The Transparent Tangle of History: Ligeti's *Lontano*

Invited to participate in the 1965 congress on musical form at Darmstadt, Ligeti took the assignment quite seriously, brushing up on his Adorno and securing Carl Dahlhaus as editorial assistant.[1] Although he had written and lectured on specific compositional issues, "Form in der Neuen Musik" was Ligeti's opportunity to set out an all-encompassing theory of form, one that acknowledged his debt to Adorno while clearly outlining a unique view.[2] The essay begins by relating musical form to cognitive categories of temporal and spatial perception, drawing on the conceptual metaphors *pitch change is orientation in vertical space* and *pitch length is orientation in horizontal space.* This cross-domain metaphor is drawn out further with the addition of dynamics and tone color to create the impression of spatial depth.[3] Listeners thus experience a kind of inverted, illusionary perspective: although musical shapes and events themselves create space, we imagine them as placed in a *space that already exists*.

From this recursive cognitive model, Ligeti logically expands the spatial metaphor to include other musical parameters: an imaginary harmonic, syntactic, or architectural space. This leads to the curious assumption that there exists some ideal object "music" that can be conceived of as pure, temporal process. Yet once we pass from the abstract to the phenomenological and begin to process this music–to make associations, abstractions, memories and predictions–time becomes space and form as we know it. As musical form connotes both the relation of parts to one another, and of those individual parts to the whole, so the individual work itself relates to other works, as well as to the sum total of musical history. The musical present thus becomes a potent concentrate of "all music previously experienced." In Adorno, musical tradition subsisted as sedimented structure, a substrate latent within the musical material, which the subject acted upon. But Ligeti's metaphor assigns the weight of the past a role external to the work. The compression of history, as accumulated and represented time, acts *on* the temporal level of a composition to produce an "imaginary time of a higher power"; history is always already an imaginary space, one that unites musical substance, rhetoric, and affect in each individual work.[4]

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[1] György Ligeti, "Carl Dahlhaus in memoriam," (1989), GS I, p. 516.

[2] György Ligeti, "Form in der Neuen Musik," GS I, pp. 185–99; trans. "Form," in Ruth Katz and Carl Dahlhaus (eds), *Contemplating Music: Source Readings in the Aesthetics of Music,* vol. III (New York, 1992), pp. 781–96. Earlier writings include "Die Funktion des Raumes in der heutigen Musik," GS I, pp. 106–11, first published "Die Entdeckung des Raumes in der Musik," *Österreichische Monatsblätter für kulturelle Freiheit* 7 no. 76 (1960): 152–4.

[3] These metaphors in turn are based on underlying image schemata; see Lawrence M. Zbikowski, "Metaphor and Music Theory: Reflections from Cognitive Science," *Music Theory Online* 4.1 (1998), http://www.societymusictheory.org/mto/issues/mto.98.4.1/mto.98.4.1.zbikowski_frames.html.

[4] Ligeti, "Form in der Neuen Musik," p. 187.

Ligeti does follow Adorno in asserting that musical syntax "is transformed by and through history." Verb and subject are co-extensive: what is formed in music is already "form," not mere material to be acted upon. Yet if musical objects are already pregnant with spatial implications and allusions, what then represents semantics in music? Ligeti's Saussurean answer asserts that musical meaning comes solely from difference, and that music as a syntactic system is not only "pervaded by gaps and internal inconsistencies" but "open to every transformation."[5] Here he leaves behind analogies with language, and invokes the Freudian unconscious, with the declaration "Musical meaning and musical logic relate to actual meaning and actual logic like dreams to reality."

The "dream logic" of music returns Ligeti to the ubiquitous analogy of a web, borrowed from his childhood dream of the spider's lair, discussed in Chapter 2. The forward march of music history is compared to an "immense net that drags itself through the ages." Composers affix to this or that "place," only to create new knots, patterns and rips in the structure. Yet from a great distance, "one sees almost transparent tangles of thread which imperceptibly cover the tears: even what is seemingly without tradition has a secret connection to what has been."[6] This poignant image evokes Lacan's concept of the gaze, the object of the act of looking. The gaze represents the split subject expressed in visual terms, its internal alienation expressed as "a gaze imagined in the field of the other."[7] The subject, gazing at the snarls and kinks of the Other–"the system of musical form and its history"–sees that Other looking back at him, from a point that excludes herself as viewer. That point is the "transparent tangle," that which conceals a hole, or gap, in the structure, and which forms secret ties to the past, hidden from view. The Real of music remains inaccessible; we can glimpse its deformations only in the knots and torn threads that appear to conceal the truth. The transparent tangle of history is thus the object-cause of desire: it is not simply the inert substance of musical form, but that which causes the subject to desire to at all, and thus that which causes new music to enter the world.

Objects in Imaginary Space: *Lontano* as Gaze

Lacan introduced the voice and the gaze as two primary and paradigmatic embodiments of the object *a*, the lost object as cause of desire and that which is lacking. In Lacan's famous graph of desire, the voice appears as a residue of the signifying chain, one that cannot be broken down further into its constituent parts.[8] For all that it appears to summon presence, to represent a kind of material "counterweight to differentiality," in the words of Mladan Dolar, the voice object itself cannot be reduced to a timbre, mode of address, or point of origin.[9] Its uncanny power is bound up with its existence outside meaning, as a counterweight to the subject as lack. The voice as object may be ineluctably associated with music, but can never be located within it. Music functions as but a screen, one that evokes voice in infinite ways by fixating on its absence. Music, then, is a route away from the voice as object, which perforce must remain silent, implied but never heard.[10]

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[5] Ligeti, "Form," *Contemplating Music,* p. 785; "Form in der Neuen Musik," pp. 188–9.
[6] Ligeti, "Form,"p. 786 and "Form in der Neuen Musik," 189–90.
[7] Jacques Lacan, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), trans. Alan Sheridan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1998), p. 84.
[8] Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire," *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink with Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (New York, 2006), p. 684.

By the inverted logic of the lost object, we feel closest to that idealized, silent voice when it is embodied in a visual medium, as in the silent *Scream* of Edvard Munch. Likewise, we feel the overwhelming presence of the gaze in certain musical works that strive to approximate the condition of painting, particularly those orchestral works of Ligeti that retreat from goal-directed motion in favor of a stationary canvas. In "Metamophoses of Musical Form," Ligeti identified integral serialism with the "sign of the totally static"; this music "like hanging carpets of mighty oriental quietness" was one culmination of tendencies that dated back to the coda of Beethoven's *les Adieux* sonata.[11] If Ligeti turned away from strict serialism, he yet accepted the increasing spatialization of music as part and parcel of modernism, in tandem with the "temporalization" of space in Picasso or Joyce. As late as 1988, in the midst of a compositional re-invention of himself that drew on non-Western traditions, Ligeti maintained his interest in "musical forms that are less process-like and more object-like."

> Music as frozen time, as an object in an imaginary space that is evoked in our imagination through music itself. Music as a structure that, despite its unfolding in the flux of time, is still synchronically conceivable, simultaneously present in all its moments. To hold on to time, to suspend its disappearance, to confine it in the present moment, this is my primary goal in composition.[12]

The orchestral works *Apparitions* and *Atmosphères* marked the beginning of this compositional approach. They were quickly dubbed "sound-mass" compositions, alongside vastly-different works like Penderecki's *Anaklasis* and Xenakis's *Metastasis*. Yet the broad strokes of Penderecki's graphic notation and Xenakis's stochastic methods produced works of great dramatic effect. Ligeti's careful notation of each rhythm, dynamic and articulation, on the other hand, erected a still, if intensely corporeal, presence. The shimmering, emergent mass of *Atmosphères'* 87-voice canon seems to be part of a process that began before the work and will continue after it falls silent in the concert hall. Their deceptively static surface, and their attention to "secondary parameters" like timbre and articulation, masked a disjunction between atemporal structure and an illusory, causal syntax, one that lent *Apparitions* and *Atmosphères* a "phantasmatic" quality.[13] Lacan located the power of painting in such an illusion, the discrepancy between Monet's dabs of color–the gestures encoded on a painting's surface–and the imaginary whole, which celebrates its artificiality: its distance from the Thing itself.[14] But what makes their successor *Lontano* a sterling example of the gaze in music is not simply this palpable, static quality, nor the dialectic between structure and syntax; its *Lontano's* sense of a unified whole, "simultaneously present in all its moments," that folds elements from separate corners of musical history into its embrace. As befits its title, *Lontano* represents music "from afar," sounds that reach the listener from a great spatial as well as historical distance. History lives in *Lontano's* margins, in the allusions and references that percolate beneath its placid surface. Its audience is confronted with the enigma of a large, stationary form, a screen "illuminated from behind,"[15] whose "truth" can be only be grasped obliquely, in glints and flashes of different musical spaces.

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[9] Mladen Dolar, "The Object Voice," in Slavoj Žižek and Renata Salecl (eds), *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* (Durham, 1996), p. 10. See also Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), pp. 36–8.

[10] See Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (London, 1994), p. 117.

[11] György Ligeti, trans. Cornelius Cardew, "Metamorphoses of Musical Form," in *Die Reihe: Form-Space* 7 (Bryn Mawr, 1965), pp. 16–17.

[12] Ligeti, "On My Piano Concerto," trans. Robert Cogan, *Sonus* 9/1 (1988): 13.

Harmonic Space

The perspective implied by *Lontano's* title is reflected in its deceptively simple compositional structure: a series of highly chromatic canons superposed at the octave or unison. Four canons appear in textures that vary from two to 54 separate instrumental parts, confined within a narrow melodic compass. The canons boast a strict pitch succession, but the internal rhythm of each line varies; the result is a series of dense, cluster-like harmonies that shift slowly and subtly over time. Each canon resembles a cantus firmus, moving predominantly by step and avoiding consecutive leaps. *Lontano's* canons include all of the same intervals–and only those intervals–admitted in the melodic composition of species counterpoint, and each canon includes a single climactic high or low point. They preserve the principle of equilibrium–as well as the spirit of modal rhythm–through a fluid, complex and ever-changing "elastic talea."[16] The essential paradigm consonance-dissonance-consonance is re-written as diatonic-chromatic-diatonic: motion toward and away from the vertical signal chords (013), (025) and (024).[17]

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[13] Roger W.H. Savage, *Structure and Sorcery: The Aesthetics of Post-War Serial Composition and Indeterminacy* (New York, 1989), p. 92.

[14] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, pp. 112–15.

[15] György Ligeti, trans. Gabor J. Schabert, Sarah E. Soulsby, Terence Kilmartin and Geoffrey Skelton, *György Ligeti in Conversation with Péter Várnai, Josef Häusler, Claude Samuel and Himself* (London, 1983), p. 92.

[16] Ligeti cited in Pierre Michel, *György Ligeti* (Paris, 1995), p. 150.

[17] Ligeti calls the (013) trichord "an intervallic combination opposed to chromaticism … and in my time with tonality." Michel, p. 161

Thus linear motions generate the dense chromatic harmony of *Lontano*, as exemplified by its opening B-A-C-H motive, in the form A@–G–B@–A (shown in an annotated description of Canon I, Figure 4.1). Internal relations and repetition at the unison establish a rapport between the successive and the simultaneous in each canon, while texture, instrumental grouping, chordal attacks and rests create audible divisions of the surface.[18] The ten pitches that compose Canon I are answered by a chromatic expansion that leads via a twelve-tone series (embedded in the first transition, mm. 41–55) to section II. The second and third sections begin with two and three tones respectively, and gently expand to include all twelve pitches in the course of each section. The careful restriction of range and contour maps out a modal "space" that operates behind the canonic foreground, while intervallic species–identified by referential melodic figures–are orchestrated to form a corresponding timbral space.

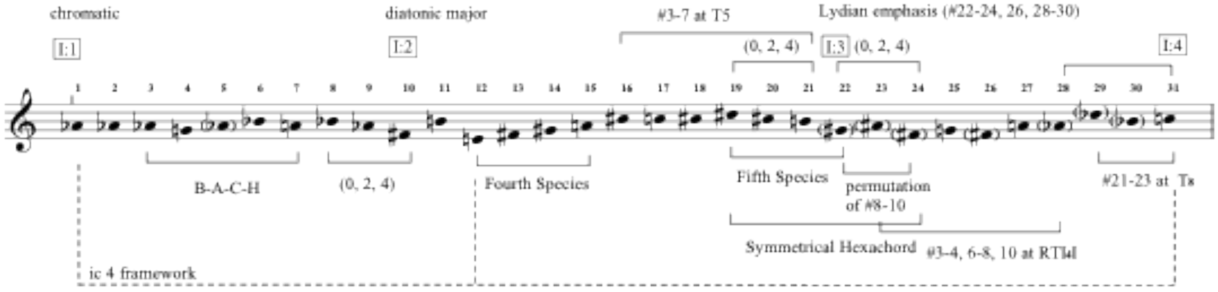

Figure 1, *Lontano,* analysis of canon I

Carl Dahlhaus presents the positive distinctions between modal polyphony and tonal harmony as opposing conceptions of structure and function in the modal "complex" and tonal "system."[19] Individual modes–archetypes carved out from a common, concrete background–offer a comprehensive sequence of degrees, but the *clausulae* and melodic types of modally-oriented intervallic music function as markers of difference. Yet only in the full growth and development of modal polyphony does diatonicism attain "an independent existence and effect," as a neutral locus of activity against which modal scales and tonal key relations define themselves. Such a description mirrors Ligeti's explanation of his own harmonic process, "… an atonal diatonicism that evades this tonal/atonal opposition. [An approach that] represents a third direction."[20]

In the first section of *Lontano* (mm. 1–41), specific pitches and intervals sketch a modal space defined by the canon's opening "subject," A@–G–B@–A, and its final pitch C. The pillar *tones* A@ and C are linked to

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[18] For instance, the first canon is presented in 13 segments of 1 to 9 pitches each, separated by rests; see Jane Piper Clendinning in "Contrapuntal Techniques in the Music of György Ligeti," vol. II (Ph.D. diss., Yale, 1989), p. 28.
[19] Carl Dahlhaus, trans. Robert O. Gjerdingen*, Studies on the Origin of Harmonic Tonality* (Princeton, 1990), p. 192.
[20] Ligeti in Michel, p. 167.

the pillar *intervals* of unison and octave, two of twelve pitches and associated intervals that mark the work's formal divisions. The pitches A@4 and C5 create a symmetrical trichord with canon tone #12, E4, the lower boundary of section I. Tones #10 and 11, F#4 and B4, function as boundary and pivot tones, while the opening A@ becomes the enharmonic ˆ3 of E major, in a shift to the diatonic fourth "species" (E–A in I:2) that ushers in a second "subject" on E major. The registral highpoint of canon I is reached at tone #19, D#5, the endpoint of a fifth species (tones #19–22). The repetition of pitch-classes 6, 8, and 10 (tones #22–4) neutralizes E major by restating tones #8–10 within a symmetrical hexachord from D#5 to F#4 (tones #19–24). The third segment emphasizes F# Lydian, with a "recapitulation" of the opening segment in retrograde inversion. The final C rises through four octaves to close the major third cycle E–A@–C and as part of a final sonority that repeats the opening trichord at T8. A sustained E4 contrabass harmonic amplifies the Lydian tetrachord of the third segment. When the E drops out at m. 33, the major tetrachord remains, a reminder of the second subject (tones #28–31).

Lontano's modal species begin and end on specific nodal pitches, and are outlined by gestures that expand or contract to fit a given modal "space."[21] Pitch-classes 8 and 10 recur as registral and tonal foci that identify new modal contexts through enharmonic restatement, while the pedal point/lower bound supports a diatonic gamut on E. But its canons are also constructed with principles borrowed from serial music. Two (012) trichords compose the combinatorial hexachord that closes Canon I, ordered to emphasize the pitch-class succession 6-8-10-0. The boundary pitches of Section I:1 repeat at T_5 to preserve maximal variance, while tones #3–4, 6–8 and 10 are repeated in retrograde inversion at RT4I (tones #23–9) to preserve pitch invariance along with contour. In subsequent canons, T2, T5, T7 and T7I yield a maximally variant pitch content, and shift melodic material to a new tonal region.

Micropolyphony–the term Ligeti coined for his canonic technique–suggests a distance between compositional method and aural effect, the "synchronic [achieved] by pushing the diachronic (polyphonic) to its limits."[22] By naming the style after its method, the composer emphasizes the compositional process over its object-like product. "If you ask me: 'why the canon?'" Ligeti answered Pierre Michel, "I would like to respond for horizontal/vertical unity."[23] But the contrapuntal relationship depends on the perception of difference within unity. Thus micropolyphony as both style and method offers an implicit critique on the traditional use of canon to promote linear continuity, forward progression, and an audible separation of voices: "polyphony is what is written, harmony is what is heard."[24] Tones, intervals or harmonies congeal out of the polyphonic mass then are gradually obscured by "parasitic" tones that–in turn–disperse to reveal new foci.

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[21] See Amy Bauer, "Compositional Process and Parody in the Music of György Ligeti," (Ph.D. diss. Yale, 1997), pp. 131–74.

[22] Alastair Williams, "Music as Immanent Critique, Stasis and Development in the Music of Ligeti," in Christopher Norris (ed.), *Music and the Politics of Culture* (London, 1989), p. 205.

[23] Ligeti in Michel, p. 52.

> I also practice a certain equilibrium that isn't tonal; there are no functional harmonic relations between these "regions." One could compare this to work in the geometric measurement of a certain territory. This territory is here a form marked by these intervals, by the pitches that don't normally return, or that then, if they return, create a clear formal relation. … There is never a tonal function, but nevertheless … different musical objects are bound very lightly.[25]

Ligeti explicitly compares this provisional, modal space to a landscape in which tonal distance is equivalent to spatial distance, a distance that is not pre-given but measured *as it is traversed*. The means of mapping that distance–canon and registrally-marked intervallic spaces–reclaims the expanded musical space of pre-tonal polyphony, as a container for another space that functions, in Josef Häusler's words, as a nostalgic "summation of the orchestral tradition from Wagner and Brahms, Bruckner, Mahler and Debussy."[26]

Nostalgia Observed

The word nostalgia was coined in the seventeenth century to diagnose the real pain suffered by homesick soldiers on long tours of duty. Tied to a sense of nationality, it survived in this sense for two hundred years or more, only gradually adopting its contemporary sense, as a longing for the past, that home for which none can ever return.[27] As Linda Hutcheon notes, it is precisely this unrecoverable nature of the past that lends nostalgia its emotional impact and appeal.[28] The past remains at a distance and so–like the future–its idealized image can never be directly challenged; hence nostalgia is a conservative trope, if not a necessarily regressive one.[29] Modernist nostalgia rarely yearns directly for the past, but memorializes it with a collection of relics or moments, whose visceral power–manifested in concrete smells, tastes, images or sounds–can easily bypass our critical instinct. Early diagnoses of nostalgia as affliction linked it with exposure to the "music we have been accustomed to in our youth," and the passions excited by "particular musical instruments."[30] Rousseau identified certain music as a "memorative sign" that always provoked sorrow for a lost past.[31] His acolyte Senancour celebrated the particular power of sound to evoke not only time and place, but other senses: "I have never seen a picture of the Alps which could make them as real as an alpine melody can ... The ranz-des-vaches ... put[s] us in the high valleys, near the naked, reddish-gray rocks, beneath the cold sky and the burning sun."[32]

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[24] Ligeti, *Ligeti in conversation,* pp. 95–6.
[25] Ligeti in Michel, p. 172.
[26] Josef Häusler, "György Ligeti, oder, die Netzstruktur," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 144/5 (1983): 20.
[27] Johannes Hofer first used the term nostalgia in "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia (1688)," ed. and trans. Carolyn Kiser Anspach, *The Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 7 (1934): 379–91. See also John D. Lyons, "The Ancients' Ironic Nostalgia," *Paragraph* 26/1 (2006): 104–5, and David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 6–10.
[28] Linda Hutcheon, "Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern," in Raymond Vervliet and Annemaries Estor (eds), *Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory* (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 189–207.
[29] See Stuart Tannock, "Nostalgia critique," *Cultural Studies* 9:3 (1995): 453–64.

Lontano invokes not only the late nineteenth-century orchestral tradition, but the nostalgic power of specific allusions. Yet these references appear obliquely, never as a "billboard" advertising their anachronistic deployment in the present.[33] Ligeti's subterranean polyphony undercut the power of canon to create the illusion of Renaissance polyphony; so to do *Lontano's* citations of Romantic and early-twentieth-century masterworks operate beneath its surface. Ligeti explained his approach as part of an "ambivalent attitude to tradition: denying tradition by creating something new, and yet at the same time allowing tradition to shine through indirectly through allusions."[34] Yet he may equally have blamed his ambivalent attitude to the present–to the political minefield represented by the 1960s avant-garde–as he takes great pains to locate the *idea* of *Lontano* in a historical tradition:

> *Lontano* is a title that signifies a music from long ago at a great distance, but also of a temporal distance … The word "lontano" is used several times by Schumann, notably in the *Davidsbündlertänze* ("From Lontano"), and also by Berlioz. The orchestral music of Berlioz has also influenced me; for example, the fifth movement of *Symphonie Fantastique* which begins with the timpani with sponge mallets, after the signal to play the oboe and the piccolo, and the following imitation (they are the sorcerers) by the horn. Berlioz wrote the following: "from the distance." [reh 62+5, *lointain*] This is actually an idea that found its source in the music of the nineteenth century, including Debussy, and somewhat in opposition to the avant-garde.[35]

Bruckner's Paradox

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[30] John Gregory, *A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World,* 7th ed. (London, 1777), pp. 164–6, cited in Jean Starobinski, trans. William S. Kemp, "The Idea of Nostalgia," *Diogenes* 14 (1966): 92.

[31] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Dictionary of Music*, trans. William Waring (London, 1779), p. 267.

[32] Senancour, *Obermann*, Letter XXXVIII, Third Fragment (1804), cited in Starobinski, p. 94.

[33] Hans-Christian von Dadelsen, "Entferung als räumliche, historische und ästhetische Perspektive in Ligetis *Lontano,"* *Melos/Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 2/3 (March 1976): 188.

[34] Ligeti, *Ligeti in Conversation*, p. 105.

[35] Ligeti in Michel, p. 169.

Ligeti composed *Lontano* with Mahler, Bruckner, and Debussy in mind.[36] Its expanded instrumentation, with four horns and four chairs in each wind choir, mimics "Bruckner's orchestral effects," and treats the expanded orchestra as a mammoth organ.[37] This "registration" includes sustained pedal points, an overridingly dark instrumental sound (similar to the theme in low strings that opens the *Allegro moderato* of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony), the separation of instrumental groups by register (setting woodwinds above brass in a combined range of four octaves), and a "block" style of instrumentation. Bruckner's formal process rested on a paradox: the attempt to bring symphonic form closer to the sound of an organ improvisation.[38] His orchestration incorporated a measure of sonic illusion; tremolos suggest the slightly sharp or flat tone of an organ stop intended to beat softly behind foreground timbres, while seconds in pedal tones imply the deliberate mistuning of one rank of pipes to imply greater orchestral forces (as in the Adagio of the Ninth Symphony at mm. 167–72 in oboes and clarinets).[39] These devices functioned formally when string tremolos were used to connect harmonically and texturally disparate sections of a work, as in the discant-tremolo in the first movement of the Fifth Symphony that links the slow introduction with the *allegro* theme (mm. 43ff.). *Lontano* incorporates a similar deviation from equal temperament through the use of quasi-unison textures that produce an audible beating, while relying on string articulation and overtone structure to promote links between sections.[40]

As Ligeti's orchestral works owe a debt to the organ's heir, the analog electronic studio, Bruckner also served as a model in a meta-orchestrational sense. *Lontano*'s "theme" is represented by a soft pedal tone: a unison A@ *(pppp)* in flutes, joined by clarinet and bassoon (mm. 1–5), then oboe, French horn, and trombone (mm. 3–8), like the extended tremolo that opens Bruckner's Ninth Symphony and functions "almost a paradox of the melodic unfolding of a single tone."[41] Yet the aperiodic sequence of durations between successive pitch entrances alludes to Ligeti's formative experience in the Studio for Electronic Music of the West German Radio in Cologne. The slightly wavering but simple frequency spectra of each tone mimic those produced by analog electronic synthesis, and the regular but staggered appearance of rests in each line creates a gentle pulsation like that of an electronically generated sound.[42]

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[36] Ligeti in Michel, p. 170.

[37] Ligeti, *Ligeti in Conversation,* p. 56.

[38] Manfred Wagner, "Musik von gestern - Provokation für heute," *Musik-Konzepte 23/24: Bruckner* (1982): 73. Measure references are to the Nowak edition of Bruckner's complete works.

[39] For instance, the use of aeolina and celeste stops to achieve a slightly out-of-tune background, or celeste with one rank mistuned to produce sensation of a warm, variable string or woodwind ensemble; see Irwin Stevens, *Dictionary of Pipe Organ Stops* (New York, 1983), pp. 36, 51–4.

[40] For instance, canonic segment I:3 is set by strings (and one *tenuto* clarinet), divided between *flautando, sul tasto* soli instruments and muted harmonics, which link the sound to that of the opening segment orchestrated solely by woodwinds (with one *tenuto* harmonic in cello).

[41] Peter Gülke, *Brahms/Bruckner* (Basel, 1989), p. 77.

[42] See Michel, p. 169.

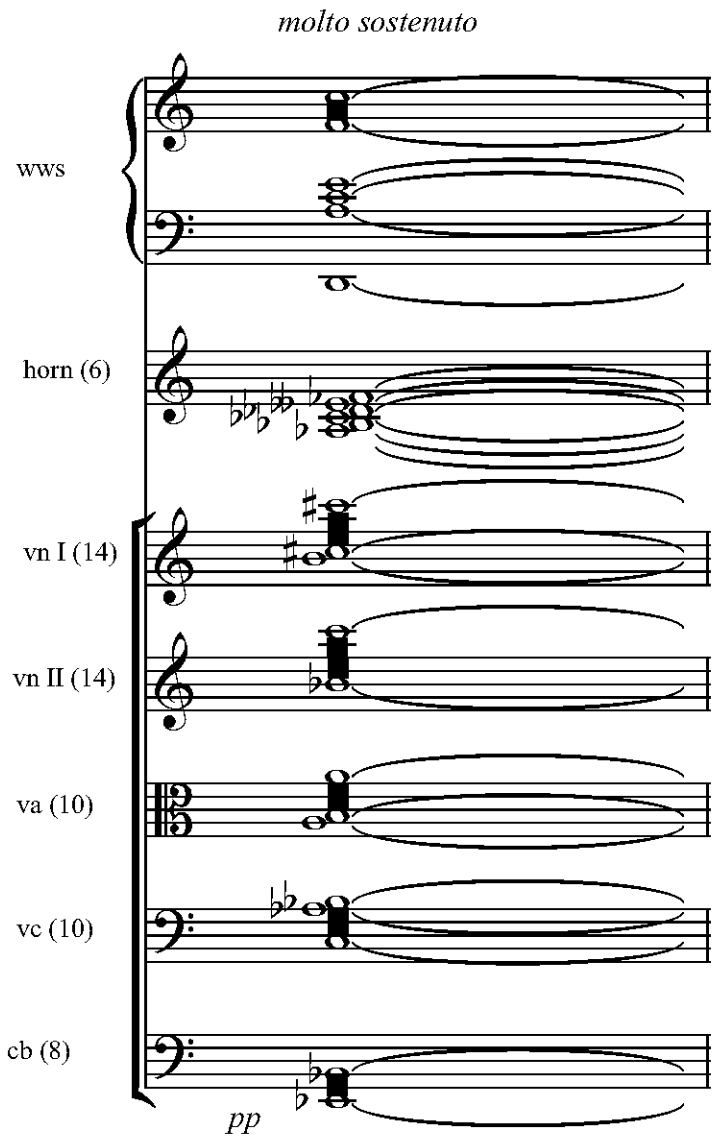

Figure 2, *Atmosphères,* orchestral reduction of first chord

Early twentieth-century composers rejected Bruckner's "sonic abundance full of luminescence and ambiguity," as Ernst Kurth put it, which gave "Romantic sensibility its purest expression in absolute and closed musical form."[43] As William Benjamin suggests, their negative reaction may represent "an unconscious suppression of their origins," one that *Lontano* dares to explictly reveal.[44] Ligeti recognized Bruckner as a pioneer in the conception of a musical space in which orchestration was inextricable from formal process and a radical sense of time-scale. *Atmosphères*–which proceeds in 22 sections demarcated by texture–could be could be read as a parody of Bruckner's style. Its opening eight bars segregate contrabass, violas and cellos, and violins by octave, as though the F# that spans five octaves to open the finale of Bruckner's Eighth were refracted through a dusty, chromatic lens (Figure 2). As this cluster dies away, paired string lines crescendo to *forte* (mm. 11–13) and drop to triple *piano* (mm. 12–14), followed by winds which enter in distinct blocks, and pit "white-note" (in oboes, bassoons, trumpets and trombones) and "black-note" (in flutes, clarinets and horns) collections against one another, sustained through separate rhythms in each line that cause the sound to fluctuate audibly. Each instrumental group recedes in turn, as a trill figure in violin 1 marked *sul ponticello, molto vibrato* (m. 23) launches an ostinato that ripples through the entire string body, in accelerating figures which model the tremolo passages that launch so many Bruckner movements.[45]

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[43] Ernst Kurth, trans. Lee A. Rothfarb (ed.), *Ernst Kurth: Selected Writings* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 165, 177.
[44] William E. Benjamin, "Tonal Dualism in Bruckner's Eighth Symphony," in William Kinderman and Harald Krebs (eds), *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality* (Lincoln, 1996), p. 253.

Throughout *Atmosphères* instruments enter and exit in blocks, isolated from one another by register, articulation, and terraced dynamics. A peak of intensity one-third of the way through the work (mm. 30–9) culminates with piccolos at quadruple *fortissimo* that quit abruptly to leave contrabass six octaves below (mm. 40–3): the sole pause in the otherwise unbroken stream of sound until a wave of delicate harmonics in all strings is cut short abruptly in mm. 100–101. Only the pale sound of brushes on piano strings is left, a provocative reference to the hushed motivic fragments–stripped of all melodic and rhythmic urgency that rustle at the close of the first movement of Bruckner's Eighth (mm. 393–417), and the slow movements of his Third and Fourth Symphonies (mm. 218–22 and mm. 238–47).[46]

The 1971 orchestral work *Melodien* begins with ascending scales in staggered groups of thirty-second notes marked *sempre espressivo*, a knowing nod to the febrile rising scales that serve as themes in the first movements of Bruckner's Fourth (mm. 43–61), and Eighth Symphonies (mm. 51ff.). Ligeti's notes to *Melodien* describe "three dynamic planes," similar to the "three processes of ever different sound character" that Dieter Schnebel describes in the first movement exposition of Bruckner's Third.[47] Bruckner's "one-chord-unfolding, polyphonic stream-of-sound, and sound lines compressed to pure melody" prefigure *Melodien's* background, middleground, and foreground of fleet lyrical melodies. Ligeti saw *Melodien* as the logical successor to *Lontano,* but traced this last innovation–melodies grouped in constellations with their own tempi, rhythms, shapes and intervallic structures–to Mahler's First Symphony and its contrapuntal use of a fragmented dominant chord.[48] For at the opposite pole from Bruckner's architectonic, layered movements lay Mahler, whose "ambitious overall forms [that] somehow always fail," came alive–for Ligeti–precisely in that "gap between the symphonic aspirations and the result."[49] But what Ligeti found most attractive in Mahler was "that rent quality, his 'Zerrissenheit,'" a "torn quality" which shapes form directly in *Lontano*.

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[45] See the opening movements of Symphonies 4, 7, 8 and 9, the Scherzi of Symphonies nos. 1 and 4, and the Finales of Symphonies nos. 4, 6 and 7 and Bauer, p. 311–12.

[46] Referring to the close of outer movements in Bruckner's Seventh, Ligeti discusses the change of function from the classical tutti-coda to "composed-out fermatas [that] are no longer mere closing-confirmations, but at the same time also static sound-planes, [a closing gesture] enlarged in its outward dimensions, shoved in on itself and carried over in a state of suspense so that the glow enters as though the conclusion itself could last forever."; "Form in der neuen Musik," pp. 187–8.

[47] György Ligeti, *Melodien* Schott, ED 3664 (1973); Dieter Schnebel, "Der dreieingige Klang oder die Konzeption einer Leib-Seele-Geist-Musik (Zu Bruckners Dritter)," *Musik-Konzepte 23/24: Bruckner* (1982): 18–19.

Form as "surging flow"

Robert Hopkins identified "dissolution"–the falling away or fading of a musical passage, motive or chord, marked by collapse, fragmentation or subsidence–as the primary indicator of closure in Mahler's music. A quick descending figure (such as a chromatic scale, or portamento), accompanied by a sudden decrease in both dynamic level and the number of elements it contains creates "collapse," as in the second movement of Mahler's Fifth Symphony. Subsidence, by contrast, names those final gestures in which Mahler decreases register, loosens the concordance among musical elements, lowers dynamic levels, and augments individual durations.[50] *Lontano's* three sections (mm. 1–55, 56–121 and 122–65) close with either "collapse" or "subsidence." The tutti *fortissimo* C in four octaves that closes canon 1 collapses into a lone violin harmonic and tuba, which limn a huge expanse between C8 and D@1 (mm. 41–6). Subsidence, by contrast, rules the final passages of sections II and III. Ten instrumental groups cycle at a glacial pace through the final five canon tones of second II, as 63 individual voices wither to three (mm. 93–111). The passage reaches a complete standstill in mm. 116–18, as E and G@ dissolve into F, and a single clarinet connects the fragmented whole-tone cadence of section II with the diatonic entrance of the final two canons in m. 122. As the section III reaches its climax on D#6, the canon' s pace slows down, and its two inverted canons contract (m. 140ff.). Individual instruments drop out as the number of sustained tones increase, until all that is left is a final (013) "signal triad" in clarinets (B2, C#3, D3, mm. 161–2).

Yet *Lontano*'s organic shape owes as much to Debussy, Ligeti's annointed heir to Mahler:

> For me, Debussy meant liberation from traditional form, not Schoenberg, Berg or Webern, who in this respect are much more traditional; nor Stravinsky for that matter: in his compositions the suite form is dominant. … Eventually, much later, I discovered Debussy's free formal ideas in Mahler's music; the last movement of his Sixth Symphony, for instance, which is only nominally

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[48] György Ligeti, "Ein Gespräch mit Detlef Gojowy aus dem Jahre 1988," in Constantin Floros, Hans Joachim Marx, Peter Petersen (eds), *Für György Ligeti: Die Referate des Ligeti-Kongresses Hamburg 1988* (Laaber, 1991), p. 354; Ligeti, *Ligeti in Conversation,* p. 62.

[49] Ligeti, *Ligeti in Conversation,* p. 77.

[50] Robert G. Hopkins, *Closure and Mahler's Music: the Role of Secondary Parameters* (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 87, 97, 122.

> a sonata-rondo; schematic formal structure does not apply here, it is all broken up, dissolved. Its cohesion comes from the unity of an all-pervasive mood, or perhaps it is due to its thematic material being derived from the same basic pattern, as in the late works of Debussy. It is a new kind of form, a surging flow, yet it is not shapeless. That is what I adopted as my model.[51]

As in *Lontano,* themes in Debussy grow from precisely-colored pitch, interval or harmonic cells. These brief motivic fragments spin a web formed of constantly-changing variation, as in rehearsal 18 in *Iberia*, or at m. 153 of the second movement of *La Mer* ("Jeux des vagues"), where woodwinds (with English horn and a trilling piccolo), trumpet, percussion, harp, and tremolo strings fill the tonal space up to G sharp6 (m. 153). Changes of intensity within single instruments or instrumental groups animate this static but iridescent texture, while minute rhythmic changes, as they did in *Apparitions, Atmosphères* and *Lontano,* function as an aspect of timbre. Debussy generates individual lines that–submerged in a sequence of wave formations–produce persistent but only dimly-perceived contrapuntal textures aided by the use of heterophonic orchestral doublings. Ligeti's divisi part-writing often takes Debussy's individual scoring–such as that found in the opening passage of "Nuages"–to a parodic extreme, as in *Atmosphères'* 56 simultaneous individual lines.

Atmosphères repeats *La Mer's* episodic construction, with formal sections announced by texture and articulation. Brass and strings often play *dolcissimo,* with bow changes alternating between parts, while muted strings are directed to play on the fingerboard. As in "Jeux de Vagues," the 74 instruments of *Atmosphères* fill the tonal space continuously (D2–C#7). Hence only minute changes in volume are required to raise the intensity level, creating audible distinction between sections that lends *Atmosphères* the same sense of spaciousness and depth. Debussy also relied on the juxtaposition of modal segments against a static–if internally restless–harmonic background. *Lontano*'s texture of "staggered simultaneity" points to a structural connection with the heterophony in mm. 211ff. of *La Mer*'s final movement, "Dialogue du vent." Both works can be parsed by Golden Section proportions, and represent "static forms" paradoxically animated by inner movement, in which abrupt changes of register and instrumentation and shifting relations of tempo and proportion replace more traditional techniques of thematic repetition and development.[52]

Secret Messages

Ligeti specifically chose his formal models from the "alternate" musical tradition, one not closed to the Darmstadt modernists, but at right angles to German and Viennese classicism. His two articles on Mahler's forms celebrate not only their sense of physical space, but their space for historical reflection.[53] The kind of illusory spatial perspective that, in the First Symphony, causes clarinets–seated in the front of the orchestra–to sound further away than the trumpets, operates metaphorically as well, within a historical narrative of musical objects. Ligeti's article on collage technique in the music of Mahler and Ives focuses on Mahlerian elements that come "from the garbage pail," those which long ago lost their military or social function and thus enter the new work suffused with a kind of ironic nostalgia. Even when fully integrated into a work's formal and harmonic structure, Mahler's particular collage technique–in its rejection of logical development and homogeneity–implies a moment of "violence" (*Gewaltsamkeit*). To express just how this alienation effect works, Ligeti turns to the sculptural installations of Edward Kienholz. The Kienholz installation *The Beanery* features a realistic bar setting, but for the fact that all the patrons have clocks instead of human faces. This small deviation in a naturalistic setting affects the tension of the entire scene, and radicalizes the assemblage.[54]

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[51] Ligeti, *Ligeti in Conversation,* p. 42.

[52] For a discussion of GS proportions in *La Mer*, see Roy Howat, *Debussy in Proportion* (Cambridge, 1983) pp. 64–135; for GS proportions in *Lontano,* see Bauer, pp. 98–9.

If this moment of violence radicalizes the whole, Ligeti further asserts that found objects gain their full meaning only when they both sharpen our sense of the historical and contribute to a work's formal structure, as in the music of Ives. Writing in a period in which the avant-garde orthodoxies of the 1960s were fraying at the edges, Ligeti proffered the collage technique of Mahler and Ives as one of the "secret messages to our time." Ligeti denied using direct quotations in *Lontano*, yet it's full of "secret messages," manifestations of distance that transcend mere formal and structural allusion:

> … we can grasp the work only within our tradition, within a certain musical education. If one were not acquainted with the whole of late Romanticism, the quality of being at a distance … would not be manifest in this work. For this reason, the piece is double-edged: it is in a sense traditional but not literally as with Stravinsky, it does not treat exact quotations from late romantic music, but certain types of later romantic music are just touched upon. … The forms can be heard from a distance and from long ago: almost, as it were, like the post-horn in Mahler's Third Symphony.[55]

These forms "from a distance and from long ago" are manifest most provocatively by individual moments in *Lontano* that recall the Adagio of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony, the Finale of Mahler's Ninth

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[53] See Chapter 1 and György Ligeti, "Raumwirkungen in der Musik Gustav Mahlers," GS I, pp. 279–84, and "Zur Collagetechnik bei Mahler and Ives," GS I, pp. 285–90.

[54] Ligeti, "Zur Collagetechnik," p. 286–90. Ligeti doesn't name the work, calling it a "drugstore," but he appears to be referencing the West Hollywood bar scene *The Beanery* from 1965 (photo by Ralph Crane, 1 Jan. 1964, in the *Life* magazine archive http://www.life.com/image/50543299). Ligeti's observation does not reflect local controversies expressed by the installation, which add another "radicalized" layer to the assembly.

[55] Ligeti, *Ligeti in conversation*, p. 93.

Symphony, Debussy's *La Mer,* and the Prelude of Wagner's *Parsifal.* Whether intentional or not, such intertextual references cite composers (with the possible exception of Wagner) who themselves maintained a critical, ambiguous relation to musical tradition. Klaus Kropfinger associates *Lontano* with the beginning of the prelude to Act I of Wagner's *Parsifal.*[56] Both works begin on a unison A@, and close on C at the end of the first expanded phrase. The extended central sections in the overture and *Lontano* close with a contraction to F–an F minor string tremolo in *Parsifal* (m. 79) and a tremulant F3 in the clarinet in *Lontano* (mm. 115–20). The rising head of the grail motive–E@–F–A@–is inverted in the middle of *Lontano* (B@–A@-F; mm 73–6, horn, trumpet, trombone), and both works end on an enharmonically-related unison in the higher register, in *ppp* sounded in the highest violins (E flat6 and 7 in the "Prelude," mm. 112–13, and D sharp6 and 7 in *Lontano,* mm. 136–54). Although the existence of a "secret message" may suggest the fraught history of *Parsifal,* this allusion points toward its structural affinities with *Lontano*. In one sense, both works function as exercises in the chromatic expansion and contraction of an essentially diatonic space, part of what lends them their essentially static quality.[57] *Parsifal's* diatonic space seems to coexist with the chromatic, and–as in *Lontano*–expresses itself as if from a distance, the "aura" of musical ideas, as Adorno expressed it, "understood only by whoever surrenders more to the echo of the music than to the music itself."[58]

An almost motionless transition from silence to sound links *Parsifal's* "Prelude" and Bruckner's Adagio to the topos opened up by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the nineteenth-century's model discourse for the sublime.[59] The Bruckner Adagio begins with a gentle pulsation in D@ major, harmonized by a *pianissimo* open fifth. Over this open fifth, the theme–a Baroque *kyklosis,* or turn figure, folding back on itself through the force of inertia–is barely perceptible (mm. 3–6). Against this veiled, pulsing backdrop, Bruckner's A@4, like *Lontano's* opening pitch, births "melody from sound" through incremental, half-step expansion.[60] Both works follow this double neighbor motive on A@ with an identical second subject: an E major scale that introduces high woodwinds doubled at the octave (mm. 6–10 in the Adagio and mm. 13–17 in *Lontano*). Each work incorporates earlier practices in a radically revised form; as Adolf Nowak noted, Bruckner used liturgical figures in the service of "a voluptuous indulgence in the embodiment of sound," at odds with the aesthetic implied by their source in Austrian church music.[61] Once associated with staid, periodic forms and a solemn, reverential function, in the Adagio of the Eighth these figures participate in hedonistic repetition and intensification to the point of parody: that point when–in Dahlhaus's terms–correspondences created by the juxtaposition of structural "blocks" with a web of motivic relationships "reaches a level of sophistication that enables monumentality to appear as grand style."[62]

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[56] Klaus Kropfinger, "Ligeti und die Tradition," in Rudolf Stephan, (ed.), *Über das musikalische Geschichtsbewußtsein* (Mainz, 1973), p. 132.

[57] Patrick McCreless calls *Parsifal* "a world that globally seems to be in diatonic space but is in fact full of warps and seams that posit the coexistence of a chromatic space." "An Evolutionary Perspective on Nineteenth-Century Semitonal Relations," in *The Second Practice*, p. 105.

[58] Theodor W. Adorno, "On the score of Parsifal," trans. Anthony Barone, *Music & Letters* 76/3 (1995): 384.

[59] For instance, in Chapter V of Arthur Seidl, *Vom Musikalisch-Erhabenen* (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 143–78. Leo Treitler speaks of the Ninth's "residual sense of the infinite," *Music and the Historical Imagination,* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), p. 56.

[60] Ernst Kurth, *Bruckner*, vol. II (Hidesheim, 1971), p. 1060.

[61] Adolf Nowak, "Die Wiederkehr in Bruckners Adagio," in Mahling, Christoph-Hellmut (ed.), *Anton Bruckner: Studien zu Werk und Wirkung* (Tutzing, 1988), p. 166.

Lontano approaches that point of sublime saturation on the historic plane, as its opening A@ motive references not only *Parsifal* and Bruckner's Adagio but the flute "arabesque" that interrupts the opening figure in Debussy's "De l'aube à midi sur la mer" over pianissimo divisi strings.[63] As *Lontano* continues it cites corresponding moments in *La Mer's* subsequent movements. For instance, *Lontano*'s second subject recalls the E major section of "Jeux de vagues" (mm. 36ff), while the canon cites several motives from "De l'aube." As the second section of *Lontano* continues (mm. 81ff), it cites the corresponding section of "De l'aube"(mm. 84ff.): the gesture introduced by divisi cellos in *La mer* is fragmented in *Lontano,* rising above the surface and sinking in a wave-like motion. These scattered echoes remain beneath the surface until the final four pitches of *Lontano's* second canon, which shift to the "flat side" of the pitch spectrum with a whole-tone descending tetrachord–B@–A@–G@–F@–that cycles through mm. 88–111 of *Lontano,* heard clearly in each instrumental group as section II slowly subsides.

This Lydian motive echoes throughout *La mer,* but comes to prominence in the dissolution of "Jeux de vagues" (mm. 114 ff.); the coda culminates in a whole-tone passage during which two-bar motives cycle through woodwinds, glockenspiel, and harp (mm. 237–44).[64] The (025) trichord heard throughout *La mer* appears as a sustained harmony to open *Lontano's* final section (mm. 120–54), where the spiraling descent (mm. 124ff) of the first canon in section III (IIIA) echoes the woodwind lines of "Dialogue du vent et de la mer" (mm. 98–109) and its "yearning" woodwind motive (mm. 56ff.). As "Dialogue" varied the pacing of melodic variants, so *Lontano's* final section features audible variations in tempi between juxtaposed mirror canons.[65] The climax of canon IIIB brings back the (025) motive (mm. 134–7); the upper canon cuts off suddenly as strings rise to D#7 over low winds and contrabass with a gently rocking chromatic motive that recalls the deceptive climax before the final return of the first and second group in "Dialogue" (mm. 203–10).

With the muted horn fanfare that announces its coda *Lontano* becomes self-conscious and overtly rhetorical. As the final two canons climax on piercing clusters that span seven octaves, three horns reference the collapsing "Grail" motive heard in the transition to the section II: B@3/B3/E4 to B@3/C4/F#4 to A3/D4/G#4 (mm. 145–51). This fanfare evokes that moment near the end of Bruckner's Adagio when "with great tranquility and gentleness the four horns suddenly play a passage that sounds almost like a quotation from Schubert, but seen through Bruckner's eyes."[66] Through Ligeti's "eyes," these horns reflect Bruckner as Bruckner reflected Schubert, and perhaps, we might speculate, as Schubert reflected Beethoven: the horns in the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth that–by repeating the first theme's close–already functioned in context as a "reminiscence, even a bit of nostalgia, colored brightly as it hadn't been before."[67] As *Lontano's* brass fade out in m. 150, muted cellos and contrabass subsume the sonority, and the G# is subtly–almost imperceptibly–resolved by one contrabass and cello (mm. 150 and 154). This dissonant G# seems to index the augmented fourth in the coda of Mahler's Fourth Symphony, III (m. 332) and the Andante comodo of his Ninth. In the Andante's development, the augmented fourth appears twice: trombones strike a rhythmic tattoo in triplets in mm. 250–53, and are recalled in tranquility in the movement's coda, passed from horns to winds under the direction *Schwebend* (mm. 410–24).

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[62] Carl Dahlhaus, trans. J. Bradford Robinson, *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 273–4.

[63] On the arabesque, see Simon Trezise, *Debussy: La Mer* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 54–6.

[64] Nine staggered instrumental groups enter in *Lontano,* mm. 93–112, each cycling through the final four canon tones; see Bauer, pp. 273–80. This passage is also astonishingly similar to mm. 103–10 of Ravel's orchestration of *Une barque sur l'océan* from *Miroirs.*

[65] See Bauer, 356–7.

This highly evocative, over-determined sonority comments ironically on the modernist subject: not only does she renounces the lost object but she must accept that it never existed in the first place. Lontano's horn fanfare thus represents an "impossible gaze," and introduces a split at the core of self-presence. As but a reflection of a reflection, the fanfare cannot *itself* be present, although the whole notion of presence–*Lontano's* aura of history made palpable in space–is constructed around it. In looking back to Bruckner, the fanfare reflects not an original object but a virtual ideal, the burgeoning historicism of a late-nineteenth century tradition already mirroring its direct forebears. The modern subject emerges in this impossible relation to a past that is present without ever being "presentified"; as Ligeti says of *Lontano,*

> Behind the music there is other music, and behind that more still–a kind of infinite perspective, as if one saw oneself in two mirrors, with the never-ending reflection that this produces.[68]

That Ligeti denied *Lontano's* conscious connection to Wagner, and claimed to abhor *Parsifal,* seems like the ironic consequence of such an "infinite perspective." The composer himself, caught in the "immense net" of music history, may find himself startled by the distorted image captured in his own creation, as if stumbling on a "secret connection to what has been."

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[66] Ligeti, *Ligeti in Conversation*, p. 92.
[67] Treitler, p. 62.
[68] Ligeti, *Ligeti in Conversation,* p. 98.