) for six consecutive months.[19] At the same time, as background, as unobtrusive atmosphere, Yiruma's music frequently goes unremarked. In an introductory essay to a licensed edition of his scores commemorating the tenth anniversary of his debut, Yiruma describes his music as "instrumental music," "background," and as another nocturne-adjacent emblem of 19th century bourgeois pianism, the "miniature":

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corollary repackaging and valorization of classical bourgeois analytical and hermeneutical literacy in the name of "critical listening" is also indicative of this. Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[19] Kwon Ikdo, "Yiruma, 'bilbodeu keullaeshikul chateu' 23-ju 1-wi eumban hanjeongpan LP-ro," *Nyuseu Tomato,* November 11, 2020, https://www.newstomato.com/ReadNews.aspx?no=1006255; Minhyeong Lee, "How Yiruma Made It to the Top of the Classical Albums Chart for 17 Weeks," July 7, 2020, https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/9413829/how-yiruma-topped-classical-albums-chart-17-weeks.

> Kiss the Rain, May Be, River Flows In You, Wait There…
>
> Even if you don't know these titles, you have probably heard them, by chance, on the television or radio. Instrumental music that did not receive recognition, mere background music, miniatures…[20]

The ellipsis holds open space for whatever unvoiced genre silently gathers these songs that steal into our backgrounds, music that is heard ("by chance") but not known or recognized. "Miniature," in this context, designates as well as a matter of scale, length, and loudness, the discursive and axiological diminution of Yiruma's musical atmospheres.

Allan Hepburn describes the miniature as "a disinherited genre within musicology," remarking upon the contrast between the multitudes of exempla and the paucity of discourse surrounding them.[21] The nocturne, in fact, fares no better. In his opening chapter to the seminal book, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre*, Jeffrey Kallberg promises a rare discourse on the nocturne genre's own discourse. Titled "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G minor," Kallberg's chapter is one of the few existing scholarly works that promises discursus around what is arguably the most popular and widely performed of the canonic composer's works. But what immediately emerges from the get-go is the rhetoric, not so much of the genre "nocturne," but rather of the singular and "idiosyncratic" Nocturne in G minor, op. 15, no. 3, whose capitalized first letter sets it apart

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[20] Yiruma, *Yiruma Piano Concert*, 10. Throughout this chapter, I present extended quotations of Yiruma's own speech and writings as potentially valuable primary sources to those interested in Yiruma Studies. While Yiruma sometimes gives interviews in English, his written and spoken output tends to be more extended and varied in Korean. Unless otherwise noted, all Korean sources are translated by myself.

[21] Allan Hepburn, "Piano Miniatures: An Essay on Brevity" *Gettysburg Review, 19 no. 1* (Spring 2006): 97. The nocturne in historicism and criticism has always occupied the hazy zone encompassing genres such as the miniature, the character piece, the song without words. Depending on the object at hand, the boundaries between these genres overlap, expand, and collapse differently; it is difficult to come across writing on either one of these that does not gesture towards its proximity with the other. See also Louise H. and Hans Tischler, "Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words,*" *The Musical Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (January, 1947): 1-16.

from the lowercase nocturne-as-generic.[22] Over the course of the chapter, Kallberg characterizes the capitalized Nocturne in G minor as a chimerical combination of three genres—the nocturne, the Polish mazurka, and the Lutheran chorale— and furthermore as an upending of the normative discourse of the nocturne genre. Of the three genres, it is the mazurka and chorale that speak. These respectively deploy a "nationalistic" and "religious" rhetoric and imbue Chopin's Nocturne not only with "idiosyncrasy" but also with "communicative capacity" and "persuasive force."[23]

In all this, the genre of the nocturne—the lowercase nocturne, the nocturne "as usual," as Kallberg calls it—falls silent. In the introductory paragraphs, Kallberg invokes the "idiosyncrasies," "differences," and "unorthodox gestures" of the G minor Nocturne, before offering the following explanation for how genre features in his argument:

> When we employ genre primarily to classify through the cataloguing of shared characteristics, it would inevitably cease to be useful after identifying the Nocturne as usual. But when we grasp its persuasive and communicative capabilities—when, in other words, we restore its full rhetorical potential—genre allows the understanding of the meanings the idiosyncratic Nocturne might have, to Chopin and his contemporaries as well as to us.[24]

Genre and its vehicle, the "nocturne-as-usual," are together cast as a foil to the "idiosyncratic Nocturne," the protagonist of this drama.

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[22] "Unorthodox gestures stand out on every page of the Nocturne… The rhythmic stress falls persistently on the second beat of the measure, unlike the downbeat accents found in most nocturnes." Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 3.
[23] Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries*, 25-6.
[24] Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries,* 29.

Kallberg's approach to the nocturne and to genre, I argue, is emblematic of musicological genre criticism—the genre of our academic discourse on genre—which seeks genre-breaking aesthetic events and mobilizes genre primarily to pave the way for the singular and idiosyncratic exempla of creative genius. The tendency is to approach genre as a prison from which performative subjects either free themselves or from which they must be freed.[25] As Kallberg demonstrates, the scholarly gesture of identifying genre-breaking events allows a nationalized subalternity to emerge and establish itself, to find and locate difference and to write of its performative agency.[26] In the case of Chopin, the excavation of the G minor Nocturne's "bold" and "experimental" "idiosyncrasy" allows Kallberg to rehabilitate Chopin, in spite of "his lifelong avoidance of political activism," as a hitherto closeted Polish freedom fighter:

> Chopin expanded the range of expression of the genre with the composition of the Nocturne in G minor. The work seems to teeter precariously at the edge of its ostensible genre, so bold was its experimental and virtuosic combination of kinds. But its marginal generic status was to serve an important purpose for Chopin: the articulation of his kinship with the Polish romantic nationalists.[27]

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[25] Musicology's attachment to liberatory, decarceral genre scholarship likely has a dual source in its material dependency on Anglo-American political and economic liberalism as well as the discipline's indebtedness to German Romanticism, in particular the aesthetics of Friedrich Schlegel and his privileging of the "characteristic" and "interesting" over the classically beautiful. For a discussion of Schlegel's aesthetic categories, as well as overall application of these categories to an historiography of European 19th century music, see Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[26] The same polarization between generic passivity and idiosyncratic agency occurs in the subsequent chapter, also on the nocturne, this time giving birth to a *gendered* subaltern subject: the female Romantic composer. The chapter, titled "The Harmony of the Tea Table: Gender and Ideology in the Piano Nocturne," mobilizes Fanny Hensel-Mendelssohn and Clara Wieck's nocturnes as yet more mold-breaking counter-generic exempla in order to "uncover stories of devaluation, marginalization, and sometimes outright exclusion [and] to discover intimations of individual voices questioning the patriarchal tradition." Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries,* 60.

[27] Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries,* 29.

Kallberg proceeds to draw connections between the generic discourse of the mazurka and chorale and the "Polish romantic messianism" of Adam Mickiewicz, whose *The Books of the Polish Nation and of the Polish Pilgrims* was published in 1832, the same year as Chopin was composing the Nocturne at hand. The Nocturne (and, by proxy, Chopin) thus emerges as a "marginal" protagonist in the "Polish revolt against Russian domination" and gains nationalistic and messianic signification through its mobilization of the mazurka and chorale.[28]

But while the idiosyncratic Nocturne in G minor gets to claim difference and play liberator of peoples, the nocturne "as usual" retains its nondescript cosmopolitan pallor. When Kallberg gets around to querying the rhetoric of the generic lowercase nocturne, it is as a "neutral" element whose primary characteristic is a lack. As the "host genre," the lowercase nocturne provides the nondescript background against which the capitalized Nocturne articulates and performs national and religious difference:

> Chopin's choice of the nocturne as the 'host' genre for the blending might even have arisen from its lack of a clearly defined national identity: its relatively neutral character in this sense might have been perceived as 'universal' or 'international.'[29]

By so starkly contrasting the ease with which he circumlocutes a zone of aesthetic and political discourse *around* the nocturne genre while struggling to enunciate from within it, Kallberg's nocturne criticism lays the foundation and helps clarify the stakes for this chapter's exploration of the convergence between the generic, the neutral, the background, and the (inter)national. For the scholar of Yiruma's music, armed with the tools of area

[28] "The central tenets of the messianic brand of Polish romantic nationalism practically read like a description of the piece, particularly in its blend of the 'nationalistic' mazurka and the 'religious' chorale." Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries,* 27.
[29] Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries,* 27.

studies and the presumption of nationality as character, is faced with the challenge of attempting to account for a national-historical context that spectralizes itself. In the wake of the IMF crisis, the South Korean state was compelled to dismantle national civic infrastructures and promote the loosening of traditional national identity. At the same time, the (neo)liberalized state promoted a vision of "global Korea" and redefined Koreanness as an oxymoronic property of exceptional and exemplary global assimilation.[30] Koreanness names the ironic capacity to adapt to the loss of national infrastructures, to become transparent to globality, while nonetheless retaining whatever alterity (or memory, trace of it) that warrants the originary national and ethnic identity.[31]

In an interview in Germany, Yiruma offers the following reflections on his music:

> Every time I write music, I want to write music like the air that you breathe, all the time—it's around you. I want my music to be like that. It's always played around you and surrounds you. I want to stay in someone's memory, like air.[32]

The pronoun "it" interchangeably refers to "music" and to "air," which surrounds his listeners, persists in their sensoria and memory as a ubiquity that barely impresses.[33] The challenge posed to scholars of music by Yiruma's music, then, is the challenge of writing

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[30] See Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, "A Journey to Seoul" in *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (London; Brooklyn: Verso, 2015). The frequent Left characterizations of Korea as the "ground zero" of global capitalism diagnose the Korean project as imperialist much as they themselves are conscripted to it.

[31] My thinking on the specifically musical texturedness of historically overdetermined psychic and political identity owes a lot to the work of those who have taken up object relations and affect theories within the framework of materialist critique and praxis. On the musical construction of a globalized cosmopolitan identity within the genre of World Music, see Roshanak Kheshti, "Inversion, *Signifiance,* and the Loss of Self in Sound," *Parallax* 14, no. 2 (May 2008): 68-77. Kheshti's focus is on the "geno-sonic" appropriation of ethnic alterity into pleasures of roughness, whereas here I am interested in the "pheno-sonic" construction of smooth, uniform cosmopolitan texture. On phenosong and genosong as musical properties emerging from incommensurately classed and ethnic milieus, see "The Grain of the Voice" in Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 179-189.

[32] Yiruma, "Yiruma Interview with K-Colors of Korea." Interview by Esther Klung. *ColorsOfKorea*, K-Magazin, April 14, 2013. Video, 8:09. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzUyQh--KUk.

[33] I owe this locution to Dan Wang's comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

about what is all around and difficult to grasp—a music that seems to evade any one genre, but that is also pervasive, generic, and atmospheric.

II. The Room, the Person, the Piano (and Other Non-Places)

Figure 25. Still from "Room with a View" (2020).

Yiruma enters a room. He rearranges the furniture, adjusts the blinds, and places a photo of his daughter on a surface. He gazes out the window, opens the lid of an upright piano that stands against a wall, and begins to play. Coffee is poured into a cup. While the hand tilting the pot is off-screen, it is presumably Yiruma's own hand, for in this room he is alone.

The music video for "Room with a View" features the composer-pianist in a room, engaging in sundry activities, while the track plays as the non-diegetic soundtrack (Yiruma's

slow-motion on-screen performance remains silent).[34] The video opens with a title screen that is a shot of a cracked plaster wall overlaid with the track's title, Yiruma's name, and a date ("24. April. 2020"). As in a time-lapse photo, a square of yellow sunlight bisected by a shadow of a window frame travels across the tan wall, as if to frame what follows within the span of a late afternoon. The camera luxuriates in the textures of frosted glass, the wooden door frame, the seamed leather back of an old chair, the elongated leaves of an orchid. The afternoon light slants sideways through the windows and bathes everything in a golden, sepia-toned glow. We first see Yiruma from behind, shuffling into the room in a simple all-black outfit, shoulders relaxed, almost drooped from exhaustion (he lifts his right hand to his face—perhaps he rubs his eye or covers a yawn). This is not just any room, at any time; it is a room where one retires, perhaps at the end of the workday, to collect oneself, relax, pour oneself a cup of coffee, play piano. In an accompanying interview about the new track, the room emerges as a motif that allows Yiruma to explore the "personal perspective," which he frames as a recent interest owing to time spent in isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[35]

But the room is an important motif throughout Yiruma's work. A collection of essays by the pianist published in 2005 bears the title *Yiruma's Little Room*; the title of his third studio album (as well as its title track) is *From the Yellow Room* (2003). In Yiruma's

[34] The music video can be viewed in the following link: https://youtu.be/6Oph9z-3vFg. The title of this single alludes to the famous E. M. Forster novel of (almost) the same name. Like other Koreans for whom English is a second language, Yiruma frequently drops definite and indefinite articles in his English. See Hikyoung Lee, "Variable article use in Korean Learners of English," *University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics* 6 no. 2 (January 1999): 35-46.

[35] "I think recently I am writing more from a personal point of view. Now, I hope to share the feelings coming from time spent alone: the comfortable feeling that familiar spaces give, the laziness from being completely alone, the loneliness and reminiscence in the late night." Yiruma, "Yiruma Announces New EP 'Room with a View'." Interview by Sharon Kelly, udiscovermusic, April 24, 2020. https://www.udiscovermusic.com/classical-news/yiruma-room-with-a-view/.

musical and written oeuvre, the room frequently appears as a specific place—an autobiographical location—that is nonetheless a space of shared and generalizable personal memory and experience. According to an essay from his 2005 collection titled "The View from My Window, and My Story," the "yellow room" that appears in his album and song title as well as his writings refers to his childhood room in a house on the outskirts of London, where he lived with his family after they emigrated when he was twelve. Like the video for "Room with a View," the essay offers the audience entry into a space where the aspirational familiarity and comfort of a personal space is given synaesthetic rendering through warmth, light, memories, and shared musical atmosphere:

> My room is suffused with yellow light.
>
> The second-floor room of "Rosemary," our house at the outskirts of London in Barrylands, was all yellow. The curtains, the wallpaper, the bed, the furniture was all yellow. The room where sunbeams squeeze past the curtains is enfolded in a warm light. […]
>
> In the view from the window, briefly glanced, there is a sky on the verge of a rain and trees swaying in the wind. And in my little room there resides the memory of when I first met you and shed tears of happiness, the moments when my heart raced for the people who loved my music.
>
> I want to open up those precious loves and longings, joy and happiness to those who love my music.[36]

Here, memory converges with light, with a synaesthetic pastoral depiction of a western-style dwelling in suburban Barrylands (where Yiruma elsewhere writes "time moves slowly"); the

[36] Yiruma, *Yiruma-ui jageunbang* (Seoul: Myeongjinchulpan, 2005), 4.

memory of first love addressed to an unspecified second-person "you," which morphs into appreciation for his fans; and a mission statement addressed to them as to why he is publishing these essays, which are both described as "from" his little room as well as called "little rooms" themselves. These are the "little rooms" where a commingling of sensibilities and memories can take place.

The room, then, as it emerges around Yiruma's musical practice, refers not just to a specific place but also to a quality and mode of relation desired by Yiruma between him and his listeners: a sharing of light, memory, and music, atmospheric interfaces which Yiruma assembles under the metaphor "like air." The room gathers these seemingly paradoxical impulses for the personal and the generic and embodies them in architecture and physical and affective space—a retreat into the personal that is nonetheless an opening up into a relationality that, if not obtaining the texture of a collective, affords an experience of belonging to a generality.

Rooms are often like this, increasingly so, interfaces whose style and ambience are portable even as the physical chambers themselves remain geographically fixed. The hotel room, the suburban bedroom, the urban studio of a condominium: cosmopolitan subjects learn to dwell in these and come to expect the same trappings of personal space. They constitute what anthropologist Marc Augé calls "non-places," dehistoricized spaces whose functions and atmospheres are interchangeable and which facilitate cosmopolitan interface and exchange.[37] While Augé draws his paradigmatic examples from spaces of transit such as train stations, airports, and bus terminals, his analysis could apply equally to hospitals, office buildings, shopping centers, and residential spaces. For those living in post-industrial

[37] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 2008).

Korea, inhabiting one of the myriad concrete high-rise apartments (*apateu*) that form the signature concrete jungles of the urbanized national landscape, the room is something that is increasingly modular, if also still, in crowded urban living situations, aspirational.

Augé's discourse of the non-place builds on previous distinctions between "place" and "space," with the former naming a rooted, communal, historical enclosure and the latter a more open and indeterminate zone of abstraction.[38] Like so much melancholizing left historiography, *Non-Places* constructs the non-place as a space of abstracted and inorganic serial life and of affective attrition—where the supermodern or late-capitalist subject gradually accumulates scars of deracination, alienation, and exhaustion.[39] The ultimate destination of the frequent traveler to the non-place is a further and further "retreat into the self," the only form of human mediation and relation still available: "The community of human destinies is experienced in the anonymity of non-place, and in solitude."[40]

But whereas Augé's rendering of the non-place mourns the loss of identity, history, and relationality, Yiruma's rooms make the case that the retreat into personal space (the "room") and its generic trappings of anonymity are no less relational. On the one hand, Yiruma's music and rooms reflect the solitude and isolation of the non-place. And yet the visual and verbal commodities that accompany Yiruma's music are rife with invocations of personalness framed as intimacy: Yiruma becomes a prosthesis for personal experience for

[38] "If a place can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place." Augé, *Non-Places*, 63.
[39] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001). Pierre Nora's "(mi)lieux de mémoire" participates in a similar genre of social criticism, where the socially-embedded *milieu* gives way to the increasingly abstract and commodified *lieu*. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring, 1989): 7-24.
[40] Ibid., 98.

people that aren't Yiruma, but who can experience lyrical self-relation around and through him. "From My Hands to Yours" is a motto stamped across the top of the preface to a publication of his music as scores, intended for amateur performance in the nocturnal solitude of their own rooms. Yiruma's preface to the accompanying limited-edition publication of his scores is rife with evocations of a personal intimacy between him and the imagined reader through shared habits of piano-playing and journal-writing:

> I wanted to pick and craft with my own hands a collection of pieces that piano lovers would be able to play themselves. The pieces in this collection are like entries in a personal diary: poems that I wrote in the margins of my notebook, doodles, pictures, sketches... I'm preparing myself to write music that will wear me in; that many people can sympathize with, and use as the background music to their lives...[41]

A special release celebrating the 10th anniversary of his debut not only included a CD featuring re-recordings of favorites such as "Love Me" and "Kiss the Rain" but also a small postcard-sized envelope filled with prints of photographs, handwritten messages, and musical manuscripts. The effect is at the same time to make you think Yiruma wrote them for you and that you wrote them yourself. His titles—"The Day After...", "I", "The Things I Really", "One Day I Will"—so often seemingly incomplete, offer themselves to his audience as things to be completed in their minds, at their hands, as they replicate this music in rooms of their own. By imitating Yiruma at the keyboard and filling the air with his words and music, the solitary denizen imbues their non-place with the conjunctive resonance of Yiruma's rooms.

[41] *Yiruma Piano Concert* (Seoul: Eumak Segye, 2012).

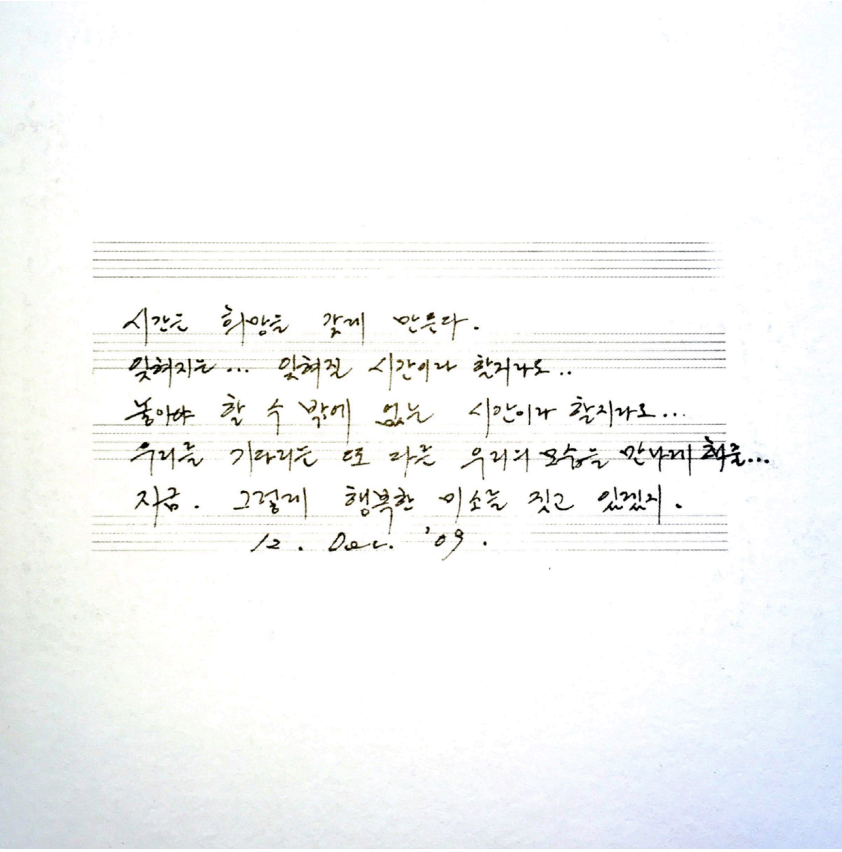

Figure 26. A "hand-written" printed postcard from Yiruma: The Best – Reminiscent (2011), *a special ten-year anniversary recording. "Time makes you hope. Even if it is a time that will be forgotten…"*

*

A stripping away of historicity—of the feeling of occupying a scene shot through with multiple structural overdeterminations and the incommensurate desires and intentions of a collective—may be a hallmark of the non-place, whose neutral, smooth, easy interfaces belie the unevenness from which they emerge. But like Yiruma's music, which nonchalantly bears the sonority and attendant affects of an historical genre, Yiruma's rooms are also scenes where the subtending force of history is embedded and expressed in what is familiar and habituated. Without rising to the level of a discursive formulation that looks and sounds

like historical knowledge, history persists nonetheless as infrastructure and atmosphere, impressing itself on the surfaces of Yiruma's rooms, his music, and his words.

In an essay titled "I: The Story within the Melody," Yiruma narrates the origin of "I" from within the middle-class family and its living room. The music emerges from the interstices of a social and architectural constellation, where the piano sits as an emblematic suture at the thresholds between Mother, Father, and Child and the respective realms of productive, reproductive, and musical labor.[42]

> This is the story of how the piece came to be titled "I." My family lived in England at the time. One day—it was around the time when Father would arrive home from work—Mother was preparing dinner in the kitchen, and I was playing piano in the living room. I was playing without thinking, when Mom came to the living room and asked what piece I had just played.
>
> I said, "It's just something I played." She asked who wrote it. So I said, "I did." So the title became "I." Simple, right?[43]

The story works at multiple registers: as a musician's account of the backstory of a fan favorite, as a nostalgic conjuring of domestic idyll, and as a case for the ease and simplicity of Yiruma's art. "Without thinking" is, I would argue, a rhyme for Yiruma's desire to write music "like air," his desire to write music that "many people can sympathize with, and use as the background music to their lives… Music that resonates in the heart, like a poem."[44] Yiruma wishes his music to be habituated background, atmosphere, "like air," melding into

[42] On domestic labor as socially necessary (re)productive labor, see Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).
[43] Yiruma, *Yiruma-ui jageunbang* (Seoul: Myeongjinchulpan, 2005), 157.
[44] Yiruma, *Yiruma Piano Concert*, 10.

unawareness, music that is not only easy enough so that people could play it themselves, but that also in the process lends itself to casual domestic piano-playing.

The piano has since its inception and industrial mass production in the 19th century been associated with the bourgeois domestic interior and amateur music-making, the architecture and atmosphere of private life.[45] In her article "Girling at the Parlor Piano," Ruth Solie attends to the multiple scenes of domestic musical labor performed by women in the Victorian nuclear bourgeois household and their key role in curating and managing both the libidinal relationship between father-daughter, husband-wife, and suitor-prospect as well as the affective atmosphere of the parlor, arguably that most emblematic and aspirational of the emergent spaces of privacy as set against the public sphere. In one of the numerous diary entries Solie gathers throughout her account, the piano takes its place in the patterns and conventions of bourgeois domesticity, which includes, as well as its furniture and ornaments, a special concern with evening twilight, the temporal threshold that marks the threshold of the workaday and the life that has its proper time and place in the domestic enclosure, as well as acts and affects that together curate a multisensory domestic space of comfortable and comforting privacy:

> Monday 11th… How comfortable and cozy the sitting room did look this evening by twilight. The shelves laden with books, specimens, minerals, shells. The Piano, the Sewing Machine, comfortable sofa and easy chair, with healthy, happy, prattling, chippy, little children all… I played on the piano for Mr. C.[46]

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[45] Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos: A Social History* (New York: Dover, 1954); Richard Curt Kraus, *Pianos & Politics in China: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[46] Christiane Fischer, ed., *Let Them Speak for Themselves: Women in the American West, 1849-1900* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1977), 61. Cited in Ruth Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California), 108.

But whereas the room in "Room with a View" clearly owes its sources and impulses to the affects and atmospheres of bourgeois domesticity, it is also a space of personal solitude and artistic creativity that is incommensurate with the domestic realm. As Solie argues, at the same time as the piano functioned as a fixture in the curation of domestic space and provided the oftentimes younger women of the household a special role in the generation of its musical atmosphere, the piano came to signify an experience of solitude and self-relation contiguous to but autonomous from the privacy of the domestic realm. Zaretsky describes this as a distinction between the private and the personal realms, with the latter taking on the burden of subjective and emotional life as the private, domestic sphere came to be increasingly identified as the scene of alienated reproductive labor.[47] By the time of the writing and publication of *Music and Morals* (1871) by the English cleric and educator H. R. Haweis, amateur piano-playing at home had come to be discussed as a matter of personal expression and moral refinement, an activity undertaken in solitude, or an even asocial reverie, sometimes even unfolding within an ostensibly "public" performance for an audience of cohabitants unaware of the true nature and audience of the pianist who had retreated into private self-relation and reflection.[48]

For Haweis as for many others, the nocturne came to occupy a privileged position as conveyor of this personal space and its musical atmosphere.[49] The mid-nineteenth century

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[47] Zaretksy, *Capitalism, Family, and Personal Life,* 56-77.

[48] As Solie argues, for the middle-class women who are emblematic domestic and personal subjects in contemporary 19th century accounts as well as in Solie's scholarship, the line between the private and personal was not only hazy but delineated two incommensurate but related spheres of "girling," or the production of appropriate feminine subjects by way of piano. "The girl's job would surely have included *both* the good play on the piano *and* the good cry upstairs." Solie, *Music in Other Words,* 94.

[49] "That poor lonely little sorrower, hardly more than a child, who sits dreaming at her piano, while her fingers, caressing the deliciously cool ivory keys, glide through a weird *nocturno* of Chopin, is playing no mere study or set piece. Ah! what heavy burden seems lifted up, and borne away in the dusk?" H. R. Haweis, *Music and Morals* (1871)*,* 103. Cited in Solie, *Music in Other Words,* 115.

saw the emergence of a post-nocturne archetype in the colonial metropoles of Western Europe and North America that retained the stylistic hallmarks and technical solutions of the earlier nocturnes while becoming more accessible to a burgeoning class of amateur pianists. Largely forgotten in the West, these mid-century middle-class nocturnes are mainstays in the Korean amateur repertory and constitute the larger pedagogical context and aural canvas into which Yiruma's New Age nocturnes entered at the turn of the millennium.[50] Like so many scattered shards forged of and within the emergent non-places of a nineteenth-century European bourgeois domestic and personal interior, these nocturnes can be found embedded in random Korean piano collections, carrying habits and dispositions across temporal and geographic boundaries and seeding simultaneously personal and generic non-places within and around the subjects playing them.[51]

In these nocturnes as well as in Yiruma's, the fantasy of personal expression converges with an easy-listening aesthetic of iteration and simplicity. The personal emerges in what is most stylistically generic, tonally neutral, and commercially popular. Bearing picturesque titles such as "Maiden's Prayer" (1856) and "Silvery Waves" (1863), the pieces conveyed simple *cantilena* melodies over arpeggiated left-hand accompaniments, and featured a slow harmonic pattern that allowed for maximum use of the sustain pedal on part of the solo pianist to more easily affect resonance and legato while retaining the bass. The continuities between the Korean New Age music and midcentury Euro-American nocturne are structural as well as melodic and textural: Ignaz Xavier Leybach's Fifth Nocturne (1862), like much of Yiruma's music, including "Room with a View" and "I," proceeds by

[50] Cf. the discussion of miniatures and the *Piano Sogokjip* (1990) in the section "The Really Long Nineteenth Century" of the dissertation's introduction.
[51] The "Maiden's Prayer" is ubiquitous in Korea, in simplified digital form, as the bell that signals the beginning and ends of periods in primary and secondary schools.

alternating between two melodic ideas whose simplicity and tonal stability undergird some textural and harmonic experimentation in later iterations.

The nocturne and the room are together elements of the historical architecture of personal space, these non-places whose historicity barely register in our experiences of them, so "neutral" and "universal" and "international" have they become. Like the music that suffuses their atmospheres, Yiruma's rooms are spaces of deracinated gestures that can be disseminated and shared. One of the closing shots of "Room with a View" shows Yiruma unlatching a window and pushing it open, the pianist's hands just shown a frame before playing the piano here creating a different kind of opening from within his room. He lets in some air from the outside at the same time as his music exits the confines of his room, entering those of others, and suffusing the backgrounds of so many noncontiguous yet uniform spaces.

*

Search for a Yiruma song on the internet and you are bound to lose yourself among cover after cover performed by amateur pianists. In a blog post from 2012, October 22nd, 11:53PM, user @jasmine recounts having recently heard Yiruma in concert.[52] Professing her adoration of the pianist-composer, she confesses to having tried her hand at a few of his pieces on a late, rainy evening. She offers up a few videos of Yiruma's greatest hits. She posts herself playing "I," "May Be," "River Flows in You," "Do You," "Kiss the Rain," and "When the Love Falls," before closing with George Winston's popular arrangement of "Canon in D." She is not a great pianist—even Yiruma's simple left-hand arpeggios cause

[52] Naver Café, October 19, 2012. http://cafe.naver.com/sbsjjack/24793.

her hands to falter and stumble. But it does not matter for jasmine or her adoring online public, who leave sweet comments that compare her favorably to piano majors at a conservatory. Buoyed by Yiruma's masterfully simple piano-writing, jasmine becomes a poet:

Figure 27. A screenshot of jasmine's post-concert blogpost and piano performance. Her caption reads:

"2012. 10. 19
I just got back from a Yiruma Concert, thanks to a very special someone.
I was so happy for the duration of the two-hour concert because he is a pianist and composer that I adore so much…
It rained a lot today for the first time in a while…
I stuck around after work for a bit… took out my Yiruma piano collection and tried playing a few pieces…
One sentimental late evening in October, 2012…
Hope you have a relaxing… and pleasant evening listening to a few peaceful pieces."

Suffused with Yiruma's music and disseminated via social media, jasmine's practice room takes on the character of the nocturnal non-place where individuated-yet-interconnected pianists practice and bear witness to the becoming-personal and generic of themselves and others. Like many other such self-recorded amateur videos, jasmine's video features the performer's hands but not her face, the individual logo that is used most often to identify and distinguish Korean citizens and workers on their passports and ID cards. The goal is not to be recognized as an individual but to become a person. In the absence of a physical audience, jasmine and others like her reach out to the camera's simultaneously self- and other-directed gaze, but in the process efface the most paradigmatic visible trademarks of official identity. The frequent ellipses in jasmine's writing is also a common feature of the generic lyrical verses that establish the scene of the piano-person's pleasurable isolation—sentences that seem to dissipate into the air, despite their presence on the screen. They gesture towards a space of a shared atmospheric intention that precedes articulation. In these windows into others' worlds that are videos uploaded and streamed online, the repetition of so many hands, rooms, words and music creates an audiovisual collage of the generic infrastructures and musical atmospheres that undergird shared experiences of auto-affection. Recognition and loss of self happen at the same time in the soft and easy iteration of an "I" that repeats, over and over, across a multitude of views.

III. Korean(s) in Ellipsis

In *Death of a Discipline,* the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak asks the question, "What, after all, is English?" She leaves it an open question, although hinting "it is more than half the ingredient for producing human capital."[53]

For Yiruma, and listeners and players of his music, English is everywhere. English is, of course, the language of his cosmopolitan, Western musical education (the fact that he studied abroad is frequently touted: he is an "international student," that paragon of educational success and class aspiration). A recent series of vlogs on his personal YouTube channel mix English and Korean with bilingual fluency, in a nod to his international fans (this sometimes gives rise to complaints from members of his Korean audience, comments like "there is too much English, it's hard to follow!"). But English is everywhere in Yiruma's music. We might even say that *all* of his music is "in" English, bearing titles in that language that is the most familiar, neutral, and endotic of foreign languages.[54]

After all, English is the linguistic interior of non-places. Like Yiruma's New Age nocturnes, it promises a conjunction with a generality of others in a technologically-mediated and post-national world. As Park and Abelmann note, within the national-historical context that is Korea, "the life of English exceeds the linguistic entity."[55] English is a project, a promise, and a fantasy realm "independent of its functional or instrumental character."[56] It enables a space of living that Park and Abelmann call "cosmopolitan

[53] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 11.
[54] On the endotic, see "L'infra-ordinaire" in Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (Penguin Classics, 2008).
[55] So Jin Park and Nancy Abelmann, "Class and Cosmopolitan Striving: Mothers' Management of English Education in South Korea," *Anthropological Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (Autumn, 2004): 666.
[56] Ibid., 666.

striving"—"a life at once more purposive, efficient, and joyous."[57] In Park and Abelmann's sociology of English in Korea, the main bearers of cosmopolitan striving are mothers who, from disparate class positions, have in common the burden of curating an English education for their children. Park and Abelmann not only describe the material conditions and ramifications of "cosmopolitan striving" but also capture the affective charge around English, the way it animates and buoys up a family, a mother's dreams, and the child's biography and sense of what it takes to have a life.[58] Cosmopolitanism in this account is not the disinterested "humanist idea of universalistic identifications," but rather the exhausting and exhilarating interval that opens up between a rabid acquisition of the tools of postnational class mobility (English, music, education) and the realization of class mobility as emigration or "success."[59]

Yiruma's music and persona enters an historical milieu where English is densely intertwined with cosmopolitan class fantasy and a Koreanness that remains attached to national identity at the same time as its material and affective contexts are increasingly assimilated into a postnational globality. The Englishness of Yiruma's titles and the musician's oft-reiterated biography and credentials bear the mark of the double-movement of aspiration and assimilation that, in Korea since the 1990s, has been called globalization (*segyehwa*).[60] Yiruma's biography and titles put a Korean in England and English in Korea. On the one hand, Yiruma's biography reflects a relationship between colonial periphery and

[57] Ibid., 665.
[58] On *why* the family and the mother has become such a key locus for the bearing of the burden of cosmopolitan fantasy (as opposed to the school, the state, etc.), see Kyung-Sup Chang, *South Korea under Compressed Modernity: Familial Political Economy in Transition* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2010).
[59] Park and Abelmann, "Cosmopolitan Striving," 647.
[60] "Globalization" had become a keyword in Korean official and popular discourse already by 1995, when the first civilian administration established the Committee for the Promotion of Globalization (*segyehwa chujin wiwonhoe*). See Sameul Kim, ed. *Korea's Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

metropole, between Korea and the "centers" of classical music education (the Purcell Academy of Music, London School of Music). On the other hand, this very relationship presumes a collective, national affective attachment to Western liberal fantasies of musical talent, education, and happiness.[61] The presence of English in Korea and the presence of a Korean in England, in other words, delineates the space of the globalization. Globalization is both distilled into the English titles of Yiruma's New Age nocturnes and expanded in the global appeal and success of Yiruma's music. It emerges as a trace in the anecdote of how he composed "I"—in the nonchalant transformation and translation of the constative "*naega*" ("I did") spoken to his mother and relayed and published Korean, into "I," as both the music and the foreign first-person pronoun affixed to the page as its title.

This final section traces the specific ramifications of this double-movement in Yiruma's music: how Koreanness appears through Yiruma's music, not in spite of the latter's cosmopolitan and global character, but in and around its generic and postnational atmospheres. In doing so, we return to Kallberg's characterization of the nocturne as a "neutral" "host genre," differentiated from genres such as the chorale or mazurka by its "lack of a clearly defined national identity." When the nation form and its material, discursive, and affective infrastructures are assimilated into a cultural and political economic generality spearheaded by the liberal state and global institutions like the IMF, Koreanness comes to be redefined and mediated through the "neutral," "universal," and "international."

Yiruma's music and discourse registers and conveys a generalized unease and anxiety about national identity in the era of globalization. In an essay titled "The Music I

[61] Lindsay Jordan Wright, "Discourses of Musical Talent in American Culture" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2018).

Want to Write and Play is…", Yiruma describes the dance of passive aggressiveness, defensiveness, and internal justification that unfolds around the status of one's Koreanness:

> Someone once asked me, "You've said that you want to make music that is Korean—have you ever thought of using Korean instruments?" I had this thought then: "Why do people think that music is Korean only if performed on Korean instruments? Isn't a music Korean if written by a Korean, no matter the instrument?"[62]

Throughout the essay, the title's questing/questioning ellipsis is filled by Yiruma's resolute iteration of his own—and therefore of his music's—Koreanness: "The Music I Want to Write Is… Korean!" But the language belies the self-evidence of nationality, exposing instead the *longue durée* of Korean immersion in the supranational. The Korean language as transmitted in Yiruma's original passage differentiates Korean instruments from Western instruments such as the piano or violin by allowing the latter to go unprefixed (*akgi*), whereas the set of traditional folk and court instruments to which the questioner and Yiruma refer must be prefixed and differentiated as "national" or "Korean" instruments (*guk'akgi*). The language bears the marks of colonial assimilation and modernization which renders Koreanness a specialized prefix to whatever neutral (Western) instruments or music are otherwise presumed as proper. With the compulsive iteration of "Korean" (*hanguk*, *hangukjeok*), the word almost seems to reenter the space of the ellipsis, dotting the page like so many invocations of a social knowledge whose self-evidence must be constructed through repeated affirmation.[63] In the ellipsis, the uncertainty of a nation can be heard.

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[62] Yiruma, *Yiruma-ui jageunbang,* 172.

[63] "An ellipsis is a sentence that I don't end because…I don't know how to. An ellipsis is a sentence I don't end because…you know what I mean. An ellipsis is a figure of return that isn't symmetrical." Lauren Berlant, "Lauren Berlant discusses "reading with" and her recent work," interview by Andy Campbell, Artforum,

*

"…." begins with a rhapsodic cloud, a delicate canvas of dappling extended chords arpeggiated over a relatively static left hand. The opening is an impressionistic rendering of an improvisatory fantasia opening: harmonically slow yet, at the same time unsettled; showcasing a florid, pianissimo virtuosity while presenting a single meandering line that flutters around lightly punctuated tonal centers.

Like many other nocturnes and miniatures with opening fantasias, "…." transitions to a simpler section that contrasts with its preceding flourish. From the rhapsodic haze of the opening measures a simple melody emerges, presented over halting and bare left-hand arpeggios. Missing from the score (printed in 2003 in the first licensed publication of Yiruma's music) is the permanently depressed sustain pedal, along with the copious *ritardandi* that Yiruma affects towards the end of each measure in the recorded track. These expressions of hesitation culminate in a midsentence fermata (m. 7) that casts an ellipsis: do-re-mi-mi, do-mi-sol-la-sol…

January 30, 2014. https://www.artforum.com/interviews/lauren-berlant-discusses-reading-with-and-her-recent-work-45109.

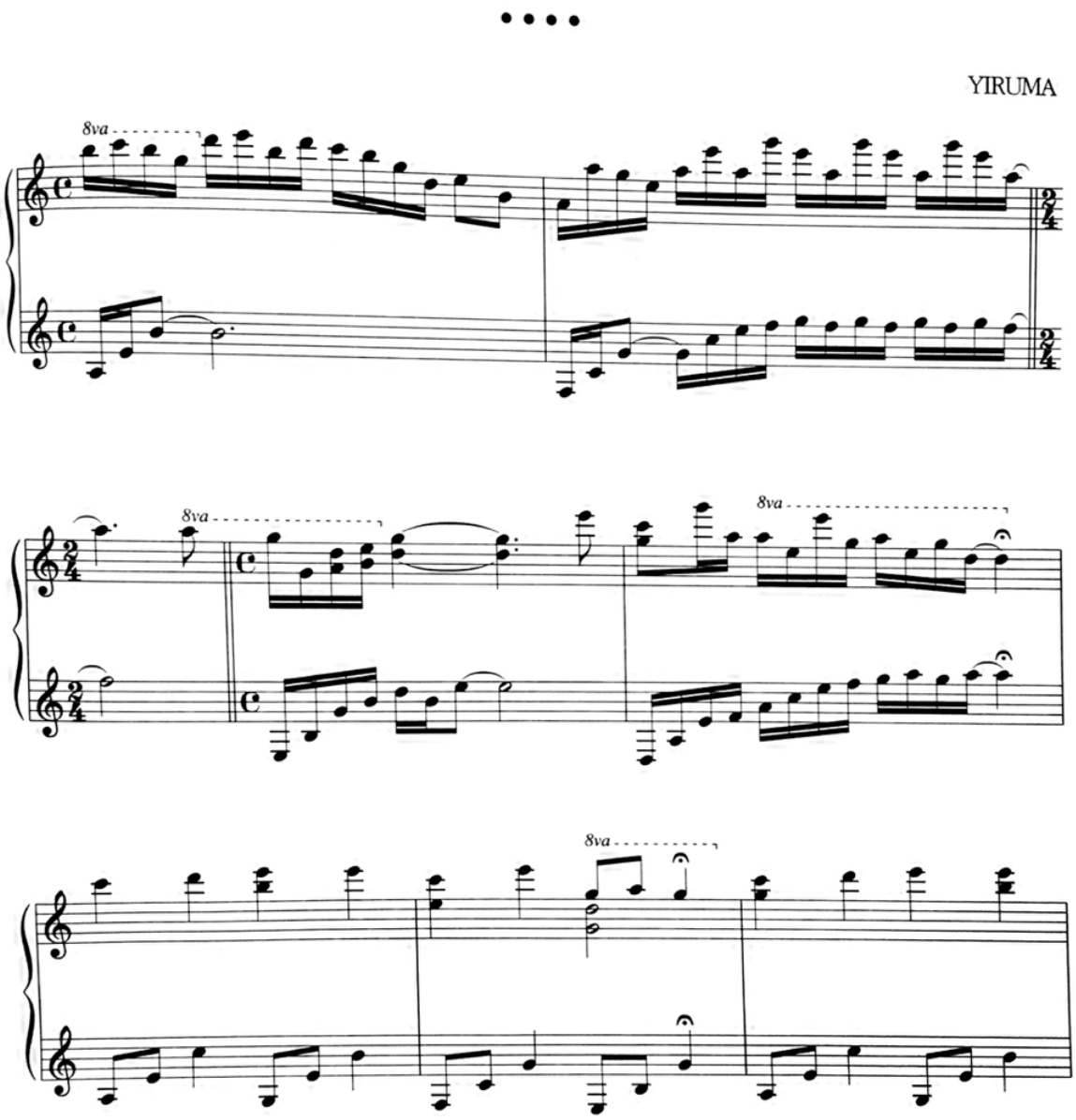

Figure 28. The opening of "...." as published in Yiruma Piano Album *(2003). A familiar tune begins to emerge in the beginning of the third system.*

Any Korean would recognize the melody as that of "*Pongdang pongdang*," a popular and ubiquitous children's song. It is one of those melodies that are so familiar as to have gained the character of a folksong, maintained in the collective song and dance archive

through oral transmission from parent to child and reinforced through performances at daycares and schools. But whereas the song is often categorized as a traditional folksong, it was composed in 1929 by the composer Hong Nan-pa and published the same year in Seoul, then under Japanese colonial rule and known as Gyeongseong, or Keijō in the Japanese.[64] Published as part of a larger collection titled *Songs for Joseon Children* (1929), the song was, indeed, intended to be taught to children, most likely at an elementary or preparatory school installed by the Japanese government in order to educate colonial peninsular subjects into the emergent imperium, or perhaps at one of the Christian missionary schools equipped with a harmonium.[65] As one of those cultural artifacts to have gained the distinction of dispersing from composed piece to universal tune, "*Pongdang pongdang*" passes through a multitude of voices and bodies without triggering associations with Japanese occupation or Western colonialism; the tune is ingrained in the collective memory to the point of time- and placelessness. But the song's forgotten modernity bears witness to the troubled emergence of Koreanness from the chaotic crucible of overlapping colonialisms at the twilight of the Joseon era.[66]

Hong Nan-pa's education and career encapsulates, in microcosm, the physical, musical, and political trajectory of a cosmopolitan slice of late-Joseon's ruling class, which found itself caught between conflicting allegiances to the dying Kingdom and a dizzying

[64] Kim Changuk's extensive collection and commentary on primary source materials relating to Hong Nan-pa's life and music have been invaluable in the course of my research. Kim Changuk, *Hong Nan-pa eumak yeon-gu* (Seoul: Minsokwon, 2010).
[65] Yi Gangsuk, *Uri yangak 100-nyeon* (Seoul: Hyeonamsa, 2001).
[66] In standard Korean historiography, the Joseon era names the period from 1392, when the Lee dynasty founded the Joseon Kingdom, to 1897, when King Kojong proclaimed the founding of the short-lived Korean Empire. The Korean Empire is often narrated as an abortive sovereign and modern nation-state which failed to stave off increasingly brazen and direct Russian, American, and Japanese political and economic interference, and was fully subject to Japanese colonial rule by 1910. See, for example, Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 2005).

array of colonial powers vying for supremacy on the peninsula at the turn of the century.[67] Born to a distinguished *yangban* family in 1897—the year when the last sovereign of the Joseon dynasty proclaimed the birth of the "Korean Empire" (*Daehanjegook*)—Hong had easy access to a modern cosmopolitan education, especially once his family moved to the capital in 1899. As for many inhabitants of Seoul in the twilight of the Joseon era, Christianity and its burgeoning churches and mission schools were Hong's gateway to the world of Western instruments and harmonies, and to English and "modern" ideas more broadly. In 1916, in accordance with his father's wishes, he entered the Severance Hospital to pursue a degree in Western Medicine. However, he quit the following year to study music, a path which lay through Westernized Imperial Japan. By 1929 he had received degrees in composition and performance from music schools in Tokyo and had served stints at the Joseon Institute for Court Music (*Joseon jeongak jeonseupso*) in the faculty of "Western Music" (*yang'ak*).

In his writings, Hong articulated his attachment to Western music as an attachment to a civilizing mission grounded in Western values and which he sought to realize through a zealous commitment to Japanese colonialism. Not content to compose music or write scholarly treatises, Hong propagandeered copiously, producing pamphlets that exhorted the benighted people of Joseon to ceaselessly mimic, emulate, and aspire to the greatness of the Western races. By the time he had written "*Pongdang pongdang*," he had elaborated a philosophy of musical pedagogy that looked to the "transcendent civilization," "refined morality," and "great ideas" of the West as a source of Enlightenment in Joseon's "period

[67] The popular K-drama *Mr. Sunshine* (2018) conveys the chaotic convergence of and conflict between multiple foreign colonial interests and native modernisms and anti-modernisms in the capital during the twilight years of the Joseon dynasty.

of awakening" (*kkaeneun ddae*), during which the people would "reject decadent traditions and outmoded ideologies and breathe in a new spirit, new vision, noble desires, great ambitions."[68] In Hong's writings, modernity is cast as a regime of colonial mimicry and is advanced and defended against the native culture of Joseon, in polemics that themselves mimic the rhetorical gestures of Western music philosophy and criticism. His musical philosophy articulated a notion of "absolute music" that exhibits the "three elements of [...] rhythm, melody, and harmony"; inversely, he denounced the music of Joseon as lacking these elements and therefore "imperfect" and "inabsolute."[69] In his essay "On Orchestral Music" he writes: "Western music possesses complex organization and lofty values; therefore it is the most complete and developed music. We cannot but say about modern man, who possesses such complete music, that they are truly happy and blessed. If you survey the musical state of our nation, it is pathetic beyond compare."[70]

Hong's writings are stentorian, projecting an affective certitude that belies the uncertainty of the Korean project. (Though, at times, his tone verges on the histrionic and insecure, as when he excoriates the capital, his hometown, as a place of "unbearable filth" and the "most repulsive city in the world;" such affects and performances are sadly familiar to any assimilated oriental, including the one who currently writes to you on the page.[71]) Writing specifically of music for children, he bemoaned that "there are barely any folk songs in our nation that deserve to be brought into the household, and seen from either a moral or educational perspective there is little reason to play them for growing children," and called for a "Music Illiteracy Reduction Movement" as a corrective to an "amusical nation's

[68] Kim, *Hong Nan-pa*, 113. Translations are mine.
[69] Ibid., 114.
[70] Ibid., 115.
[71] Ibid., 122.

musicless people."[72] Hong's proclamations of colonial subjecthood, of modernity as an emphatically articulable and imitable musical quality, of Western music education as a corrective to the musically and politically unagentic state of stillborn Koreanness—all these are invested in the pedagogical scene of children learning to sing a song written in Western harmony and bearing the instruction "Allegro con Grazia."

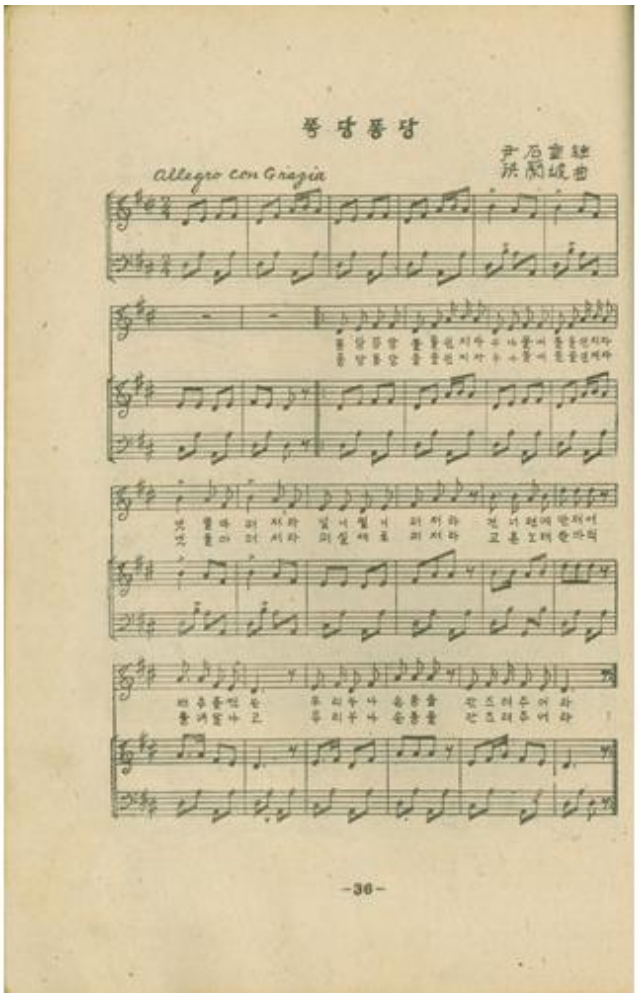

Figure 29. "Pongdang pongdang" as published in Songs for Joseon Children *(1929)*

[72] Ibid., 115-116, 118.

The music of "*Pongdang pongdang*" is almost aggressively tonal in its emphasis of the tonic and dominant, metrically stable and direct, and symmetrical and periodic in its melodic structure. The song is easy to teach and to learn, its melody limited in range and rhythmic variation, buttressed and doubled in the simple accompaniment part. The song's easiness and simplicity lend themselves readily to children, at the same time as it transmits some fundamental features of functional harmony and "common practice" melodic and metric conventions, the three features of an "Absolute" music laid out in Hong's philosophy of music.

For all its simplicity, however, "*Pongdang pongdang*" underscores, musically and figuratively, the unsettled political and cultural matrix of an emergent and contested Koreanness. "Korea" would come to name, in the course of the half century surrounding Hong's own lifetime, a transitional empire whose dreams of a sovereign modernity were thwarted and annexed by colonial powers; a national and ethnic identity, as viewed both from the outside by foreign interests and from the inside by a fledgling nationalist consciousness; and, finally, under US occupation of its southern half, a divided state and ongoing scene of internecine neocolonial warfare. The pastoral idyll depicted in the song in the native language simultaneously belies and grapples with the anxiety that attended Hong's ambitious and self-abnegating civilizing project at the eve of the dissolution of the "Hermit Kingdom" into the chaotic jumble of Korean modernity. The lyrics relay playful banter between a child and his elder sister, the former frolicking by a creek while his sister washes herbs for cooking. The child attempts to distract the sister from her chores by playfully tossing pebbles into the water:

Pongdang pongdang (kerplop! kerplop!)

Let's throw pebbles!

Let's throw them while sister (*noona*) doesn't notice.

Ripple far, little brook, ripple far and wide—

Go and tickle the back of our sister's hand

While she sits across from us, rinsing herbs.

In this reminiscence of a rural childhood (certainly more fantastical and out of reach now than when it was composed, already through the veil of modernist nostalgia), the elder sister (*noona*) is sensuous and maternal, subject to the whims of the male protagonist which are registered and relayed through a babbling brook. The libidinal and symbolic triangle between man-child, brook, and maiden constructs a scene of a simultaneously primordial and domestic rural countryside. Like European artsong such as *Die Schöne Müllerin* (1824), the song describes a scene of shared timeless national character, itself not the endpoint of the modernizing Korean project but a retconned pastoral starting point.

Korean children continue to encounter and sing "*Pongdang pongdang*." In doing so they entrain themselves to the conventions of functional harmony, which have become habit. YouTube and social media are rife with little choreographed variety show performances, featuring proud parents clapping along to dancing and singing children. There is a K-Pop song by the group WJSN (aka Cosmic Girls) which references the tune.[73] Hong and his music are objects of continued official national commemoration within institutions of cultural and intellectual distinction (the Nan-pa Memorial and Exhibition Halls at Danguk University, the Nan-pa Archives in Busan, the Nan-pa Commemorative Foundation, recurring anniversary concerts performed by philanthropically and publicly

[73] WJSN, "Plop Plop," track #6 on *Happy Moment,* Starship Entertainment, 2017, compact disc. The track can be heard here: https://youtu.be/z3busydA2h8.

funded performing arts groups such as the Nan-pa Children's Chorus, etc.).[74] Hong's children are interviewed to this day, as a sort of embodiment of this living tradition. One of them says: "As long as our nation exists I believe his achievements will never disappear."[75] As long as the Korean nation-state remains an ongoing hegemonic project, Hong's dream of singing our way into modernity lives on.

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To encounter "*Pongdang pongdang*" through Yiruma's transcription in "...." is to hear a palimpsest, a colonial record overwritten, as in layered over by experiences of neocolonial assimilation and extraction.[76] As a piano arrangement of a colonial-era children's song, "...." seems to preserve and extend Hong's own cosmopolitan aspirations. In his life and music, Yiruma, too, is frequently cast as an exemplary cosmopolitan mimic, equipped with the language, education, and musical stylings of the colonial metropole. The fantasy of a "study abroad" (*yuhak*) as a means of securing prestige or even simply the survival of both the individual and the nation continues to loom large in the aspirational ordinary that is "Global Korea," hoovering up household finances and children's time.[77]

In the course of a century, the styles and geopolitical underpinnings of cosmopolitanism have shifted, however, and the two composers remain incommensurate if contiguous figures in the history of colonialism and cosmopolitan striving. Whereas Hong's

[74] Park Jeongryang, "Hong Nan-pa tansaeng 100-junyeon ginyeomeumakhoe," *Maeil Gyungjae*, March 27, 1997, https://www.mk.co.kr/news/home/view/1997/03/17741/.
[75] Kim Taewan, "Hanguk gagok, dongyo-eui wang 'Hong Nan-pa'eui husondeul," *Wolgan Chosun,* November 2016, http://monthly.chosun.com/client/news/viw.asp?ctcd=&nNewsNumb=201611100038.
[76] The full track can be heard here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvcLl3d1DT0&ab_channel=YirumaLOVE.
[77] See Hong Jin Jo, *Local Motivations, Global Trajectories: The Rise and Fall of Korean International Students in American Higher Education, 1950-2020* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, forthcoming).

own discourse on mimicry is strident, at times histrionic, Yiruma's discourse transmits a more contained, soft-spoken anxiety. Hong declaims the death of the old national identity and casts himself in the model of an assimilated and Westernized Korean consciousness; Yiruma obfuscates the national figure in the ellipsis: "The Music I Want to Write Is..."

"...." concludes Yiruma's third album, *From the Yellow Room* (2003). Within the context of the album and Yiruma's larger output, the appearance of "*Pongdang pongdang*" has the effect of a surprise. The tune is only gradually revealed, triggering the event of recognition past the half-minute mark at the earliest, for a musically astute listener.[78] The title of the track bears the secret of the unannounced allusion, an utterance withheld. Once revealed, the song can be read in the silence of the ellipsis, its extraneous four dots (as opposed to the usual three) marking the places of the four syllables of the song's title and refrain. This is the closest Yiruma has come to giving one of his pieces a non-English title.

"...." opens out to the collective space of national reminiscence. The ellipsis interpellates the listener within a scene of shared Koreanness. But, and at the same time, the track also draws the popular children's song into the space of nocturne solitude. The song, usually undertaken as a group activity, with a parent or with other children, is recalled and recast as a piano solo. The tune, when it slowly and softly breaks through the improvisatory opening continues to be shrouded in the haze of extended harmonies, counterpoint, and the resonance of undampened piano strings. The resolute major tonality of the song is transcribed into a limpid Aeolian, the dominant-tonic toggle replaced with more

[78] For some, the event takes longer to unfold: a bewildered questioner on Naver Knowledge iN—the inspiration for Yahoo! Answers—wonders if anyone else has noticed possible similarities between the track and a famous children's song.

meandering progression through variously extended and inverted tonalities (Amin11 – Emin/G – Fmaj9 – Emin7).

The generic shift into the realm of the New Age nocturne induces a shift in the melody. Yiruma tweaks the tail-end of the melody such that instead of the jolly scalar descent from fourth scale degree to tonic, the melody wanders around its tonal center (in this case, a C) by tracing an arpeggiated A minor. The tune contained within the track never breaks out into joyful declamation. Instead, the tune ends on a deceptive cadence that, rather than concluding, gives way to a final meandering right hand melody that winds gradually to a stop on the subtonic. The piece closes, as it had begun, on the uncertainty of an ellipsis.

"...." sounds and works a lot like Yiruma's oeuvre more broadly. It wanders the peripheries of Korean and nocturne history, gathering their affects, gestures, and tunes in an atmospheric archive that fills the room without obtaining the concretion of historical knowledge. For listeners attuned to certain references, the allusions may afford the excitement of recognition, or the promise (or threat) of an aesthetic encounter that feels historical.[79] But when liberal assimilation and extraction continue to strip away at the moorings of collective life, what matters by and large in the globalized spaces of one's own room or personal memory is that shared resonance, in spite of loss and displacement, is still possible. Through his New Age nocturnes, Yiruma gives his listeners and players the materials with which to curate shared musical non-places that mediate between the personal and the generic. "Like air," Yiruma's music "is all around you," "stays in your memory" and carries history without event or genius, but simply as a kind of persistent tonal presence

[79] Lauren Berlant, "Thinking about Feeling Historical," *Emotion, Space, Society* 1 (2008): 4-9.

that accompanies dreams of postcolonial personhood. Shorn of words, his music winds softly and slowly through the nocturne-scape, suffusing our spaces with a memory that is less a song and more like air.

Chapter 3. Minima Melancholia: Schubert, Minimalism, and Dysthymic Soundtracks

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.[1]

I. Melancholy Minimalism (and Schubert)

George Belfield's short film *On the Nature of Daylight* (2018) follows a white woman played by Elisabeth Moss in the aftermath of a phone call.[2] Its impact is in abeyance, her face variously clenched, numb, flat. Her body is hunched and shivers in response to the occasional wind. Through the camera our gaze precedes her, is fixed in a perpetual backward glance at her face and body as she wanders through the grungy city, past fast food restaurants, gas stations, walk-ups, scuffed-up brick walls and street lights. Gradually, she traverses the town's commercial and residential districts, treads along a highway lined with bare trees and walks by an abandoned plant hemmed in by a chain link fence. She arrives at a sprawling concrete infrastructure of buildings, walkways, and winding alleys—it could be a convention center, a university, a hospital, and turns out to be a hotel. She passes an employee entrance and enters a corridor glinting with cold fluorescent light. There, she stops for the first time and has a moment of expression: tears well up in her face. She places a hand on the wall and doubles over as she heaves out a few sobs. Then, she stops, rights

[1] T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (San Diego; New York; London: Harcourt, 1971), 59.
[2] *On the Nature of Daylight,* directed by George Belfield (2018: Somesuch). The film in its entirety can be viewed at https://www.maxrichtermusic.com/2018/06/21/on-the-nature-of-daylight-short-film/.

her face and body, grits her teeth with a frown, and resumes walking with what could be read as newfound resolution on her face (or maybe it's just the old face, looking harder because of the tears that preceded it).

In the world of the film, everyone and thing is exhausted, but they continue to walk, drive, stand, and flicker on. On the street, everything looks chipped and dirtied—except for the ads. One pristine, well-lit ad says "CA$H 4 YOU: Loans up to $5,000 Fast." The postindustrial urban infrastructure framed by the camera and traversed by Moss is worn down and shabby, bearing intimations of underemployment, overpolicing, homelessness, a general metastasis of exchange and productivity. The world is exhausted—materially and affectively depressed. Moss's surroundings echo her affects, and vice versa. But despite the fact that she is, throughout her wandering, alone, the video also presents her as surrounded by a world and others within it who also bear in their proximate solitude the project of continuing on in exhaustion. Various figures in the background accompany Moss's wander, haunt the periphery of her scenes, without entering the shot's focus. One exception: the opening of the video is a close up of an old man's weathered face. His expressionless gaze shifts from off camera towards his dirty hands, which are holding and caressing a little bird. The camera pans out and we learn that the man and Moss are both sitting in a Mr. Sub.[3] The mise-en-scène of his absent-minded, soiled presence hearkens to a Dickensian sentimentalist exposé of poverty, but the film leaves him as soon as Moss enters the shot. As viewers, we are interpellated as witness to a pervasive and banal collective exhaustion that doesn't quite achieve the tone of suffering or struggle. So, from the beginning, Moss isn't

[3] The name of the fast food chain places Moss's dithering in Canada, Toronto specifically. Like in many developed urban metropoles, Toronto's municipal infrastructures and public welfare have suffered from austerity policies. See Beth Wilson, "Toronto After a Decade of Austerity: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," *Social Planning Toronto* (January 2020).

quite alone. The landscape of her clenched dithering is inhabited by figures and objects other than herself.[4]

Figure 30. The opening shots of "On the Nature of Daylight" (2018):
An old man's face; a sickly bird in his dirty hands; Moss on the phone across from him in a Mr. Sub.

[4] In this chapter, dithering names the hesitant, circular, at times stationary vacillation and shivering that rhymes with wandering. Wandering, alone, is too laden with *flânerie* to function as the primary action the chapter tracks.

Including, of course, the music. In the short film-qua-music video, the 6-minute string-orchestral track is a sonic counterpart to the visible human protagonist: the film was made and titled *after* Max Richter's original track, "On the Nature of Daylight," originally released in 2004 on his album *The Blue Notebooks.*[5] But the music is also more than protagonist here: it is also the landscape that Moss and the viewer inhabit, together, over the course of the film. As the musical template from which Belfield's visualization draws its tempo, duration, and affects, Richter's track underscores the film's depressive landscape. In the absence of development, repetition with minimal variation substitutes for musical plot. At the largest scale, the piece consists of a 24-measure harmonic ostinato played by the lower strings that circles around the tonal center (B-flat) and repeats four times, each repetition gaining an additional treble voice and thickening in density and texture before concluding by way of a "*poco a poco decrescendo e ritardando"*—a sort of classical equivalent of the pop fade out. The 24-measure ostinato itself, in turn, consists of repetitive four-bar phrases that circle around the tonic and create three sets of rhyming couplets:

[5] Max Richter, *Blue Notebooks* (FatCat Records, 2004), CD. In many ways, the short film's project of setting image to Richter's music is itself just a repetition. "On the Nature of Daylight" has already underscored many scenes in many movies and TV shows, from *Stranger than Fiction* (2006) to *Castle Rock* (2018).

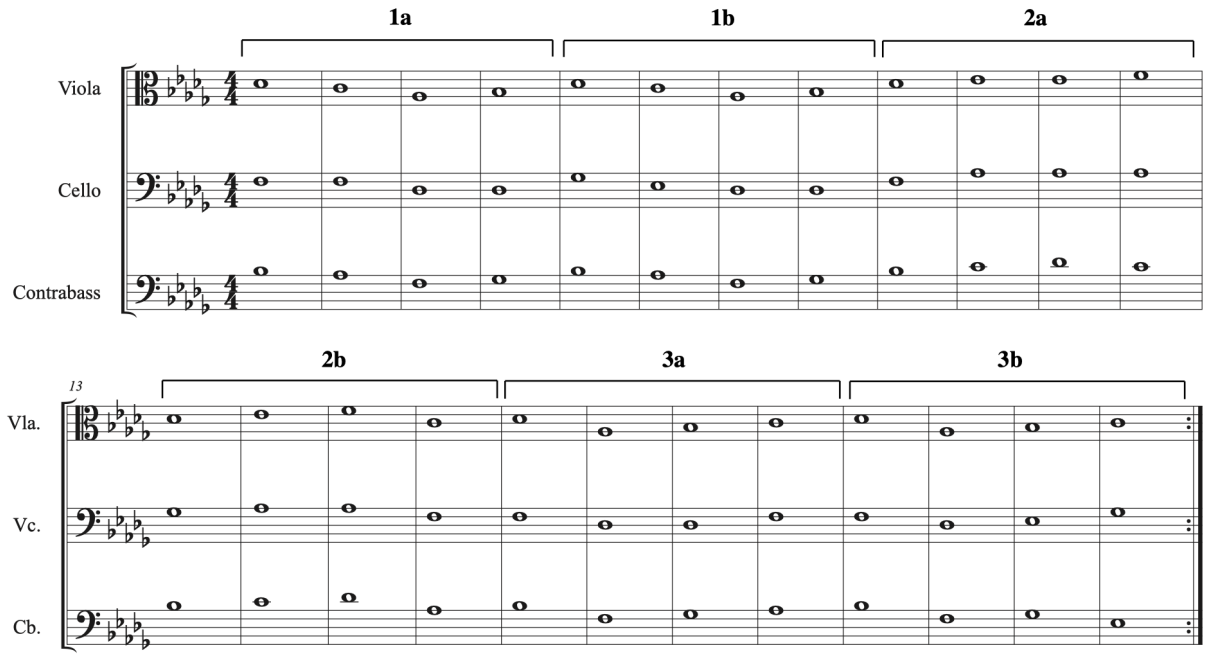

Figure 31. "On the Nature of Daylight": Bass, Cello, Viola ostinato (mm. 1-24).
The ostinato repeats three times and provides the track's structural and harmonic anchor.

Meanwhile, the violins trace a diatonic melody consisting of nested scalar and intervallic repetitions:

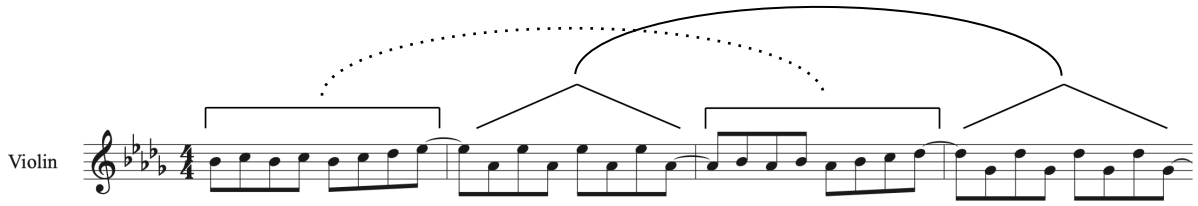

Figure 32a. Lower violin melody, beginning m. 25 (2nd cycle of harmonic ostinato)

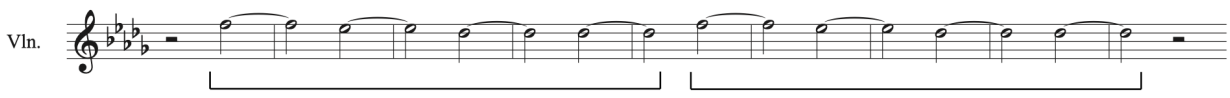

Figure 32b. Upper violin melody, beginning m. 49 (3rd cycle of harmonic ostinato)

Like Elisabeth Moss's sojourn in the music video, the resulting undulating fabric stretches out and over a flat landscape with various zones and features and haunts the wandering protagonist. When daylight finally arrives, it remains cold, never fully breaking out into a warm radiance, stuck in the chromatic, temporal zone of what the French impressionists named "the blue hour" (*l'heure bleue*). Incidentally, the title of Richter's album, *The Blue Notebooks*, refers to a characteristically depressing series of journals kept by Kafka from 1917-1919.[6] Stuck in that in-between slice of time that precedes or follows daylight proper, the subject of the title ("daylight") never blossoms but is held in abeyance, in a cyclical minor-mode landscape that repeats, dithers around its tonal center, and unfolds itself in the world by way of holding on to old gestures. Moss's facial poetry rhymes with the cinematographic and scenic poetry which rhymes with Richter's musical poetry: all revolve around a taught sameness that is not just static but is in flux and dithering. If it is static, it is radio static, a granular, fractal canvas which actually contains bits and pieces of familiar sound, music, and words that meld into the familiar "white noise."

This chapter tracks the convergence of slow, minimalist musical atmospheres and meandering, depressed landscapes in recent film and television. In this chapter's scenes and examples, the tempo and tonalities of a subgenre of musical minimalism rhyme with a particular set of individual and collective affective conditions, portrayed as the inability to move through relations and events in any way other than in an exhausted, repetitive

[6] Cf. "One of the first signs of the beginning of understanding is the wish to die. This life appears unbearable, another unattainable. One is no longer ashamed of wanting to die; one asks to be moved from the old cell, which one hates, to a new one, which one will only in time come to hate. In this there is also a residue of belief that during the move the master will chance to come along the corridor, look at the prisoner and say: "This man is not to be locked up again, He is to come with me." A public domain English translation of Kafka's notebooks can be accessed on a public Google Doc: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gD981HZ190BUJF-3czZNX3DsFWvqp3cq-Z4QS4d-9gw/edit?hl=en (Last accessed February 1st, 2021).

dithering. As one of the most commercially successful purveyors of predominantly slow, circular, and repetitive minor-mode soundtracks, Richter's music acts as a primary example of what this chapter calls "melancholy minimalism," a style that can be found across a range of recent minimalist musics and soundtracks, other examples of which include Michael Andrews's recasting of "Mad World" from rock to downtempo ballad, sung by Gary Jules for the movie *Donnie Darko* (2001); Rachel Portman's soundtrack for the *Never Let Me Go* (2010); and a striking cue from the season 6 finale of *Game of Thrones*, where Ramin Djawadi introduces a piano into the show's faux-medieval sensorium for the first time ("Light of the Seven").[7] Schubert features in the chapter's cases as well, as one of Richter's favorite sources and as a melancholy minimalist in his own right. As with "On the Nature of Daylight," the movie *The Congress* (2013) and television show *The Leftovers* (2014-2017) feature characters who, accompanied by Richter and Schubert's music, tread without a plot, or at least conventional drama: their "plots" consist of a tense, listless wander in a world and around other inhabitants whose exhaustion and stuckness mirrors and amplifies their own. In all these examples, the persistent plodding of the characters and their soundtracks substitutes for narrative destination, transformation, and catharsis. But if the music and characters often seem to end up where they started, the chapter's scenes are committed to unfolding their circular trajectories as a questing nonetheless, where the project of finding a foothold in something or someone is no less ongoing for struggling within the same.

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[7] Other prominent composers of melancholy minimalism include Carter Burwell, Clint Mansell, Michael Nyman, Ludovico Einaudi, Ólafur Arnalds, Philip Glass, and Ryuichi Sakamoto. Arnalds scored the successful British crime drama *Broadchurch* (2013-2017).

"Melancholia" originates from historic clinical descriptions of depressive disorders, variously and sometimes contradictorily conceived.[8] My use of it in the chapter and its title stems more directly from Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (originally published in 1918), and from more recent applications of Freud's concept to aesthetics and politics more broadly.[9] Freud's influential essay defines melancholy as the inability to move on from loss. It is a neurotic obsession with a purportedly absent object—purportedly because the object status of this loss turns out to be up for grabs, epistemically and also ontically within and around the ego. So, the "healthy" person mourns the object of loss and moves on, but the melancholic is stuck in the continued return of the uncertain event of loss that threatens an infinite loop.

Most importantly, in Freud's essay, melancholy names a structure of attachment rather than (just) the clustering of affects or moods around an object or event. In many ways, Freud's emphasis on melancholy as structure runs against the grain of how depression and depressing-ness continues to be conceptualized, whether clinically or in colloquial evocations of the modifier "depressing" or "melancholy" as synonymous with sadness. In the scholarly archive of academic music studies, too, melancholy tends to feature as a mood—albeit one tinged with Romantic irony and approaching bittersweetness.[10] But from

[8] For a very short introduction on the subject, see Mary Jane Tacchi and Jan Scott, *Depression: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[9] Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning, and Melancholia* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 201-218. Following clinicians and theorists as well as the world more generally, I use "melancholia" synonymously with neurotic depressive disorders. Not everyone would agree with this use. Jonathan Flatley, for instance, pries the gap between melancholia as structure and depression as symptom to argue that the melancholiac's probing orientation towards objects and phenomena could lead us out of political and affective depression. See Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2008).
[10] See Michael P. Steinberg, "Music and Melancholy," *Critical Inquiry* 40 (Winter 2014): 288-310; and Nancy November, "Haydn's Melancholy Voice: Lost Dialectics in His Late chamber Music and English Songs," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 4, vol. 1 (2007): 71-106. Robert Burton continues to looms large in anglophone

Freud's account it is clear that what is being defined and discussed isn't so much an affect—though it is sometimes that, too!—but a structuration of our relationship with affects and our experiences of them, which could encompass any number of affective states such as anger, sadness, frustration, and irritation as well as their evasion, abeyance, and suspension.[11]

Because, colloquially, our public discourses on music and film privilege feeling and melodrama not only as genre but as political and aesthetic principle, responses to Richter's music and "On the Nature of Daylight" more specifically are saturated with invocations of invariably intense affects that rhyme with sadness.[12] Of Richter's track and the eponymous short film, an NPR critic writes of "deep sadness" and "gut-wrenching anguish."[13] But "On the Nature of Daylight isn't (just) sad: as a slow, repetitive, stretched-out audiovisual encounter with Moss's clenched dithering, it places the viewer-listener in proximity as much with a lack of affective expression as a surfeit of something else that isn't captured by the NPR critic's catalogue of adjectives. So one of this chapter's gambits is to hear a rhyme between narrative and musical structures; by homologizing the musical and affective repetitions within and around its examples, the chapter attends to how melancholy minimalism expresses and imitates depression. This style of minimalism doesn't just express

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musicological discourses on melancholy. Accordingly, his humoral understanding of the temperaments and melancholia more specifically condition much of the discussion on melancholy as a mood and affective gradation.

[11] See footnote 13 in the dissertation's introduction for a discussion of how I mobilize "affect" throughout.

[12] "[IIL] extremely sad classical/ambient classical – Max Richter – "On the Nature of Daylight", Adagio for Strings, Stars of the Lid - …and Their Refinement in Decline [WEWIL?]," reddit, last accessed February 14, 2021, https://www.reddit.com/r/ifyoulikeblank/comments/24o1rt/iil_extremely_sad_classicalambient_classical_max/. The acronym "IIL" means "if I like" and "WEWIL" means "what else will I like." Both are frequently used by redditors to crowdsource further aesthetic encounters based on taste.

[13] Tom Huizenga, "Max Richter's 'Blue Notebooks' Offers Moving Portrait for Elisabeth Moss," *NPR,* June 21, 2018, https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2018/06/21/622283030/max-richters-blue-notebooks-offers-moving-portrait-for-elisabeth-moss.

subjective feelings: it also weaves a landscape where something approaching a collective can inhabit a scene and dither, collectively, in the uncertain unfolding of an impact.

The idea of approaching music as a landscape that mediates more than subjective and individual expression owes much to Adorno's writing on music. While the struggle with repetition and its attendant affects infects Adorno's corpus more generally, it is his early essay on Schubert (1928) where melancholia emerges as an affective and structural precondition of musical repetition.[14] In the essay, Adorno casts Schubert as a Freudian melancholic, one unable to mourn or to create closure, choosing instead to embrace the loop and present it congealed in his repetitive, "crystalline" forms and themes.[15] For Adorno, the metaphor of "landscape" conveys both the anti-developmental iterative character commonly analyzed in Schubert's music by critics other than himself as well as what he identifies as the "inorganic," "mineral" nature of Schubert's themes and forms.[16] Adorno, ever the epigonic Romantic at heart, senses stretching out over Schubert's frozen landscapes "the affect of death."[17] In his subsequent paraphrase of this affect as "the sorrow for human beings rather than the pain within them," and throughout the essay more generally, however, Adorno does not dwell on his tragic pronouncement of mortal finitude ("the affect of death"). But he does highlight the extension of existence, the "continuance of the isolated" within the "inorganic, erratic, brittle life of stones"—a mineral life, but a life nonetheless.[18]

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[14] "Schubert" in Theodor W. Adorno, *Night Music: Essays on Music 1928-1962,* trans. Wieland Hoban (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2009), 19-46. For an alternate translation, see Theodor W. Adorno, "Schubert (1928)," trans. Jonathan Dunsby and Beate Perrey, *19th-Century Music* 29, no. 1 (2005): 3-14. While Dunsby and Perrey render Adorno's prose in a more idiomatic and transparent modern English, I prefer Hoban-Adorno's starker, if also at times more awkward, rhythm and diction.
[15] Adorno, "Schubert," 28.
[16] Ibid., 28-30.
[17] Ibid., 38.
[18] Ibid., 26, 30.

In the musical archive of melancholy minimalism, Schubert's frozen landscapes emerge as stylistic and affective scenes that contemporary mass culture and its soundtracks continue to dither around. Richter uses Schubert a lot in his music, often borrowing gestures and textures, as in the case of "Infra 3," a track for solo piano which paraphrases Schubert's beloved G-flat major Impromptu, op. 90 no. 3. Sometimes, Richter straight-up places Schubert's music next to his own cues. In Ari Folman's film *The Congress* (2016), as will be discussed later, the descending gesture from the opening theme of *Winterreise* forms a motivic cell around which the film's protagonist and Richter's music circle incessantly. The paradigmatic Schubertian figure of the wanderer, musically elaborated in his late song cycles *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, is taken up and repeated in these contemporary examples. And the rhyme, once noticed, is hard to let go: like Schubert's winter traveler when we encounter him in the beginning of *Winterreise*, Elisabeth Moss is dealing with the stretched-out aftermath of some event, yet to be fully defined, by treading aimlessly in a barren winter landscape. As Adorno put it: "the wanderer… circles his way through [the landscape] without progressing: all development is its complete antithesis, the first step is as close to death as the last, and in circling, the dissociated points of the landscape are scanned but never actually left."[19] Both Moss-wanderer and Schubert-wanderer are witnessed and haunted by various institutions, buildings, and people in the background and periphery who themselves circle around the protagonist's dithering, sometimes as a function of their meekness or confusion, sometimes like birds of prey. The titular inn of Schubert's "Das Wirtshaus" (the 21st song of *Winterreise*) is replaced, in "On the Nature of Daylight," by a nondescript hotel. Both merely seem to offer a temporary resting place; the rooms are full

[19] Ibid., 32.

for Schubert's wanderer ("Are all the rooms/in this house taken then?"), the building is most likely a place of labor for Moss—or at least for the hazy figure in the background that is taking a cigarette break in the grungy alleyway by the employee entrance.[20] In Adorno's theoretical mediations as well as Richter's musical and attendant visual ones, the exhausted dithering of contemporary characters is prefigured in Schubert's wanderer, an hitherto historic and pastoral figure who in turn emerges into our austere urban geography in a guise less glamorous than the *flâneur*, more insistent than the loiterer.[21]

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Soundtracks often act as musical objects whose forms and gestures play out and mediate affects. At the same time, they also function as scenes within which the shared cohabitation, if not traversal, of various affective and disaffected states can take place. Think, for instance, of Glass's soundtrack to *The Hours* (2002), similar to Richter's in its motivic and harmonic economy, its repetitiveness, that mimics and articulates the repetitiveness of libidinal stuckness depicted within the film, at the same time as it curates, as background, the sonic scene where encounters take place between characters onscreen and between them and the viewer.[22] The toggle between soundtrack as object and scene is particularly germane to discussing depression, unfolding as it does in the object's uncertain wake, where it is unclear (whether to subject or analyst) if the attachment is to the object or

[20] Translation by Gerard Mackworth-Young in *Schubert: 200 Songs in Three Volumes, Vol. 1: 100 Songs,* ed. Sergius Kagen (New York: International Music Company, 1961).
[21] Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1999).
[22] For Susan McClary, Richard Strauss's opulent late-Romanticism acts as a foil to the stuckness conveyed by Glass's minimalist soundtrack. Susan McClary, "Minima Romantica" in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, edited by Lawrence Kramer, Richard Leppert, and Daniel Goldmark, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 48-65.

to a drawn-out spatial configuration, a scene, that comes to replace the object. Thus, in Freud's evocative phrase, "the shadow of the object fell upon the ego," exchanging a zone encompassing the object-ego relation for the lost object.[23]

The preceding section took up Adorno as an affect theorist who is interested in the aesthetic constellation and circulation of things that are sensed before they are articulated and argued. An implicit argument, therefore, was that music (and soundtracks in particular) affords opportunities to encounter affective structures (like depression and melancholia) as they circulate in ways that precede normative genres of knowing, including the discursive and performative conventions of affective experience and expression. In what follows, I borrow from affect-theoretical accounts of sentimentality and feeling to further prise open the distinction between the expression of affect and the mediation of affective structure. Building on the observation that not all feelings are sentimental and sentimentalizing, we could say that not all affective publics are united through the expression of shared affects.[24] So what would it mean to conceive of an affective collective based on shared experiences of suppression and abeyance? It would require we retool normative conceptions and definitions of publicity that privilege circulation, discourse, and expression.[25] It would require thinking of different forms of collectivity or redefining publicity to encompass different classes of experiences and conveyance, including those of (self-)silencing, of accompanying and being accompanied in places of transit by silent, tired bodies, of hovering

[23] Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia,* 209.
[24] Any thought I have about affect and publicity is thanks to Lauren Berlant's work and teaching. For example, see the chapter "On the Desire for the Political" in Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 223-263; Lauren Berlant and Jordan Greenwald, "Affect in the End Times: A Conversation with Lauren Berlant," *Qui Parle* 20, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 71-89; Lauren Berlant, "Slow Death" in *Cruel Optimism,* 95-120; and *Matter of Flatness* (forthcoming).
[25] Berlant's concept of intimate publics grounds and preconditions much of my riffing. Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

and being hovered around by strangers whose business is not with you but is in the vicinity of your business.

If such relations seem too diffuse, incidental, and peripheral to knowledge and intention to warrant the genre public, so be it.[26] As Williams argues, individuals who inhabit shared and generalized structures of feeling cannot always account for the structure of feeling they inhabit. In fact, while the experience (as intuition) is generalized, an understanding of it as a shared or generic structure is only available to the materialist analyst of culture: "[W]e are defining a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies."[27] Structures of feeling are different from discursive publics in this way: the latter are available as spatial entities mediated by often literary technologies and, for all their portability and digitization, are still centered around geographic coordinates; whereas the former do not yet have clear outlines, boundaries, and terms of participation. Instead, structures of feeling are intuited and inhabited by people engaged in the shared project of figuring out what the shape and texture and emplotment of the next genre is going to be.[28] Williams's examples are literary: here, I argue that the

[26] For a counterargument that seeks through depression a reparative counterpublicity, see Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012). Cvetkovich's project is about the aspirational communities of hope and healing that can emerge in the wake of depression through the creative resources of queer feminist performance and crafts. "The labor of habit or practice—gathering palm leaves, performing rituals from diasporic and indigenous traditions, knitting and crocheting, writing—forges new understandings of the political." (202) As such it is closer in affective territory and politics to *Cloud Atlas* (see chapter 1). I am deeply sympathetic and indebted to this work. But what is the depression that is neither public nor a feeling, precisely because it has yet to emerge as named affects within normative publics? And what are the channels through which such an affective structure and structure of feeling is able to form, circulate, and interpellate a non-public collectivity that is nonetheless a sociality?

[27] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 132.

[28] Cf. Lauren Berlant, "Genre Flailing," *Capacious* 1, no. 2 (2018): 156-162.

soundtrack, as musical atmosphere, is an emblematic medium through which structures of feeling are intuited and inhabited, prior to analysis.

Depression is also a structure of feeling in the sense of being temporally prior to articulation: a common feature of being depressed is, in fact, being undiagnosed; being, rather than sad, or normatively "depressed," being "depressing," being irritable, a burr in your own life and the lives of those around you. There is an experience—and expression, just one often also repressed—of depression prior to its diagnosis. Anyone who has undergone the experience of diagnosis knows, remembers, the slow-dawning clarification, the too-rapid reduction, of the moment you first conceptualize a diagnosis. A name appears, magnetizes a slew of symptoms and a cluster/ensemble/repertory of gestures and ways of being depressed that include being depressed-seeming—unable to ask for help, lackluster, brooding—and also loud, brash, laughing a lot, irritable, constantly chafing against injustice while internalizing the failure of others as your own, etc. The diagnosis does not explain everything. It becomes a dominant pole around which to organize a clinical biography and history that helps explain something (or at least is felt to). In in- or out-patient clinical situations, too, rather than being something for the patient to identify with, a diagnosis can be something that opens up a time and space for "wandering absorptive awareness."[29] But as a structure of feeling, depression circumscribes a hard-to-define and nevertheless generalizable zone prior to the diagnosis and naming of a clinical condition, of a slow and often stultifying but no less questing search for scene, object, or soundtrack to proceed by and around.

[29] Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 4.

Structures of feeling are invested, by Williams and subsequent cultural historians and theorists alike, with vitality and promise.[30] As the form that "emergent" rather than "dominant" or "residual" cultures take, structures of feeling augur the world to come, and are often read for signs of a utopia or coming world.[31] With the depressed atmospheres collected under the banner of melancholy minimalism, nothing really feels emergent: the only thing that allows you to persist is whatever remains. As in the preceding scenes, in the examples that follow, minima melancholia names both a musical stylistic as well as a more general affective tendency to dither around familiar (and often, familial) gestures and objects, because in the austere and depressed material and affectworlds depicted onscreen, that's all that seems left to proceed by, for the time being. Minima melancholia is also an homage to Adorno's depressing collection of aphorisms; this chapter and the dissertation more broadly have learned a lot from Adorno's commitment to mucking about in the depressed and depressing structural impossibility of reconciling a philosophical account of the good life with its material conditions.[32] For Adorno, as for the characters of melancholy minimalism, too, there is frequently less to look forward to and more to look back on. There is something distinctly *dysthymic*, I would argue, about the continued collective persistence in whatever has already proven to not lead to flourishing but still works to provide a life.[33] So by calling these soundtracks dysthymic, I'm hoping to gather and exemplify a musical

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[30] Cf. Jill Dolan, "Performance, Utopia, and the "Utopian Performative"," *Theatre Journal* 53, no. 3 (October 2001): 455-479.
[31] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 121-127.
[32] E.g. "Wrong life cannot be lived rightly." Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005), 39.
[33] In the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), dysthymia is the name given to a depressive "episode" that stretches beyond the length of two years and becomes almost indistinguishable from personality trait. As of DSM-5, dysthymia has been replaced with Persistent Depressive Disorder (PDD). For a handy chart see "DSM-IV to DSM-5 Dysthymic Disorder Comparison," National Institute of Health, last accessed February 14, 2021, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK519704/table/ch3.t6/.

approach to mediating affects and experiences that are recessive and depressed without being freewheelingly detached or despondent—an art of quotation that maintains a meandering attachment to remnants from the past; and moreover, a music that is about, that dramatizes the dedramatized, sometimes pleasurable, sometimes draining, sometimes strenuous, sometimes cruising maintenance of this attachment, in a way others can witness and perhaps even relate to, if not fully understand.

II. Andante con Moto

Ari Folman's *The Congress* (2013) is a live action/animated film about an aging actress's quest for a cure—a cure, first, for her son's rare degenerative genetic disorder, and, later, for a generalized worldwide degenerative addiction to drug-induced fantasy.[34] The film follows Robin Wright as she plays a fictional version of herself in a near-future or alternate present that is only slightly and uncannily more advanced than our current world. Alt-Robin dwells in a dystopic Hollywood where studios are capable of scanning human beings and storing the gamut of their expressions and gestures for later digital replication. Because alt-Robin is also a single mother who must bear the burden of sexist affronts and isolation on both professional and domestic fronts, she is all but forced by her production company, Miramount Studios, to sign away her digital likeness for a large amount of cash, foreclosing any future gigs for her embodied self and procuring what she feels is a decent shot at a decent future for herself and her children. The film then jumps twenty years to the future, where a disaffected alt-Robin (massively popular and "forever young" in her digital

[34] *The Congress*, directed by Ari Folman (2013; Germany: Pandora Filmproduktion).

incarnation) attends an entertainment industry conference in Abrahama City. In order to access Abrahama City, guests and inhabitants must take a drug that allows them to enter a hallucinogenic state where themselves and the world around them takes cartoon form. What follows largely takes place in a surreal eclectically-animated bonanza, where figures in the style of classic Ken Harris *Looney Tunes* and Les Clark *Steamboat Willie*-style cartoons meld with more expressionist and realist renderings of people and places as they battle, fall in love with, and ultimately just shuffle and dither around other in drug-induced stupor.

Like in "On the Nature of Daylight," Richter's repetitive strains accompany the female protagonist as she wanders, aimlessly, through her initially glitzy and zany but ultimately subdued and austere surroundings. And here, moreover, Richter's melancholy minimalism draws in Schubert's *Winterreise*, as if to catch its figures in affective and historical rhyme with those of Schubert's winter traveler. During an armed Luddite uprising that disrupts the conference and scatters its participants, alt-Robin is mortally wounded and placed in cryogenic suspension. She dreams, while in her frozen slumber, of traversing a cold and blue-tinged world. The vast frozen landscape stretches out in all directions, and neither alt-Robin nor the viewer has any idea where she is headed.[35]

[35] Viewers of *The Congress* frequently struggle with what one reviewer calls the movie's "trippy meandering." Mike Scott, "Part sci-fi parable, part psychedelic mind trip," *NOLA.com*, September 5, 2014, https://www.nola.com/entertainment_life/movies_tv/article_b057c922-f14b-5624-9ebb-26e934748759.html.

Figure 33. Dreams of wandering in a blue, frozen world.

In the background, Richter's music riffs on the thematic material from the opening of *Winterreise.* Titled "Winterreise" itself, Richter's cue fixates on the falling gesture that opens Schubert's song cycle.[36] In its original context, the gesture already repeats, interminably, within and between the song's strophic returns, braced by a left-hand accompaniment that itself treads repeatedly on and around the same D-minor chord. (Meanwhile, Wilhelm Müller's poetry intones, drearily: "As a stranger, I entered/As a stranger I go out again."[37]) Richter's track takes up the internal motivic repetitions already present in the first four measures of Schubert song and spins them out in a 2-minute cue that circles around these gestures even more obsessively.

[36] Max Richter, *The Congress* (2013: Milan Entertainment, Inc.).
[37] Translation by Gerard Mackworth-Young in *Schubert: 200 Songs in Three Volumes, Vol. 1: 100 Songs,* ed. Sergius Kagen (New York: International Music Company, 1961).

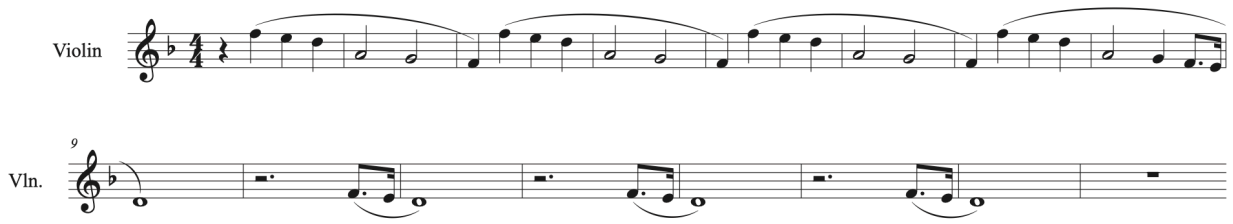

Figure 34. Max Richter's "Winterreise" (opening)

There's a rhyme between the track's internal motivic fixation; its transhistorical fixation on Schubert's music; Robin Wright's fixation on her son's and her own healthy, embodied past; and what will turn out to be the world's generalized inability to move forward, stuck in a kind of final winter where everything slows to a cold death. When alt-Robin is brought out of her cryogenic stasis an undisclosed number of years later, she wakes to a completely animated world that turns out to have been infected with a political version of her son's genetic disorder. In the genetic version, your senses are gradually sapped from you one by one until you are left stranded in an alternate reality projected by your mind to compensate for lack of sensory input. In the political version, you are given a choice between wandering in an economically and affectively depressed wasteland among its dysfunctional and catatonic inhabitants, or permanently entering a drug-induced phantasmagoria where you can be whatever you want to be, wherever and with whomever you want (that's the idea, at least). In the final live action sequence of the film, however, alt-Robin braves an antidote and opens her eyes to the de-animated steel and concrete ruins that lie about her. She travels through a broken city crumbling to dust and grime: the people, the clothes they wear, the trains they ride and alleys they haunt are caked with dirt or ashes. But there is no collective change afoot, no revolutionary atmosphere of the dispossessed: everyone chooses drug-induced stupor, gazing off into the distance and crowding around

each other's bodies like zombies, while individually they each retreat into a 2D animated bonanza of Golden Age cartoon figures and prior memories.[38]

Figure 35. Alt-Robin takes the subway, where her neighbors stare-off into space and stand crammed together in a physical proximity that fails to translate to a social or affective one. The mise-en-scène, cinematography, and characterization of this scene is redolent of the opening shots of Belfield's "On the Nature of Daylight" (see Figure 30).

By the end of the film, with the exception of the sliver of memory alt-Robin has of her son, the private and public worlds around her have been diminished and destroyed. (All that remains of "society" are blimps that float above the social death below, carrying the few elites and scientists who bear witness to the world's slow death.) The soundtrack has moved on from the explicit quotations of "Winterreise" to a cue titled "Beginning and Ending," but the general principle of musical construction around the gradual accumulation of unchanging minor-mode themes remains.

[38] Ben Anderson, "Affective Atmospheres," *Emotion, Space and Society*, 2 (2009): 77-81.

The loss of reality and of any prospect of individual and political relation within it does not in the end disclose an anger or sadness**,** however. In contrast to the beginning of the film, which portrays a besieged and aging Robin Wright barely holding it together while her career and family are on the verge of coming undone, the movie's ending shows alt-Robin hovering somewhere between resignation and peace, a much flatter if thereby no less affective terrain. As Scout Tafoya notes in his review of the film, the rage and bitterness that characterized Folman's earlier *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) is here replaced with "a flamboyant, seductive *cafard* [from the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, referring to melancholic bouts suffered by white colonizers in the tropics]."[39] But whereas Tafoya's flamboyant, seductive formulation might mirror the animated sheen deployed as a defense against the encroaching ashen flatness of a politically, economically, and libidinally frozen landscape, Richter's music intones, from beginning to end, the depression of a world that subtends, frames, and braces the film's flights of animated fancy.

*

Schubert reception tends to vacillate between *Biedermeier* comfort and the "gruesomely melancholy."[40] Some Schubert criticism does in fact capture a zone that is neither, the zone of a gentler species of melancholia, one that is neither tenderly tear-jerking nor necessarily all that anguishing, as does the following excerpt from a contemporaneous review of *Winterreise*:

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[39] Scout Tafoya, "Review: The Congress," *RogerEbert.com*, August 29, 2014, https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-congress-2014.

[40] For Adorno, the former was best encapsulated by the 1916 operetta *Blossom Time,* available currently as a 1934 British film adaptation starring Richard Tauber. On the "gruesomely melancholy," one of the foremost interpreters of Schubert's piano music riffs in Alfred Brendel, *Music, Sense, and Nonsense* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2015), 131-32.

> Schubert's mind shows a bold sweep everywhere, whereby he carries everyone away with him who approaches, and he takes them through the immeasurable depth of the human heart into the far distance, where premonitions of the infinite dawn upon them longingly in a rosy radiance, but where at the same time the shuddering bliss of an inexpressible presentiment is accompanied by the gentle pain of the constraining present which hems in the boundaries of human existence.[41]

The excerpt opens with the conventional Romantic discourse on "depth," "longing," and "shuddering bliss," but even this nineteenth-century listener closes his review by focusing on the dedramatized, depressive territory of the "gentle pain of the constraining present": Schubert is here not only a lyrical melodramatist of a "bold" and "sweeping" Romantic transcendence, but is already perceived as a conveyor of what Lauren Berlant might call "modes of lived immanence."[42]

At times, indeed, rather than carrying away, soundtracks hem in. Schubert's music is frequently cited in movies to evoke upper-class crustiness, (sometimes even psychopathy): the beloved Schubert lied "Die Forelle" underscores arch-villain Moriarty's playful sadism in the Robert Downey Jr.'s *Sherlock Holmes* franchise (beginning with the 2009 film) much the same way Bach's Goldberg Variations was used as Hannibal Lecter's calling card in *Silence of the Lambs* (1991). In *The Avengers* (2012), Loki gets down to mischief accompanied by the first movement from the String Quartet no. 13 in A minor. But Schubert's often

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[41] *Wiener Theaterzeitung*, March 29, 1828, quoted in Ian Bostridge, *Schubert's Winter Journey: Anatomy of an Obsession* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), xii. Of the contemporary anglophone musicologues, Susan Youens perhaps teaches us best how to attend to the counter-melodramatic moods and structures in Schubert's depressive song cycle: "Out of the denial that art transcends misery comes art and transcendence. If this is the final betrayal of the poetry, I doubt anyone would wish it otherwise." Susan Youens, *Retracing a Winter's Journey: Schubert's Winterreise* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 312.

[42] Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 27.

sparsely textured and repetitive andantes are also used atmospherically in situations where expression is not (yet, or ever) occurring; or, sometimes, where the genres of social intercourse are supposedly so congealed and brittle as to nearly fail in their job of making expression possible.[43] You could call these scenes counter-melodramatic: the music underscores the lack of drama rather than its presence or plenitude, a sort of affective and historical stasis and sometimes pathological fixation with forms that (should) have lost social currency. The privileged position of the "Andante con Moto" movement from the E-flat Major Piano Trio in the musical fabric of Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975), for example, owes not to the movement's expressiveness, but rather its ability to hold open a musically-mediated sensorium for the habitation of underdefined or constrained affects.

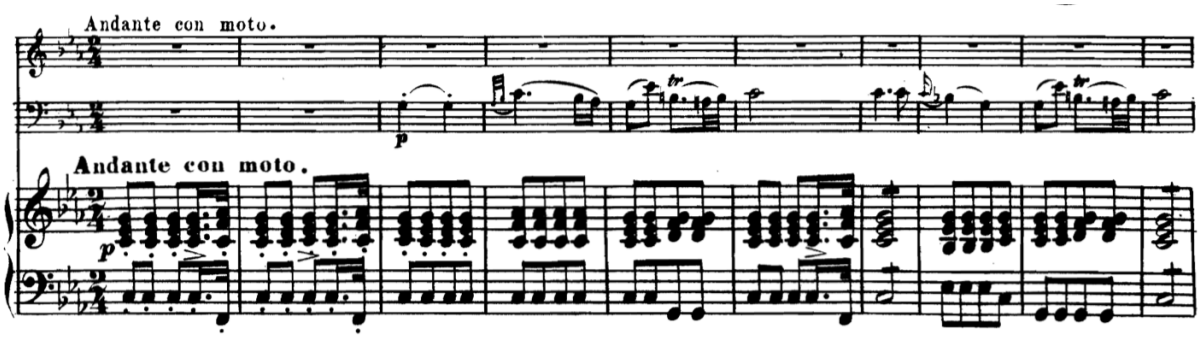

Figure 36. Opening measures of the "Andante con Moto" movement of Schubert's Piano Trio in E-flat major (1828)

The dry, staccato piano accompaniment dithers stoically around a repeated C-minor chord while the solo cello intones a melody that, like the opening tune of *Winterreise*, never quite breaks out into soaring melody, opting instead to stay anchored to repeated rhythmic and

[43] Unlike Beethoven, who tended towards the more profound and melodically-developed adagio, Schubert was the composer of the andante and andantino. On the significance of the adagio in the discourse and practice of 19th-century German instrumental music, see Margaret Notley, "Late-Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music and the Cult of the Classical Adagio," *19th-Century Music* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 33-61.

melodic gestures.[44] In *The Congress*, too, the "Andante con Moto" appears when the newly-drugged and animated alt-Robin enters the lobby of the conference hotel, where the bustle of a (literally and figuratively) animated social scene belies a stultifying world that hems in its inhabitants into a choice between psychosis and depression.

We often listen to Schubert songs for their melodic invention and for the variably tender and intense affects that their often-dramatic texts and musical settings solicit.[45] But as Schubert's later song cycles teach us, emotional drama isn't the only subjective response to loss. While performers and commentators tend to focus on the affective innervations and expressions of *Winterreise*'s singer-narrator, who has undoubtedly experienced a loss of a love object and does, unsurprisingly, cycle through the more familiar conventional stilted-lover responses of bitter rage and plaintive sadness, much of *Winterreise* takes place around, rather than within, the emotive discourse of the hapless sad boi protagonist.[46] *Winterreise* traverses, no doubt, the heartrending sadness of songs like "Erstarrung," "Einsamkeit," and "Der greise Kopf"; the agitated, operatic declamations of "Rast," "Die Post," "Der stürmische Morgen"; the pastoral parlor room gemütlichkeit of "Der Lindenbaum" and "Frühlingstraum"—but around these songs (and even within them) there are colder affective

[44] When *Barry Lyndon* aims to convey drama, it resorts to an orchestration of Handel's "Sarabande" from the Keyboard Suite in D minor, HWV 437. The orchestration itself points to an interesting post-Mendelssohnian tradition of heightening dramatic effects in Baroque instrumental suites for solo keyboard by translating their agogic textures into the dynamic and textural range of the Romantic orchestra. The trailer for British Film Institute's 2016 remastered theatrical release of *Barry Lyndon* makes use both of the dramatic orchestral version as it appears in the film as well as an electronic remix: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjPSGuJskxM&ab_channel=BFI. *Barry Lyndon*, directed by Stanley Kubrick (1975; Hawkfilms, Peregrin Productions: Warner Bros.).

[45] An Exhibit A for this claim could feature various recorded performances of Schubert's first published opus, "Das Erlkönig."

[46] "Sad Boi," Urban Dictionary, last accessed February 14, 2021, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Sad%20Boi.

territories, frozen expanses where the music seems to dither around in almost anempathetic disregard of the emotional outbursts of the singer-narrator.

Take the concluding song, for instance, the infamous "Der Leiermann." The song is even more sparse and repetitive in its motivic and harmonic construction than the austere opening song quoted in *The Congress*. The economy of the song and the paucity of dynamic and tempo indications potentially opens up many possible approaches to the eponymous hurdy-gurdy man and his story and to the singer's affective state around this hurdy-gurdy figure and his hurdy-gurdy music, rendered through the piano. Singers and their accompanists have tremendous freedom in deciding how much rubato and phrasing to imbue the song with, how much variation in volume, tempo, and mood. Then again, performers also have the choice to dwell in the relative flatness of the song, in the melody and accompaniment's inability to move on beyond an almost mechanical repetition of brief gestures. Rather than seeing in the hurdy-gurdy man the sadness of the lonely protagonist reflected—or, its inverse, a vicious adversary who mocks the poet's self-indulgent suffering––we could dither for a bit in the meta-affective, atmospheric space opened up by the piano's sparse and repetitive textures.

Schubert's music often lends itself to the conjuration of affectively recessive and depressed atmospheres. Sometimes, it is up to the performer to choose to dwell within the music's repetitive and flat terrain or to enliven it with dynamic contrast, speed, or rubato.[47] Sometimes, however, as with the "Andantino" of the late A major Piano Sonata, D.959, the notated music seems to make anything other than a slow dither impossible. Like with the

[47] Compare, for instance, Arcadi Volodos's slow and reserved performance of the standalone Minuet in C-sharp minor, D. 600 with Gerhard Oppitz's confident romp. Arcadi Volodos, *Schubert: Piano Sonata D.959 & Minuets D.334, D.335, D.600* (Sony Entertainment, 2019); Gerhard Oppitz, *Schubert: Piano Works* (Hänssler CLASSIC, 2018).

piano music for "Der Leiermann," the left-hand accompaniment is rhythmically and texturally sparse, outlining open, empty twelfths and octaves. The wide intervals and their *andantino* pace through the bar create sparseness in terms of vertical pitch space as well as horizontally in time. The simple, constrained melody is more of a collection of repeated and transposed gestures built on descending and ascending seconds. Both the "Andantino" and "Andante con Moto" feature impassioned, thickly textured, rhythmically agitated, and harmonically adventurous middle sections that contrast with the restraint of their opening bars.[48] Whenever they are used in movies, they are truncated at their first couple dozen bars, at most; Adorno's characterization of Schubert's themes as "devoid of dialectical history" is perhaps even truer with these extracts, which remain stuck in their dedramatized—though no less taut— slowness.

[48] Adorno heard in Schubert and Mahler's music related attempts to give the lie to the developmental ruse of sonata form through brute contrasts and juxtapositions of material that fail to cohere internally. Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

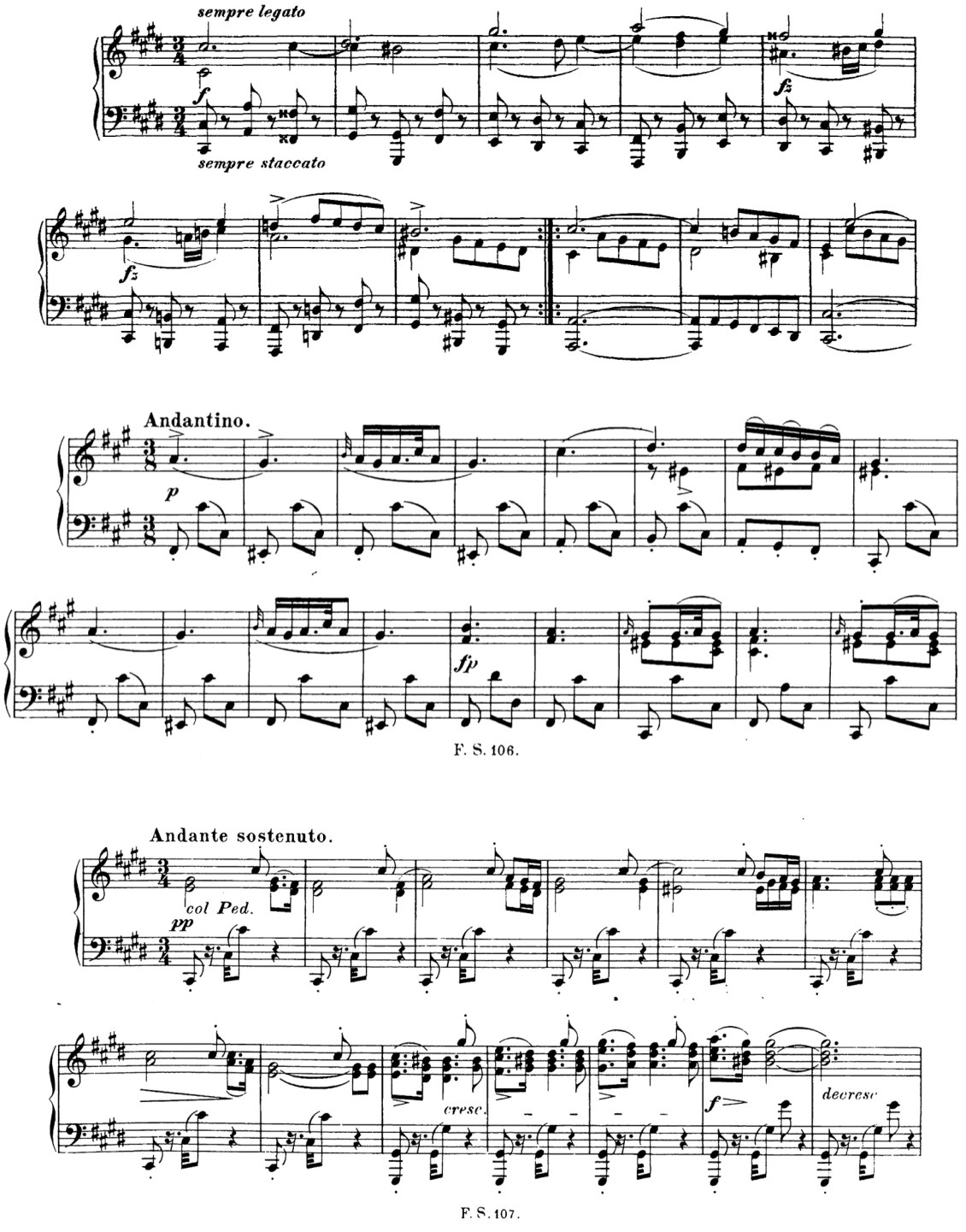

Figure 37. An archive of recessive Schubert, from top to bottom: Minuet, D.600; "Andantino" from Piano Sonata, D.959; "Andante sostenuto" from Piano Sonata, D.960.
All three opening excerpts feature dry, open sonorities (especially in the left-hand) and repeated gestures over a steady and slowish andante pulse.

The Dardenne brothers use the D. 959 "Andantino" in the end credits of their 2019 film, *Le Jeune Ahmed,* a film that circles around the struggle and drama of a young Muslim boy in Belgium who becomes radicalized as a terrorist.[49] Reviews of *Le Jeune Ahmed* tend to read the ending as redemptive, and within the plot of the film it certainly promises rapprochement between Ahmed and his victim and provides nonviolent resolution to the question of Ahmed's fate. But I would argue the closing credits tell a different, if not opposed story. The "Andantino" provides space to inhabit a structure of feeling that holds viewers and characters together in suspended moral and aesthetic judgment around Ahmed's violence and ultimate comeuppance. The Dardenne attempt to humanize without sentimentalizing. The "Andantino" allows the viewer to experience a tenderness that is less an affect and more a structural feature of being in the same room as Ahmed. Despite being unable to coax the situation to a cooperative political or emotional resolution, the viewer nonetheless cohabits a shared musical atmosphere that allows the commingling passage of divergent affective responses to a depressing situation.

The same "Andantino" appears in a pivotal scene in the pilot episode of the television series *The Leftovers* (2014-2017), another media object scored by Max Richter and peppered with Schubert. A crowd gathers in the square of small-town America in order to commemorate an as-of-yet undefined event of collective loss. (The following section of the chapter will treat *The Leftovers* more broadly by way of closing.) The crowd is about to turn into a mob, egged on by a group of militant protestors who dare to say what everyone knows, that they are full of shit for persisting in their small-town routines and speeches and events when the world is falling away. In Richter's underscore, a synthetic distortion

[49] *Le Jeune Ahmed*, directed by Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne (2019: Les Films du Fleuve, Archipel 35).

escalates along with the situation. The presence of cops augurs a brutal, coordinated takedown of the disruption. Instead, the show's chaotic diegetic sound world falls silent as the entire sonic sensorium gives way to a Schubert sonata. The tension in the imagetrack buckles as well, falling into a slow-motion sequence backgrounded by Schubert's slow motion. Instead of a resolution in favor of one party or another there is just the slow motion of people banging around on the screen like disordered atoms, as the disembodied hurdy-gurdy man plays us a weird *andantino* from across space and time, slow but sustained, with motion, like the circular tread of a wanderer through a frozen world.

III. *The Leftovers*

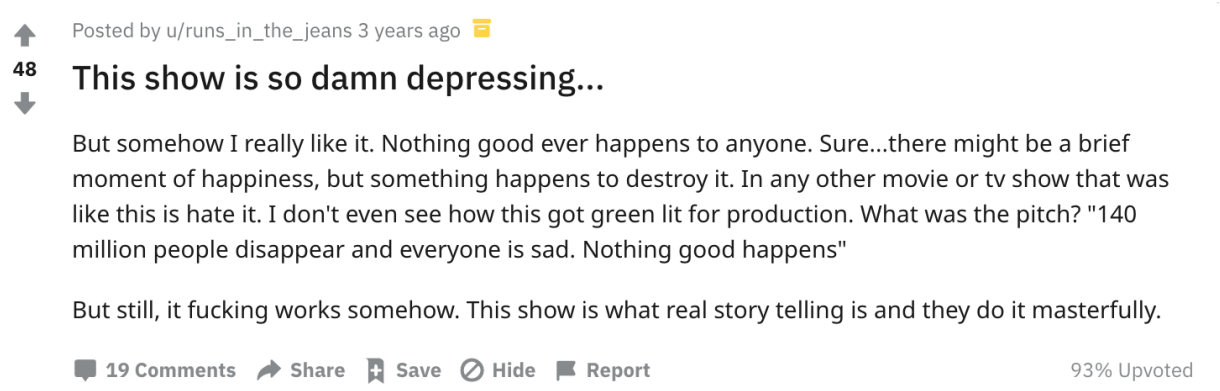

Figure 38. "This show is so damn depressing… (But somehow I really like it.)"

Between "so damn depressing" and "somehow I really like it," there is a zone of negativity and pleasure and the gentle sidling up of the first-person to the scene of aesthetic judgment.[50] The 2017 reddit post dithers around that zone for a while, between the confident accounting of what happens in the show (or what doesn't happen) and the less

[50] "This show is so damn depressing…" reddit, last accessed February 14, 2021, https://www.reddit.com/r/TheLeftovers/comments/523rtl/this_show_is_so_damn_depressing/.

certain accounts of how the show happened (in the first place) and how it happens upon you. Like, do you like it or hate it? It's not a rhetorical question: subsequent posts on this reddit thread follow up on the original post with their own accounts that are more or less confident that the show is depressing but diverge on how to account for individual and collective responses to its depressing-ness. Whether discussing the responses, actions, and emotional states of the show's characters or of themselves, depressing-ness emerges as an objective property whose aesthetic value and affective impact are still being figured out.

The Leftovers is a show relentlessly committed to dithering in the space of whatever goes by depression or depressing-ness in our everyday use of a medical diagnosis as an aesthetic category in the vernacular.[51] The HBO prestige drama follows small-town Americans Kevin Garvey (Justin Theroux) and Nora Durst (Carrie Coon) in the aftermath of a mysterious event; at the same instant around the world, two percent of the world's population simply vanishes into thin air forever. Over three seasons and thirty-plus hours, *The Leftovers* attempts to construct a shared situation: as a serial television show, it becomes a space to occupy in life, a zone for its viewers as well as characters. Like with Freud's idea of melancholia, the innovation of *The Leftovers* isn't so much that it deals with the theme of loss. As Freud points out, loss happens all the time, without everyone falling into depression. In terms of its depiction of loss and desolation in American suburbia, the show dwells on the loss of love and family and what happens when the good life fantasy of the happy suburban household is broken, the house and its members are in disarray, and there isn't anything left to ground a normative account of what it means to have a life.

[51] On certain recurrent and significant modifiers in the mass-cultural vernacular as historically overdetermined and laden aesthetic categories, see Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015). Ngai's emblematic examples in the book are the zany, cute, and interesting.

Like Freud's essay on melancholia, however, *The Leftovers* deals with the question of what exactly is the nature—its object, narrative genre, and coming emplotment—of the event of loss. "The Departure" is the word that people in the world of *The Leftovers* use to describe the loss of two percent of the world. But like much else in this world it is a euphemism, a patchy fragile screen over the gaping hole of absent knowledge, of the opacity of what exactly happened. Characters are constantly commenting on the uncertain nature of this loss. On the one hand, it seems obvious: in the case of one of the main characters, Nora, it's her husband and two children that are lost, her whole family. But Nora and everyone around her struggle with the experience of loss in excess to the death of loved ones. The uncertain nature of the event, with its open-endedness, its non-death—all these make it impossible for Nora to determine exactly how she should move on. The difficulty of determining the nature of the loss makes it difficult for the characters to incorporate the Departure into an account of the world coherent enough to make sense.

Much of the show follows the ensemble cast as they separate out, come together, dither around each other, in their restless, aimless questing not even for answers (they know those are not available), but for some *thing.* Before the Departure, the questing was for some encounter, some event to disturb the overbearing monotony of suburban nuclear heterodomesticity and make for a more fibrillating, less smothering ordinary (a new job, a new sexual partner, a new baby). In the wake of the corpseless annihilation event and in the aftermath of the fantasy of normal domesticity that had framed peoples' sense of escape, the quest becomes one for anything that will hold open an envelope of space and time enough for life to develop something akin to an orientation. And in this uncertain evacuated ordinary, of a crippling evacuation of institutional and ideological legitimacy and loss of

meaning, what is lost turns out to be the genre of loss itself, at least partly: neither death nor kidnapping nor rapture, the "Departure" names a zone of dithering action and activity that is also gaping maw around which people must somehow structure a new fragile ordinary.

Like for the participants on the reddit thread, what is certain for the characters in *The Leftovers* is the sharedness of this loss, its collective dimension, its generality and generalizability. You can't necessarily describe what it is but you could point towards it, refer to it in the knowing comprehension of others, indexically. The series pilot opens with a woman in a laundromat at a strip-mall engaged in the harried and conventional dance of suburban housewife crisis (a flooded basement, a crying baby, a canceled appointment, an uncooperative husband), while the baby's undulant wailing provides the soundtrack. She manages to stuff the laundry in the car and strap in the baby while sparring with her useless hubby over the phone, but at some point, she realizes the crying has stopped. At the same time, a child somewhere off-screen shouts after his suddenly absent father; suddenly driverless cars run into each other. What could have been an isolated disappearance, one of those cautionary tales for incautious parents, turns out to have been a shared happening.[52]

[52] Berlant, "Affect in the End Times." *The Happening* (2008) is also the title of Shyamalan's arguably most underrated film, where characters find themselves having to survive against an unknown assailant, as a mysterious epidemic of suicide sweeps America.

Figure 39. From the opening sequence of The Leftovers: *a baby vanishes from its car seat; a father disappears leaving his son and grocery cart in the parking lot. What could otherwise have been the beginning of an isolated kidnapping quickly devolves into a collective crisis, as suburbanites begin to cry after their disappeared family members.*

When the baby stops crying, minima melancholia creeps in. Let's think of this as a shift in generic worlds, from the show's pre-apocalyptic suburban ordinary to whatever comes after its loss, from the realm of the diegetic crying baby to nondiegetic dysthymic soundtrack. The momentous disturbance in the genre of the character's mother/wife life is registered as a sonic, musical event. The mother/wife leaves the car, looking for her baby, who was also an anchor for her harried multitasking. Her efficient, goal-oriented tread turns into a clueless wandering, and her gaze alights anew on objects previously categorized as relevant or irrelevant to her task.[53] The minimalist soundtrack holds open the space for characters and viewers to dither around the precipitous suspension of life's prior emplotment, in a bumping up against one another of bodies without orientation. The soundtrack is that loose holding space for a collective breathing, aspiration maybe not (yet) in the sense of reaching beyond the stuckness of the present, in the sense of staying afloat and breathing in musically-mediated proximity with someone else. We could read the space of Richter's music in this scene as a space in transit to a more fully articulated something. But what renders this show so interesting (despite all of its boring suburban fixations) is that it extends into three seasons and attempts to make a shared cultural event from this space that is a stretched-out transition that never really leads anywhere.

Richter's cue, titled "The Departure," is a shimmering canvas of musical motives and gestures that fail to give way to something else.[54] Like floaters in your eye, these motives pepper your field of vision and follow your focus as it shifts slightly and lights upon different scenes and objects. The track encapsulates Richter's musical m.o.: a cyclical harmonic ostinato accompanies a two-note falling motif in the right that itself repeats ad

[53] WASPs need anchor babies too, you know, just not for *jus soli* reasons.
[54] *The Leftovers: Season 1 (Music from the HBO Series)* (WaterTower Music, 2014).

nauseum. The motif repeats over a slowly shifting harmonic landscape, rising and falling in pitch with the harmonic contours, circling the tonic or mediant. Richter borrows from Glass's procedures, though rather than repeating to showcase variation, material repeats much more straightforwardly repeating material rather than repeating to showcase variation. Except, where Glass generally opts for denser metric constructions and harmonic shifts projected over longer spans, Richter stays small, grounds harmonic procedure in brief two-bar sentences, opens up more space around his repeated melodic motives, and creates more ambience and reverb, dithering always in the vicinity of a sparsely-textured *mezzo-piano*.

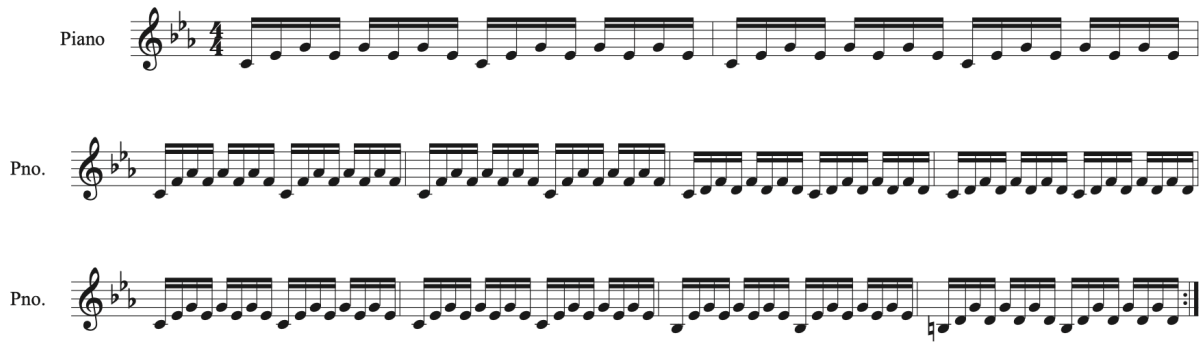

Figure 40. "The Departure" – ostinato

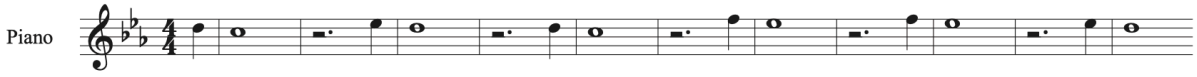

Figure 41. "The Departure" – melody

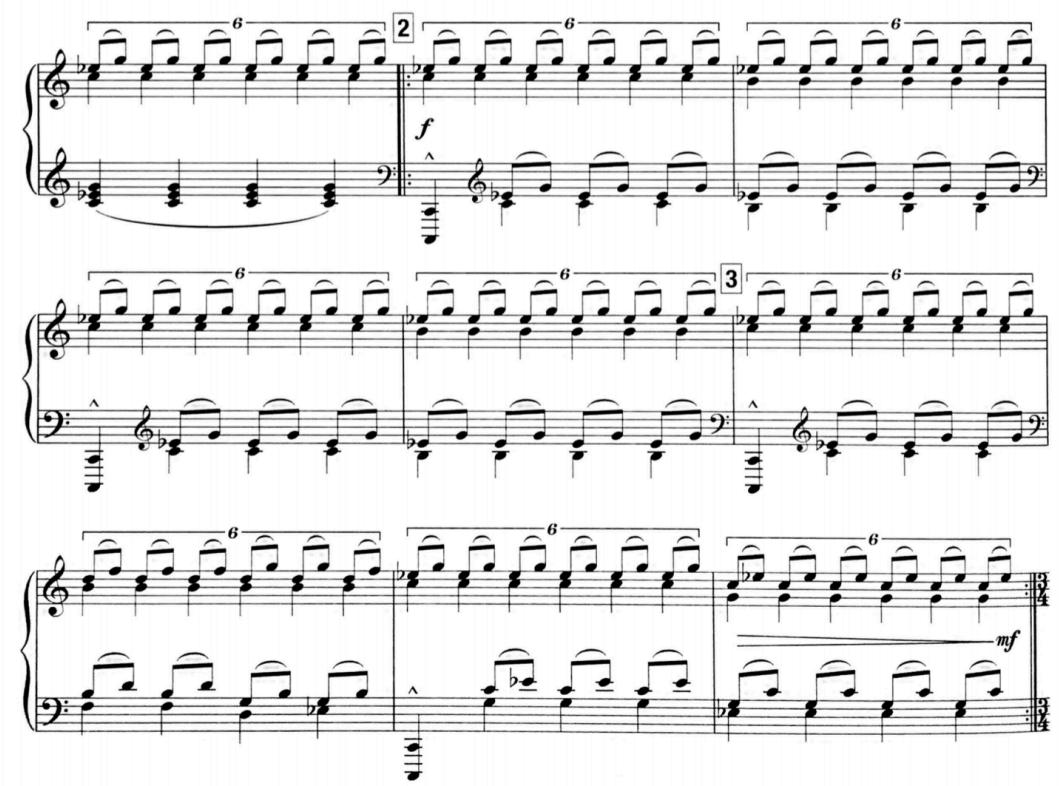

Figure 42. Philip Glass, "Etude No. 11" (as published in 2014 by Chester Music Limited)

Like the happening after which the track is named, the track comes to serve as an occasion for shared treading around that hollow gap that cannot be defined or named as anything other than for right now a "Departure." It returns again and again, sometimes in a slightly altered guise with an even more staid eighth-note ostinato, in various dramatic and affective situations and acts as a kind of ambient structuring device around which the show can continue to build its narratives of wandering. But rather than mirroring and expressing whatever affects inhabit a given scene, the track establishes a shared atmosphere to dwell in.[55] There are some musical cues that barge in on the scene and situation with the

[55] Like most commentary on depressive atmosphere, commentary on "The Departure" (including Richter's own) focuses on expressed feelings and the sentimental connections forged with the aid of music as an affective mirror: "Well, there were two basic things really. The first is that these are very emotional and intimate stories, to do with the personal impact of the departure on those characters and on those people, the Garvey family for example, but on everyone really. That's the motor that drives the story. So for that, I've

confidence and certitude of an affective and ideological mirror: the pop scores, for example, marshal the expressive and explanatory power of their lyrics and topoi (country music for vigilante-like resolve for justice, choral music for religious ecstasy and resolution). Other cues composed by Richter mirror the heightening tension or conflict onscreen in a way we might expect from classic melodrama. But then there are the piano-led minimalist tracks like "The Departure" and "Vladimir's Blues," which wander onto scenes where characters themselves are wandering in uncertainty of their affective genre. Rather than clarifying the situation, these cues remind the viewer that we are, once again, invited to dwell in the characters' and show's dithering incertitude.[56]

After its initial presentation in the opening scene, "The Departure" returns 15 minutes later when suburban police chief Kevin Garvey is having a minor outburst in a planning meeting with other municipal functionaries for "Our Very First Hero's Day." For Kevin, "Hero's Day" is an aspirational patch over something and someone you have no idea what else to call. He is displeased generally by the pomp and circumstance and this attempt to generate public catharsis over something you don't even know what to call yet. But it's been three years since whatever happened happened, and in the drawn-out waiting for absent assurances from the grand masters of politics, religion, and science, the municipality must do what it can to make the people feel like there is something to hang a collective account of a life on. The mayor Lucy's projected confidence around this event to

done quite intimate, small-scale music that sort of feels like it's really about their feelings." But the "personal impact" is not as self-evident as Richter says here (otherwise there would be no show about characters trying to figure out how to be impacted). Quote from Kevin Jagernauth, "Composer Max Richter Talks Scoring HBO's 'The Leftovers,' Writing for Television & More," *IndieWire*, June 30, 2014, https://www.indiewire.com/2014/06/interview-composer-max-richter-talks-scoring-hbos-the-leftovers-writing-for-television-more-84327/.

[56] "Vladimir's Blues" was originally released as part of *The Blue Notebooks,* alongside "On the Nature of Daylight," and has since become another one of Richter's tracks ubiquitous in film and television.

instill confidence grates Kevin. He explodes in a small rage when the mayor Lucy dismisses the disruption likely to ensue from the presence of a post-Departure cult known as the Guilty Remnant at the event. Against Lucy's aura of confidence Kevin exudes a miasma of doubt and uncertainty: "I don't know shit Lucy—do you? Where do they come from? What do they want? You don't even know who they are!"[57] Then, Lucy's emphatic come-back: "We know who they *were*."

Into this situation, "The Departure" wanders in again and creates a musical atmosphere around the characters' incommensurate but coexisting affects and thoughts. What the music mirrors is less the personal expression of individuals and more the cumulative, cumulus aura of their depressed collectivity and the delicate dance of suspension and abeyance among them**.** Like the characters themselves, who keep finding one another around a shared orientation (if not disposition) towards the experience of loss, "The Departure" returns, again and again, with slight variations in tempo, but always cleaving to its original melodic and harmonic pattern. Like the characters, the musical material floats around in the show's soundworld, braced by the steady left-hand accompaniment that provides rhythmic and harmonic structure, confines within which melodic fragments can dither, wander, without going anywhere, without developing, without achieving climax or resolution.

In *The Leftovers*, where the inability to move on from the past is presented as a condition endemic to the show's world, the gesture of holding on is also developed as an individual and collective practice. What happens when, in addition to functioning as a

[57] *The Leftovers: Season 1,* 1, "Pilot," created by Damon Lindelof and Tom Perrotta (2014: HBO Entertainment), 18:08.

formal description of what happens in the unconscious, melancholia comes to describe a concerted cultivation of action and habits intended to make life not only possible but significant? *The Leftovers* shows people experimenting with different methods of holding on, even though the gestures and their institutions are sometimes sensed as husks, because at least they provide a repertory of habits and actions for moving around in the world without progressing through it. For many of them, the husk is family, or what remains of it; for some, the church. People straggle daily through jobs and school, drawn onward by a lingering promise that contains little or no optimism that feels optimistic.[58]

Within the show's proliferations of depressive styles, factional warfare breaks out between those who repeatedly grasp at whatever old form of life and sense of living on and those for whom such dithering is false theater in the face of world-ending catastrophe. The cult mentioned before by Kevin and Lucy, the Guilty Remnant, militates against the constant attempts to mourn and move on from the loss, demanding instead that people reorganize their lives around the inescapable and gaping maw of the disappearance. Insofar as there are traditional antagonists in the show, it is the members of The Guilty Remnant: They stalk people; they are the burr in peoples' lives that seek to make it impossible to forget what happened, that they are living in the mere empty husks of a normal life. In a particularly gruesome sequence in the Season 1 finale, the Guilty Remnant turn out to have

[58] "To phrase 'the object of desire' as a cluster of promises is to allow us to encounter what's incoherent or enigmatic in our attachments, not as confirmation of our irrationality but as an explanation of our sense of our endurance in the object, insofar as proximity to the object means proximity to the cluster of things that the object promises, some of which may be clear to us and good for us while others, not so much. Thus attachments do not all *feel* optimistic: one might dread, for example, returning to a scene of hunger, or longing, or the slapstick reiteration of a lover's or parent's predictable distortions. But being drawn to return to the scene where the object hovers in its potentialities is the operation of optimism as an affective form. In optimism, the subject leans toward promises contained within the present moment of the encounter with her object." Berlant, *Cruel Optimism,* 23-24. See also the opening discussion of *Tokyo Sonata* (2008) in this dissertation's introduction, "End-Historical Romanticism."

placed grisly wax replicas of the Departed in the homes of those left behind on the anniversary of the Departure. Nora wakes up and comes downstairs to taxidermy editions of her husband, her son, and her daughter sitting around the dining table. This is what you are doing, the Guilty Remnant seem to say; you are play-acting house with uncanny figurines that are neither ghosts nor corpses, neither spectral projections of the past nor bodies undergoing decay.

The realm of the Guilty Remnant's modernist askesis is strikingly also a realm of both diegetic and nondiegetic silence. Members live in a communal setting where there is no nuclear mommy-daddy-me triad; they renounce colorful, balanced meals for a diet of plain gruel, wear plain white clothes like orderlies in a mental ward, smoke cigarettes as a matter of doctrine,[59] and take a vow of silence, communicating by scribbling words and phrases on notepads. The silence and the stripping away of the Guilty Remnant present an aspirational "unity of atmosphere and *Weltanschauung"* in their totalizing praxis: habit coheres with habitus and the stylings of food, clothing, and air (conditioned with cigarette smoke and silence) add up to a sense of a solid aesthetic and ideological totality.[60] For that, the viewer cannot but admire, at some level, this sole outpost of post- and anti-nuclear dystopian praxis. The Guilty Remnant project the entrained coherence of their own airtight sensorium—without sound nor soundtrack—onto the dithering, depressed trajectories of their neighbors, seeing nothing but a pathetic mess and non-life. They miss the dysthymic soundtrack that suffuses the atmosphere and renders the mess something still livable.

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[59] Jefferson Grubs, "Don't they know smoking is bad for you?" Bustle, July 20, 2014, https://www.bustle.com/articles/32201-why-does-the-guilty-remnant-smoke-so-much-theories-and-an-answer.

[60] Mikel Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 177; cited in Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 48. For Ngai, following Dufrenne, atmosphere and tone emerge as the privileged realm of ideological analysis.

Figure 43. "Remember": The Guilty Remnant stand in uniform coherence.

The Leftovers itself inevitably "moves on," as a television serial that, despite itself, must achieve climax and resolution. By the third season of *The Leftovers*, the characters (and perhaps the viewers, too) are tired of dithering tiredly: the time for drastic decisions that escalate to a finale is nigh. The music, too, takes a more postmodern turn—randomly intertextual, as if suddenly suffusing itself with the hope of hitting upon a revivifying vein of signification: pop songs like "Take On Me" (1984) proliferate in the show's texture, and a recurring nondiegetic cue is introduced that transcribes the theme song of the historic American sitcom *Perfect Strangers* (1986-1993), "Nothing's Gonna Stop Me Know," for solo piano and ambient electronics. Mark Linn-Baker, the main star of the *Perfect Strangers*, appears in *The Leftovers* as himself. But really, the mounting of such details seems incidental to the obvious fact that the show, like Schubert's unfinished music, has no idea where to go

(Mark Linn-Baker's role as a character is to introduce Nora to a scheme that claims to irradiate people so they can be beamed to wherever the Departed have departed to).[61]

Despite the manufactured resolution, however, the show's persistent dysthymic mode reverberates. For the Guilty Remnant, the stuckness of their neighbors is read as laziness and acritical complacency. Both the shocking narrative and sonic emptiness of the Remnant (and even the rather extreme closure of the show's conclusion) highlights by contrast, however, the soundtrack of indecisive dithering elsewhere. When the townspeople, Kevin and Nora, disaffected teenagers, the small-town politicians, workers, and businessmen, revolve around and bump into each other, accompanied by Richter's music, they generate so much tenderness and tension, world: all this noise is quiet and soft but hardly silent. The show's musical atmosphere breathes a shared structure of feeling around the characters' dithering, hems in and creates a sensorium that is inhabited together and where characters struggle in their own ways, haphazardly alighting on various ways of being stuck and unable to move on. *Pace* Dufrenne, the coherence of atmosphere is *not* the coherence of a characteristic or quality.[62] But for the majority of those dwelling in the wake of the Departure, the search for the next life genre proliferates so many different styles of holding on to what once seemed to have held the world together with nothing so firm and grounding even as a method. Richter's minimalist atmosphere is what curates, accompanies, enters into this shared zone of collective depression that is also the life people have, a realm of holding on, differently, but together.

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[61] "It is in the Schubertian finale that the fragmentary character of his music reveals itself in the material. The circular motion of the song collections conceals what inevitably becomes manifest in any temporal sequence of timeless cells as soon as they strive simply to approach the developmental time of the sonata; the fact that Schubert was unable to write the finale of the B-minor symphony should be viewed together with the inadequacy of the finale of the *Wanderer* fantasy." Adorno, "Schubert," 37-38.
[62] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, 177.

*

When people (including Richter himself) talk to sell Richter's music, they say stuff like "ground-breaking" and "innovative work" and talk about his "post-minimalist electronic revolution."[63] Yet the archive of melancholy minimalism is suffused with a backward glance. Ólafur Arnalds, who has also found success as a composer for the screen, has an entire album dedicated to performances and paraphrases of the music of Chopin (*The Chopin Project,* 2015); one of Max Richter's most successful recording projects has been a minimalist reworking of Vivaldi's Four Seasons (*Recomposed,* 2012). And here yet again we must distinguish between the historicism of, say, Richter's teacher Luciano Berio, and of Richter and his colleagues.[64] Richter's music dwells in the remnants of the past without the vital intercourse of allusion or pastiche, or even the tender reparative touch of nostalgia; it dithers among musical strains caught from the nineteenth century, catching and repeating them over and over, as with the direct citation of *Winterreise* in the soundtrack to *The Congress,* but also in the reminiscent crystalline structures of "The Departure," and "On the Nature of Daylight."

Extrapolating from Richter's example, we could speak of melancholy minimalism's persistent attachment to Romantic aura, the sedimented historical associations that accrue around minimalism's forms, textures, and timbres as habit and convention. Ambient minimalist musics more broadly often work this way: it is not coincidental, for instance, that a substantial strand of musical minimalism tends toward the pianistic, both in terms of the

[63] All these blurbs and phrases are gathered in Max Richter's own website: https://www.maxrichtermusic.com/bio/.

[64] On Berio's own relationship with Schubert and, more generally, the conjurings and renderings of Schubert in and through late-modernist melancholies, see Seth Brodsky, *From 1989, or European Music and the Modernist Unconscious* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 147-161.

dynamic marking as well as the emblematic instrument of tender softness. There would be no *Music for Airports* (1978) without the piano miniature, no later Glass, and certainly no Erik Satie and functionally and affectively recessive furniture music.[65] No Erased Tapes either, with its extensive catalogue of minimalist music intended for consumption as atmosphere, whether in film, television, or by itself.[66] In all this music, the historical past persists as something not to overcome or traverse, but simply to hold onto. A resigned attitude towards mingling with remnants of the past distinguishes melancholy minimalism from what now arguably forms the canonized body of "classical" minimalism (the music of Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Morton Feldman, and Terry Riley, among others). Where the connection to a more diminutive and recessive Schubertian Romanticism is oblique, indirect, and evasive in Glass, both Arnalds and Richter persistently recycle and repeat music by composers such as Schumann, Chopin, and Schubert.

Minima melancholia is a style of soundtrack, a structure of feeling, and a political diagnosis. Insofar as we are interpellated into Schubert and Richter's frozen landscapes, we struggle to form and formulate a politics or aesthetics that feels utopian, even though they provide scenes to inhabit in the meanwhile. In the soundtrack album of Richter's music for *The Leftovers* season 3, the opening and closing tracks are respectively titled "The End of All Our Exploring" and "And Know the Place for the First Time."[67] These tracks are both just versions of "The Departure," the first for solo piano and the second orchestral. The titles are

[65] Satie and Glass were/are both, of course, pianists themselves, ones whose public performances dissipate the artistic presence and inspiration associated with the piano since Beethoven and Liszt. See Dana Gooley, "Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso as Strategist," in *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700-1914: Managers, Charlatans, and Idealists,* ed. William Weber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004): 145-161.
[66] Nils Frahm and Ólafur Arnalds are but the two most commercially successful artists that have released work through this label.
[67] *The Leftovers: Season 3 (Music from the HBO Series)* (WaterTower Music, 2017).

quotations from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, specifically the final poem of the cycle, "Little Gidding."[68] The allusion to Eliot's late poetry might be Richter's way of acknowledging the final season's ambitious eschatological overtones: the album cover features Kevin and Nora standing against a grainy and cracked concrete wall, silhouetted by a dark stain that looks like angel wings sprouting from their shoulders, as if striving towards promised religious redemption. But taken out of context, the quatrain from which Richter draws his titles could be as well a motto for the shared arts of depressive persistence that dysthymic soundtracks allow, a persistence in and through depression that knows no end except what may or may not come abruptly. In the meanwhile, it is still a method for moving, if not moving on.

[68] Eliot, *Four Quartets,* 59.

Conclusion: What Remains

Dear Cyborgs,

Today's puzzler. Enforced inescapable automatic
insidious complicity. On the horizon no viable just
alternative and no path toward one. All proposals
thus far fanciful, impossible, doomed. Sure,
optimism of the will. But—either from the towers or
beyond the grid, in the trenches, among the ruins,
or burb'd—what do to?

Yours most truly,[1]

***Klaatu barada nikto**. Change or die, humans. Change or die.*[2]

I went to a concert a few years ago. It was at a theater located near a gigantic convention center, and the theater parking was too expensive, so I ended up parking at a structure about a mile away. I made my way through deserted and incredibly well-lit streets lined with shiny glass and metal buildings. The theater was across the highway and I wasn't able to find a pedestrian overpass, so after a while I walked into a hotel to ask for directions. Turns out, the way to the theater was through a subterranean walkway that connected all the hotels and office buildings and convention center structures. Once I got out of the hotel elevator and walked out into the atrium leading to the walkway, I found myself in more

[1] Eugene Lim, *Dear Cyborgs* (New York: *Farrar, Straus and Giroux*, 2017), 3.
[2] Yasmin Nair, "A Manifesto," *Evergreen Review,* Winter 2017, https://evergreenreview.com/read/a-manifesto/.

familiar territory from fancy malls and airport terminals—shiny floors and walls, steel buttresses flying overhead, unblinking glass panels lining the ceiling, beyond which lay the Chicago night sky. I see two young Asians wandering about who were Korean specifically (we can tell, like 90% of the time), so I know I am in the right place. We share the same destination and start to walk towards the tunnel, soon joining a steady trickle of mostly Koreans in an underground passageway in Chicago.

We get to the other end and emerge into the theater lobby. It looks like a food court at an airport. I line up and go in. There are lots of Asians here, lots of Koreans, and I find myself doing the familiar braindance of wondering what kind of Korean in America they are, trying to guess from age, dress, and speech if they are first or second gen or international student; if they are from the city or the burbs or the ivory tower or fresh off the boat. Lots of couples and millennials. Some non-Koreans too, especially white people.

Once in the theater, I notice how large it is. It's massive. Later, I learn that the theater boasts one of the largest seating capacities in Chicago. I notice how empty the theater feels. It's not bad in terms of sheer numbers of people—a good third to half of the seats are filling up—but it's hard not to notice the empty spaces between the couples and clumps of people. I feel a bit bad, like I'm watching the leaky end of a big dream.

But Yiruma walks on-stage and it's clear the room is filled with fans. People clap and shout and woo the way an audience woos a beloved artist or public figure. He's wearing a black sweater and dark jeans and waves and smiles his way to the piano, a black boat floating in a disc of spotlight.

He opens with a dappled collage of slow-shifting, rapid-fire arpeggios. I recognize it from one of his "middle-period" albums, where he shifts from his earlier nocturnes to more

ambient, minimalist textures. It's a good opener—he plays with a light and easy touch, even when there are lots of notes. He fills the auditorium with a soft musical cloud filled with light and air.

The remainder of the concert alternates between Yiruma's playing and patter. He speaks in a relatively fluent and accented English, peppered with locutions that reveal an underlying Korean grammar. I watch him and think, he's a master! He knows how to play for his audience and how to play to them. More than that: he puts everyone at ease, makes people laugh, giggle, and smile; he invites people to look back on their own memories, conjures his own; he invites them to come up on stage and bang out rudimentary tunes while he sits next to them and transforms it all into a gentle music.

I enjoy all this but I'm also alienated. When he invites a white person from the audience to join him on stage and improvise together, I feel the shadow of an overfamiliar dread fall over me, not on behalf of the breathless and unsuspecting fan (who can play no piano but what gives), but for Yiruma. Does he have the chops? Is he actually good? Is this when the room turns against model minority prince without clothes? (Yiruma performs marvelously.) Why did he decide to feature that mediocre *America's Got Talent* contestant to join as a special guest and warble the way young singers emulate grown-ups who in turn are emulating a mythical European bel canto that comes out as a careening overplush pomp? Both of them are trying too hard, Yiruma and the singer. The audience seems to like it all, though. At some point I think, they don't deserve you—the world doesn't deserve you. I wonder how he feels about the fact that he continues to program concerts where half or more of the material is from the first two years of his career, the "early period" from which compilations and playlists continue to draw, almost exclusively. Yiruma might want to

peddle his newer stuff but what the people want are twenty-year-old favs like "Kiss the Rain" and "River Flows in You." They want him to keep riffing on the familiar tunes so they can lean back and "stay in memory," to cite what is the title of a Yiruma album but also could have been the theme of the evening.

It made me a bit sad to see Yiruma working so hard, speaking in a foreign language and reaching out to his fans who are aging with a version of him stuck in the past. He was generating so much atmosphere, giving people so much with which to underscore a sense of ease and feeling-togetherness. I was in it, but also not, observing from the edges and gauging where I fit in all this, in this crowd made up of people caught in various stages and styles of traversing the space between Korean and American, the space that starts out as an ocean and becomes a hyphen lodged in your throat. Plus, I was technically doing research for my dissertation. While people around me closed their eyes and sank into the soundtrack of their lives, I took notes and studied their responses, trying to gauge where this crowd and its cloud fit into the bid for belonging in the wider/whiter world that was my dissertation and my life.[3]

I like movies without soundtracks (as in, without nondiegetic underscore). I like the off-kilter out-of-syncness they allow you to inhabit. Silences are awkwarder, transitions more jarring. You experience a heightened awareness of sounds that aren't music. The world is less glamorous or comforting; atmosphere is there, but it's dry (like our atmospheres often are, especially in winter, or in a bad meeting). A lot of my favorite

[3] The concert took place at the Arie Crown Theater on November 21st, 2017 as part of Yiruma's most recent North American tour, *Yiruma Life: In North America 2017*. The opening piece was "The Sunbeams… They Scatter," recorded and released in the 2004 album *Nocturnal Lights… They Scatter*.

movies have very little soundtrack, sometimes none at all: *Yellow* (1997); *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *The Florida Project* (2017); etc. Actually, the last one does have a soundtrack—a weird orchestral/piano concerto arrangement of the Kool & the Gang song "Celebration" (1980).[4] It comes at the tail end, as a touching, poignant, sad mark of fantasy. It's sad because you want desperately for there to be a happy ending for the characters but you know it's not going to come in the slice of time of the movie. Instead, the music is there and it's "mere" fantasy but not in the way we might say something is delusional. At that point in the film, the main character, six-year-old Moonee, is being taken into DCF (Department of Children and Families) custody because her parent Halley is a single teen-mom who fucks the rules and fucks people for money. Moonee is a fighter and does not want to be taken away. She manages to escape from the DCF caseworkers and runs across the highway to her best friend Jancey's home. Jancey answers the door, and Moonee starts to cry and can't say anything much except for bye. Jancey's shoulders begin to rise and fall and her nostrils flare with a child's intuited rage? determination? in the face of everything. She looks back to check her grandma won't be able to stop them, grabs her friend by the wrist, and starts running.

That's when Lorne Balfe's piano-orchestral underscore starts to play, with a pulsing open-fifth eight-note ostinato in the lower strings overlaid with atmospheric tinkering in the piano. Of other examples in this dissertation, it bears closest resemblance to the "Cloud Atlas March." And march it is: hints of a catchy, energetic melody ("Celebrate good times, come on!") start to emerge as the Moonee and Jancey run across fields, parking lots, and highways to Disneyland (for the movie has unfolded hitherto in the seedy shadows of

[4] *The Florida Project*, directed by Sean Baker, (2017: A24).

themed-motels on the outskirts of this American Utopia). The movie and its one-minute soundtrack end just as Moonee and Jancey run up to the iconic Disneyland castle in the Magic Kingdom. For the time being, you are happy that they get to have their fantasy. You are glad and sad to be able to be in Moonee's headspace then and there and to not just see but hear this grand escape unfold. Maybe they, too, are happy and not (just) sad, for the time being. Maybe the time stolen with Jancey in the heart of the Magic Kingdom will be a future resource for Moonee's continued flourishing. Maybe later on she'll be able to celebrate good times, not just because she has learned Halley's ability to draw a fierce magic from seedy things, but also because she has trained in being in atmosphere with children who show up for each other in ways that are in sync even when the grown-ups around them are not able to, only ever in ways that heighten the world's dissonance and tear their rhythms further and further apart. The last-minute appearance of a soundtrack allows us to inhabit a different sense of what Moonee and Jancey's training-in-attunement might feel like.

Figure 44. Moonee and Jancey run towards Cinderella's Castle in Disneyland's Magic Kingdom.

Then there is Lee Chang-dong's *Oasis* (2002).[5] *Oasis* is a love story between two misfits: Gongju, a woman with a severe cerebral palsy that limits her ability to move and talk, and Jongdu, a well-meaning but maladjusted ex-convict incapable of reading social cues and holding onto a job.[6] Gongju spends her time floor-bound and isolated in a room in a cheap, dilapidated apartment, save for occasional visits by her brother and her neighbor who is paid to keep her fed. Jongdu has just been released from prison and lives with a family (his mother, brothers, and sister-in-law) who can't relate with him except as a shame and a burden. Lee Chang-dong's camera follows the two characters as they struggle and crawl together through a cold, dry world with no social security net, no glamour, no time or place of celebration for its excised and incarcerated misfits. The music in *Oasis* is, for the most part, the music as it comes through Gongju's old radio, as croaked out by Jongdu at a karaoke after his family treats him and Gongju like shit at his mother's birthday party. But there is no romantic or pop underscore. The love story of Gongju and Jongdu unfolds in the shakey world of handheld camera and patchy soundtracks only of the kind they assemble for themselves from the world's leftovers.

Then there is Yiruma's "image album," *Oasis & Yiruma* (2002)—a totally external entity to the film, except that Yiruma was handed the script to write music for an album that was released in advance of the movie, but not as a part of it. The album presents Yiruma at the height of his early creative powers and popularity—how else to account for the

[5] Lee Chang-dong became famous when white people all around the world fell in love with his misogynist mystery drama film *Burning* (2018), about Korean working-class castration at the hands of the protagonist's flitty love object and his rival, an Americanized bourgeois psychopath. *Burning* was also chosen by Obama for one of his now-routine "best of" lists for the year 2018. Ryan Gilbey, "Why mesmerising mystery film *Burning* is an Obama favorite," *New Statesman*, February 4, 2019, https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/film/2019/02/why-mesmerising-mystery-film-burning-obama-favourite.

[6] *Oasis*, directed by Lee Chang-dong, (2002: CJ Entertainment).

marketing decision to preface a highly-anticipated film by an already fêted film-maker and public figure with a CD of nothing but piano music? As a middle-schooler, I made sure to torrent the album the moment it was released, even though I didn't watch the R-rated movie until a few years later.

I experience Yiruma's pseudo-soundtrack as fake in two ways. First, it was not in the movie! Nor were the music's styles and affects within the general ambit of those of the film. My later contact with the movie *Oasis* and its stuttering, tender characters and affects had nothing to do with my middle-school fandom of Yiruma's limpid piano music. Second, it is a fake soundtrack because its atmospheres and fantasies are not "real" within the terms of the plot and world of *Oasis*. The album's liner notes feature warm, sepia-toned photographs of Gongju and Jongdu (played respectively by Moon So-ri and Seol Kyung-gu), dressed in nice sweaters and looking like the very picture of well-adjusted, clean, handsome and pretty Korean Gen-X coupledom. In the movie their clothes are shabby, in Jongdu's case always inadequate to the cold weather, their bodies and faces contorted. Yiruma concludes his accompanying notes for the album with the simpering line, "Thank you for letting Jongdu and Gongju love each other."[7] Well, in the movie, the world does not let them love each other; at the end of the movie, Jongdu is thrown back into prison for rape because an agitated Gongju is incapable of explaining to the cops and her horrible, horrified family that they are dating and that she wanted him to fuck her. The two are viewed as damaged beyond normal desire. The world around them—the families, the state, and the society of individuals who are too busy or desperate themselves to care otherwise—makes no space for their misshapen love or its soundtrack.

[7] Liner notes to Yiruma, *Oasis and Yiruma* (Stomp Music, 2002).

Figure 45. Gongju and Jongdu in the movie (left) vs. Yiruma's album (right)

But maybe this is exactly why Yiruma's music is so touching and necessary? In the movie, Gongju is always fantasizing her and Jongdu as more "normal"—Jongdu as less fraught and contorted with the constant struggle between his uncivilized childlike mien and the strict codes and hierarchies of the petty bourgeoisie; herself as less contorted and hampered by the always herculean struggle to coordinate her body with her brain. While out and about with Jongdu, stuck to her seat unless carried by him, she sees a young couple about their age; the woman is tapping her boyfriend on the head with a plastic water bottle. Gongju imagines getting out of her chair, creeping up to Jongdu with a cute, menacing smile, and swinging the plastic bottle with all her might against the back of his head. When he turns to her in annoyance, her fantasy face and body feign a cheeky nonchalance. Elsewhere, as Jongdu carries her on his back, Gongju imagines whispering a classic 90s love song in his ear ("If I were a poet, I would sing for you"), sliding gently off his back, and leading him in a dance. And the one and only instance of a nondiegetic soundtrack in the movie happens in a fantasy sequence where Gongju pictures herself up and about and dancing, in a circle with Jongdu and an exotic trio of villager, child, and baby elephant plucked from a shabby tapestry hanging in her bedroom wall. So the fake soundtrack could

be something that doesn't just cover over the cracked, out-of-sync world of *Oasis* with a delusional projection of normalcy. It could be something that allows us to be in sync with Gongju's own fantasies of normativity, to share in their atmospheres, like we do when Moonie and Jancey catch the pulsing strains of their soundtrack and run towards Disneyland, hand in hand.

So much organizing training is about what you say and how and when you say it—modulating the content of your speech and tone, having a game plan, timing this or that pivot or rhetorical gesture towards an ask and towards your campaign benchmarks more broadly. All this is important.[8] But so little time in the besieged affectspheres of contemporary workplace and single-issue organizing is spent on thinking and feeling and talking through the atmospheres we float and inhabit as we move through a strategy and timeline together. There's always something pressing and emergent to react to and parry, always the structural and personal assaults on solidarity and livelihood by bosses, scabs, and the law.

It's hard to think and feel atmospherically when the empire is literally burning up our world and its actual atmosphere, when the twin-styles of respectable and extremist white supremacy force us to wear our tempered and hardened affects as emotional and physical armor. But it's important. From our teachers of transformative justice and abolitionist

[8] I learned a lot from other members and organizers with Graduate Students United at the University of Chicago and then as a youth organizer at the HANA Center working with kids from the predominantly Asian and Hispanic immigrant neighborhoods around Albany Park. For helpful tips on one-on-ones, social mapping, and planning and escalating around an issue campaign, see Alexandra Bradbury, Mark Brenner, and Jane Slaughter, *Secrets of a Successful Organizer* (New York: Labor Education and Research Project, 2016).

organizing we learn how important it is in the fight for justice to reimagine not just what a transformed justice looks like but also how it feels. adrienne maree brown writes:

> Is it a pleasure to be with each other? Does the agenda or space allow for aliveness, connection, and joy? Is there a "yes!" at the center of the work? There are so many things that are violent, offensive, unbearable. An embodied "no" is so justified—but I don't believe it moves us forward.[9]

brown is reminding us that when so much of our energy in survival mode is spent trying not to drown or suffocate, it leaves a scar on our disciplines of hope.[10] We bring a paranoid and defensive orientation to our spaces of change. These are justified and necessary; but they can make it difficult to attune to the desires and needs and fantasies emanating from the people (strangers and comrades) currently in the room. And whatever is emanating forth are necessary ingredients to help us determine not just who and what we are fighting against but who and what we are fighting for.

I see this dissertation and its objects less as places themselves of liberatory practice or theory and more as preparatory scenes. From the position of sitting lonelily at the desk, typing at the keyboard, there is only so much you can do. In fact, I am constantly besieged by the thought that my isolated struggle in the scene of writing and intellection is a betrayal of everyone else who is having to engage, right now, in the more immediate temporality of individual and collective struggles at their workplace, their neighborhood, their home. I think of writing as a survivor's scene. At the same time, I think it's important to model and cultivate scenes of collective attunement, where we can occupy a slow togetherness that

[9] adrienne maree brown, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (Chico: AK Press, 2019), 23-24.
[10] The idea of hope as affective and embodied discipline is taken from Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021).

could feel alternatingly joyful or melancholic (or whatever). I see writing, and what I experience as good academic writing, as a training in attunement. Music, too, for obvious reasons—sharing breath and line and rhythm can be a gentle, intense, or awkward but nonetheless tender erotic experience. And I am constantly amazed at the soft and edgy openness that can be disclosed around a drawing, no matter how simple, especially when it is addressed to the people then in the room.[11] But I return to the scene of writing and of academic writing for the risk it encourages in floating an object and a scene and thinking and feeling around it for an unfamiliar and potentially exciting conceptual and political vocabulary. Fiction and poetry do this, too. I suppose I am saying the best academic writing strikes me as a form of fiction and poetry, but with more courage in the face of abstraction, maybe.

Remembering forgotten and repressed histories that haunt our psyches and exert subterranean pressures on our speech and gestures; channeling feelings of frustration, self-hatred, and aggression into political agitation and righteous rage; these are all important of course. But at the same time there is history as what fills the room as a tenuous vibration and light-refracting air, around and within which people feel safe, alienated, welcomed, judged, uneasy, seen, instrumentalized, revolutionary, etc. The good organizer is able to catch some of this and tune into how the discourse of politics unfolds as shifts in atmosphere. Soundtracks matter, too, whether as ambient noise or as songs curated and sung on the picket line. So I offer this dissertation as a little bit of exploring, unfolding over an uneven time, of the arts in sensing modes and musical styles of being-with-others that that we learn and practice unconsciously and affectively, whether we know it or not.

[11] Blanca Lorenzo, Jasmine Anuntarungsen, Jason Tumalan, Kent Canonigo, Miguel Torres, and Yasmin Chaudhry taught me this (to name a few).

*

Piano is one of Yiruma's more recent albums, released in 2015. As the title indicates, it's sort of a "back to basics" work, previous albums having featured electronics (*Nocturnal lights… they scatter,* 2004), jazz combo (*Poemusic*, 2005), prepared piano (*h.i.s. monologue*, 2006), and piano quartet (*Blind Film*, 2013). All eleven tracks are for solo piano, performed by Yiruma alone.

The album comes as an oversized, hardcover booklet with the CD on one side and a bound collection of photographs and liner notes on the other. The black, matte cover features Yiruma's name and the album's title in small, san serif font, and the silhouette of what looks like a forest canopy.

The booklet is mostly photographs of a forest called *Gotjawal*. Located on Jeju Island off the southern coast of the Korean peninsula, *Gotjawal* is a local forest, a provincial park, a part of UNESCO World Natural Heritage; it is described as a uniquely-occurring hybrid ecology of northern and southern hemispheric vegetation. The pictures by photographer An Woongchul are chiaroscuro studies in green, made up of uncanny half-jungle silhouettes of winding trees and their dense, untouched underbrush of ferns.

The word *gotjawal* in the Jeju dialect refers to any uninhabitable or nonarable landscape formed by a dense vegetative overgrowth over cooled lava. These combinations of rock, vine, and forest take a long time to form. In a short essay included in the booklet and titled (in English) "Gotjawal, The Last Paradise," the photographer describes the forest as a "fundamental space-time" (*geunwonjeok shigong-gan*) where a sense of prehistory mingles with the experience of passing time: walking it, he hears an "unlikely music," in the sounds of the wind and the leaves brushing up against each other, in the mixture of birdsong and

rain.[12] He writes: "Faced with this supernatural scenery, I press the shutter, wishing for this last paradise to last…"

"The Last Paradise" is also the name of the last track on the album. Its simplicity is striking, of a different kind from the repetitive, sweet tunefulness that characterizes Yiruma's music more generally. The opening alternates between two chords, G major and B minor, starkly voiced with low, open octaves in the left hand and thirds and sixths in the right. The chords linger for a couple seconds, presenting each of themselves twice before moving up another third to a D-major chord, which then alternates in similar fashion with B minor. There is hardly a melody to this chorale of slow-moving G, B, and D chords with open fifths and octaves. The tonality comes into focus only a minute into the track, when a F-minor chord clarifies the subsequent G major as a submediant, which then cadences on D major before alternating back to G, and then D once again.

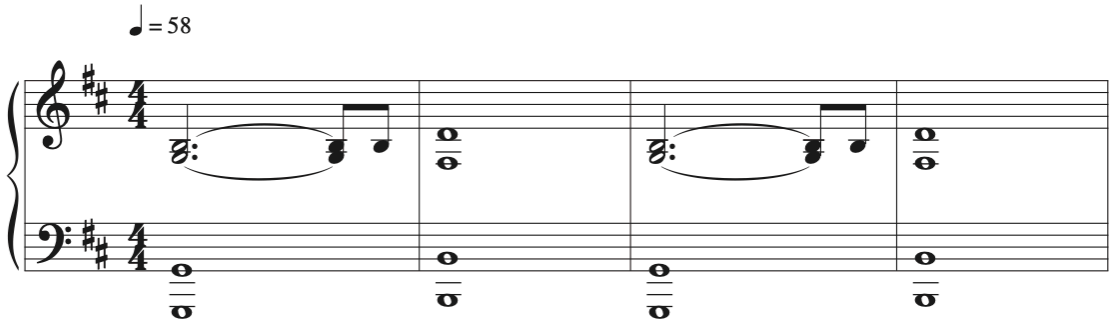

Figure 46. The first section of "The Last Paradise." (Continued on following page)

[12] An Woongchul, "Gotjawal, The Last Paradise" in the liner notes to Yiruma, *Piano* (Sony Music, 2015).

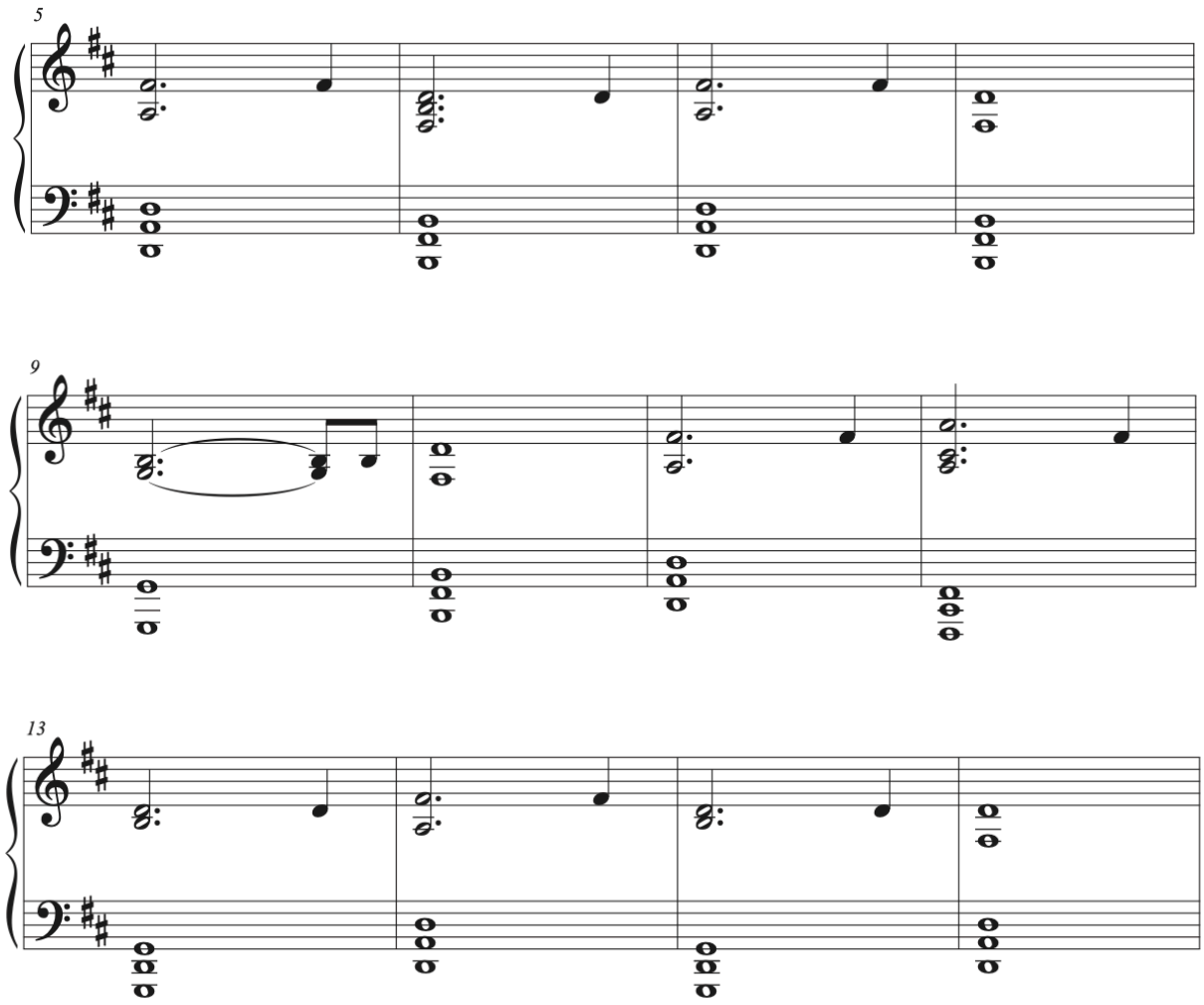

Figure 46, continued.

A friend once asked, what's up with Koreans and first loves? Every K-drama is about people getting back with their first loves! That's a really good question. Korean movies, TV shows, and songs—and songs without words, like Yiruma's debut album, *First Love*—are obsessed with first loves. I give two explanations (not that my friend was looking for any). First I think about how difficult it is for couples in Korea to live up to their fantasies of nuclear hetero-domesticity. Through a mixture of Joseon *yangban* ruling-class mores and imported liberal ideals, Koreans have birthed a uniquely powerful ideology of the private

nuclear family and its place in modern society. Korea has the lowest out-of-wedlock birthrate among OECD member nations (remember, the white liberal democracies and assimilated model minority agents of globalization), at 1.9 percent compared to the OECD average of 40.5.[13] At the same time, Korea also boasts the lowest birthrate, period, among an even wider UN-conducted survey 201 countries, as well as the highest suicide rate among OECD member nations.[14] When they are not too poor, people are too overworked and stressed to think about having babies, let alone having a life.[15] Maybe the pubescent fantasy of a pre-marital first love serves as an escape from the harsh realities of married or unmarried grown-up routine. Through first love fantasies, marriage and the prospect of normal adult life becomes exciting again, rather than a prison.

Second, and obviously related to the first, I think it has to do with the trauma not just of war and immiseration but of moving through modernity so fast and seeing your world literally demolished and paved over into a glitzy glass-paneled and steel-buttressed thing. This new (non-)place is richer and better and more developed, etc. but it is also lonely and cold and harsh. For the younger generations, it also means your nostalgia has nowhere specific to cite. There is no country; from the very beginning you are displaced and exiled within the borders of your so-called home.[16] So the genre of first love allows you to conjure

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[13] "Report says out-of-wedlock birth rate lowest in Korea among OECD states," *Korea Herald,* October 1, 2018, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20181001000871.

[14] The sociologist Chang Kyung-sup calls the phenomenon of suppressed birthrates "family strike" (*gajeong pa-eop)*—an uncoordinated spontaneous collective refusal to engage in reproductive labor in state-sanctioned conditions of (neo)liberal precarity and austerity. Chang Kyung-sup, *South Korea under Compressed Modernity: Familial Political Economy in Transition* (New York: Routledge, 2010). Hyonhee Shin, "South Korean birth rate world's lowest in struggle for balance," *Reuters*, June 30, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-women/south-korean-birth-rate-worlds-lowest-in-struggle-for-balance-report-idUSKBN2410YR; "World suicide rates by country," *The Washington Post,* accessed March 18, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/suiciderate.html.

[15] Koreans are among the world's most overworked people. "Average annual hours actually worked per worker," *OECD.Stat*, accessed March 18, 2021, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS.

[16] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1973).

and relive the fantasy of nostalgia in times and locations that may never have served up the kind of comfort and familiarity they attain in these cinematic and musical reminiscences. In the case of Yiruma's first album, the comfort and familiarity of *First Love* can be traced in something as vague—and specific—as the echoes of nineteenth-century European domestic piano music. Elsewhere and more generally, the fantasy of first love is figured in a man and a woman—boy and girl—who serve as vessels of identification and desire, in a world more accommodating to tender touch and squirreled time.

I think about all this as I listen to Yiruma's *Piano*, with its slower, more open sonorities and chiaroscuro packaging, as I read Yiruma's remarks printed on the page facing the photographer's essay:

> Working on this album, I sensed continually the crudeness, fragility, and deficiency of me and my playing. Everything was a struggle to the point of feeling depressing. Chaos, confusion, and stillness… Piano.
>
> My unease stretches on, even as I listen to this music. Maybe it's because of the foolish thoughts that dream of the last paradise… Maybe it's because of the clouded regrets of moments for which I've yearned. So from this space of fantasy I wish as a last paradise, I want to let you hear the sound of my piano.[17]

I think of these uncharacteristically subdued words as I listen to, transcribe, and play through the slow-moving chords of "The Last Paradise." I notice how, later on, the phrase

[17] "이번 앨범을 작업하는 동안 제 자신도, 제 연주마저도 한없이 부족하고 여리고 투박하기만 했습니다. 모든게 우울하게 느껴질 만큼 힘들었습니다. 혼돈, 혼란 그리고 정적… Piano. […] 이 음악을 듣는 지금도 저의 불안감은 계속되고 있습니다. 아마도 낙원을 꿈꾸는 어리석은 생각들 때문일지도… 내가 갈망하는 순간들의 아련한 미련 때문일지도. 그렇게 마지막 낙원이기를 바라는 이 몽환의 공간에서 제 피아노 소리를 들려드리고 싶습니다." Liner notes to Yiruma, *Piano* (Sony Music, 2015).

often turns to the minor submediant in its close, what we learn in music theory as the "deceptive cadence" because in major keys the subversion of the expected "authentic cadence" on the tonic is often experienced as a poignant surprise. I think, this is a wonderful, mysterious track, characteristically simple and light in its surprising starkness. But there are no loving and enthusiastic covers of this song on the internet; and while there are a gazillion licensed and unlicensed scores of various quality and professional-to-amateur provenance for early tracks like "Love Me" and "I" and "Wait There," there are none that I can find for "The Last Paradise." No videos either of Yiruma playing this track, whether officially-produced music videos or mobile uploads from fans at performances. I think back to Yiruma on stage in Chicago in 2017, two years after his music and words for *Piano*, playing the old favorites to a transnational audience—how the room was filled with a desire for the nostalgia of *First Love* and not for the slow and mournful strains of "The Last Paradise." I think of how within musical atmospheres, there are worlds that are not necessarily in sync.

Mournful is an operative word here. Mourning means letting go of things, people, and places. I think of how there might be here a music of letting go, and letting things end so that new things can take their place.

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