

Discourses of Identity in Contemporary East Asian Music: Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka



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Abstract

Discourses of identity in East Asian new music are often limited to tracing ethnographic materials or conceptual influences from the composers' cultures of origin. Existing analytical approaches tend to look for the musical features that are emblematic of the cultures in question, and to map relationships between the contemporary and traditional musical aspects. Composers who resist employing their native traditions as musical tropes, however, problematise discussions of their identity and are consequently overlooked in studies of identity politics.

This thesis therefore examines questions of identity through a focus on three contemporary composers who, in diverse ways, challenge and complicate essentialising expressions of East Asian identity: Chinese composer Chen Yi (1953-), Korean composer Unsuk Chin (1961-) and Japanese composer Karen Tanaka (1961-). All of them came to Europe or the United States to hone their skills in the mid-1980s and have since developed their musical careers in the Western world. They have been selected for examination due to their radically different reactions to the East-meets-West question; namely, Chen Yi's embracing of cultural fusion; Unsuk Chin's reaction against cultural fusion; and Karen Tanaka's lack of interest in cultural fusion. To demonstrate this variation, this thesis analyses the works of these composers, their personal viewpoints and the critical reception of their works. Beyond discussing conventional notions of identity and difference, this dissertation explores the ways in which these composers complicate their perceived dissimilarity by embracing a 'universal music' ideal.

Chapter One explores Chen Yi's musical identity as defined by her idea of 'cultural translation' and her musical goal of enhancing intercultural communication; where Chen Yi affirms cultural fusion, her work contributes to the traditional idea of 'East-meets-West'. Chapter Two examines an alternative approach in the case of Unsuk Chin, who consciously avoids the practice of cultural hybridity by locating her work squarely within the Western tradition. Chapter Three examines the works of two Japanese composers – Toru Takemitsu and Karen Tanaka – who focus their attention not on cultural fusion but on natural themes. The first section of Chapter Three presents Toru Takemitsu's Japanese-based philosophy of the co-creative bond between nature and humanity, which serves as a foil for Karen Tanaka's evolving, observational relationship with the natural world. To conclude, I compare the identity choices and the musical representations in the three case studies of Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka. By gaining a better understanding of each composer's music, this thesis aims to provide a more expansive discourse of identity formation in contemporary East Asian art music, and to offer a critical rethinking of what counts as an 'Asian perspective' in this field.

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Introduction: The Location of Identity Politics

I.1 ‘Not... a Chinese Composer’

In February 2013, Radio Free Asia published an interview with Wang Ying (b. 1978), recent recipient of the Brandenburg composition prize and a former pupil of German composer York Höller at the Cologne Conservatory of Music and Dance. In it, she makes the following comments on her ambitions as a composer:

What I would like to do in Germany is avoid getting labeled as a Chinese composer, or [as] someone who can only compose in [the] pentatonic [mode], because a lot of people have done that already, so I don't want to do that sort of thing.

I want to start on the same basis as other German composers. I don't want to make a big deal of my ethnic background. [...] I want people to see me as a composer who came out of Germany, and not as a Chinese composer.¹

Wang Ying's statements point to the central concern of this thesis: the location of musical identity for a modern Asian composer working within the tradition of Western classical music. In sharing her career aspiration, Wang Ying notably expresses her wish to establish her authorial voice in the context of German musical life rather than as 'a Chinese composer'. This wish underscores a problem experienced by many contemporary East Asian composers – that of being labelled and having their work analysed according to the traditional and

¹Yi Tian, trans. Luisetta Mudie, 'Not a Chinese Composer', *Radio Free Asia* [web page] (2013) <<http://www.rfa.org/english/women/composer-02152013151432.html>>, accessed 04 Oct. 2015.

stereotypical bifurcation between ‘East’ and ‘West’, or an assumed attempt at rapprochement between the two.

I.2 East-Meets-West: A Tiresome Position?

When East Asian composers such as Chou Wen-Chung (China, 1923-), Toru Takemitsu (Japan, 1930-2006) and Isang Yun (Korea, 1917-1995) became internationally recognised in the 1960s, popular interpretations and reception of their music were often tinted with an ‘East-meets-West’ optimism.² They represented the first wave of world-renowned Asian composers whose works reflected an effort to hybridise Western musical elements with indigenous or ‘ethnographic’ sounds. However, the critical reception of works by subsequent generations of East Asian artists, such as those of Chinese composer Tan Dun, tends to be more suspicious of such compositional practices. For example, the practice of ‘cultural fusion’ has been more recently dubbed by critics as ‘Asian neo-Orientalist’ or ‘Auto-exoticism’, or as ‘capitalizing on Orientalism’.³ These terms imply a critique of the composers for catering to the Western audience’s expectation of exotic flavour in their music, due to their Asian origins.

Not surprisingly, later-generation composers are anxious about having their works strait-jacketed as mere expressions of nationalism, orientalism or regional culture. This anxiety is revealed in paradoxes and problems inherent in their idealisation of the ‘universal’ – a broad and pliant concept that forms the crux of this thesis. In a 2005 interview, Chinese composer

²Frederick Lau defines ‘East-meet-West’ as ‘a label often used to refer to compositions that incorporate Asian and European musical elements. See Frederick Lau, ‘Context, Agency and Chineseness: The Music of Law Wing Fai’, *Contemporary Music Review*, 26 /5-6 (2007), 585–603.

³‘Asian neo-Orientalist’ is the term labelled by John Corbett; ‘Auto-Exoticization’ is used by Ralph P. Locke; and the phrase ‘capitalizing on Orientalism’ is employed by Frederick Lau. See John Corbett, ‘Experimental Oriental: New Music and Other Others’, in Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (eds.), *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley, CA; London, UK: University of California Press, 2000), 163-186, at 179; Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 294; Frederick Lau, ‘Fusion or Fission: The Paradox and Politics of Contemporary Chinese Avant-Garde Music’, in Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (eds.), *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 33-39, at 38.

Tan Dun famously asserted that ‘there is no East or West, all is human’.⁴ That same year, Korean composer Unsuk Chin also responded in an interview: ‘My music doesn’t belong to any school... It is very important to me that my music speaks to all... people.’⁵ Their objective is to compose music for all audiences, and their repeated emphasis on there being ‘no East or West’, along with their renunciation of any established school of music, evinces their deep awareness of the limitations imposed by preconceived and fixed cultural identities – whether those identities are conceived by the composer or by the listener. However, one can discern an incongruity between the lofty compositional aims of these composers and their actual execution. As an example of this possible incongruity, Samson Young observes that Tan Dun often laments the tendency of critics to read too much into his cultural background, but at the same time still continues to evoke explicit cultural markers in his music.⁶

From these critical concerns, the politics of identity has recently emerged as a focal issue in the study of contemporary East Asian compositions. One can clearly identify this trend in, for instance, the 2004 essay collection, *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, which explores the complex and often conflicting ‘politics of exoticism, ideologies and identity politics’ in cross-cultural musical influences.⁷ The 2013 collection entitled *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West* further studies the multifaceted relationship between the human voice and cultural identity under the general trends of cultural globalisation.⁸

Yet, approaches to the politics of identity in East Asian composition often remain limited to locating traces of ethnographic materials or conceptual influences from a composer’s

⁴Robert Lipsyte and Lois B. Morris, ‘Special Delivery from the Spirit World’, *New York Times*, 26 June 2005, Sunday Music Page.

⁵Hae Young Yoo, ‘Western Music in Modern Korea: A Study of Two Women Composers’, D. M. A. Thesis (Rice University, 2005), 143. The quotation is taken from the author’s interview with Unsuk Chin on 18 March 2005.

⁶Samson Young, ‘Reconsidering Cultural Politics in the Analysis of Contemporary Chinese Music: The Case of *Ghost Opera*’, *Contemporary Music Review*, 26 /5-6 (2007), 605–618.

⁷Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (eds.), *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

⁸Christian Utz and Frederick Lau (eds.), *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West* (New York, NY; London, UK: Routledge, 2013).

culture of origin. Commentators have been preoccupied with interpreting ‘indigenous’ elements in contemporary East Asian new music, expanding their critical approaches from postcolonial theory through to that of cultural globalisation. East Asian composers who resist employing their native traditions as musical tropes, however, problematise discussions of their identity and are consequently overlooked in studies of identity and identity politics. The purpose of this thesis is therefore to explore questions of identity in contemporary East Asian art music through a focus on three composers who, in different ways, challenge and complicate essentialising views of the way in which East Asian composers might express identity: Chinese composer Chen Yi (1953-), Korean composer Unsuk Chin (1961-), and Japanese composer Karen Tanaka (1961-). These artists share similarities in their biographical and educational backgrounds: all of them are women who came to Europe or the United States to hone their compositional skills in the mid-80s, after being trained in their countries of origin; all have since developed their musical careers in the West. They have been selected for examination in this thesis because they offer examples of radically different reactions to the East-meets-West question: while Chen Yi seems to embrace cultural fusion, Unsuk Chin reacts against and Karen Tanaka lacks interest in it altogether.

Taking these stances into account, this thesis explores the various ways in which each composer establishes her own musical identity through her own unique response to the question of ‘East-meets-West’. The ultimate goal is to gain a better understanding of each composer’s music and, most importantly, to provide a more expansive discourse of identity formation in contemporary East Asian art music.

Since the millennium, the study of contemporary East Asian music has been dominated by issues of cross cultural fusion and hybridity. The past five years have witnessed a scholarly attempt to shift the focus from problematising the Western centre and the non-Western periphery, to emphasising the tension between local and global dynamics in the age of cultural globalisation, as is evident in the 2013 book *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities*. One

can also observe a similar disquietude in the study of contemporary female composers – a field which has, since its emergence in the 1980s, been dominated by an observable ‘silencing and envoicing model’. To counteract a male-dominated history and society, researchers initially attempted to give female composers recognition and to stress aspects of ‘female’ identity in their music. Contrary to earlier scholarly efforts that strove to recognise and to celebrate female composers, during the past five years, the category of ‘woman composer’ – and whether it should even exist as a separate category – has generated serious discussion. At the same time, scholarly work focusing on ‘women composers’ continues to be published. Given these recent critical developments, the case studies presented in this thesis need to be mindful of the shift in current socio-cultural debates, and this introductory chapter therefore consists of three sections: the first outlines the history and the evolution of the dominant narrative of cross-cultural confluence in new East Asian music; the second provides a critical review of the study of contemporary female composers; and the third section develops my conceptual framework and provides a chapter summary for the thesis.

I.3 Rethinking the Prevailing Narrative of Cross-Cultural Confluence

The Politics of Exoticism

‘Musical exoticism’, as defined by Jonathan Bellman in his introduction to *The Exotic in Western Music* (1998), is ‘the borrowing or use of musical materials that evoke distant locales or alien frames of reference’.⁹ While the politics of exoticism is a well-established field of debate in studies of Western art music, it has emerged as a relatively new point of contention in the study of contemporary East Asian compositions. Recent approaches to

⁹Jonathan Bellman, ‘Introduction’, in Jonathan Bellman (ed.), *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), ix-xiii at ix.

exoticism in East Asian compositions can be assigned to two principal camps, whereby the first is critical of the conventional reception of the 'East-meets-West' theme, and the second takes issue with 'Eastern' composers' appropriation of stereotyped 'exotic' gestures as markers of an authentic voice.¹⁰ Under the old reception paradigm, an East Asian composer's interpolation of indigenous musical elements into Western compositional idioms was often interpreted as nationalistic self-expression.¹¹ In her 2003 paper, 'Against National Style - Individualism and Internationalism in New Chinese Music', Barbara Mittler argues against seeking supposedly 'national' characteristics as the main point of reference in the study of contemporary Chinese composition, positing that these composers' music should instead be viewed as 'the expression of individualism'.¹² Alternatively, in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, editor Frederick Lau remarks on how Chinese-American composers have often used distinctly 'Chinese' elements to their own advantage, as marketing strategies.¹³ Another contributor, Jeongmee Kim, explores how the musical ideas and techniques of Korean composer Isang Yun (1917-1995) are 'fundamentally different from conventional practices of musical hybridization that were motivated by "exoticism" or "nationalism"'.¹⁴ These various critics attempt to move beyond seeing contemporary East Asian compositions as either mere expressions of nationalism or naïve cultural exchanges.

The other scholarly camp examining the politics of exoticism in new East Asian Music was originally critical of the theme of musical exoticism in Western art music. Only recently

¹⁰Cf. note 2

¹¹See Judith Ann Herd, 'The Neonationalist Movement: Origins of Japanese Contemporary Music', *Perspectives of New Music*, 27 /2 (1989), 118–163; 'National Traditions in Music and a Nationalistic Style' and 'National Characteristics in Music and the Mutual Influence of World Musical Cultures' sections in Huanzhi Li, 'People's Republic of China', in Harrison Ryker (ed.), *New Music in the Orient: essays on composition in Asia since World War II* (Buren: F. Knuf, 1991), at 204-209; Songwen Li, 'East Meets West: Nationalistic Elements in Selected Piano Solo Works of Chen Yi', D. M. A. Thesis (University of North Texas, 2001).

¹²Barbara Mittler, 'Against National Style - Individualism and Internationalism in New Chinese Music', *Proceedings of the Symposium at the 2003 Chinese Composers' Festival*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Composers' Guild, 2003, 2–26; cf. also Samson Young, 'The Voicing of the Voiceless in Tan Dun's *The Map*: Horizon of Expectation and the Rhetoric of National Style', *Asian Music*, 40 /1 (2009), 83–99.

¹³Lau, 'Fusion or Fission', 22-39.

¹⁴Jeongmee Kim, 'Musical Syncretism in Isang Yun's *Gasa*', in Everett and Lau, *Locating East Asia*, 168-92

have Western scholars begun to investigate ‘exoticism’ in the contemporary music practices of those conventionally exoticised groups.¹⁵ In his work, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (2009), Ralph P. Locke identifies what he deems to be the crucial question of the topic: namely, what is considered exotic in the view of ‘composers from beyond “the Western mainstream”’?¹⁶ As early as 1998, Jonathan Bellman indicated that ‘the crucial difference between exoticism and musical folklorism depends much on who is doing the composing and who the listening’.¹⁷ For example, the use of Russian folk music in a composition can be perceived as ‘exotic’ by a French audience. While Bellman focuses on the incongruity in the reception of the same music amongst native and non-native audiences, John Corbett’s position goes much further. Unlike Bellman, Corbett is critical of the ways in which ‘exotic’ musical elements are ‘re-appropriated’ by East Asian composers, viewing or representing them through the Western lens. Corbett goes so far as to refer to Asian composers such as Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996), and Tan Dun (1957-) as ‘Asian neo-Orientalist’. In his view, these composers re-incorporate ‘techniques devised by a Western composer inspired by Asian philosophy... in their compositions’.¹⁸ This paradox is suggested by Mittler as ‘the double mirror effect’, according to which Taiwanese and Hong Kong composers ‘rediscover’ elements of their own traditional culture in New Music from the West’.¹⁹ Locke summarily dubs this compositional practice ‘auto-exoticization’ in his 2009 book *Musical Exoticism*, identifying the same paradoxical practice of Asian composers using elements considered ‘exotic’ by Westerners to represent themselves.²⁰ Regardless of their various positions, contemporary academic attitudes to new East Asian music have shown a marked

¹⁵On Tan Dun, see W. Anthony Sheppard, ‘Blurring the Boundaries: Tan Dun’s *Tinte* and *The First Emperor*’, *Journal of Musicology*, 26 /3 (2009), 285–326; For general discussion, see Ralph P. Locke, ‘Exoticism in a Global Age (C. 1960 to Today)’, in Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 276–311.

¹⁶Ralph P. Locke, ‘Exoticism in a Global Age (C. 1960 to Today)’, in Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 276–311.

¹⁷Bellman, *The Exotic in Western Music*, IV-V.

¹⁸Corbett, ‘Experimental Oriental’, 179.

¹⁹Barbara Mittler, ‘Mirrors and Double Mirrors. The Politics of Identity in New Music from Hong Kong & Taiwan’, *CHIME*, /9 (1996), 4–44.

²⁰Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 294.

dedication to scrutinising the impact of Western exoticism on the rediscovery of cultural heritage taking place in new East Asian music.

Current practice in East Asian new music scholarship can be regarded as a dialogue between these two camps. In response to Asian music being discussed as an exotic Other – such as in *Western Music and Its Others* (2000) – Frederick Lau and Yayoi Uno Everett’s *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* (2004) serves to point out that East Asian culture has served as an important inspiration and not just an exotic flavour for many post-war, Western composers such as John Cage, Olivier Messiaen, Lou Harrison, Karlheinz Stockhausen – and has consequently altered the contemporary music scene.²¹ Meanwhile, post-war Asian composers such as Takemitsu, Isang Yun and Chou Wen-Chung have tried to move away from the mechanical and superficial incorporation of Asian materials that many of the pre-war Asian composers apparently engaged in.²² According to Lau and Everett, the cross-cultural synthesis of both Asian and Western composers signals ‘the emergence of a distinct cross-cultural genre’ which represents a ‘new aesthetic consciousness’.²³ In their study, Lau and Everett attempt to ignore the ethnicities of the composers, as ethnic differences inherently involve the traditional asymmetrical power relations between ‘East’ and ‘West’, or self and Other. Instead, they direct attention to cross-cultural works as matters of aesthetic choice and artistic taste.

Everett’s 2005 article, ‘Mirrors of West and Mirror of East: Elements of *Gagaku* in Post-War Art Music’, further develops this aesthetic viewpoint.²⁴ In response to Corbett’s labeling of certain Asian composers as ‘Asian neo-Orientalists’, Everett explores the use of the Japanese court music material, *gagaku*, by a number of post-war Japanese and Western composers, such as Takemitsu, Makoto Shinohara (1931-), Yoritsune Matsudaira (1907-2001)

²¹ Everett and Lau, *Locating East Asia*, XV.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Yayoi Uno Everett, ‘Mirrors’ of West and ‘Mirrors’ of East: Elements of *Gagaku* in Post-War Art Music’, in Hae-Kyung Um (ed.), *Diasporas and Interculturalism in Asian Performing Arts* (New York, NY; London, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 176-203.

and Messiaen. Everett discovers that for both Messiaen and Matsudaira, *gagaku* represents ‘a neutral, abstract musical entity that can be freely merged with the Western dodecaphonic idiom’.²⁵ In her analysis, Everett quotes Matsudaira’s own statement indicating that, for a Japanese composer, *gagaku* materials can be free of any Japanese connotation or emotional resonance. Matsudaira rather emphasises that what have been regarded as ‘Japanese features’ in his music are merely a ‘byproduct’ of his search for his own individual voice.²⁶ This wilful de-ethnicisation of musical materials on the part of researchers or composers can be regarded as a common strategy to avoid being regarded as exotic and ‘other’. Yet, another paradox arises from this strategy: if these materials are explicitly devoid of any cultural connotation, then what substantiates the study of East Asian music as ‘East Asian’ music?

In current cross-cultural synthesis debates and dialogues, three major scholarly positions have emerged. The first view is held by scholars who complicate and try to politicise the presence of native cultural traditions in East Asian new music as the composers’ self-exoticising for marketing purposes. The second position constitutes a reaction to Corbett’s ‘Asian new-Orientalist’ accusation, whereby scholars attempt to elevate Asian composers above the category of ‘exotic Other’ by demonstrating that they use Asian materials as compositional source materials without any cultural connotation in the way that some Western composers do. The third view considers the composers’ use of indigenous materials as representing the intentional expression of their cultural identities. This third view neither politicises the exotic elements nor attempts to neutralise them as a composer’s aesthetic inspiration and choice; it rather emphasises the intuitive value of native elements to a composer’s sense of belonging. In all three positions, one can see the tendency to locate the problem of identity in the presence of ‘indigenous materials’. The three positions have co-existed and undergone

²⁵Ibid., 196.

²⁶Ibid., 185. Matsudaira’s original quotation: ‘If I use *gagaku* and serialism, it is only to foster my own ‘individual’ style. What is ‘Japanese’ in my music has not been intended as such, it is only a byproduct of my search for individuality. [...] *Gagaku* also has very rich historical connotations, of course. It has been the music of the Imperial court. Its social overtones are again very strong. But, for me at least, these overtones are emotion free.’

sustained examination, country by country, in three seminal publications: Keith Howard's *Creating Korean Music: Tradition, Innovation and the Discourse of Identity* (2006); the 2007 special issue of the *Contemporary Music Review*, 'China and the West'; and the 2008 study *Music of Japan Today*.²⁷

Not surprisingly, the rapidly evolving perceptions of Asian 'exoticism' on the part of musicologists who hold versions of the three views outlined above is matched by the complex, developing relationships that Asian composers' have with their own musical heritage. Tan Dun, as a Chinese composer, provides a notable case of the myriad responses engendered by contemporary East Asian music. As previously mentioned, Corbett reads Tan's re-appropriation of sounds of 'nature' in *Ghost Opera* (1994) as an instance of Asian neo-Orientalism.²⁸ Meanwhile, Yu Siu Wah argues that the use of ancient Chinese bell-chimes – which symbolise imperial China in Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997: Heaven, Earth, Man*, as the piece was commissioned for Hong Kong's reunification with China – may sound generically 'exotic' to Western audiences, but would certainly be perceived by some Hong Kong residents as a threat to the city's autonomy.²⁹ Despite Tan Dun's famous assertion that 'there is no East or West, all is human', he has been criticised for his inconsistency in executing this principle.³⁰ Samson Young therefore questions how Tan Dun can lament the tendency of critics to read his cultural background into his compositions while he continues to employ cultural markers in those works, such as the Chinese folk tunes *Nuo* (傩, for 'ghost dance' and 'wailing'), and *Xiaobaicai* (小白菜), a Yimeng folk song, in his *Ghost Opera*.³¹

²⁷Keith Howard, *Creating Korean Music: Tradition, Innovation and the Discourse of Identity* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006); Edwin Michael Richards and Kazuko Tanosaki (eds.), *Music of Japan Today* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2008); 'China and the West - The Birth of a New Music', *Contemporary Music Review*, 26/5-6 (2007), 493–637.

²⁸By 'cage-like nature sounds', Corbett refers to Tan Dun's use of water, stones and paper as instruments in *Ghost Opera* – inspired by John Cage's aesthetics of 'the presence of sound as the voice of nature'. Corbett, 'Experimental Oriental', 179–80.

²⁹Yu Siu Wah, 'Two Practices Confused in One Composition: Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997: Heaven, Earth, Man*', in Everett and Lau, *Locating East Asia*, 57–71; Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 294.

³⁰Lipsyte and Morris, 'Special Delivery'.

³¹Young, 'Reconsidering Cultural Politics'.

To add to the already complex nature of compositional identity for East Asian composers, the past five years in particular have witnessed a movement in East Asian new music studies from the centre-periphery model towards a local/global dichotomy in the context of cultural globalisation. This transition can be seen most recently in the essay collection *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West* (2013), which constitutes an effort to collate discussions of Western musical practices in East Asian regions since 2004. What distinguishes this book from previous studies of East Asian new music is that it focuses exclusively on the human voice in vocal music and adopts theories from the study of cultural globalisation in order to discuss ‘intercultural compositions’.³² In this collection, one can discern the formal evolution of the ‘Western centre versus the non-Western Other’ debate into tension between ‘local’ and ‘global’ considerations. In an effort to provide more inclusive discussions, the subject matter of this book includes both Western and East Asian composers, and both art and popular music. The human voice is the central focus of the work because of the voice’s dual functions: it can both assert ethnic authority and achieve liberation by disrupting that authority.

The foremost among the cultural globalisation theories put forward by *Vocal Music* is that of ‘reflexive globalisation’, developed by Ulrich Beck and Danilo Zolo in 1999.³³ In their introduction to the collection, editors Christian Utz and Frederick Lau point out two aspects of ‘reflexive globalisation’ that are particularly relevant to discussions of ‘intercultural compositions’: the first is the phenomenon of reflexive globalisation itself, which contends that globalisation should not be regarded as a unidirectional force ‘from “outside” that “influences” a homogeneous local territory’.³⁴ According to the reflexive principle, globalisation should be understood as interactions between local and global processes that produce new cultural hybridisations and cultural identities. The second relevant aspect of

³²Utz and Lau, *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities*.

³³Ulrich Beck and Danilo Zolo, ‘What is Globalization? Some Radical Questions’, *Jura Gentium: Rivista di filosofia del diritto internazionale e della politica globale* (2005) <<http://www.juragentium.org/topics/wlgo/en/beck.htm>>, accessed 15 Sept. 2015; Utz and Lau, *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities*, 2.

³⁴Utz and Lau, *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities*, 2.

the reflexive theory is that globalisation results not only in cultural hybridisations but also in socio-political trends such as neo-nationalism, which involve the reassertion of national identity and stem from the 'reterritorialization and re-ethnicization of identity'.³⁵ The collection therefore seeks to use vocal music as a tool to discuss these two factors, as the editors outline: 'musical manifestations of reflexive globalisation tending towards hybridity, as well as musical manifestations of reinforced identities and boundaries'.³⁶

Yet, the case studies in my thesis show different pictures to these two musical consequences of reflexive globalisation that *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities* observes – music creating cultural hybridity and also reinforcing cultural boundaries. Chinese composer Chen Yi can be regarded as a representative Asian composer whose music testifies to 'the persistent attachment to real or imagined cultural identities' identified in *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities*.³⁷ However, the issue of 'real and imagined cultural identities' is crucially negated in the cases of Unsuik Chin and Karen Tanaka, as the latter two composers do not seek to build their musical identities from past traditions. While current studies stress that local and global dimensions intersect in the construction of identity, this thesis extends that discussion to include compositions where the sense of locality is absent, either consciously, meaning intentionally on the part of the composer, or subconsciously, suggesting a more 'organic' compositional process – however we might choose to situate notions of organicism culturally. The objective of this project is to explore the unique way in which each composer establishes her musical identity and compositional voice through either their categorical embracing or rejection of cross-cultural fusion and locality. The ultimate goal is not only to gain a better understanding of these composers' respective musical positionings, but to expand the discourse of identity formation in contemporary East Asian art music.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

I.3 Towards an Unlocalised, Cosmopolitan Identity

Despite the fact that existing studies of East Asian contemporary music tend to stress the role of cultural heritage in the construction of a composer's identity, the phenomenon whereby an artist purposefully constructs an identity that is more cosmopolitan rather than locally-driven has been explored in studies of other musical genres or art forms. The following section will examine some precedents in other artistic genres and practices in order to contextualise the cases of Tanaka and Chin, who do not follow the prevailing narrative of 'East-meets-West'.

In popular music, Kai Khiun Liew and Shzr Ee Tan examine the complex construction of identity in Singaporean English-language indie music as an unlocalised, but as of yet 'unglobalised' subculture.³⁸ Singaporean English-language indie musicians resist ethnic labeling by consciously steering away from local references and from the styles of commercial Mandarin popular music. Rather, they embrace the genre's Western origins and its anti-mainstream tendency, forming instead a counter-narrative to the dominant political culture in Singapore. However, despite (or perhaps because of) their effort to pursue a non-territorial identity, the Singapore-English indie bands are still unable to penetrate the global musical scene. This paradox is due to the fact that their music is not considered 'exotic' enough to qualify for that Western label of 'world music', and hence does not satisfy Western consumer demands for colonial fantasies.³⁹ As such, Singaporean-English indie music is not only unlocalised but also a currently unglobalised subculture which challenges the current scholarly understanding of the localising tendencies of popular culture in Asia.⁴⁰

In recent studies of contemporary arts, the simplistic identity categorisation of artists has been challenged. For example, in 2013, a conference on contemporary arts and cosmopolitanism held in Berlin explored 'the practice of artists who can no longer be classified and

³⁸Kai Khiun Liew and Shzr Ee Tan, 'An Unlocalized and Unglobalized Subculture: English Language Independent Music in Singapore', in Anthony Y. H. Fung (ed.), *Asian Popular Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 113-38.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 114.

located either inside or outside the “West”, or as occupying an in-between space’.⁴¹ Notably, this exploration challenges not only the notorious dualism of West/Non-West, but also the influential postcolonial concept of hybridity now deemed inadequate in reflecting the variety of identity outlooks and practices in the contemporary art world.

Recent studies thus pay particular attention to artists’ various strategies and narratives, which serve as an alternative to any presumed identity and belonging. Mark Cheetham’s study on British-born Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare is one such example. Born in London in 1962, Shonibare was moved to Lagos, Nigeria at the age of three, and subsequently moved back to the UK at the age of seventeen. According to Cheetham, Shonibare was encouraged, as an art school student in 1980s London, to produce artworks based on his African heritage.⁴² Shonibare replied by asking ‘why [he would] know any more about that [African heritage] than a typical “English” student would know about the clichés of Englishness, such as Morris Dancing’.⁴³ Shonibare went on to remark: “[I]f you are a black artist who chooses not to make work about being black [...] [y]ou will be described as the black artist who doesn’t make work about being black.”⁴⁴ True to his concerns, rather than searching for an essentialised authenticity, Shonibare explores issues of Britishness and cosmopolitanism ironically, by using the ‘African Wax’ as a key material in his works. The brightly coloured fabric called ‘African Wax’ is in fact a Dutch product inspired by Indonesian batiks and imported to the Western African market in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It later became a symbol of typical African clothing and therefore a sign of ‘Africanness’. As Cheetham points out, by invoking a European product which came to represent ‘authentic’ African culture, Shonibare ‘turns cultural stereotypes to the business of critique’.⁴⁵ As

⁴¹ ‘Rethinking Cosmopolitanism’, *Goethe Institute* [web document] (2013) <http://www.goethe.de/ins/pt/lis/pro/prog/Cosmopolitanism_Berlin.pdf>, accessed 26 June 2016.

⁴² Mark A. Cheetham, ‘A Renewed Cosmopolitanism: Specifying Artists, Curators, and Art-writers’, *The London Consortium* [web document] (2008) <<http://static.londonconsortium.com/issue08/Cheetham-Static8.pdf>>, accessed 26 June 2016.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

such, he does not conform to but instead plays with the politics of representation. Notably, Shonibare's response bears resemblances to Unsuk Chin's reaction, in that they both reject presupposed ethnic labeling; yet, their strategy differs. While Shonibare demonstrates how inauthentic the 'African wax' is, Chin shows us how un-Korean a composer she can be by deliberately drawing inspiration from a wide range of authentic Western narrative traditions, ranging from Euripides' tragedy, to Lewis Carroll's children's literature, to E.T.A. Hoffman's *The Sandman* (1816).

In attempting to move beyond ethnic- or religion-based identity analysis, recent studies have explored the potential for cosmopolitanism to be used as an analytical tool to explain identity outlooks or new forms of belonging beyond the local and the national.⁴⁶ For example, in the book *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, cultural anthropologist James Clifford points out that the term 'cosmopolitan', with its multi-faceted connotations, provides a possibility 'toward alternative notions of "cultural" identity. It undermines the "naturalness" of ethnic absolutisms, whether articulated at the nation-state, tribal or minority level'.⁴⁷ In other words, cosmopolitanism – derived from the Greek *kosmopolitēs* (*kosmos* + *politēs*), meaning 'citizen of the world' – offers an alternative framework for identity analysis which extends beyond the limitations of conventional notions of belonging and citizenship in the globally connected contemporary world.

Amongst recent theoretical considerations of cosmopolitanism, German sociologist Ulrich Beck's concept of a 'world risk society' is most relevant to the case of Karen Tanaka. In his 1996 article 'World Risk Society as Cosmopolitan Society?', Beck argues that the contemporary world has entered a stage of second modernity which is focused on shared similarities rather than differences, including the most pressing and shared risks such as

⁴⁶Magdalena Nowicka and Maria Rovisco, 'Making Sense of Cosmopolitanism', in Magdalena Nowicka and Maria Rovisco (eds.), *Cosmopolitanism in Practice* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 1-2.

⁴⁷James Clifford, 'Mixed Feelings', in Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (eds.), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 365.

environmental catastrophes, terrorist attacks and global diseases.⁴⁸ According to Beck, this growing awareness of common risks is fostering the sense of a globally shared collective future, which is leading to the emergence of a cosmopolitan identity.⁴⁹

Drawing on Beck's notion of globally-shared risks, in her work *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008), Ursula Heise looks at how the global scale of environmental crises are imagined in various contemporary artifacts such as novels, poems, films and installation artworks. Heise criticises the primacy of localism in current ecocriticism and argues instead for an engagement with environmental issues from a global, cosmopolitan perspective.⁵⁰ While Heise focuses on the media of arts and literature, Tanaka's case exemplifies a cosmopolitan imagination conceived through commonly shared risks in a musical dimension. Particularly in her piano compositions for children, she evokes environmental problems on the global scale as well as the interconnectivity between humans and non-human others, in order to foster in children a planetary perspective and the sense of shared future and responsibility. This vision of a cosmopolitan future, which values the global community over local priorities, is presented in Tanaka's works, deeply shaping her own 'eco-cosmopolitan' identity and outlook.

In contrast to Tanaka's embracing of a shared humanity, Chin's strategy for rejecting any perceived identity is to deny any particular similarities to any cultures, and to embrace instead her autonomy as a free-willed agent, able to draw material inspiration from any one of them. For Chin, individual and artistic freedoms not only relate to her ideal of artistic originality, they also entail the rejection of a presupposed musical identity based on her culture of origin. Both Tanaka and Chin refuse to be constrained within such 'essentialist' concepts of identity; they both strive to construct a musical identity that is neither localised nor hybrid. Their alternative narratives offer key insights into the complexity of the identity

⁴⁸Ulrich Beck, 'World Risk Society as Cosmopolitan Society? Ecological Questions in a Framework of Manufactured Uncertainties', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 13 /4 (1996), 1–32.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ursula Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: the Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008).

discourses surrounding contemporary East Asia composers, which until now have been overlooked in scholarship.

I.4 The Study of Contemporary Women Composers

As the three subjects of the case studies in this thesis are female as well as East Asian, the issue of gender must be addressed; after all, it pertains to and has potentially influenced the critical focus on their compositional careers. As early as the second half of the 1980s, music scholars began to apply the analytical techniques developed by feminist critics to the study of music, as is evident in two books: *Women Making Music* (1986) and *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (1987).⁵¹ Following the aforementioned ‘silencing and voicing model’, researchers have aimed to retrieve the forgotten names and works of women composers who have been excluded from the history of Western music.⁵² In order to discern why these female artists have been silenced and how to make their voices heard, commentators have focused on the notion of their difference. Earlier research draws upon ideas of female or feminine archetypes to examine women’s music making.⁵³ Susan McClary’s feminist critique of Janika Vandervelde’s piano trio *Genesis II* (1983), in her seminal book *Feminine Endings* (1991), is a good example.⁵⁴ McClary interprets a clockwork *ostinato* at the beginning of the piece as evoking the concepts of childbirth, woman’s reproductive faculty and the life cycle.⁵⁵ For McClary, the notion of cyclicity in Vandervelde’s music embodies female or feminine pleasure, which is different from the tension-and-release patterns conventionally

⁵¹Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, *Women Making Music: the Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950* (London: Macmillan Press Music Division, 1986); Ellen Koskoff (ed.), *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York; London: Greenwood, 1987).

⁵²See Kimberly Marshall, *Rediscovering the Muses: Women’s Musical Traditions* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

⁵³Sally Macarthur, *Feminist Aesthetics in Music* (London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 18.

⁵⁴Susan McClary, ‘Getting Down Off the Beanstalk: The Presence of a Woman’s Voice in Janika Vandervelde’s *Genesis II*’, in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 112-31.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 112-131.

found in more ‘masculine’ tonal music.⁵⁶ McClary’s reading of Vandervelde’s *Genesis II* is influenced by *l’écriture féminine*, a reading practice championed by French writers and psychoanalysts such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. *Écriture féminine*, which literally means ‘women’s writing’, promoted writings marked by feminine desire and expressions of the female body.⁵⁷

Pirkko Moisala’s article ‘Gender Negotiation of the Composer Kaija Saariaho in Finland’ (2000) discusses the situation of female composers in establishing a professional career, and Saariaho’s experience as a female composer working in the then male-dominated electronic music laboratory at IRCAM in the early 1980s.⁵⁸ Moisala points out that the difficulty inherent in studying contemporary female composers is that while researchers try to make their experiences heard, the research itself is also hindered by the composers’ own statements that they have never considered their artistry to be defined by their gender.⁵⁹

In order to revive feminist musicology, Sally Macarthur’s *Towards a Twenty-First-Century Feminist Politics of Music* (2010) attempts to adopt French philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s works as a philosophical tool and theoretical model. Macarthur uses Deleuze’s conceptions of ‘difference’, ‘virtuality’ and ‘becoming’ to ‘think anew of the question of women’s participation as composers in “new” music’.⁶⁰ According to Macarthur, Deleuze’s notion of difference is not based on a fixed hierarchical binary, such as the traditional male/female dynamic; it is instead ‘produced through an ongoing process of differentiation’ that permits

⁵⁶McClary, ‘Getting Down Off the Beanstalk’, 112-131. Of course, cyclicity is not an exclusively feminine phenomenon, and can be found in works, amongst others, by César Frank, Robert Schumann, and Igor Stravinsky. I am grateful to Prof. Robert Saxton (Oxford) for this observation.

⁵⁷*Écriture féminine* is the term coined by French feminist Hélène Cixous in her article ‘The laugh of the Medusa’ in 1975. See Laura Alexander, ‘Hélène Cixous and the rhetoric of feminine desire: re-writing the Medusa’, *MODE Literary Journal* [web page] <<http://english.arts.cornell.edu/publications/mode/documents/alexander.html>>, accessed 12 Sept. 2015.

⁵⁸Pirkko Moisala, ‘Gender Negotiation of the Composer Kaija Saariaho in Finland: The Woman Composer as Nomadic Subject’, in Beverley Diamond and Pirkko Moisala (ed.), *Music and Gender* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 166-188.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 173.

⁶⁰Sally Macarthur, *Towards a Twenty-First Century Feminist Politics of Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 1.

us to ‘think of difference as a constantly emerging process of becoming other-than-itself’.⁶¹ By adopting this concept, Macarthur attempts to establish a future for women’s music that is not based on the current master or ‘male’ narrative. To that end, Macarthur identifies two aesthetic trends that currently dominate contemporary classical music: composition based on the languages of post-serial atonal music, or composition inspired by post-minimalist tonal music.⁶² Macarthur uses these trends to examine three case studies: Sofia Gubaidulina (1931-), Elena Kats-Chernin (1957-) and Anne Boyd (1946-). According to Macarthur, Gubaidulina composes extremely atonal, dissonant music that subverts the master narrative, whereas Anna Boyd’s music communicates what would stereotypically be seen as ‘excessive femininity’ and consonant music. Kats-Chernin, in contrast, composed music that moves to a ‘space in between masculinity and femininity’.⁶³ However, as this analysis falls back into arbitrary binaries such as masculinity/femininity and consonant/dissonant, it begs the questions of how these different musical consequences all, ‘in different ways, open up difference and the unknown in "new" music composition’, as Macarthur claims they do.⁶⁴

As increasing numbers of female composers have gained prominence in contemporary music over the past few years, the tension between researchers’ focus on and composers’ rejection of gender categorisation continues to manifest itself. For example, in 2012, composer Amy Beth Kirsten published a provocative essay entitled ‘The “Woman Composer” Is Dead’ in *NewMusicBox*, an online magazine of contemporary classical music.⁶⁵ As a composer herself, Kirsten acknowledges that female composers have had difficulty gaining authority in the male-dominated sphere of Western art music. Yet Kirsten further argues that this category is now not only inappropriate – as it may imply a lesser quality in the music – it is also unnecessary, as composers today tend not to be self-conscious about their gender. Kirsten

⁶¹Ibid., 11.

⁶²Ibid., 19.

⁶³Ibid., 19-20.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Amy Beth Kirsten, ‘The ‘Women Composer’ is Dead’, *NewMusicBox* [web page] (2012) <<http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/the-woman-composer-is-dead/>>, accessed 10 Sept. 2015.

suggests that, rather than analysing data to argue what percentage of musical ensembles are programming music by female composers, it would be more fruitful to ask ‘young composers if they feel that gender is an obstacle in their personal quest to make art’.⁶⁶ Kirsten’s article has generated heated discussions amongst her colleagues in new music circles, as evidenced by more than one hundred online replies.

Demonstrating its wider cultural relevance, Kristen’s article was discussed by music critic Alex Ross in *The New Yorker* in 2013. Ross’ article, ‘Even the Score: Female composers edge forward’, refers to the controversy generated by Kristen’s article and offers the writer’s own observations on the ‘programming’ taking place in the United States:

To date, the Met has performed only one opera by a woman: Ethel Smyth’s “Der Wald,” in 1903. On Operabase’s 2012 list of the hundred most frequently performed opera composers, Saariaho is the lone female, in ninety-sixth place. The picture in the orchestral world is slightly brighter, with Jennifer Higdon, Augusta Read Thomas, and Joan Tower occupying the League of American Orchestras’ list of the twenty most popular living American composers. [...] ⁶⁷

Ross paints a dire picture of female representation amongst those composers being selected for American programming. He concludes by agreeing with Kristen’s statement that ‘if we are going to fixate on equality in programming it should be to balance out the division between living composers and dead ones’.⁶⁸ Ross further questions the idea that there is ‘a common sensibility in women’s music’, as identified by certain feminist musicologists. In sharing his experience of going from concert to concert to experience various women composers’ music, Ross felt that he was attending ‘a festival of opposites’ between them, with musical styles ranging from ‘the most dissonant avant-gardism to the most melodious post-minimalism’.⁶⁹

⁶⁶Kirsten, ‘The ‘Women Composer’, is Dead’.

⁶⁷Alex Ross, ‘Even the Score: Female Composers Edge Forward’, *The New Yorker* [web page] (2013) <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/04/29/even-the-score>>, accessed 30 July 2015.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹John Robinson, *Korean Women Composers and Their Music* (Missoula: College Music Society, 2012).

Despite the fact that the category of ‘woman composer’ has generated serious debate over recent years, several books published between 2012 and 2013 focus specifically on female composers. John O. Robison’s *Korean Women Composers and Their Music* (2012) provides a comprehensive study of the life and works of forty-two significant Korean women composers born between 1931 and 1971. By providing a biography, a musical analysis and recommended listening for each composer, Robison’s work aims to increase understanding of the artistic achievements of these composers and to prompt further research into and performances of their music. Jennifer Kelly’s own experience of having limited exposure to female artists throughout her education inspired her to write *In Her Own Words* (2013), in which she interviews American women composers whose careers span the past eight decades.⁷⁰ The interviews probe the composers’ viewpoints on issues of equal representation, gender influence and compositional voice, and various positions and diverse opinions are presented. For example, in responding to the value of women-only projects, Libby Larsen expresses her affirmation that all-female concerts would help to close the gender gap in performance opportunities.⁷¹ Pauline Oliveros believes that women can write music distinct from that of men and therefore create new pathways.⁷² Gabriela Lena Frank expresses a similar opinion, but feels it is her experience as a woman, rather than her biological sex, that makes her think: ‘If I were a man, I think my music would be different’.⁷³

Focusing on American women composers, Denise Von Glahn’s book, *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World* (2013), explores nature-inspired works written by nine women composers between 1921 and 2010.⁷⁴ Von Glahn

⁷⁰Jennifer Kelly, *In Her Own Words: Conversation with composers in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 298-321.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 152-174.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 61-77.

⁷⁴Denise von Glahn, *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), The nine composers included in the book are: Amy Beach, Marion Bauer, Louise Talma, Pauline Oliveros, Joan Tower, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Victoria Bond, Libby Larsen, and Emily Doolittle.

situates these composers among the larger tradition of American ‘nature writing’, performed by both male and female writers. Von Glahn observes that, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, male composers’ nature-inspired music often celebrates iconic American natural wonders such as Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon, which coincides with the conquering and pioneering spirit that is the dominant national narrative. However, in her study of how twentieth-century American women composers express their relationships to the natural world, Von Glahn argues that their compositions reveal a less confrontational and controlling approach than male composers have – one more focused on observing narrative and listening.

Significantly, two of my subjects, Chen Yi and Unsuk Chin, have been involved in recent scholarly and media debates related to the identity of ‘women composers’. In Amy Beth Kirsten’s article ‘The ‘Women Composer’ is Dead’, they are mentioned as composers who have successfully ‘killed’ the category of ‘women composer’:

Kaija Saariaho, Jennifer Higdon, and Unsuk Chin did [kill it] when they were among the first to be commissioned by major opera companies; Chen Yi also did when she received the Charles Ives Living Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, gender is still seen as a useful categorisation for discussing these composers: Unsuk Chin’s biography and musical achievements are discussed in Robison’s *Korean Women Composers and Their Music*. Chen Yi is further included as one of the twenty-five American female composers interviewed in Kelly’s *In Her Own Words*. Most recently, both have been featured in the BBC series ‘Celebrating Women Composers’ presented in March 2015, in honour of International Women’s Day.⁷⁶

At its inception, my project was focused on issues of gender, examined together with issues of cultural identity. I therefore intended to explore questions of identity concerning

⁷⁵Kirsten, ‘The ‘Women Composer’, is Dead’.

⁷⁶ ‘Explore and Learn More About Women Composers’, *BBC Radio 3* [web page; radio show] <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4DdBrYwz6Bx58ct7MF9Xv9P/explore-and-learn-more-about-women-composers>>, accessed 12 Sept. 2015.

both gender and ethnicity in the works of contemporary East Asian women composers. While emphasising the ethnicity of East Asian composers has been challenged in the study of East Asian new music, issues of gender have never before entered into scholarly discussions on contemporary East Asian music. I was therefore interested in examining the role that gender plays in my case studies – in the identity choices made by these three female composers of East Asian origins.

Yet over the course of this project, I discovered that the three composers' reactions to the 'East-meets-West' paradigm do not depend on their gender. For all three, the East-meets-West question is given primacy over the issue of gender. It can be inferred that what most obviously signals their 'difference' in any given environment is their main anxiety. Consequently, for these women all working outside of Asia, their 'Asianness' probably assumes a higher importance as a marker of identity than it would if they were working in their home countries. Logically, their gender identity might well garner a much greater focus and prominence as a distinguishing feature if they were living and working in their countries of origin, where that gender, rather than ethnicity, was their primary point of differentiation from the compositional 'norm'.

As I was able to discern these composers' positions on 'East-meets-West' or cultural fusion through their music, more so than to reveal their gender concerns, it became necessary to refocus and redefine my project. That said, it bears mentioning that in each case the composer's attitude towards ethnic categorisation parallels the one they show towards gender categorisation. For instance, in the case of Chen Yi, collective identity is vital to her musical life. As I discuss in her chapter, Chen Yi's first commission in the United States in 1993 was from the 'The Women's Philharmonic', and she recalls the sense of 'community' that she felt when she heard the Women's Philharmonic perform for the National Organization for Women.⁷⁷ Since then, Chen Yi has been actively involved in promoting an awareness of the

⁷⁷Kelly, *In Her Own Words*, 111.

quality of women composers' music, especially that of East Asian female composers.⁷⁸ So, for Chen Yi her gender may be as strong (and unproblematic) a marker of her identity as her ethnicity evidently is.

In contrast, as I will demonstrate later, Unsuk Chin rejects gender categorisation as being devoid of meaning, as ethnic categorisation also is for her. Nonetheless, in Chin's music, one can observe a persistent, though not explicitly stated interest in exploring female vocalicity and portraying aspects of gender identity, as shown in the subject matter of her works *Trojan Women* (1986), *Alice in Wonderland* (2007), *Le Silence des Sirènes* (2014), and her current opera project, the sequel to *Alice*, which will premiere at Covent Garden in 2018/19. Lastly of the three composers I am examining, Karen Tanaka's music directs attention to the natural world and emphasises her 'human identity', thereby ensuring that such subcategories as 'Japanese' or 'women' are equally absent in her work. For each of these three composers, their approach to the question of gender reflects their approach to their musical identity. Consequently, the study of these composers' musical identities can be seen (albeit tangentially) to encompass the issue of gender and to harmonise it within a broader theoretical focus on identity construction.

I.5 Identity: Sameness/Difference

Identity, as described by contemporary researchers, is a concept that is abstract, elusive and challenging to define.⁷⁹ As a result of its multivalence, scholars have provided a variety of descriptions of what comprises identity. For example, Harry W. Gardiner and Corinne Kosmitzki consider identity as 'a person's self-definition as a separate and distinct individual, including behavior, beliefs and attitudes'.⁸⁰ While this definition emphasises an individual's

⁷⁸Kelly, *In Her Own Words*.

⁷⁹Margaret Wetherell, 'The Field of Identity Studies', in Margaret Wetherell and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Identities* (London: SAGE, 2010).

⁸⁰Quoted in Larry A. Samovar et al., 'Culture and Identity: Situating the Individual', in *Communication Between Cultures* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 2007), 215.

conception of who he or she is, Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets note that identity is determined by an individual's position within a larger social network:

An identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person.⁸¹

These two definitions of identity differ in the attention they pay to the individual and his or her role in a social context. The former addresses an individual's self identification, while the latter emphasises that identity is contextually determined. This dissertation takes both of these emphases as a starting point, and discusses the congruity or tension between the selected composers' self conceptions or self images and their perceived identity within a larger structure of social relations, as these factors are articulated through – or omitted from – their musical compositions.

As an individual occupies multiple social roles, identity also involves a certain multiplicity. In order to better comprehend the individual's various identities, researchers have established categories to clarify different kinds of identity. John C. Turner provides three categories of identity in his self-categorisation theory: human identity, social identity and personal identity.⁸² According to Turner, human identities are understood as the perceptions of self that both connect an individual with the rest of humanity and distinguish that person from other forms of life such as animals or plants. Social identities are defined by the diverse social groups that an individual belongs to, as a function, for example, of his or her ethnicity, culture, profession or age. As an added modifier, social identity is an outcome of the dichotomy between being a member of some social groups and not a member of others. Personal identity, as the most self-determined of the categories, is what differentiates an individual from others who belong to the same social groups and therefore renders an

⁸¹Peter James Burke and Jan E. Stes, 'Agency and the Social Structure', in *Identity Theory* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-17, at 3.

⁸²John C Turner, 'A Self-Categorization Theory', in *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 42-67, at 45.

individual unique.⁸³ Turner's self-categorisation theory provides an analytical framework for this dissertation, as I will examine each of the three composers' efforts at self-categorisation in their musical compositions.

Cultural identity – as a form of social identity – is particularly relevant to this thesis. Cultural identity is defined by Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koester as 'one's sense of belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group'.⁸⁴ Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva Chung note the particular emotional importance of cultural identity to an individual, and thus consider cultural identity as 'the emotional significance that we attach to our sense of belonging or affiliation with the larger culture'.⁸⁵

Having presented these definitions and categorisations as being relevant to this study, it becomes necessary to establish 'identity' as this thesis imagines it. In his article 'Theoretical foundations of identity', Phillip L. Hammack Jr. views identity as including both 'sameness and difference at the level of social categorization, group affiliation, and intergroup relations, as well as at the level of individual consciousness or subjectivity'.⁸⁶ In his preface to *Music and Identity Politics*, Ian Biddle notes that, contrary to its Latin origin (from *idem*, 'the same'), identity in its 'modern', post-Enlightenment usage has 'mark[ed] out one's autonomy, *difference*, rather than sameness (and belonging, in the sense of belonging *to* someone)'.⁸⁷ Biddle further points out that the passage from sameness to difference is where 'identity politics' emerge, because identity politics come to require the act of exclusion 'in its own appeal to difference, as both a desired state of being (this who we are, who we want to be)

⁸³Turner, 'A Self-Categorization Theory'.

⁸⁴Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koester, 'Cultural Identity, Cultural Biases, and Intercultural Contact', in *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), 136-165, at 142.

⁸⁵Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva C. Chung, 'Why Study Intercultural Communication?', in *Understanding Intercultural Communication* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-24, at 12.

⁸⁶Philipp L. Hammack, 'Theoretical Foundations of Identity', in Kate C. McLean and Moin U Syed (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Identity Development* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11-30, at 12.

⁸⁷Ian D Biddle, Introduction to Ian D. Biddle (ed.), *Music and Identity Politics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), xi–xxiv, at xiv. Biddle's italics.

and as the result of its *having been differenced* by the “mainstream”⁸⁸ Critical musicology – a research trend that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, and which favours study of previously marginalised groups and practices rather than canonic composers and works – can be viewed, according to Biddle, as indicating a turn to identity politics within musicology.⁸⁹

Use of the notion of identity as a conceptual tool to examine sameness and difference is therefore significant for the study of contemporary East Asian music, as it can offer alternative perspectives for reading the aforementioned debate on ‘the politics of exoticism’. The two research camps identified above for the analysis of contemporary East Asian music can be considered to focus initially on the elements of ‘sameness’, and then to shift towards privileging elements of ‘difference’. That is to say: at first, East Asian composers’ use of cultural heritage was read by some critics as a nationalistic expression emphasising identity as sameness, thereby recalling the group they belong to. Once contemporary East Asian composers and their music gained the scholarly attention of the Western mainstream – thanks to the ‘exotic’ elements in their works emphasising their ‘difference’ – the continued use of these elements was read as catering to the Western market demand for foreign elements. New perspectives oscillate between reading the use of cultural heritage material from these composers as markers of their cultural identity, which capitalise on their exotic origins, or more simply as traditional musical materials and sources of inspiration. It is significant, however, that what all approaches have in common is the assumption that the musical expression of ethnicity matters to East Asian composers.

From ‘Difference’ to ‘Universality’

Through my studies, I have identified another phenomenon highlighted by these composers’ respective reactions to cultural difference in their music. That is, these three composers each claim their goal to compose a ‘universal’ form of music that transcends the limitations

⁸⁸Ibid., xv.

⁸⁹Ibid., xvi.

of their cultural difference. For Chen Yi, music is a universally inclusive language; she states that ‘music is a real universal language now [...] [and] this language could include different styles of language’.⁹⁰ Similarly, Unsuk Chin expresses her wish to compose a universally accessible music when she remarks: ‘I want to write music that speaks to all kinds of people’.⁹¹ In the case of Karen Tanaka, her deep interest in the universal physical laws of sound and light later developed into an eco-cosmopolitan notion of identity with global, environmental aspirations.⁹² This thesis explores how this universalising tendency, as exhibited by each composer, is a reaction to a sense of cultural difference, and marks a shared ideal of composing a universal music in order to de-colonise and de-localise their own individual musical identities. Aspiration to compose ‘universal’ music is, of course, not new; in fact it has occupied a paradigmatic role in Western art music since the nineteenth century, when its espousal was particularly associated with Beethoven.⁹³ It is not surprising, then, that this tendency to claim the ‘universal’ musical high ground is not limited to these composers; it is also demonstrated by their contemporary, Chinese composer Tan Dun, as well as by an earlier generation of East Asian composers, including Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu. For example, as mentioned before, Tan Dun has famously claimed: ‘There is no East and West, all is human’. Similarly, in a letter sent to a friend several days before his death, Takemitsu expresses his wish to be healthy like a whale and to ‘swim in the ocean that has no west and no east’.⁹⁴

The notion of ‘universal music’ is therefore a salient aspect of these composers’ musical identities, and so what exactly the broader concept entails is a primary concern in my thesis. It bears noting upfront that while the general meaning of ‘universal’ is quite vague and

⁹⁰Cf. Chen Yi, Chapter 1

⁹¹Cf. Unsuk Chin, Chapter 2

⁹²Cf. Karen Tanaka, Chapter 4

⁹³Cf. Celia Applegate and Pamela Maxine Potter, *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Richard Taruskin, ‘Nationalism’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* [online database] <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50846>>, accessed 14 Sept. 2015.

⁹⁴Peter Burt, *The Music of Toru Takemitsu* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 234.

all-encompassing, and therefore similar for each composer, the imagining of the ‘universal’ differs between them in terms of how it inspires their methods and compositions. Issues of identity will therefore be discussed in the case of each composer using three terms that are closely related within the context of my argument – ‘sameness’, ‘difference’, and ‘universality’ – to explore how their own envisioning of the ‘universal’ principle has influenced their respective musical practices and pursuits.

I.6 Issues of Identity in Émigré Composers: At Home and Abroad

All of the three composers examined in this project are pursuing their musical careers outside of their home countries. This project focuses specifically on émigré composers as reflections of the issues of identity and belonging which are particularly pertinent and acute in the case of the émigré. One of the key issues in current studies concerning identity and immigrant artists is the way in which the émigré experience initiates a process of self-reflection and self-transformation, either consciously or subconsciously.⁹⁵ Such a transformative process involves interactions and negotiations between the host country, the homeland, and the aspiration of the individual artists. For example, certain scholars focus on an artist’s process of searching for or rediscovering his or her cultural heritage, such as Elena Dubinets’s study on the different meaning of ‘Russianness’ for Russian émigré composers.⁹⁶ Other researchers look at artists’ processes of assimilating into their host countries. For example, Claudia Zenck explores the processes of acculturation in the émigré experiences of Schoenberg,

⁹⁵Timothy Weiss, ‘Translational Identities and the Émigré Experience’, in Igor Maver (ed.), *Diasporic Subjectivity and Cultural Brokering in Contemporary Post-colonial Literatures* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 46.

⁹⁶Elena Dubinets, ‘Music in Exile: Russian Émigré Composers and Their Search For National Identity’, *Slavonica*, 13 (2006), 57–67.

Krenek and Stravinsky.⁹⁷ Stephen Hinton's study shows how German composer Kurt Weill resisted the concept of exile, which traditionally implies a feeling of loss and alienation, and willingly adopted his new American culture.⁹⁸ Ernst Krenek and Don Harrán's study explores the influence of America on its émigré composers.⁹⁹ These approaches attempt to understand the dynamics of émigré composers' identities and sense of belonging formed between genealogy and geography. Apart from the abovementioned observations, studies have also revealed that some émigré artists demonstrate a desire to distance themselves from their cultural tradition, such as Hermann Danuser's exploration of the implications in Kurt Weill's radical break with the German tradition.¹⁰⁰ These various angles seek to unpack the diverse but still identity-fuelled aspects of émigré experience.

Unlike the previously mentioned composers who were forced émigrés, most East Asian émigré composers, including the composers I will examine in this project, are free to choose to establish their musical careers outside their country of origins. As such, the concept of exile or diaspora, which implies a forced migration with an impossibility of returning, is not entirely adequate with regard to analysing them. Christoph Flamm remarks on the identity choice that contemporary Russian émigré composers have, but see no need to exercise:

Today, leaving Russia does not imply the impossibility of returning. Many Russian composers living abroad do not see any connection between their nationality as stated on their passports and their creative output; some even find it humiliating to be categorised as émigré.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷Claudia Maurer Zenck, 'Challenges and Opportunities of Acculturation: Schoenberg, Krenek, and Stravinsky in Exile', in Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (eds.), *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 172-93.

⁹⁸Stephen Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 196-7.

⁹⁹Ernst Krenek and Don Harrán, 'America's Influence on Its Émigré Composers', *Perspectives of New Music*, 8/2 (1970), 112-7.

¹⁰⁰Hermann Danuser, 'Composer in Exile: The Question of Musical Identity', in Brinkmann and Wolff, *Driven into Paradise*: 155-71.

¹⁰¹Christoph Flamm, "My love, forgive me this apostasy": Some Thoughts on Russian Émigré Culture', in Christoph Flamm, Henry Keazor and Roland Marti (eds.), *Russian Émigré Culture: Conservatism or Evolution?* (Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 13.

Flamm's passage not only raises the question of whether it is reasonable to think of artistic identity in the twentieth-first century in terms of national culture alone; it points out the importance of modern mobility in generating new forms of belonging. In existing scholarship on East Asian émigré composers, however, attention is perhaps unduly focused on the narrative of 'rediscovery' or searching for composers' cultural heritage. Different manifestations of identity construction, such as those exhibited in the cases of Chin and Tanaka, have not been explored in detail, thereby exposing the gap this project seeks to address.

With regard to how their post-émigré experiences influence the construction of their musical identities, each of the three composers studied in this thesis shared their own personal experiences and different perspectives. In a 2006 interview by *NewMusicBox*, when asked whether her musical identity and achievements would have been the same if she had not come to the United States, Chen Yi replied, '[i]t would have been different kinds of achievements'.¹⁰² She went on to explain her situation:

I am in America. I write music inspired by the culture around me. My cultural root is Chinese, and now my inspiration is a combination. This is what makes me have my own voice. I do honor both cultures and even more cultures because America is a multicultural society; you have influence from many different resources.¹⁰³

While Chen Yi acknowledges that the multicultural environment in America nourishes her musical styles, she also stresses several times in the interview that her 'Chinese root and blood' will never be changed (and, implicitly, that this also influences her music).¹⁰⁴ Yet she admits that being outside of China and staying in the States help her reflect on and dig deeper into her culture. While Chen Yi's assertion affirms the narrative of redefining the self while encountering the Other, that self is contingent upon the Other; it further suggests that

¹⁰²Frank J. Oteri, 'He Said, She Said: Zhou Long and Chen Yi', *NewMusicBox* [web page] (2006) <<http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/he-said-she-said-zhou-long-and-chen-yi/2/>>, accessed 26 June 2016.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

the Self-Other divide is not to be resolved for Chen Yi, but is in fact an important element of her sense of self.

While Chen Yi embraces her ‘natural’ cultural ‘combination’ as an East Asian working in the field of Western classical music in the America, Chin and Tanaka challenge common preconceived notions of their mixed identity. According to Chin, her decision to stay in Berlin is due to the professional opportunities that the city offers in furthering her artistic career, and to the way in which the city gives her ‘a freedom to be [her]self’.¹⁰⁵ However, in her interviews – discussed in detail in Chapter 2 – Chin reveals that as a new arrival from Asia, she did not want to conform with the stereotypical expectation of incorporating traditional elements from her cultural heritage into her compositions. In other word, she chose consciously not to imagine herself as other people were inclined to perceive her.

Yet evidently, that stereotypical cultural expectation comes not only from the reception in Germany, as Chin suggests in the interviews, but also from her fellow countrymen. Since she won the prestigious Grawemeyer Award in Music Composition in 2004, she has been assumed to be representative of the internationally acclaimed Korean composers produced by her country. She has constantly been asked why she did not choose to study with Isang Yun (1917-1995), a famous Korean-born, Berlin-based composer renowned for mixing Korean and Western materials. In a Korean article reporting the Munich premiere of Chin’s *Alice in Wonderland*, the author even justifies Chin’s decision to write an opera not based on Korean materials, suggesting that thanks to Isang Yun’s having incorporated Korean materials so successfully into his music, Chin, a later-generation Korean composer, was freed from this responsibility.¹⁰⁶ After composing a concerto for a non-Western instrument, the Chinese *sheng*, for the first time in 2009, she was repeatedly asked when she would write a piece for Korean traditional instruments. Consistent with her claim to individuality and artistic

¹⁰⁵Yoo, ‘Western Music in Modern Korea’, 145.

¹⁰⁶Hoe-suk Chin (진회숙), ‘동양을 지우고 ‘세계적 보편성’으로 [Reducing [the Scope of] “East” and Moving Toward [the Scope of] “World-Universality”], *계간 문화예술*, [Culture and Arts, Quarterly], (September 2007), 182–9.

freedom, she replies that ‘what is important is what feeling the instrument gives to me, and what kind of musical ideas it arouses for me... [I]f I compose for the *gayageum* [12-string Korean zither], I must have a particular idea of what I could do with the sound of the *gayageum*.¹⁰⁷ In other words, Chin directs the issue to artistic inspiration and to the nature of the instrument itself, rather than to a sense of cultural obligation. In a video entitled ‘Unsub Chin on Unsub Chin’ provided on the website of her publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, she claims: ‘I am very different from when I was in Korea, that is amazing’.¹⁰⁸ In choosing to be an émigré composer, Chin clearly seeks a change by eschewing the narratives of ‘rediscovery’ or mixed identity. As such, the émigré experience plays a crucial role in shaping Chin’s musical identity.

While Chin experiences the stereotypical expectations from audiences both at home and abroad, Tanaka’s case points to the difference in perspective between her two host countries. In an interview for a Japanese radio station in 2012, she shares the feeling that the audience impulse to look for something ‘Japanese’ in her works was stronger when she was in Paris than when she came to the States.¹⁰⁹ Tanaka goes on to explain that she felt the reason for this might be that America is an immigrant society. What we can draw from Tanaka’s statement is not that French audiences tend to stereotype Asian composers more than American audiences do. Issues of location and timing must be taken into account when analysing Tanaka’s experience. Tanaka came to study in Paris in 1986 and stayed there as a freelance composer for ten years before taking a teaching position in 2005 in California, a Pacific state known for having many Asian immigrants and settlers. What can be drawn from Tanaka’s account is that matters of identity are contingent upon cultural notions of difference. In what she

¹⁰⁷Jeong Eun Seo, ‘Unsub Chin’s Musical Language, Abstraction and Recontextualization: With an Example of *Šu für Sheng und Orchester* (2009, rev. 2010), in Hee Sook Oh (ed.), *Contemporary Music in East Asia* (Seoul, RK: Seoul National University Press, 2014), 89-120, 115.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Unsub Chin on Unsub Chin’, *Boosey & Hawkes* [web video] <<http://www.boosey.com/podcast/Unsub-Chin-on-Unsub-Chin/100716&q=med>>, accessed 26 June 2016.

¹⁰⁹Naoki Hayashida, ‘Composer Karen Tanaka [作曲家 田中カレンさん]’, *Cafe Figaro by Naoki Hayashida* [林田直樹のカフェ・フィガロ] [radio interview] (2012) <<https://www.blue-radio.com/program/cafe/index.aspx?genrename=120124>>, accessed 27 June 2016.

regards as the immigrant society of the US, Tanaka is perceived as less ‘different’ than she is in a city containing far fewer Asians. Her statement supports my observation that the émigré experience of these composers causes their perceived cultural difference to be an urgent issue, which in turn influences the way these composers construct their musical identity.

These three composers represent three different émigré experiences concerning issues of musical identity in relation to their own cultural heritage. With regard to Chin’s and Tanaka’s alternative narratives to ‘searching for their cultural root’, questions might be raised as to whether their alternative narratives are particular emigrant perspectives, or whether they would have sought those identity paths if they were not émigrés. Regarding East Asian composers who establish their careers in their home countries, there are two possibilities: firstly, home-grown composers may be more prone to incorporate their surroundings and local materials into their compositions, as these materials are more readily available; or, composers may feel a responsibility to revive or renovate their traditional heritage in contemporary artworks. Secondly and conversely, composers may be strongly inspired by encountering elements very different from their surrounding culture, prompting their imagination of the global or cosmopolitan. There are indeed examples of composers who remained in East Asia but developed strong international identities. One such example is found in Hoi Yan Wendy Wong’s study on Chinese composer Luo Zhongrong (b. 1924), the first composer who purposefully incorporated twelve-tone techniques into the construction of his music (and so his musical identity) in 1979 – immediately after the Cultural Revolution, when China started to open to the outside world.¹¹⁰ To reach a thorough comparison, lengthier and complementary studies devoted specifically to identity discourses on non-émigré East Asian composers would be required. In any case, while it might have been plausible for Chin and Tanaka to pursue the same identity construction if they had established their careers in their countries of origin, this thesis contends that emigration and cultural questioning contributed

¹¹⁰Hoi Yan Wendy Wong, ‘Compositional Techniques and Identities in Contemporary Music of China: Integrating Ideologies in the Post-Cultural Revolution Era’, *IMS-EA 3rd Biennial Conference* [web document] <http://media.wix.com/ugd/8cee38_8ce7d56b80ff42db92ec39013e1ff061.pdf>, accessed 26 June 2016.

to the formation of Chin and Tanaka's alternative musical identities, as their status as émigrés prompted their reflection on as well as rejection of a preconceived cultural identity.

I.7 Scope and Methodology

This thesis is a set of case studies, with each chapter concentrating on one composer and exploring their unique way of constructing their musical identity in relation to the cultural dilemma and/or optimism of 'East-meets-West'. I will look at their personal opinions, expressed through interviews, their musical compositions and the critical reception of their works. Their viewpoints are gathered from existing interviews printed in books, journals and on-line journals together with correspondence or personal interviews conducted by myself. I use an analytical and hermeneutic approach to explore their music; in particular, I test and assess the musical applicability of their ideas, as these are expressed in their music. Aside from the section on Takemitsu, which presents a complementary counter case study, the music I examine was composed in the period between 1984 and 2007. The criteria for discussion of a work is that it either explicitly or implicitly deals with questions of identity, or it articulates a major theme of musical concern for the composer, such as the theme of nature in the cases of Karen Tanaka and Toru Takemitsu, her predecessor.

Aside from providing a more comprehensive view of identity discourses, this thesis seeks to contribute to the body of scholarship on each composer. Since current scholarship on each composer is at different stages, the strategy and the goal of my case studies have been adjusted accordingly. Chen Yi has been discussed regularly in the context of identity discourse studies. In my thesis, I thus provide new readings of her music. Since scholarship on Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka is still in its early stages, my discussions of them focus more on examining the central themes in their compositions such as Chin's musical intertextuality and Tanaka's evolving conception of the natural world, relating these topics to issues of identity and to the

aspiration for universality. In this project I hope to lay the foundation for future research on these composers.

Scholarship on Chen Yi began at the end of the 1990s, when the politics of cultural hybridity and identity began to attract scholarly attention in studies such as Barbara Mittler's *Dangerous Tunes: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China Since 1949* (1997). Mittler's book explored, for the first time in Anglophone scholarship, how China's new music relates to its own tradition, and it assessed what counts as 'newness' in Chinese contemporary music.¹¹¹ Since then, Chen Yi's music has been studied extensively, as her musical practice fits well with the dominant narrative of cross-cultural fusion; as such, my discussion directs attention to the theme of cultural translation, which has not yet been discussed but which is crucial to understanding issues of identity in her music.

Scholarship on Unsuk Chin presents a stark contrast to studies on Chen Yi. Despite the fact that Chin received the prestigious Grawemeyer Award in 2002, scholarship on her compositions has only begun to emerge in the past five years. I believe that this is due to the challenge inherent in situating her music, as the absence of 'ethnic' materials in her works has kept her outside the debate on identity discourses. Current research on Chin is mostly only available in German and Korean. For example, after the premiere of her inaugural opera *Alice in Wonderland* (2007) in Germany, where she currently resides, there have been more than twenty reviews of her work in major music journals and newspapers. In 2011, a monograph about her music, *Im Spiegel der Zeit: Die Komponistin Unsuk Chin* was published in Germany. Since then, Chin has been interviewed frequently by German radio and television outlets.¹¹²

I contend that Chin's music has been absent from discussion of the politics of contemporary East Asian music precisely because discussing representation of identity is problematic.

¹¹¹Barbara Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China Since 1949* (Wiesbaden, DE: Harassowitz, 1997).

¹¹²Stefan Drees (ed.), *Im Spiegel der Zeit: Die Komponistin Unsuk Chin* (Mainz, DE: Schott, 2011).

Chin's music has only recently started to attract research interest in Korea, and in fact what is finally generating that Korean scholarship is Chin's first and (so far) only composition written for a non-Western instrument, the Chinese mouth organ, *sheng*. In 2014, the two articles on Chin's music published in Korean journals both focused on her concerto *Šu for Sheng and Orchestra* (2009, rev. 2010).¹¹³ This focus is telling, as the research shares the presupposition that Chin's 'oriental' cultural identity can be found in *Šu*. Yet because the work does not contain any apparently exotic flavour, researchers conclude that Chin's music is articulating a unique voice that is not easily categorised, and thus exhibits a 'transcultural identity'.¹¹⁴ However, as my case study will show, Chin's music clearly plays with, and situates itself within a well-established cultural context that is demonstrated by references to and quotations from Western musical and cultural tradition; as this 'culture' is not what her fellow Koreans (or Western scholars either) would expect. Consequently, her notions of identity and indeed her music in general are largely ignored.

Despite the fact that Karen Tanaka has been recognised as one of the most established Japanese composers in the post-Takemitsu generation, there has been no detailed examination of her works. Current literature on Tanaka either emphasises her IRCAM influence or discusses her several piano collections for young performers from a pedagogical perspective.¹¹⁵

¹¹³Heekyung Lee (이희경), *ch' omunhwachok sangsanglyokui kanungsong* 초문화적 상상력의 가능성 [Toward Transcultural Imagination: Recontextualizing Unsuk Chin's *Su for Sheng and Orchestra* (2009/2010)], 音樂論壇, [Journal of the Science and Practice of Music], vol. 32 (2014), 135–162; Jeong Eun Seo, 'Unsuk Chin's Musical Language, Abstraction and Recontextualization: With an Example of *Šu für Sheng and Orchestra* (2009, rev.2010)', in Oh, *Contemporary Music in East Asia*, 89–120.

¹¹⁴Lee, Towards Transcultural Imagination.

¹¹⁵Rebecca Lynn Billock, 'Selected Intermediate Piano Pieces by Seven Women of the Twentieth Century: Marion Bauer, Germaine Tailleferre, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Sofia Gubaidulina, Emma Lou Diemer, Chen Yi, and Karen Tanaka', D. M. A. Thesis (University of Washington, 2003); Eiko Sudoh (須藤 英子), 'Tanaka Karen sakkyoku 'chikyu' dai kaibo' 田中カレン作曲『地球』大解剖! [A detailed exploration of Karen Tanaka's *Our Planet Earth*], PTNA [web page] (2011) <http://www.piano.or.jp/report/02soc/pmj/2011/10/07_13171.html>, accessed 27 July 2015; Eiko Sudoh (須藤 英子), 'Tanaka Karen sakkyoku 'chikyu' shokyu hen' 田中カレン作曲『地球』初級編 [Karen Tanaka's Piano Collection *Our Planet Earth*, the Pieces for Beginner Level], PTNA [web page] (2011) <http://www.piano.or.jp/report/02soc/pmj/2011/10/13_13221.html>, accessed 27 July 2015; Eiko Sudoh (須藤 英子), 'Tanaka Karen sakkyoku 'chikyu' chukyu hen' 田中カレン作曲『地球』中級編 [Karen Tanaka's Piano Collection *Our Planet Earth*, the Pieces for Intermediate Level], PTNA [web page] (2011) <http://www.piano.or.jp/report/02soc/pmj/2011/10/21_13255.html>, accessed 27 July 2015; Eiko Sudoh (須藤 英子), 'Tanaka Karen sakkyoku 'chikyu' jokyu hen' 田中カレン作曲『地

The most prominent themes in her works – nature and environmental consciousness – have not received sustained study until now. The close examination of Tanaka's conception of nature in this thesis seeks to demonstrate the primacy of the natural world in Tanaka's musical identity.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One explores Chinese composer Chen Yi's musical identity through her idea of 'cultural translation' and her musical goal of enhancing intercultural understanding and communication. This chapter presents a case study that affirms and embraces the notion of cultural fusion, and rather contributes to the traditional idea of 'East-meets-West'. It begins by looking at Chen's metaphorical understanding of music as language, and her attendant belief in the 'translatability' of culture into music. As a fellow student of Tan Dun (1957-) in China and the United States, Chen Yi, like Tan Dun, adopts overtly Chinese 'ethnographic' elements in her music. The result for both composers is their constant association by critics with other Chinese *xinchao* (新潮, 'new wave') composers¹¹⁶ in current studies of East Asian contemporary music – and their grouping together under the umbrella term of 'cultural hybridity'. The chapter goes on to draw attention to the disparate philosophical and aesthetic orientations of comparable compositional practices in the music of Chen Yi and Tan Dun. From this comparison, I present their disparate attitudes towards questions of cultural boundaries and difference, with Chen Yi's belief that distinct cultures should coexist and hold 'equal rights', versus Tan Dun's attitude of cultural assimilation, embodied by his famous equation 'one plus one equals to one'. The third section tests the musical applicability of Chen Yi's idea of cultural translation in her *Chinese Myths Cantata* (1996). A fourth section

球] 上級編！ [Karen Tanaka's Piano Collection *Our Planet Earth*, the Pieces for Advanced Level], *PTNA* [web page] (2011) <http://www.piano.or.jp/report/02soc/pmj/2011/10/28_13292.html>, accessed 27 July 2015.

¹¹⁶*Xinchao* refers to a group of composers who came of age during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, and subsequently entered the conservatories when educational institutes were reopened in 1978. Everett and Lau, *Locating East Asia*, 265.

examines Chen Yi's autobiographical symphony, *My Musical Journey to America* (2004), as it exemplifies her notion of a 'translational space'. The chapter's conclusion discusses Chen Yi's cultural positioning in light of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critical paradigm of the 'native' and the 'postcolonial informant'.

Where Chapter One discusses a composer who embraces cultural hybridity as a primary way of establishing musical identity, Chapter Two examines an alternative approach, in which Korean composer Unsuk Chin consciously avoids the practice of cultural hybridity. In the first section, I explore Chin's view of the danger of *Identitätsfalle* (G. 'identity trap') – a term Chin borrows from the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen's book of the same name – by analysing interviews from several sources including the recently published book on her music, *Im Spiegel der Zeit* [In the Mirror of Time] (2011). The second section discusses Chin's appropriation, adaptation and parody of Lewis Carroll's story, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in her 2007 opera, *Alice in Wonderland*. Essentially, Chin develops her own identity through her musical interpretation of Carroll's literary characterisation of Alice's process of self-discovery, and the thesis therefore observes Chin's *Alice* as a composition of Western origination and associations. Chapter Two concludes by questioning Chin's problematic ideal of a 'universal' music, and the way in which it drives her work.

Chapter Three examines Karen Tanaka's conception of nature in relation to her sense of self, with a particular emphasis on her nature-inspired chamber works, such as *Prismes* (1984), *Echo Canyon* (1995), *Children of Light* (1999) and *Questions of Nature* (1999). In the first section of Chapter Three, I set up a foil against which I compare Karen Tanaka's environmentalist responses to questions of identity. It begins with a discussion on the music of her forebear, Toru Takemitsu, especially his philosophical meditations on the nature of sound and human life in his critical writings. It then considers the musical applicability of Takemitsu's ideas about nature and existence by examining the multilayered interaction between the 'garden' and the 'stroller' in his 1961-3 piano concerto series, *Arc*. This section

demonstrates that Takemitsu's relationship with sound reflects and shapes his relationship with nature in his career. In his compositional philosophy, Takemitsu views sound as a companion with which he actively engages during the compositional process. For Takemitsu, the collaborative relationship between the composer and sound is analogous to humanity's co-creative relationship with nature, as demonstrated by *Arc*, in which the stroller/soloist and the garden elements/instrumental groups correspond and interact with each other as human and natural elements do, and their spontaneous responses result in the irreproducibility of that singular performance by other performers. Contrasting with Takemitsu's localised expressions of nature, Tanaka aspires to universal natural ideals in her compositions. In examining Tanaka's music, it is difficult to find subject matter, sound materials or conceptual influences that are explicitly Japanese or East Asian. Nature-related themes are prevalent, while the 'East-meets-West' question is nowhere to be found in her music. In the second part of Chapter Three, Tanaka's musical approaches to nature are analysed as a function of her sense of selfhood and existence relative to the natural world. In particular, the chapter shows how Tanaka's search for her own musical identity is reflected in the evolving relationship between the composer and the natural world. A comparison is then established between Takemitsu and Tanaka, as both foreground the subject of nature in their music while they differ in their view of humanity's relationship with nature. In Takemitsu's conception of the natural world, the human element is indispensable, whereas humanity is noticeably absent in Tanaka's early works. While Takemitsu finds a solution to the problematic distancing of avant-garde music from its audiences in the concept of the Japanese promenade garden (*kaiyū-shiki-teien*), Tanaka's view of nature is rather detached from particular cultures or places. Both Tanaka's chamber piece *Echo Canyon* (1995) and her piano collection *Children of Light* (1999) feature a holistic and global idea that transcends location. Notably, Tanaka's relationship to sound advocates a more distanced, cognitive model than Takemitsu's

engagement model. The chapter consequently positions Tanaka's music in a critical dialogue with current eco-musicological research interests.

The thesis concludes by comparing the three case studies' methods of identity construction, and with a discussion of the implications of this thesis for discourses of identity in contemporary East Asian music.

Chapter 1

Naturally Bilingual: Cultural Translation in the Music of Chen Yi

Chinese-born, US-based composer Chen Yi (1953-) is critically characterised as a composer who bridges different cultures and ‘transcend[s] cultural and musical boundaries’.¹ This view is discerned both from her compositional practice, which features an integration of elements from Western and Chinese musical traditions, and from her own statements in interviews. According to Chen Yi, her musical fusion seeks to enhance cross-cultural understanding, interaction and communications.² The purpose of this chapter is to revisit the issues of cultural boundaries and differences in Chen Yi’s music, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the way that Chen Yi constructs her identity through music. To that end, I direct attention to her metaphorical understanding of music as language, and her attendant belief in the ‘translatability’ of ‘culture’ into music. Given these central concepts, this chapter seeks to understand Chen Yi’s musical identity through her role as a cultural translator, and through her philosophical meditation on different cultures coexisting with ‘equal rights’ in art as well as in society. The ultimate goal of the chapter is to reassess the prevailing

¹ ‘Chen Yi’s Rich Body of Work Blends Chinese and Western Traditions’, *KT Wong Foundation* [web page] <<http://www.ktwong.org/collaborators/performance/chen-yi/>>, accessed 10 Sept. 2015.

² Yi Chen, ‘Artist Statement’, *American Composers Forum* [web page] (ca. 1996) <<https://composersforum.org/members/directory/chen-yi/>>, accessed 10 Sept. 2015.

narrative of cross-cultural synthesis in Chen Yi's music, as that discourse is crucial towards understanding the case studies presented in this thesis.

This chapter provides a critical review of scholarly research on Chen Yi's cultural identity and her music and examines Chen Yi's ideas about musical language and translation. Following this theoretical basis is a discussion of the disparate aesthetic orientations of the same compositional practices in the music of Chen Yi and her Chinese contemporary Tan Dun (1957-). The chapter further examines Chen Yi's musical identity and self narrative in relation to three important concepts – 'language' 'society' 'culture' – while a further, fourth section tests the applicability of Chen Yi's idea of cultural translation in her *Chinese Myths Cantata* (1996). The chapter concludes with a theoretical discussion of Chen Yi's cultural position in light of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critical notions of the native and postcolonial informants.

1.1 Current Research on Chen Yi

Notions of identity have appeared in discussions of Chen Yi's music since the turn of the century. Fredrick Lau's 2004 article, 'Fusion or Fission: The Paradox and Politics of Contemporary Chinese Avant-Garde Music', discusses a group of Chinese composers who emigrated to the United States during the mid-1980s to study with Chinese-American composer Chou Wen-Chung at Columbia University, and who have since remained in the States and attracted international recognition for their work.³ Lau is critical of contemporary research that examines these Eastern composers' 'cross-cultural synthesis' according to the Western concept of 'musical hybridity', by simply identifying non-Western materials and

³Lau, 'Fusion or Fission', 33-39; Chinese American composer Chou Wen-Chung (1923-) moved to the United States in 1946 and underwent compositional training at the New England Conservatory and Columbia University. In 1949, Chou became Edgard Varèse's student and assistant. Chou taught composition at Columbia University from 1964 to 1991 and also served as the Director of the Center for US-China Arts Exchange. In the 1980s, he brought a group of young Chinese composers to study at Columbia including Tan Dun, Chen Yi, Ge Gan-Ru, Bright Sheng and Zhou Long. See Chiu Kong Lai, 'The Man and His Ideas', in *The Music of Chou Wen-Chung* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 7-22, at 9.

drawing theoretical conclusions based on the inclusion of those foreign elements. Instead, Lau draws attention to the unique Chinese socio-cultural background from which these composers have emerged, while at the same time problematising their cross-cultural synthesis in the context of the global art music market.

Among the composers that Lau discusses are Tan Dun (1957-), Chen Yi (1953-), Bright Sheng (1955-) and Zhou Long (1953-), who belong to a group of *xinchao* (新潮, 'new wave') composers.⁴ Emerging in response to economic reforms in China during the 1980s, *xinchao* music departs from the doctrine of social realism and emphasises instead an individualist and modernist form of expression.⁵ According to Lau, the musical style of *xiancho* composers, while incorporating Eastern elements, has deliberately moved away from 'superficial orientalism',⁶ by which he means a compositional practice that quotes Eastern folk-song melodies directly and sets them within Western diatonic harmonies. This style is seen in the music of Chinese composers spanning from 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party gained power, through to 1966, the beginning of the Communist initiative known as the Cultural Revolution. The new generation of composers tends to use Chinese elements as evocations or suggestions rather than as overt musical references to China; often, they seek inspiration from ancient Chinese philosophies or aesthetic principles. Given this shift in Chinese-Western music aesthetics, Lau examines the new-wave compositions and their reception in Western media. The composers, Lau finds, tend not to favour musical critics' emphasis on their ethnicity; he further states that 'it is not at all clear whether it is the music or the person behind the music that is being heard'.⁷ Nonetheless, and somewhat ironically, Lau also points out that these composers are in fact 'capitalising on Orientalism' – as the constant evocation of Chinese elements in their music, while also emphasising the trans-cultural character of the works, can be read by critics as a marketing strategy.⁸ Lau's focus on the issues of ethnic

⁴For a definition of *xinchao* composers see p. 40 n. 121 Everett and Lau, *Locating East Asia*, 265.

⁵*Ibid.*, 270.

⁶Lau, 'Fusion or Fission', 27-8.

⁷*Ibid.*, 36.

⁸*Ibid.*, 38.

authenticity, cultural politics and the culture industry surrounding these 'new' composers is clearly influenced by ethnomusicological debates concerning cultural authenticity in 'world music'.⁹

Published one year prior to the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, a 2007 special issue of *Contemporary Music Review*, entitled 'China and the West—The Birth of a New Music', explores a group of Chinese and Hong Kong composers who have successfully established their careers in the United States and Europe.¹⁰ Chen Yi's music, along with that of Chinese *xianchao* composer, Chen Qigang (1951), is discussed in an article entitled 'The tradition of *Luogu Dianzi* (percussion classics) and its signification in contemporary music', written by musicologist and theorist Nancy Yunhwa Rao.¹¹ Rao's approach in this article is different from Lau's, as she avoids entering the debates surrounding the politics of exoticism, and does not address whether their music is an example of Asian neo-Orientalism, self-exoticism, nationalism, or any of the supposed marketing strategies. For Rao, the Chinese elements in these composers' works are not a problem of Eastern/Western dynamics or of musical exoticism. Rao rather neutralises the political aspect of these Chinese elements as musical *topoi* and investigates their extra-musical referentiality and meaning by employing the topical analysis posited by the theory of musical signs.¹²

⁹See John Jutnyk, *Critique of Exotica: Music, Politics and the Culture Industry* (London: Pluto, 2000); Bruno Nettl, 'The Nonuniversal Language: Varieties of Music', in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Philip V. Bohlman, 'Music of the Folk', in *World Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 68-70, 80-1.

¹⁰'China and the West - The Birth of a New Music', *Contemporary Music Review*, 26/5-6 (2007), 493-637.

¹¹Nancy Yunhwa Rao, 'The Tradition of *Luogu Dianzi* (Percussion Classics) and Its Signification in Contemporary Music', *Contemporary Music Review*, 26/5-6 (2007), 511-527.

¹²The theory of musical *topoi* was largely developed by Leonard Ratner in his seminal book *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, as a tool for analysing musical expressions in tonal music. The theory was further elaborated by his students Wye Allanbrook and Kofi Agawu. See William E. Caplin, 'On The Relation of Musical *Topoi* to Formal Function', *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 2/1 (2005), 113-124, 113; Leonard G Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (New York, NY; London, U. K.: Schirmer Books; Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1980); Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro & Don Giovanni* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Victor Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), . In Rao's article, she also consults Agawu's article 'Structural Analysis or Cultural Analysis? Competing Perspectives on the "Standard Pattern" of West African Rhythm', in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 59/1 (2006), 1-46.

The cultural context that Rao considers for the compositions is one of musical semiotics, rather than the composers' national origins. For example, she compares the ways that rhythmic *topoi*, known as *luogu dianzi* ('percussion classics'), are used in traditional Chinese opera and in the works of Chen Yi and Chen Qigang. In the Beijing opera, the long crescendo of *ji-ji-feng* – one of a famous group of *luogu dianzi* – coupled with an actor's stage movements, symbolises the intensity of a character's psychological state. While Chen Qigang's *Poème Lyrique II* (1991) follows this convention, to present a musical rendering of the emotive climax of the texts, Chen Yi 'transforms' this rhythmic gesture into a different musical expression. For example, in her *Symphony No.2* (1993), a work dedicated to her late father, the rhythmic *topos* of *ji-ji-feng* is used in a fragmented and unexpected way as it is constantly interrupted by unexpected and abrupt pauses.¹³ Lau's and Rao's methods represent two opposite approaches. While Lau tries to politicise the Chinese elements in Chen Yi's music, Rao attempts to neutralize them as simple musical materials.

Significantly, during the past five years, Chen Yi's music has been interpreted by scholars from three different perspectives. Firstly, she has been studied as a Chinese composer living in the United States; secondly, as a twentieth-century composer; and thirdly, as an American female composer. The first of these perspectives follows from the aforementioned research on contemporary East Asian art music. Lau and Rao published further articles on Chen Yi's music in 2013 and 2014 respectively. Lau, together with musicologist and composer Christian Utz, edited *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West* – a book which, for the first time since *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* (2004), attempts to collate essays exploring music in all East Asian countries.¹⁴ Lau's article in the collection, entitled 'Voice, Culture and Ethnicity in Contemporary Chinese Compositions', discusses choral compositions set in the Chinese language by US-based

¹³Rao, 'The Tradition of Luogu Dianzi'.

¹⁴Utz and Lau, *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities*; There were several books published between 2004 and 2013, focusing on contemporary music of each East Asian country. See Howard, *Creating Korean Music*; Richards and Tanosaki, *Music of Japan Today*, and the 2007 special issue of *Contemporary Music Review*, 'China and the West - The Birth of a New Music', *Contemporary Music Review*, 26/5-6 (2007) 493-637.

Chen Yi and Hong Kong-based Chan Hing-Yan. This book, as mentioned in my introductory chapter, represents an attempt to move away from postcolonial debates of the Western 'centre' versus the non-Western 'periphery' – or of musical exoticism – towards the issue of local versus global in the context of cultural globalisation. Lau assumes that language inevitably carries cultural and ideological meanings; he then looks at the use of Chinese classic poems, sung in their original Chinese language, in Chen Yi's *Chinese Poems for Six-Girls' Choruses* (1999), written for the San Francisco Girls' Choir. Lau explores how Chen Yi 'disrupt[s] the lineages between voice, culture, and ethnicity and assert[s] reinterpretations of tradition and language' in the piece.¹⁵ Importantly, Lau's sceptical view of Chinese elements being evoked as marketing strategies in a global cultural industry, which he posits in his 2004 article, has shifted. He no longer sees Chinese elements as the composer's way of 'capitalising on Orientalism', but rather points out that the rise of China and the widespread interest in Chinese culture generate new environments that nurture compositions such as Chen Yi's *Chinese Poems*.¹⁶

Rao's 2014 article, 'Cultural Boundary and National Border', discusses the recent works of Tan Dun, Chen Yi and Bright Sheng with a focus on their Americanisation.¹⁷ Instead of discussing their Chinese musical influences, Rao turns to look at how musical and social environments in America have influenced these composers, who have been settled in the United States for more than two decades. Rao observes that Tan Dun's compositional aesthetic is strongly influenced by the experimentalist tradition of downtown music in New York, evidenced by his innovative use of 'organic instruments' such as paper, stone, and ceramics in his works.¹⁸ Similarly, Rao notes that Chen Yi's *Third Symphony* (2004), subtitled

¹⁵Frederick Lau, 'Voice, Culture, and Ethnicity in Contemporary Chinese Compositions', in Christian Utz and Frederick Lau (eds.), *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identity: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West* (New York, NY; London, UK: Routledge, 2013), 99-115, at 101.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Nancy Yunhwa Rao, 'Cultural Boundary and National Border: Recent Works of Tan Dun, Chen Yi and Bright Sheng', in Hee Sook Oh (ed.), *Contemporary Music in East Asia* (Seoul, RK: Seoul National University Press, 2014), 211-240.

¹⁸Ibid., 213-21.

My American Journey, ‘celebrates the multicultural nature of American society’, and Rao, perhaps over simplistically, parallels the composer’s constant use of folk songs in her music with American composer Charles Ives’s similar musical borrowings.¹⁹ Rao’s critical effort here is to suggest that these Chinese composers’ use of their own cultural heritage is no different to an American composer’s use of ‘vernacular materials to fit European classical structure’.²⁰ Notably, unlike her 2007 article in which she avoids stepping into issues of cultural politics, Rao here criticises that, even though these composers’ works are performed in major American concert halls and have received many prestigious American awards, their music is still primarily heard and labelled as ‘Chinese’. Consequently, Rao encourages the reader instead to recognise how these composers have contributed to the reshaping and redefining of the ‘American’ music scene.

Further to the critical efforts of Lau and Rao, Chen Yi has also been referenced in two recently published books on twentieth-century art music, which emphasises the composer as a product of her era. Joseph Auner’s *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, the final volume in the series *Western Music in Context: A Norton History*, provides a historical overview of developments in art music in the twentieth century.²¹ A group of East Asian composers, including Toru Takemitsu, Tan Dun and Chen Yi, is discussed in the subsection ‘Making tradition in East Asia’ under the Chapter 13 heading of ‘Histories recollected and remade’.²² Auner further offers analytical commentaries of Chen Yi’s piece, *Ba Ban*, in the companion *Anthology for Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries*, stating in his preface that he intends for students to ‘consider works that can be understood in reference to explicitly articulated theories and systems, such as the twelve-tone method and

¹⁹Ibid., 221-228, at 221.

²⁰Ibid., 226.

²¹Joseph Henry Auner, *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 2013).

²²Ibid., 274-6.

its offshoots [...].'²³ *Ba Ban* is chosen because it 'integrates compositional elements from her native China along with twelve-tone techniques'.²⁴ In other words, unlike previous scholars focusing on the various implications of Chen Yi's Chinese elements, Auner focuses attention on how significant Western compositional trends and techniques, such as the twelve-tone method, have been applied to the work of non-European and non-American composers.

Another book that mentions Chen Yi's works is Elliott Antokoletz's *A History of Twentieth-Century Music in a Theoretic-Analytical Context*, published in 2014.²⁵ Unlike Auner with his historical emphasis, Antokoletz aims to provide a detailed musical theoretical analysis of the genres and concepts of twentieth-century art music, while putting them into larger political and cultural frameworks. Several works by Chen Yi are discussed in Chapter 24, 'Synthesis of East and West in Eastern Asia', along with works by another Chinese composer, Bright Sheng; Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu; and Korean composer Isang Yun. Auner's and Antokoletz's projects have several implications for the critical reception of new East Asian composers. Firstly, as Auner's book emphasises an overview of twentieth-century art music, the phenomenon of East Asian composers 'making tradition' by way of cultural fusion has been included as an integral part of the development of modern music history. Secondly, Antokoletz's approach, emphasising more an analytical perspective, permits cross-cultural synthesis to be viewed as one of many musical styles worthy of study. Where Chen Yi's works are perceived to be representative of this blending practice, they have signalled their induction into the mainstream as exhibiting a regional, East Asian style. Unlike the introductory textbooks on twentieth-century music published in the last century – such as Robert P. Morgan's seminal book *Twentieth-Century Music* (1991) – which tend to focus only on musical developments in Europe or in the United States, East Asian compositions

²³Joseph Henry Auner, 'Preface' in *Anthology for Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2013), IX-X at X.

²⁴Joseph Henry Auner, 'Chen Yi (b.1953): *Ba Ban*, Piano Piece, 1999' in *Anthology for Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, 274-288 at 287.

²⁵Elliott Antokoletz, *A History of Twentieth-Century Music in a Theoretic-Analytical Context* (London, UK: Routledge, 2014).

are now included in the category of twentieth-century music.²⁶ A final implication, however, is that East Asian contemporary music is introduced by emphasising a common style of cultural synthesis among the artists. This categorisation may reflect a general trend, but it also perpetuates a stereotypical view, which excludes the composer who does not want to employ the compositional practice of synthesising ‘East’ and ‘West’. This dilemma reflects the politics of recognition, laid out in the introductory chapter of this thesis. It is not merely the fact being recognised, but the fact of how one is recognised, that matters.

The third scholarly focus on Chen Yi’s work regards her as one of many American female composers. Intended as a college textbook and used to generate classroom discussion, Julie C. Dunbar’s *Women, Music and Culture* (2011) portrays successful American female musicians performing musical roles traditionally viewed as exclusively male, such as playing brass instruments in jazz ensembles, conducting symphonies or composing electronic music.²⁷ The second movement of Chen Yi’s large-scale work, *Chinese Myths Cantata* (1996), is discussed in detail in Dunbar’s book with a listening guide provided, and is offered as an example opposing the view that women are conventionally better at smaller-scale genres such as chamber music or piano pieces. Chen Yi is also featured in Jennifer Kelly’s 2013 book, *In Her Own Words: Conversations with Composers in the United States*, alongside twenty-five other female American composers. The detailed interview with the composer in Kelly’s book offers a valuable resource for understanding Chen Yi’s opinions, compositional philosophy and social commitment, which I further analyse in this chapter.

1.2 Chen Yi versus Tan Dun

As shown in the aforementioned *Contemporary Music Review*, Chen Yi is consistently associated with other Chinese *xinchao* composers in current studies of East Asian contemporary

²⁶Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York, NY; London, UK: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991).

²⁷Julie C. Dunbar, *Women, Music, Culture: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

music, normally being grouped under the umbrella heading of 'cultural fusion'. Despite commentators having acknowledged the disparate musical styles and compositional techniques within this commonly recognised practice, the philosophical differences between the various composers' attitudes towards cross-cultural synthesis have been overlooked. In this section, I will point out the fundamental differences in the philosophical orientations of composers currently linked under the umbrella concept of cultural hybridity, focusing on Chen Yi's championing of distinct cultures coexisting with 'equal rights', versus Tan Dun's attitude of cultural synthesis, embodied by his famous equation 'one plus one equals to one'. From this comparison, I aim to present their disparate attitudes towards questions of cultural boundaries and difference.

Admittedly, Tan Dun and Chen Yi share a similar background. They both experienced the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, and in their teenage years were both sent to the countryside by the government to be re-educated through heavy labour and were separated from their families. When the educational institutes re-opened in 1978, they were amongst the first students to be admitted to the Beijing Central Conservatory. Accordingly, they studied the same curriculum under the guidance of the same teachers; Wu Zuqiang (1927-) was their main teacher and so their training was almost entirely confined within a tonal repertoire, with an incursion into Bartok. In the 1980s, English composer Alexander Goehr and Chinese-American Chow Wen-Chung visited the Conservatory, giving a series of lectures on twentieth-century music, which both composers attended. Subsequently, they both went to New York to study composition with Chow and Mario Davidovsky at Columbia University.

Despite their identical conservatory experiences, Chen and Tan developed distinct philosophical positions and visions of their own experience of cultural fusion, evidenced by the following accounts. Firstly Chen Yi, in an artistic statement made in the website American Composers Forum in 1996, states:

[M]odern society is like a complex network, everything exists in equal rights under different cultures, environments and conditions. [...] As to the music composition [...] I hope to get the essence of both Eastern and Western cultures and write more works that embody my temperament and spirit in the new society, to improve the understandings between peoples from different cultural backgrounds, for the peace of our new world.²⁸

Chen Yi's use of the term 'equal rights' indicates that her concern lies more with the asymmetrical, imbalanced power between different cultures and peoples than with an aspiration to combine all different cultures into one. That is, what Chen Yi aims for is a co-existence of Eastern and Western cultures rather than a synthesis of them. This contrasts sharply with Tan Dun's famous claim that 'there is no East and West; all is human'.²⁹ Interestingly, Tan Dun also makes use of the term 'equal' but in a rather different way. The following statements made by Tan Dun are taken from three interviews conducted in 2005 and 2006, two of them for the world premiere of his opera *The First Emperor* (2006) at New York's Metropolitan Opera House:

Solomon: [...] Do you see yourself as an avant-garde composer?

Tan: I see myself as a spiritual mathematician. What I do is kind of one plus one. I figure out that one plus one equals one.³⁰

[...] It's one Eastern plus one Western and you become yourself. [...] East and West should be together as one. That is the history of art. All the masters of art, from Picasso to Bartók, have always collaged many cultural experiences to become themselves.³¹

Tan Dun further explains this 'philosophical formula' using a culinary metaphor:

You may want to put chocolate with spices, but if the dish that comes out still has the chocolate tasting of chocolate and the spices of spices, that is much less interesting to me. People will praise you for being a brave

²⁸Chen, 'Artist Statement'.

²⁹Lipsyte and Morris, 'Special Delivery'.

³⁰Deborah Solomon, 'Composing a Life: Questions for Tan Dun', *The New York Times* [web page] (2006) <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/03/magazine/03wwln_q4.html>, accessed 16 Sept. 2015.

³¹Ilja Stephan, 'You Suddenly Realize that Life is Boundless', [web page] (2005) <<http://www.iljastephan.de/publikationen/interviews/66.html>>, accessed 15 Sept. 2015.

cook. But what I want to do is create a new taste - one that is neither chocolate nor spices.³²

Tan Dun's aim is to dissolve the original cultures and their corresponding boundaries through their 'clash of cultures', to generate a newly blended and unique style; Chen Yi, on the other hand, wishes not only for their co-existence, but also for the survival of the different cultures through the recognition of their equal significance. In the case of Chen Yi, a contact zone is created and the boundaries are crossed rather than being removed; Eastern and Western elements are juxtaposed rather than being fused. Accordingly, despite being understood as composers whose cultural fusion transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, Chen's and Tan's attitudes towards cultural difference and boundaries differ radically. Based on this more refined understanding of their differing philosophies, it becomes crucial to discuss Chen Yi's idea of 'cultural translation', which is yet another concept overlooked by critics.

1.3 Chen Yi's Narrative Self and Her Musical Identity

Notably, Chen Yi's interviews tend to correspond to the concept of narrative identity developed by Dan P. McAdams in 1985, which emphasises the formation of the individual's identity by integrating personal life experiences into an evolving story of the self:

Narrative identity [...] is the internalized and evolving story of the self that a person constructs to make sense and meaning out of his or her life. The story is a selective reconstruction of the autobiographical past and a narrative anticipation of the imagined future that serves to explain, for the self and others, how the person came to be and where his or her life may be going.³³

As McAdams' critical notion tends to feature in Chen Yi's interviews, one can argue this narrative method of self-identification is employed by Chen Yi, and provides her with

³²Ed Pilkington, 'Once Upon a Time in the East', *The Guardian* [web page] (2006) <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2006/dec/15/classicalmusicandopera>>, accessed 15 Sept. 2015, This interview is for the premiere of the opera *The First Emperor*.

³³Dan P. McAdams, 'Narrative Identity', in Seth J. Schwarz, Koen Luyckx and Vivian L. Vignoles (ed.), *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* (New York, NY: Springer, 2011), 99-116, at 99.

better understanding of her self-knowledge and self-perception as a composer. McAdams' analytical framework further offers the notion of 'the redemptive self', defined by McAdams as the process according to which people transform pain and suffering into a positive status or outcome in their lives.³⁴ Chen Yi's life narrative evolved when she moved to America in 1986, and her life story appears in almost every interview she gives and has been reproduced in many profiles of her available on the internet, in programme notes and CD booklets. Three interviews in particular – conducted by John de Clef Piñeiro (Fall 2001), by Bruce Duffie (Winter 2005) and by Jennifer Kelly (Spring 2010) – are useful in understanding the narrative construction of Chen Yi's life; these interviews span over ten years, and the breadth and depth of the topics discussed support a 'narrative' analysis of Chen Yi's own life stories.³⁵ Given this explicit autobiographical context, it becomes useful to further consider Chen Yi's stated idea of music as a language, as well as two other related themes: her belief in culture's translatability into music, and her confidence in her own 'bilingual' background. These aspects of Chen Yi's compositional philosophy, I argue, are clear functions of the composer's own narrative identity.

Chen Yi's account of her experience as a farmer during the Cultural Revolution is one instance of her redemptive self-narrative. She spent her earlier life in the urban city of Guongzhou in Goundong province, located in a relatively more developed area of the southern part of China. Chen Yi's parents were both doctors and were obsessed with Western classical music, her mother played piano at a professional level and her father was an avid violinist. Chen Yi recalls that there was a huge collection of classical musical records, 'ranging from solo instrumental and vocal pieces to orchestral works and operas, [that] they

³⁴Ibid., 109.

³⁵John de Clef Piñeiro, 'An Interview With Chen Yi', *New Music Connoisseur* [web page] (2001) <http://www.newmusicon.org/v9n4/v94chen%5C_yi.html>, accessed 20 Mar. 2012, The interview was conducted in July 26, 2001; Bruce Duffie, 'Composer Chen Yi - A Conversation with Bruce Duffie', [web page] (2005) <<http://www.bruceduffie.com/chenyi.html>>, accessed 15 Sept. 2015, The interview was conducted and recorded in Chicago on December 14, 2005. A copy of the recording was given to the Oral History of American Music archive at Yale University; Kelly, *In Her Own Words*, 101-120. The interview was conducted in May 2010, at her home in Kansas City, Missouri (103).

played... at home every day during and after dinner'.³⁶ Chen Yi began piano lessons in 1956, at the age of three, and took up the violin at the age of four. As their family escaped the first wave of house searches in 1966, immediately after the movement started, Chen Yi was able to continue her violin practice but had to 'practice... with a heavy metal mute, and put a blanket between the hammers and the steel frame in the piano' in order not to be heard.³⁷ In 1968, when she was fifteen, she was sent to the countryside to receive 're-education' and her immediate family was separated. Chen Yi recalls:

My mother was kept as a prisoner at the hospital to do heavy labor and was compelled to engage in self-criticism. [...] Shortly after undergoing a serious stomach operation, my dad was forced to leave his medical position in the city and go to work as a doctor in the countryside. My sister was sent to a remote farm in the North, and my younger brother was sent to a middle school in the South. Our domestic possessions were either seized or destroyed [...]³⁸

Remarkably, what must have been a traumatic experience, becomes, in her later recollection of the same events, an occasion to acknowledge her own mother tongue and cultural history:

[...] Two years of hardship, working in the countryside, educated me a lot [in my] basic language. There is [the] native language that the farmers spoke, [and] actually [it was] the first time that I realized that this [was] my native language! It's not classical. It's not Mozart! [Both laugh] It's not Beethoven that I'm used to. [...] I realized that I have to think into my cultural roots very deeply in order to find my own voice, to have a unique language to speak in.³⁹

Chen Yi's concepts of 'native language' and 'cultural roots' are so vital to her musical identity that it becomes crucial to understand her variant usage of the word 'language', and her slippage between referring to verbal and musical 'languages'. Firstly, in this quotation, she uses language to mean the verbal language that farmers spoke when she encountered them in the labour camp, and she emphasises that this language was not the classical language of

³⁶de Clef Piñeiro, 'An Interview With Chen Yi'.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Duffie, 'Composer Chen Yi'.

Mozart or Beethoven. In this context, the term 'language' changes to mean Western culture and Western classical musical culture. Chen Yi is implying that music had been so important to her and her family that it had assumed a status equivalent to that of verbal language in their household, as a form of day-to-day communication. The music was therefore a 'Western' language other than Chinese. Yet it is not Chen Yi's realisation that she speaks the farmers' language that is significant here. Rather, it is the deep incongruity that she feels between her musical 'native language' – meaning the Western classical musical training in which she was engaged as a child – and her spoken language of Chinese is significant. Coextensively, there was the contradiction between Chen Yi's middle class background – with her modern, Western education – and the working class situation of the Chinese farmers. Chen Yi's interview statement implies that, despite their shared spoken language, she and the farmers were quite culturally opposed.

Drawing from Chen Yi's realisation of these two contradictory, musical and native 'languages', Chen Yi elected to find '[her] own language', which would be the perfect combination of the two:

[...] I believe that language can be translated into music. Since I speak naturally in my mother tongue, in my music there is Chinese blood, Chinese philosophy and customs. However, music is a universal language. Although I have studied Western music extensively and deeply since my childhood, and I write for all available instruments and voices, I think that my musical language is a unique combination and a natural hybrid of all influences from my background.⁴⁰

This quotation introduces a central feature of Chen Yi's musical philosophy, which is the intertwining of the concepts of 'music', 'language' and 'culture'. Chen Yi at times uses 'language' as a synecdoche for 'culture', and her native Chinese speaking is used to justify the presence of Chinese elements in her musical language. Chen Yi's own musical language is therefore a combination of the different cultural 'languages' that she has experienced in her life. Moreover Chen Yi's claim that 'music is a universal language' conveys a belief that

⁴⁰de Clef Piñeiro, 'An Interview With Chen Yi'.

music transcends the barriers of verbal language – meaning that her own music, like other musical forms, effectively communicates with people from different cultures, allowing Chen Yi to be more globally or cross-culturally understood. It can therefore be argued that the early experience of deeply incongruous ‘languages’ inspired Chen Yi’s devotion in her career to bridging the cultural gap.

From this understanding of cultural language boundaries, Chen Yi develops the idea that music should be a language derived from and connected to all peoples and societies. If a language is culture, she suggests, and music is a language that can be understood by another culture, then her musical language can also be a musical ‘translation’ of her past experience and her native culture to each and every new audience. After receiving the prestigious Charles Ives Living Award in 2001,⁴¹ Chen Yi states:

I am glad that my music is in a unique language, and that it reflects my cultural background, and most distinctly my Chinese origins. I think I’m doing it consciously and unconsciously, after all, it’s hard to change your background and your taste intentionally.⁴²

This statement, coupled with the extracts quoted above, demonstrate that Chen Yi’s formation of her musical identity is based on the cultural criteria that the individual cannot choose, such as bloodline, appearance, and language. Since the moment that Chen Yi realised that her native language was Chinese rather than her familiar musical language of Mozart and Beethoven, she decided to shape her music style around the practice of cultural hybridisation.

⁴¹Charles Ives Living award is given by the American Academy of Arts and Letters for a promising American composer. It includes an award of \$200,000 over a two-year period, which aims to free the recipient from ‘from the need to devote his or her time to any employment other than music composition’. See, ‘List of Awards’, *American Academy of Arts and Letters* [web page] <http://www.artsandletters.org/awards2_all.php>, accessed 16 Sept. 2015, When Chen Yi was given the award in 2001, she had already held a permanent teaching position in at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. She then took two-year leave and moved to San Francisco in order to fully devote her time on composition.

⁴²de Clef Piñeiro, ‘An Interview With Chen Yi’.

1.4 Naturally Bilingual

Chen Yi's self-narrative forms a coherent theme, which is a main feature of having developed a 'narrative self'.⁴³ After her realisation that her spoken language is an integral part of her national cultural heritage, and constitutes a shared element with people from very different backgrounds, her self-narrative begins to emphasise her 'bilingual' musical knowledge – meaning her dual access to Chinese and Western classical music traditions and, consequently, her competence as a cultural translator between the two. As mentioned before, Chen Yi received a full Western classical musical education until the point of the Cultural Revolution. According to her interviews, two significant life events provided her with opportunities to access traditional Chinese music. The first happened two years after she was sent to the countryside, when she was taken back to the city of Guangzhou to play violin in the Beijing Opera Troupe. Chen Yi recalls:

[...] I was fortunate. All my classmates stayed in the countryside for four or five years. I only spent two years because the revolutionary operas needed orchestra members. [...] They found me; I was working in the field under the sun. It was an army officer who became the leader of the Peking Opera Company who drove the jeep to the countryside to pick me from the field. I was taken back to Guangzhou city. [...] They didn't have a good violinist because all the orchestra members from our symphony orchestras were sent to the countryside. They were considered worse because they were intellectuals. More polluted. They were not allowed to come back. That's why they took young students. I was a student. When I was seventeen, I became a concertmaster.⁴⁴

During the Cultural Revolution, all Western forms of music, classical and popular, as well as Chinese traditional instrumental and folk music were forbidden.⁴⁵ The Peking Opera Troupe that Chen Yi worked with produced revolutionary operas or model operas, initiated by Jiang Qing, the wife of Chairman Mao Zedong. It was the only theatrical entertainment allowed

⁴³McAdams, 'Narrative Identity', 106.

⁴⁴Kelly, *In Her Own Words*, 113-4.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 102.

during the Cultural Revolution. Since the revolutionary operas featured a Western-style orchestra with a mixture of Chinese and Western instruments, Chen Yi as a concertmaster had her first chance to gain knowledge of all Chinese instruments:⁴⁶

I helped them [Chinese instrumentalists] to copy parts because they don't know Western notation better than me. [...] Also they ask me to help and listen to their scales, to adjust the position of pitches on their instruments. I learned the structures of their instruments and their fingerings. Through the copying, I know all their marks and symbols of the fingerings.⁴⁷

Chen Yi stayed in the Troupe for the next eight years, during which time she was also given opportunities to 'compose a lot of music for this 40-piece mixed Western and Chinese traditional instrumental orchestra.'⁴⁸ This eight-year experience not only allowed her to acquire first-hand knowledge of Chinese traditional instruments, but also provided her with the chance to compose music for a mixed orchestra.⁴⁹ The result is the mixture of Western classical and Chinese traditional that is her common instrumentation, as evidenced in her works such as *Pipa Rhyme* (1993), *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* (1997), *Chinese Fables* (2002), *The Ancient Beauty* (2006), and *Septet for Erhu, Pipa, Percussion and Saxophone Quartet* (2008). Yet, due to the ban on folk songs and traditional music during the Cultural Revolution, what Chen Yi mastered was only the technical part of writing for traditional instruments: fingerings, tuning systems, and symbols in traditional notations, but not the repertoire.

This void was filled by Chen Yi's second encounter with traditional Chinese music, which happened through the curriculum in the Beijing Central Conservatory. Chen Yi recalls her 'systematical training of Chinese traditional music':

⁴⁶For a detailed discussion on revolutionary operas, see B. Mittler, "'Eight Stage Works for 800 Million People": The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Music - A View from Revolutionary Opera', *The Opera Quarterly*, 26 /2-3 (2010), 377-401.

⁴⁷Kelly, *In Her Own Words*, 115.

⁴⁸de Clef Piñeiro, 'An Interview With Chen Yi'.

⁴⁹Kelly, *In Her Own Words*, 115.

[...] we have forty different categories to train our composition students. This includes folk songs that would cover the whole country — different provinces, different styles and minority groups — and you've got to memorize all of them. [...] Then you also have opera. The opera includes singing, reciting, acting, lighting, mask, make-up, costumes, everything. [...] then [we] went on to the traditional instrumental music which would include four categories that would have plucking instruments, like a pipa [琵琶], and sanxian [三弦], and all kinds of round-faced guitars.⁵⁰

The traditional education she received at the Beijing Central Conservatory, coupled with the experience she acquired as a concertmaster during the Cultural Revolution, gave Chen Yi confidence in her knowledge of Chinese and Western classical musical traditions, so much so that she declared it her career aspiration to merge them:

‘[To] find a way to express myself in a way of real fusion of Eastern and Western musics in my music. The result should be a natural hybrid, and not an artificial or superficial combination. All these have contributed to one degree or another to nurture my later musical creation.’⁵¹

Chen Yi's use of the term ‘natural hybrid’, as opposed to ‘artificial combination’, is crucial, as the achievement of this ‘natural’ blend becomes the main objective of her compositional practice. Chen Yi's claim that ‘[s]ince I speak out naturally in my mother tongue, in my music there is Chinese blood, Chinese philosophy and customs’, means that her native language is for her a symbol, a history and the source of her cultural identity.⁵²

There are two aspects that, in Chen Yi's view, make her brand of cultural fusion ‘natural’. By referring to her upbringing and education, Chen Yi presents her works of cultural fusion as the natural outcome of major early life experiences. Moving through the realisations of her linguistic heritage, her ‘bilingual’ musical competence, and ultimately her career aspiration, Chen Yi's self-narrative forms a coherent whole. Those memories are selected to support Chen Yi's own assertion that she is culturally and naturally bilingual. Based on this

⁵⁰Duffie, ‘Composer Chen Yi’.

⁵¹de Clef Piñeiro, ‘An Interview With Chen Yi’.

⁵²Chen, ‘Artist Statement’.

analysis, the subject becomes Chen Yi's compositional practice, and in particular, how Chen Yi translates Chinese mythical narrative into her own musical narrative.

1.5 *Chinese Myths Cantata* (1996)

In 1993, Chen Yi was appointed as composer-in-residence for the Women's Philharmonic and the Chanticleer male choir in San Francisco under the 'Meet The Composer's New Residencies' programme. This residency, which she held through to 1996, was Chen Yi's first commission after graduating from Columbia University in 1993; consequently, it marks an important starting point in her compositional career in the United States. During the placement, she successfully premiered her *Symphony No.2* (1994). The following 1996 premiere of *Chinese Myths Cantata*, with JoAnn Falletta conducting the Women's Philharmonic, the Chanticleer and the Lily Cai Chinese Dance Company and Dunhuang ensembles, represented the culmination of Chen Yi's accomplishments during the residency. The composition was conceived as a multi-media work including video projection, lighting and dance. It can also be performed only as a concert piece.

Chinese Myths Cantata consists of three movements, each of which is based on a select Chinese myth or legend. The first two movements are inspired by Chinese cosmogonic myths, and are entitled 'Pan Gu Creates Heaven and Earth' and 'Nu Wa Creates Human Beings', respectively. The subject of the third movement, entitled 'Weaving Maid and Cowherd', is the popular romantic story of the encounter between a human being, a cowherd, and the weaving girl, who is the daughter of the Emperor of Heaven. In conversation with Stephen Johnson, as part of the BBC Radio 3 programme 'Discovering Music', Chen Yi explains that she intended for the piece to introduce Chinese culture to audiences by telling household stories that every Chinese child would have heard from his or her grandparents or nanny.⁵³ In other words, her chosen materials for cultural translation are not limited to sophisticated

⁵³Stephen Johnson, 'Chen Yi: Chinese Myths Cantata', *Discovering Music*, BBC Radio 3 [radio show] (2004).

heritage traditions such as calligraphy or paintings. Chen Yi encourages a more intimate cultural understanding by sharing vernacular and everyday aspects of Chinese culture. The definition of culture, for Chen, is not exclusively what is considered ‘civilised’ in a developed society; it rather connotes a people’s way of life. This attitude, which echoes her earlier realisation that music and language are bound to people and society, becomes a crucial feature of her music.

A primary feature of Chinese cosmogonic myths that distinguishes them from other traditions, such as the Jewish and the Judeo-Christian, is that the creation of the world is not the will of benevolent god(s) or a divine creator. Neither is there a single authorised account of creation, such as in the Judeo-Christian Bible; instead, several accounts exist for the creation of the world and of human beings.⁵⁴ The version that Chen Yi adopts in the first movement is one of the most widely accepted myths; first recorded in the third century AD, in Hsu Cheng’s *San Wu Li Chi* (三五歷記, ‘Historical Records of the Three Sovereign Divinities and the Five Gods’), it describes how the firstborn semi-divine human, Pan Gu (盤古, ‘Coiled Antiquity’), separated the egg-like world, *hun dun* (混沌, ‘chaos’), into Heaven and Earth.⁵⁵

In the preface to her score, Chen Yi recounts the Pan Gu myth in detail. Before heaven and earth were separated, they existed as a primeval chaos in a form similar to a chicken’s egg. In the middle of this chaos, the first supreme being, Pan Gu, was nurtured for more than 18,000 years. One day he awoke, stretched himself and shattered the egg shape around him, into pieces. After the egg broke apart, the limpid part of it rose up into the sky and became heaven, and the turbid part of it sank down and became the earth. Pan Gu continued to grow nine times a day for another 18,000 years, to make sure that the separation of heaven and earth was complete. When his life reached its end, Pan Gu’s body was transformed into the

⁵⁴ Anne Birrell, ‘The Origins’, in *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore, MD; London, UK: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 23-39, at 24.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

elements of the universe; his left eye became the sun and his right eye the moon. His breath became clouds and wind, and so forth.⁵⁶

According to Chinese mythology scholar Anne Birrell, this account is the latest among the Chinese cosmogonic narratives and differs radically from earlier texts in two main aspects. Firstly, the image of a cosmic egg to describe primeval chaos is used as an analogy rather than a statement of fact or truth.⁵⁷ Secondly and significantly, unlike earlier accounts that the universe is generated from 'formless misty vapor', in this anthropogenic and cosmogenetic account, the universe and the human being Pan Gu appear as 'equal in the cosmic trinity of [h]eaven, earth, and human'.⁵⁸

First Movement: 'Pan Gu Creates Heaven and Earth'

Chinese Myths Cantata is scored for a male choir, a symphonic orchestra and four traditional Chinese instruments: erhu (two-string fiddle); yangqin (dulcimer); pipa (pear-shaped lute); and zheng (zither). The orchestra consists of two flutes, two oboes, two B-flat clarinets, two bassoons, four French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, three percussionists and strings. The first movement, 'Pan Gu Creates Heaven and Earth', can be divided into three major events: the chaos or *húndùn* (bars 1-80); the separation between heaven and earth (bars 81-123); and the formation of elements (bars 123-132). Where Moh-Wei Chen's 1997 DMA thesis, 'Myths From afar: Chinese Myths Cantata by Chen Yi', offers a detailed musical analysis, my discussion of *Chinese Myths Cantata* will focus on investigating Chen Yi's idea of cultural translation – an aspect of her compositional practice that has not yet been investigated.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Birrell, 'The Origins', 32-3; Yi Chen, Preface to Yi Chen, *Chinese Myths Cantata* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Theodore Presser, 1996), Prof. Saxton (Oxford) has pointed out a parallel in creation language: The *Book of Genesis* begins in Hebrew with the letter 'B' (Beta), 'A' (Alpha) being silent, and, therefore, representing/re-creating the breath of creation before the 'explosive' 'B!'.

⁵⁷Birrell, 'The Origins', 29.

⁵⁸Ibid., 30.

⁵⁹Moh-Wei Chen, 'Myths From Afar: Chinese Myths Cantata by Chen Yi', D. M. A. Thesis (University of Southern California, 1997).

In order to explore the multilayered manifestation of Chen Yi's idea of translation in this piece, this discussion adopts the analytical and theoretical framework of Russian linguist Roman Jakobson, as outlined in his 1959 paper 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation'. In his work, Jakobson lists three types of translation:⁶⁰

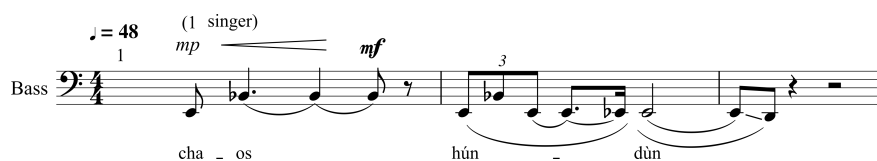
1. 'intralingual' – rewording within the same language, such as 'bachelor' into 'unmarried man'.
2. 'interlingual' – 'translation proper', interpretation of one language by means of another language.
3. 'intersemiotic' – interpretation between different sign systems, such as translating literature into a piece of music or a film.⁶¹

Jakobson's analytical terms are useful towards identifying various ideas of translation manifested in Chen Yi's *Chinese Myths Cantata*. For example, at the beginning of the first movement, Chen Yi makes her first attempt to realise her idea of cultural translation. The beginning of the piece involves two types of translation, according to Jakobson's categories. The first type is an interlingual translation of the English word 'chaos' into the Chinese equivalent, *húndùn*. The second layer involves an intersemiotic translation of 'chaos' from the verbal or lexical domain into musical language. As shown in Example 1.1, the music opens with an ascending diminished fifth interval (E-B^b) sung by the solo bass:

The diminished fifth interval represents Chen Yi's attempt to take material from Chinese music which can, at the same time, represent a state of 'chaos' in Western classical music (a version of its traditional representation as 'satanic'). According to Chen Yi, the opening material – an enharmonic tritone – is taken from a folk song about the Pan Gu story, sung by the head of a Yao ethnic-group tribe, which she once heard during a field trip to the

⁶⁰Roman Jakobson, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation', in Reuben A. Brower (ed.), *On Translation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 232-239.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 233.



Example 1.1 Chen Yi, *Chinese Myths Cantata*, Movement I, bb. 1-3, Bass Solo. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Guangxi province as a conservatory student⁶² The harmonically unstable quality of the tritone constitutes Chen Yi's best choice of representing the unsettling formlessness of chaos.

While based on the same E-B^b motive, she sets the two verbal phrases differently in this opening gesture. It is useful to understand, at this initial point, the tonal principle of Mandarin.

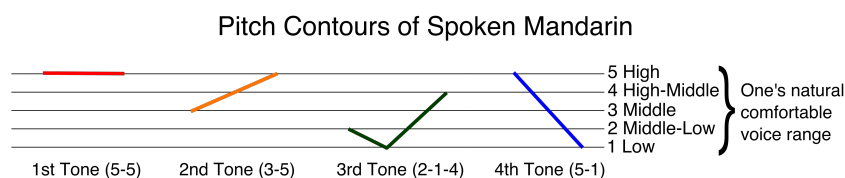


Table 1.1 Pitch Contours of Mandarin Tones.⁶³ Copyright © Jin Zhang. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Mandarin is a tonal language and has four basic tones. The pitch contours of the Chinese language are shown in Table 1.1. The first tone is a high, level tone. In *Pinyin* romanisation, the tone mark is a horizontal line of the main vowel in the syllable. For example, the first tone of the sound of 'ma' is marked as 'mā'. The second tone is a rising tone and is marked as 'má'. The third tone is a dipping tone – a fall followed by a rise – and is therefore represented as 'mǎ'. The fourth tone is a falling tone, marked as 'mà'. Since different characters in Mandarin sometimes share the same sound, the four tones are used to clarify the meanings of words and to differentiate words from each other. The first word of chaos in Chinese 'hún' uses the rising second tone and the second word 'dùn' uses the descending fourth tone.

⁶²Yi Chen, 'Tradition and Creation', *Current Musicology*, 67-68 (1999), 59-72, at 69.

⁶³Image adapted from 'Mandarin Tones', [web page] <<http://web.mit.edu/jinzhang/www/pinyin/tones/>>, accessed 15 Sept. 2015.

Based on this understanding of the tonal principle of the Chinese language, we can now turn to examine Chen Yi's musical setting of the two different languages. The melodic elaboration in the second and third bars largely follows the pitch inflection of the Chinese language. After the English rendering, the passage in Mandarin prolongs the first two-note motive by adding two minor seconds: E-E^b; E^b-D (Example 1.1). As Moh-Wei Chen points out in her analysis, the melodic shape of the prolongation reflects the characteristic tonal inflections of the Chinese language.⁶⁴ While the syllables of 'Cha-os' are set to an ascending fifth E to B^b with a syllabic setting, the Chinese words *húndùn*, which is the second tone followed by the fourth tone, are set in a melodic shape with an ascending from E to B^b, followed by a descending B^b-E-E^b-D. The melodic elaboration in the second and third bars largely follows the pitch inflection of the Chinese language (Example 1.1, Table 1.1), meaning that the bass soloist is, in a sense, assuming the role of a bilingual narrator in communicating these tonal aspects of the Chinese language through the notated music tones.

Echoing her idea about the intimate relationship between music and language, Chen Yi's music, both choral and instrumental, appropriates materials extensively from folk tunes, mostly Chinese. In the Kelley interview, Chen Yi classifies her choral music into three categories: the first is the folk tune arrangement in which she aims to 'maximally keep the original style... and also singing style'.⁶⁵ Chen Yi explains that 'because folk music is closely related to language', if the folk music is being sung, the musical arrangement should follow the characteristics of the language being sung.⁶⁶ Chen Yi therefore agrees that European *bel canto* would not suit her music sung in Chinese.⁶⁷ The second category of her choral music includes music that is imitating Chinese folk styles, but is originally composed rather directly taken from an existing folk tune. *Chinese Myths Cantata*, Chen Yi states, belongs to this category, in which some parts of the music reference recognisable Chinese folk tunes but

⁶⁴Chen, 'Myths From Afar', 23-4.

⁶⁵Kelly, *In Her Own Words*, 103.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., 103-4.

are not direct quotations. The third category of choral music is reminiscent of the style of experimental vocal music, as Chen Yi describes it as 'more abstract'.⁶⁸ In this category, she takes the rhythmic structure or musical form from traditional Chinese musical repertoires – not necessary vocal ones – and then incorporates it into her music.⁶⁹

Based on this understanding of Chen's own categorisation of her choral music, we can now turn to look at the use of Chinese folk style in this movement. In depicting Pan Gu's effort to separate heaven and the Earth, Chen Yi includes a melodic style that imitates, and is inspired by two types of Chinese folk tunes: labour songs and mountain songs.⁷⁰ The labour song is a type of folk song sung while performing labour-intensive work in order to synchronise an action.⁷¹ The form developed from spontaneous shouts emitted while working, and so it originates as having a utilitarian rather than an artistic function. Depending on the different types of labour, labour songs include farmer's songs, boatman's songs, drudge's songs and so on.⁷² In accordance with its purpose to enhance synergy and regulate breathing, the style features strong rhythmic pulse and short passages. Mountain songs are sung by people who live in mountainous areas. In contrast to labour songs, mountain songs are usually sung by an individual rather than a group. In terms of style, mountain songs features lyrical melody, free and irregular rhythm and high-pitched and loud sounds.⁷³ As Example 1.2 shows, in the beginning of the second episode (bar 81) the contra tenor and tenor begin with a style of labour songs, which repeats a short, energetic rhythmic pattern featuring dotted notes and a syllabic setting. At bar 85, the contra-tenor solo joins with the style of free mountain songs. The melody features a long-held note with improvised grace

⁶⁸Kelly, *In Her Own Words*, 104.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Johnson, 'Chen Yi: Chinese Myths Cantata'.

⁷¹Jie Jin, 'Chinese Folk Song', in *Chinese Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 75-86, at 77.

⁷²Ibid., at 78.

⁷³Qiao Jian Zhong, 'Han Folk Song in China', *Musical Performance*, 2 /1 (1998), 51-56, at 53.

notes (Example 1.2, bb. 85-88). The pitch material tritone, derived from the chaos theme, is used in the labour-song inspired melody (Example 1.2, bars 81, 83 and 85).

As mentioned in the introduction to the piece, the act of creation is not performed by a supreme being but by a superhuman. It is possible then that the musical rendering of the separation of Heaven and Earth by the semi-divine Pan Gu, presented through this folk material, is Chen Yi's way of remarking on the peculiar nature of the Chinese cosmogonic myth.

87 [L = 48]

C.T. Solo

C.T.

T.

Bar.

B.

88 [L = 48]

C.T. Solo

C.T.

T.

Bar.

B.

Example 1.2 Chen Yi, *Chinese Myths Cantata*, Movement I, bb. 81-88. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Second Movement: ‘Nu Wa Creates Human Beings’

The second movement of the *Cantata* depicts the creation of humanity by the goddess Nu Wa (女媧).⁷⁴ Nu Wa, who has a human face and the body of a snake, is mythologised as being able to transform her appearance seven times a day. After heaven and earth were separated and Pan Gu passed away, no humans existed yet. One day, while the goddess Nu Wa was roaming the world, she saw her reflection in a pond and began to feel lonely. To dispel the loneliness, she began kneading yellow earth to create human beings. While she worked hard, it took her considerable time and strength to make humans in great numbers. To save time and effort, she immersed a rope in a muddy furrow and lifted it up, splashing drops around that became human beings.⁷⁵

Chen Yi recalls the Nu Wa story in the preface to her score. In her retelling, she removes a detail from the narrative – a motif of social stratification that justifies the existence of a hierarchy amongst human beings. A version of the story recounts that the humans made from the material of yellow earth became ‘rich aristocrats’, whereas those generated by the drops from the rope constituted the lower classes of ‘poor commoners’.⁷⁶ The removal of the mythical origin of these existing social inequalities can potentially be read as another declaration of her belief in ‘equal rights’, which applies not only to cultures but also to the social classes within them.

Like the first ‘Pan Gu’ movement, this movement consists of three episodes: Nu Wa roaming the earth (bars 1-42); Nu Wa reflecting by a pond (bars 43-62); and finally Nu Wa creating human beings (bars 63-162). The sensuous, snake-like Nu Wa is represented by a group of four traditional Chinese instruments; a *zhuihu* (墜胡, bowed lute with a fretless fingerboard)⁷⁷ represents Nu Wa murmuring to herself, due to the instrument’s ability to

⁷⁴Chen, Preface to *Chinese Myths Cantata*, (1996)

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Birrell, ‘The Origins’, 34.

⁷⁷Rebecca Berkeley and Lucien Jenkins, ‘Stringed Instruments’, in Lucien Jenkins (ed.), *The Illustrated Complete Musical Instruments Handbook* (London, U. K.: Flame Tree, 2006), 188-257, at 251.

imitate the human voice.⁷⁸ The *zhuihu*'s characteristics are therefore effectively utilised by Chen Yi to realise her idea of translating 'language' into music.

Nu Wa herself is represented by a four-note motive, $g^{\sharp}-a'-b^b-b^{\sharp}$, played by the *zhuihu*, which first appears in bars 43-44 (Example 1.3) and subsequently reappears in different forms in bar 49, and bars 55-58. Mirroring Nu Wa's ability to transform her body, in each appearance the motive is varied accordingly. In the conversation with Stephen Johnson, Chen Yi explains that the idea of a four-note motive comes from the *zhuihu* imitating the tonal inflections of a four-word sentence in Chinese – 'wǒ shì Nǚ Wā' (我是女媧) – which is the equivalent of 'I am Nu Wa' in English. This demonstrates, once again, Chen Yi's intersemiotic translation of language into music. Like that of '*húndùn*' ('Chaos') in the first movement, the tonal inflection of the four-syllable Chinese sentence, 'wǒ shì Nǚ Wā', is recreated as a four-note motive. The sentence 'wǒ shì Nǚ Wā' consists of a dipping tone (third tone), a falling tone (the fourth), a third dipping tone again (the third) and finishes with the level high tone (first). As Example 1.3 shows, the melodic shape of the motive parallels the Chinese sentence's sinuous sequence of third-fourth-third-first tone. The *zhuihu*'s sliding in-between the notes $g^{\sharp}-a'-b^b-b^{\sharp}$ makes the Chinese sentence 'wǒ shì Nǚ Wā' effectively audible. Different from the previous example of '*húndùn*', however, this time the music is played by the *zhuihu*, rather than sung by the choir. In other words, the verbal sign is missing in the music and only the translated result appears.

Once the verbal signs are 'translated' into musical signs, they may then undergo further interlingual translations, such as from being 'spoken' by a Chinese instrument to a Western instrument. For example, in the second episode, 'Nu Wa reflects by a Pond', Chen Yi plays with the instrumentation to render the events described by the narrative as the goddess seeing her reflection in the water. As demonstrated in Example 1.4, the *zhuihu*'s four-note motive of 'wǒ shì Nǚ Wā' is immediately echoed by the E-flat clarinet playing $f''-f^{\sharp}''-g'-g''$, creating the effect of a reflection. However, the E-flat clarinet imitation inevitably spices the Chinese

⁷⁸Chen, Preface to *Chinese Myths Cantata*, (1996)

tonal inflection into a jazz-style riff, as the clarinet glissando reminds listeners of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924). While the original *zhuihu* colour is 'lost in translation', the new flavour is acquired during the process. If considered in vocal terms, the echo from the E-flat clarinet echo can be heard as a Chinese sentence spoken with an American accent. The simultaneous loss and gain that occurs during the process of translation has therefore manifested itself in Chen Yi's musical translation.



Example 1.3 The four-note Nu Wa motive. Movement II, 'Nu Wa Creates Human Beings', bb. 43-44. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.



Example 1.4 The E-flat clarinet echo of the *Nu Wa* motive. Movement II, 'Nu Wa Creates Human Beings', b.45. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Chen Yi's portrayal of Nu Wa's creation of human beings reflects her attitude towards the interrelatedness of human languages and the processes of communication and translation between them. Further demonstrating this interpretation is the music corresponding to Nu Wa's kneading of the yellow earth by hand. As shown in Example 1.5, from bars 68 to bar 71, after a musical passage played by Chinese instruments representing Nu Wa's effort, the first human voice appears from the choir with the primitive utterance of 'yi yi yi yi' (bar 71, Voice 1). After the same process is repeated in the instruments, the voice of the second human (Voice 2) singing 'yo yo yo yo' joins at bar 77 (Example 1.6). The third and fourth humans are then created, and accordingly sounds 'A A A A' and 'ye ye ye ye' come from Voices 3 and 4 respectively (Example 1.7, bar 84). These sounds are delivered by a solo singer from each voice group.

Example 1.5 shows a musical score for Movement II 'Nu Wa Creates Human Beings', measures 66-71. The score is for Voice 1 and includes staves for Zhuhu, Yangqin, Pipa, Zheng, and Voice 1. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked [♩ = 60]. The score shows various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings (p, f, mp, p). The lyrics 'yi yi yi yi' are written below the Voice 1 staff.

Example 1.5 The voice of the first human 'yi yi yi yi' from Voice 1. Movement II 'Nu Wa Creates Human Beings', bb. 66-71. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Example 1.6 shows a musical score for Movement II 'Nu Wa Creates Human Beings', measures 72-77. The score is for Voice 2 and includes staves for Zhuhu, Yangqin, Pipa, Zheng, Voice 1, Voice 2, Voice 3, and Voice 4. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked [♩ = 60]. The score shows various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings (p, f, mp, p). The lyrics 'yo yo yo yo' are written below the Voice 2 staff.

Example 1.6 The voice of the second human 'yo yo yo yo' from Voice 2. Movement II 'Nu Wa Creates Human Beings', bb. 72-77. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

The musical score for Example 1.7 is presented in a system of seven staves. The first two staves are for the instruments Zhuzhu and Yangqin. The next four staves are for the human voices, labeled Voice 1 through Voice 4. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. A tempo marking of quarter note = 60 is indicated at the beginning. The vocal lines for Voice 3 and Voice 4 are highlighted, showing syllables 'A' and 'ye' respectively. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *mp* and *p*.

Example 1.7 The third and the fourth human voices from Voices 3 and 4. Movement II ‘Nu Wa creates Human Beings’, bb. 80-84. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

These primitive utterances can be heard as humanity’s instinctive cries in its pre-linguistic state of being. These syllables, as they are sung, have not yet developed into words, nor have they as of yet been associated with any symbolic meaning. They may be suggestive of certain feelings or ideas, but they are not nouns, verbs, or adjectives, nor are they any other syntactical parts of human speech. However, despite being devoid of any intrinsic ‘meaning’, these simple and basic utterances are nonetheless expressive of human emotions.

As more humans are created in the narrative, more singers join in the movement. As shown in Example 1.8 in bars 96-97, each voice sings its own syllable with its own characteristic inflection. For instance, ‘Yi’ in Voice 1 features an acciaccatura on the pitch e”; ‘Yo’ in voice 2 features a falling tone on c”; ‘A’ in Voice 3 features a quick rising and falling on c[#]”; and Voice 4 features a combination of several syllables, ‘du dai jiong dududu’, in a highly rhythmic, complicated and developed pattern. These different syllables – altogether juxtaposed in bars 96-97 – can also be interpreted as the origins of multiple human languages. Significantly, as Chen Yi shows in bars 98-100 (Example 1.9), this diversification of language is not punitive: it does not block communication or separate peoples; rather, it yields a desire for communication and interaction between humans and cultures. For instance, in bars 98-102, each voice group starts to acquire the others’ syllables and to sing a mixture of the

syllables. Voice 1, in addition to its original 'yi' sound, learns to speak 'yo' and 'ye'. Voice 3 learns to speak 'yo' in addition to its original 'A' sound (Example 1.9).

Example 1.8 shows a musical score for four voices (Voice 1 to Voice 4) in 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of [♩ = 60]. The score is for measures 93-97. Voice 1 sings 'yi yi yi' and 'yi'. Voice 2 sings 'yo yo yo' and 'yo'. Voice 3 sings 'A A A A A' and 'A'. Voice 4 sings 'da dei' and 'jong du . . . du du'. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*.

Example 1.8 Each voice sings different syllable. Movement II 'Nu Wa Creates Human Beings', bb.93-97. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Example 1.9 shows a musical score for four voices (Voice 1 to Voice 4) in 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of [♩ = 60]. The score is for measures 98-100. Voice 1 sings 'yi yi yi' and 'ye'. Voice 2 sings 'yo yo yo' and 'yo'. Voice 3 sings 'yo yo yo' and 'A'. Voice 4 sings 'yi yi yi yi'. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*.

Example 1.9 Each voice sings a mixture of the different syllables. Movement II 'Nu Wa Creates Human Beings', bb. 98-100. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

This portrayal of primitive acts of communication suggests how important the concept of interpersonal and intercultural communication is to Chen Yi. Yet, what enables this communication in the first place is the question. As her music suggests, the different voice groups do not learn other voice's syllables from a void, but from active listening. In other words, the process of communication portrayed in Chen's *Cantata* does not start by merely singing one's own syllables to the other singers, but, rather, by actively listening to, making comparisons with, and even creatively misunderstanding other people's syllables. Importantly, this communication process itself entails an act of interpretation and translation, as George Steiner states in his seminal book on language and translation, *After Babel* (1998):

A human being performs an act of translation, in the full sense of the word, when receiving a speech-message from any other human being. In short: *inside or between languages, human communication equals translation.*⁷⁹

Viewed from this angle, the idea of translation for Chen is a metaphor for, and a means to communicate and develop relationships between cultures. It is a way of relating to other people who are also concerned with enhancing cross-cultural communication.

The Third Movement- 'Weaving Maid and Cowherd'

The third movement of the *Cantata* is entitled 'Weaving Maid and Cowherd' and is based on one of the most famous love legends in China. As the story is told, the Weaving Maid was the daughter of the emperor of Heaven, and, as her name suggests, she was very skilled at weaving; the Cowherd was a hardworking mortal. One day, guided by an enchanted cow, the Cowherd approached the Weaving Maid and stole her gown while she was bathing in a river. During their encounter, he managed to convince her to become his wife. Though they led a happy conjugal life, with the Maid weaving and the Cowherd working the land, it was not to last. The Emperor of Heaven, upon learning that his daughter had married a mortal, ordered

⁷⁹George Steiner, 'Understanding as Translation', in *After babel: Aspects of Language and Translations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 48. The italics are Steiner's.

her abduction and confined her to the sky, making her the star Vega. The Cowherd followed her until he reached the opposite shore of the Silver River in the sky – also known as the Milky Way – which, due to the Emperor's will, had become enlarged to the point of being impossible to ford. Refusing to give up on his beloved, the Cowherd chose not to leave the skies, and so became the star Altair. Lying on the opposite sides of the Silver River for the whole astrological year, the star-crossed lovers encounter each other on the seventh day of the seventh month in the lunar calendar, when a bridge of magpies makes it possible for the Cowherd to cross the Silver River and reach the Weaving Maid. From this legend, the *Qixi* (七夕) festival took its origin, which is regarded as the Chinese equivalent of the Christian tradition known as Valentine's Day.⁸⁰

Based on this famous narrative, the structure of the third movement of Chen Yi's *Cantata* is divided into two parts. The first part, 'Weaving Maid and Cowherd', which depicts the abovementioned story, is scored for the male choir; four traditional Chinese instruments – *erhu*, *yangqin*, *pipa*, and *zheng* – and the orchestra. The second part, 'Song of Weaving Maid and Cowherd', is scored for the Chanticleer choir, singing a Chinese classical poem *a cappella*. The choir's singing of the poem, which draws upon the legend of the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd, acts as a commentary on the event. The 'Song' of this second part forms the basis of my discussion of Chen Yi's cultural translation in this movement. Up to this point, I have demonstrated Chen Yi's attempts to find equivalences between different languages and media. In this movement, I will look at how Chen Yi deals with the difficulty of translation when a fully accurate translation is harder to achieve.

The poem that Chen Yi sets for the 'Song of Weaving Maid and Cowherd' is written in the style of classical Chinese from the late second century. It is the tenth poem from *Gu Shi Shi Jiu Shou* (古詩十九首, 'The Nineteen Old Poems', 2nd century AD), a set of poems of anonymous composition.⁸¹ The poems in this anthology are without titles and feature

⁸⁰Chen, Preface to *Chinese Myths Cantata*, (1996)

⁸¹Burton Watson, 'Poems of the Han and Wei', in Burton Watson (ed.), *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1984), 93.

five-character or five-syllable lines of verse; consequently, contemporary scholars normally use the first line of each poem as its title. The legend of Weaving Maid and Cowherd was one of the favourite themes in Chinese poetry throughout the ages, and the story was usually treated to depict either the ‘frustrated longing’ or ‘the brevity of [the] lovers’ meeting’.⁸² The poem selected by Chen Yi for her music belongs to the former group, containing the tone of deeper melancholy. In her preface to the score, Chen Yi provides the poem in both its original Chinese and her own English translation (Table 1.2).

Original Poem	Pinyin (Phonetic Transcription)	Chen Yi’s English translation
迢迢牽牛星， 皎皎河漢女。 纖纖擢素手， 札札弄機杼。 終日不成章， 泣涕零如雨。 河漢清且淺， 相去復幾許？ 盈盈一水間， 脈脈不得語。	tiáo tiáo qiān niú xīng jiǎo jiǎo hé hàn nǚ. xiān xiān zhuó sù shǒu, zhá zhá nòng jī zhù. zhōng rì bù chéng zhāng, qì tì líng rú yǔ. hé hàn qīng qiě qiǎn, xiāng qù fù jǐ xǔ? yíng yíng yì shuǐ jiān, mò mò bù dé yǔ.	Far, far away the Cowherd, and Bright, sparkling, the weaving Maid. Lifting her dainty hands, Weaving with the shuttles, Yearning for her lover, She could not concentrate to weave Shedding her tears like rain. The Silver River is shallow and clear, When can the two reunite again? Separated by the limpid river, Lovingly looking at each other, They couldn’t talk and meet.

Table 1.2 The poem ‘*tiáo tiáo qiān niú xīng*’ and Chen Yi’s English translation

Within this poem, each line of verse is made up of five characters and each character represents one syllable. As Chinese is monosyllabic, there are five words to a line, and end rhyming is employed at the end of each even-numbered line (Table 1.2, characters marked in red). Significantly, this poem further features the use of word duplications, which gives it a distinctive rhythmic effect. Amongst the ten lines, six of them employ duplications: ‘迢迢’ (*tiáo tiáo*), ‘皎皎’ (*jiǎo jiǎo*), ‘纖纖’ (*xiān xiān*), ‘札札’ (*zhá zhá*), ‘盈盈’ (*yíng yíng*), ‘脈脈’ (*mò mò*). Through the use of this poetic device, the two lovers are presented as stars in

⁸²Stephen Owen, ‘The Beginnings of Classical Poetry (Shi)’, in Stephen Owen (ed.), *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York, NY; London, U. K.: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), 249-294, at 257.

the sky in the first two lines, before the focus is shifted for the next four lines to the emotions and thoughts of the Weaving Maid, who is unable to concentrate on her work while she suffers through her forced separation from the Cowherd. In the last four lines, the Milky Way that impedes their meeting is described – apparently as a small obstacle, yet one sufficient for the two to be unable to meet or even speak, forcing them to stare longingly at each other from their distance.

Mandarin Chinese belongs to a Sino-Tibetan language family. Unlike phonetic languages, written Chinese was recorded in the form of characters such as ideographs, and was therefore unaffected and largely unchanged by phonological evolution.⁸³ Inevitably, however, written Chinese evolved as a language very different from that of spoken Chinese. Classical Chinese refers to the form of written Chinese used for all formal writing from the early fifth century BC to the early twentieth century.⁸⁴ As sinologists David Pollard and Evan Hung point out, classical Chinese, because of its high density and grammatical versatility, often results in the diversity of its interpretation, particularly as these factors are evident in the process of translation.⁸⁵

The interpretational multiplicity of classical Chinese is apparent when comparing various scholarly translations of the *'tiáo tiáo qiān niú xīng'* poem to Chen Yi's own translation of it. Over the course of her career, she has set a considerable number of classical Chinese poems into choral works, including *Tang Poems* (1995), *Chinese Poems* (1999), *Landscape* (2003), and *The West Lake* (2003). In the preface to each score, Chen Yi provides her own English translation of the selected poems, which raises the question of why she wants to translate the poems herself, particularly when the translation of classical Chinese is so challenging, and when there are already several scholarly translations that she could appropriate for her music. Comparing Chen Yi's own translation of the original Weaving Maid/Cowherd poem

⁸³Eva Hung and David Pollard, 'Chinese Tradition', in Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 369-377.

⁸⁴Jerry Norman, 'The Classical and Literary Language', in *Chinese* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 83-110, at 83-4.

⁸⁵Hung and Pollard, 'Chinese Tradition', 369-377.

with prominent American scholar Burton Watson's in 1984, draws attention to one line that demonstrates the diversity of interpretation that is possible in the translation of Chinese, as observed by David Pollard and Eva Hung in their critique. This variation is relevant to Chen Yi's musical translation of the poem and how she sets the poem, as it helps to explain her approach to translation.

In terms of structure, Burton Watson's version of the poem effectively preserves the original formal structure of duplications, whereas Chen Yi's version does not. As Table 1.3 shows, Watson employs the duplicated words of 'far, far', 'bright, bright', 'slim slim', and 'clack clack' in the first four lines, as well as 'gaze gaze' in the last line, to parallel the duplications in the original poem. In comparing the two translations, their meanings agree in most lines; however, there is one point at which the two translations differ substantially. In line 8, '相去複幾許?' ('*xiāng qù fù jǐ xǔ* ?'), Chen and Watson give strikingly different interpretations: Chen Yi's 'When can the two reunite again?' and Watson's 'What a little way lies between them!'. Demonstrating the difficulty inherent in transcribing classical Chinese poetry, the line is the most difficult one to convert of the ten in the poem. In the original line '相去複幾許?', the first two characters mean 'from each other', while the third character '複' means 'repeatedly'. The last two characters, '幾許', mean 'how far'. A literal translation of the five characters would therefore be: 'How far apart can the two of them be?'.⁸⁶ Based on this literal translation, the question mark indicates that this line is a rhetorical question. Consequently, Watson's version – 'What a little way lies between them!' – is much closer to the original poem than Chen Yi's. However, Watson's translation changes the expression from a rhetorical question into an exclamation. The use of exclamation marks not only alters the phrasing, but also exaggerates the register and the mood of the original verse. Conversely, Chen Yi's version retains the question form of the original line, but her translation is seemingly completely unrelated to the original meaning. Chen Yi's free

⁸⁶This version of translation is taken from Yuoming Luo, 'Poetry of the Han Dynasty', in Yang Ye (ed.), *A Concise History of Chinese Literature* (Leiden, NL; Boston, MA: Brill, 2011), 125-146, at 135.

translation turns the description of the external world around the protagonists – as a river lies between them – into an internalised pondering of their situation: ‘When can the two reunite again?’.

⁸⁷Burton Watson, ‘Poems of the Han and Wei’, in Burton Watson (ed.), *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1984), 100.

Chen Yi's Translation	Burton Watson's Translation ⁸⁷
Far, far away the Cowherd, and Bright, sparkling, the weaving Maid. Lifting her dainty hands, Weaving with the shuttles, Yearning for her lover, She could not concentrate to weave Shedding her tears like rain. The Silver River is shallow and clear, When can the two reunite again? Separated by the limpid river, Lovingly looking at each other, They couldn't talk and meet.	Far far away, the Herdboy Star; Bright bright, the lady of the River of Heaven. Slim slim, she lifts a pale hand, Clack clack, playing the shuttle of her loom, All day long— but the pattern's never finished Welling tears fall like rain The River of Heaven is clear and shallow What a little way lies between them! Only the span of a single brimming stream— they gaze and gaze and cannot speak

Table 1.3 A comparison of Chen Yi's and Burton Watson's translations of the poem 'tiáo tiáo qiān niú xīng' poem.

Chen Yi's musical arrangement of the poem addresses the question of its translatability. Interestingly, while Chen Yi's literary translation does not follow the form of the original, its form is mostly preserved in her musical translation. For example, in Chen Yi's music, the duplicates are set at the same pitch. As Example 1.10 shows, the duplicated words of '迢迢' (tiáo tiáo) in the first line are set on the pitch of d'. Of the six duplicates, five of them follow this pattern. Additionally, every two lines is presented as a couplet in the musical phrasing. For example, the first four lines are set in an antiphonal manner, according to which the first two lines are sung by a countertenor and responded to by a tenor singing the following two.

In terms of the musical texture, the music changes from monophonic to polyphonic in lines 5-8 (Example 1.11). Significantly, the climax of the piece happens in line 8 '相去複幾許?' ('xiāng qù fù jǐ xǔ?'), which is the line of poetry noted above for its difficulty. As demonstrated in Example 1.11, the line 'xiāng qù fù jǐ xǔ?' is first sung by countertenor 1 in the third beat in bar 31, followed by countertenors 2 and 3 in bar 32. Then tenors 1, 2, and 3 enter singing the text 'xiāng qù fù jǐ xǔ?' with the dynamic *f* in the second beat of bar 32. Notably, the multiple voices start to shift from interlocking polyphony to a homophonic texture in the last two beats of bar 33. The multiple voices finally 'unite' into homophony

8 [♩ = 48] *mp*

C. T. 1
tiao tiao qian niu xing
迢迢牵牛星

C. T. 2
mp
tiao tiao qian niu xing
迢迢牵牛星

C. T. 3
mp
tiao tiao qian niu xing
迢迢牵牛星

Example 1.10 The First Line ‘*tiáo tiáo qiān niú xīng*’ with duplicates set in the pitch of d”. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

in bar 34. In the last three words of ‘*fù jǐ xǔ ?*’ together with the following exclamation ‘A’ in bars 35-36, the music reaches its highest and loudest point. Crucially, the musical arrangement of the line ‘*xiāng qù fù jǐ xǔ ?*’, from separate polyphonic voices into homophony, supports Chen Yi’s belief that ‘language can be translated into music’, as Chen Yi effectively expresses both Watson’s sentiment about separation in his own translation (‘What a little way lies between them!’) and her own expression of yearning for their reunification in the form of the rhetorical question (‘When can the two reunite?’). In other words, for Chen Yi, the medium of music has the potential to compensate for, and overcome, the linguistic difficulties of translation.

In a 2005 interview, Chen Yi expresses her understanding that increasing numbers of musicians and types of audiences have become acquainted with her musical style and language:

BD: Do the Western audiences know enough of your language to be able to enjoy and understand your music?

CY: Oh yes, because music is closely related to language. When you speak out, you are in your unique language, and when many, many more people around the world know each other well, you also share your ideas and styles with more and more people. They get familiar with your language. In San Francisco, they would tell the orchestra, “Pick

28 [L = 48] *f*

C. T. 1 *zhong ri bu cheng zhang qi ti ling ru yu. he han qing qie qian, xiang qu fu ji xu? xiang qu fu ji xu?*
終日不成章泣涕零如雨。河漢清且淺，相去復幾許？相去復幾許？

C. T. 2 *W...A...W...* *he han qing qie qian xiang qu fu ji xu? xiang qu fu ji xu?*
W...A...W... 河漢清且淺，相去復幾許？相去復幾許？

C. T. 3 *W...A...W...* *he han qing qie qian xiang qu fu ji xu? xiang qu fu ji xu?*
W...A...W... 河漢清且淺，相去復幾許？相去復幾許？

T. 1 *zhong ri bu cheng zhang qi ti ling ru yu. he han qing qie qian, xiang qu fu ji xu? fu ji xu?*
終日不成章泣涕零如雨。河漢清且淺，相去復幾許？復幾許？

T. 2 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? fu ji xu? fu ji xu?*
W 相去復幾許？復幾許？復幾許？

T. 3 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? fu ji xu? fu ji xu?*
W 相去復幾許？復幾許？復幾許？

T. 4 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? fu ji xu? fu ji xu?*
W 相去復幾許？復幾許？復幾許？

T. 5 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? fu ji xu? fu ji xu?*
W 相去復幾許？復幾許？復幾許？

B. 1 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? fu ji xu? fu ji xu?*
W 相去復幾許？復幾許？復幾許？

B. 2 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? fu ji xu? fu ji xu?*
W 相去復幾許？復幾許？復幾許？

B. 3 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? fu ji xu? fu ji xu?*
W 相去復幾許？復幾許？復幾許？

B. 4 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? fu ji xu? fu ji xu?*
W 相去復幾許？復幾許？復幾許？

38 *ff* *pp*

C. T. 1 *xiang qu fu ji xu? A - W*
相去復幾許？ A - W

C. T. 2 *xiang qu fu ji xu? A - W*
相去復幾許？ A - W

C. T. 3 *xiang qu fu ji xu? A - W*
相去復幾許？ A - W

T. 1 *xiang qu fu ji xu? A - W*
相去復幾許？ A - W

T. 2 *xiang qu fu ji xu? A - W*
相去復幾許？ A - W

T. 3 *xiang qu fu ji xu? A - W*
相去復幾許？ A - W

T. 4 *qu fu ji xu? A - W*
去復幾許？ A - W

T. 5 *qu fu ji xu? A - W*
去復幾許？ A - W

B. 1 *W A -*
W A -

B. 2 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? p*
W 相去復幾許？ p

B. 3 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? p*
W 相去復幾許？ p

B. 4 *W xiang qu fu ji xu? p*
W 相去復幾許？ p

Example 1.11 ‘Song of Weaving Maid and Cowherd’, bb. 28-38. *Chinese Myths Cantata for Chorus & Orchestra* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 1996 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

the Chinese sound.' They would know how to play with the oboe, for instance, for the raw sound in the low register. When the Cleveland Orchestra rehearsed my music, they found no difficulty at all. They say that everything is idiomatic. [...]⁸⁸

This passage demonstrates Chen Yi's aspiration to enhance intercultural communication through her musical translation of the Chinese culture. In so doing, she can restore life to her subject matter inspired by Chinese tradition, while promoting the diffusion and transmission of its central ideas across languages, cultures and time. By importing the foreign elements for distribution to the target culture, she can give it a new context and life.

Where myths define beliefs, identity and a sense of cultural belonging, Chen Yi's audiences become acquainted with her culture – as listeners to stories and readers of her translation. Consequently, listeners are likely to appreciate the marvels of Chinese mythologies, even though they will never feel as though they are descendants of Nu Wa's human creations. What Chen Yi tries to inspire is a desire for cultural understanding amongst people of different backgrounds, who necessarily have different sets of cultural values. Nevertheless, aside from Chen Yi's myth-telling being her attempt to enhance cultural communication, it is a pertinent source of the composer's own self knowledge and self definition. In an allegorical sense, evoking myths as her musical materials serves as an archaeological dig into her own past, to retrieve crucial reminders of where she has come from and who she is.

Similarly, Chen Yi's providing of her own free translations of the Chinese classical poems used in her music, rather than directly take the ones already performed by specialist scholars, has a double function: not only the poems are an integral part of the cultural heritage she wants to share with her musical audience, but the process of translation in which she engages is itself pertinent to her self-representation as a cultural translator.

After all, it can be argued that translation does not occur in a vacuum. In order for any piece of translation to materialise, there must be a situation that demands that mediation – a milieu in which a translational exchange can and must take place, due to a certain

⁸⁸Duffie, 'Composer Chen Yi'.

communication that it inherently requires. According to Chen Yi, it is America's multicultural society that facilitates her cultural translation project. Consequently, I will examine Chen Yi's *Symphony No.3*, subtitled *My Musical Journey to America* (2004), which can be regarded as the composer's autobiographical symphony, and which best exemplifies her concept of a 'translational space'.

1.6 *Symphony No.3: My Musical Journey to America* (2004)

Chen Yi's *Symphony No.3* (2004), commissioned by the Seattle Symphony Orchestra in celebration of its centennial season, consists of three movements: 'The Dragon Culture', 'The Melting Pot' and 'Dreaming'. The second movement of this symphony, 'The Melting Pot', is Chen Yi's first attempt to depict her adoptive culture musically. In the preface to the score, the composer shares candid reflections on her personal musical pursuits as a descendent of the 'Dragon Culture', coming into the 'Melting Pot' world of the United States of America:

- I The Dragon Culture. In ancient totems, in its humanized forms, in folk traditions, the dragon has long been a symbol of power and spirit in Chinese culture. I come from that culture, with its thousands of years of history. I treasure that heritage tremendously, and want to share it with more people in the world.
- II The Melting Pot. I have been working in a multicultural environment in the United States for almost two decades, composing music which is expected to be a hybrid of Eastern and Western cultures. I want my music to express the lifeblood of the new world in sound and to act as a bridge, uniting people towards a better future in the new century.
- III Dreaming. Only in the world of dreams can I forget that I am far away from my homeland. [...] The music is mildly sentimental and nostalgic.⁸⁹

The symbolic value of the Chinese dragon as the emblem of Chinese culture is important for Chen Yi's process of self-identification. Through this symbolism, Chen Yi reiterates the guiding principle in her compositions – that her music 'is expected to be a hybrid of

⁸⁹Chen Yi, Preface to *Symphony No. 3: My Musical Journey to America* (Theodore Presser, 2004)

Eastern and Western cultures' – and that her musical vision is to enhance understanding and communication between those worlds. Significantly, Chen Yi acknowledges that her adoptive country provides a multicultural environment, which not only encourages but also effectively and naturally promotes her hybrid work. The depicting of her adoptive culture in the second movement therefore offers an angle to explore issues of identity politics in her music.

The second movement, 'The Melting Pot', of *Symphony No.3*, scored for a standard symphony orchestra, consists of two main sections with an introduction and a coda. Table 1.4 shows the overall structure of the movement. Chen Yi's musical representation of 'The Melting Pot' combines materials from Chinese folk style melodies and African-American jazz and hip-hop genres of music. The beginning of the second movement is made up of two elements from jazz music: one is the free improvised style in pizzicato in the double bass part; the other is a rhythmic pattern featuring syncopation played by sizzle cymbal, mimicking the effect of the ride cymbal played in a jazz band (Example 1.12). After the two elements repeat for 30 seconds, the third element, theme I, joins and is sustained for another 20 seconds through to the end of the introduction (Example 1.13). During the course of section A (bars 3-55), the two jazz elements function as an *ostinato*, repeating their respective patterns until the end of section A. According to Chen Yi, theme I is drawn from two sourced Chinese traditions: the folk tune *Baolengdiao* (包楞調) originated from the Shandong province and the *Xingxian* (行弦), a short instrumental melody pattern normally used to accompany a Peking Opera character as they move around the stage (Example 1.13).⁹⁰ Theme II, which joins at bar 3 immediately after introducing theme I, is designed by Chen Yi as imitating the style of folk rather than being taken directly from an existing folk tune. (Example 1.14).⁹¹

⁹⁰Weilian Wang(王玮莲), 'Dui Chen Yi disan jiaoxiangqu wodemeiguyinyueshilu zuopin fenxi [A Musical Analysis of Chen Yi's Symphony No. 3: My Musical Journey to America]', Master's Thesis (Central Conservatory of Music Beijing, 2008), 18.

⁹¹Ibid.

Introduction	Section A	Transition	Section B	Coda
bb.1-2	bb. 3-55	bb. 55-74	bb. 75-95	bb. 135-150
Theme I + Jazz Ostinato	Themes I, II + Jazz Ostinato	Theme III + Chi- nese Rhythmic Story Telling	Theme I, II + Hip Hop	Theme I

Table 1.4 The Structure of the Second Movement of *Symphony No. 3*, ‘The Melting Pot’.

$\text{♩} = 108$
Sizzle Cymbal (on bell)

2°: Sizzle Cymbal

3°: Snare Drum

4°: Bass Drum
Tom-Tom

Vividly

I

Violin

II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

pizz.
mp

30"
repeat

30"

Example 1.12 Chen Yi, Two Jazz Elements, *Symphony No. 3*, Movement II, ‘The Melting Pot’, b. 1. *Symphony No. 3* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 2004 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Fl. 1°
Perc.
2°: Cymb.
Cb.

$\text{ca. } 207$

mp f mp

regal

Example 1.13 Chen Yi, Theme I in Flute with Contrabass and Cymbal, *The Third Symphony*, Movement II 'The Melting Pot', b. 2. *Symphony No. 3* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 2004 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Fl. 1°
Perc.
2°: Cymb.
Vn.
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

$\text{ca. } 76$

mf p mf

regal

Example 1.14 Chen Yi, Theme II in Cello with Flute, Contrabass and Cymbal, *Symphony No. 3*, Movement II 'The Melting Pot', b. 3. *Symphony No. 3* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 2004 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

In section B (bars 75-135), Themes I and II, which are inspired by Chinese folk tunes are no longer juxtaposed with jazz elements but, as Wang points out in her analysis, with materials taken from the hip hop song, 'Woo hah!! Got you all in check', by rap star Busta Rhymes.⁹² The rhythmic rap pattern, which is set in a typical, strong 4/4, is represented by trumpets and trombones interlocking with the 'Woo Hah' refrain from the original song. 'Woo' is played by horns with a descending *glissando*, and 'Hah' is represented by the bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon and tuba playing a major seventh interval (B flat-A, Example 1.15).⁹³

As Mina Yang observes of many Asian American musicians, such as world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, Chen Yi's symphony can be read as an instance of celebrating 'the current fashion for multiculturalism by promoting... racialized identities', and this perspective may be applied not only to Chen Yi's incorporation of 'Chinese' music, but also to her inclusion of rap in her symphony.⁹⁴ However, it must be argued that Chen Yi's representation and conception of multicultural society are much more complicated and ambiguous than Yang's observation implies.

First of all, the concepts of 'melting pot' and 'multicultural society' are contradictory, with the latter opposing the former. The idea of a 'melting pot', as it connotes a mixing of materials within a container (*OED*, n. 'melting pot')⁹⁵, emphasises the social processes of integration and assimilation. According to its metaphorical application, all ethnic groups in a society blend together to form one uniform culture based on the dominating cultural norm. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, stresses 'the policy or process whereby the distinctive identities of the cultural groups within such a society are maintained or supported' (*OED*, n.

⁹²Wang, 'A Musical Analysis', 20.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 21.

⁹⁴Mina Yang, 'East Meets West in the Concert Hall: Asians and Classical Music in the Century of Imperialism, Post-Colonialism, and Multiculturalism', *Asian Music*, 38 /1 (2007), 1-30, at 2.

⁹⁵ 'Melting pot, n.', *OED Online. Oxford University Press* [online database] (2015) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/245326?redirectedFrom=melting+pot>>, accessed 04 Oct. 2015.

75 [♩ = 88]

B.cl.

Bn. 1°
2°

C.bn.

Hn. 1°
2°
3°
4°

Tp. 1°
2°
3°

Tb. 1°
2°

Tba. 3°

Hah Hah

Woo Woo

ff *p* *ff* *p*

f *p* *f* *f* *p*

f *p* *f* *f* *p*

f *p* *f* *f* *p*

Hah Hah

ff *p*

Example 1.15 Chen Yi, Rap Rhythm and the Refrain 'Woo Hah!' in *Symphony No. 3*, Movement II 'The Melting Pot', bb. 75-78. *Symphony No. 3* by Chen Yi. Copyright © 2004 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

‘multiculturalism’)⁹⁶. In other words, multiculturalism emphasises the recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity. While wishing to celebrate America’s multicultural environment, Chen Yi selects ‘The Melting Pot’ as the title of the movement, creating a certain contradiction through its use. As such, her ‘celebration’ – at the time in 2003-4 when the United States was particularly experiencing a backlash against multiculturalism in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attack – suggests potentially different readings of the piece and invites a detailed scrutiny of its purpose.⁹⁷

In the second movement, Chen includes musical traditions from two minorities, Chinese and African American cultures, emphasising their distinctive musical idioms in a symphony – a genre originally associated with European-origin mainstream culture. Chen Yi’s symphony treats these differing cultural materials by juxtaposing them rather than mixing them, by means of assigning them to different instrumental groups. This way of treating musical materials can be considered her attempt to create her ideal view of modern society in which, as she states, ‘everything exists in equal rights under different cultures, environments and conditions’.⁹⁸ Listeners can easily identify the styles of jazz or hip-hop and distinguish them from the Chinese ‘folk’ elements. In this way, Chen Yi presents a space where these minority cultures can dialogue or interact with each other, while each maintaining their own distinct musical identity.

By foregrounding cultural distinctiveness through an emphasis on different cultures co-existing equally, Chen Yi’s musical vision of ‘The Melting Pot’ effectively bypasses the longstanding multicultural dilemma identified by Randi Gressgard in the introduction to his 2010 book, *Multicultural Dialogues: Dilemmas, Paradoxes, Conflicts*.⁹⁹ Building

⁹⁶ ‘Multiculturalism, n.’, *OED Online. Oxford University Press* [online database] (2015) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/234921?redirectedFrom=multiculturalism>>, accessed 04 Oct. 2015.

⁹⁷For the debates on multiculturalism in the post-9/11 United States, see Derek Rubin and Jaap Verheul (ed.), *American Multiculturalism after 9/11: Transatlantic Perspectives* (Amsterdam, NL: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

⁹⁸Chen, ‘Artist Statement’.

⁹⁹Randi Gressgard, Introduction to Randi Gressgard, *Multicultural Dialogue: Dilemmas, Paradoxes, Conflicts* (New York, NY; Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books, 2010), 1–12, at 1.

on Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor's observation that there is an inherent tension between the recognition of equal rights – which implies the ignorance of difference – and the recognition of cultural distinctiveness, Gressgard finds such a dilemma in public policy-making. One salient example is in the difficulty of conciliating between guaranteeing freedom of expression to individuals and maintaining a group distinctiveness where, for instance, women might not enjoy such a right.¹⁰⁰ In the musical domain, Chen Yi can use elements from diverse musical traditions that bring their own musical features into her own symphony, without losing their characteristic flavours. The jazz elements, even though they are used outside of the social context and musical rules of a jazz piece, are still clearly recognisable, as are the multiple Chinese folk-song fragments used in Chen Yi's piece. Nevertheless, as their musical characteristics have been maintained, the social meaning of jazz and hip hop music, as forms of cultural resistance, has been removed for the service of celebrating American multicultural society. Rap and hip hop, as Tricia Rose has observed, originated as a 'black noise' with a strong political message about the rage and despair caused by racism.¹⁰¹ That political message has been erased in this case to convey an optimism surrounding multiculturalism.

Where Chen Yi once stated that she feels that music is 'a real universal language now', she has also explained the now-passing universality of the Western classical tradition:

Universal language is not the old sense of music. Talking to everybody in the universal language. Now this language could include different style of language, even only in music.¹⁰²

Chen Yi's statement suggests that Western classical music, traditionally regarded as a 'universal language', has changed. She emphasises contemporary classical music's capacity for inclusiveness and its ability to encompass musical languages from different traditions and regions. In this sense, 'The Melting Pot' movement can be heard as her idealisation of 'a

¹⁰⁰Gressgard, Introduction to *Multicultural Dialogue: Dilemmas, Paradoxes, Conflicts*.

¹⁰¹Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994).

¹⁰²Kelly, *In Her Own Words*, 106.

real universal language'. However, this 'real universal language' is achieved by ignoring and removing the ideological, political divide between different 'languages' rather than confronting and resolving it. One may wonder whether this is the vision of 'equal rights' that Chen Yi imagined.

Chen Yi recalls an episode that happened during the rehearsal for the composition's premiere with Seattle Symphony Orchestra in 2005. In that ensemble, the leader of the double bass section is African-American, and after the rehearsal he admitted to Chen Yi: 'I am a leader of the double bass group in a symphony orchestra but this is the first time I have performed my own voice.'¹⁰³ Chen Yi's music, as she idealises it, does seem to provide a forum for minority groups to have their own voice. At the same time, it inevitably elicits an 'us-and-them divide' in her musical realisation of a multicultural environment.

On the other hand, Chen Yi's positive affirmation and appreciation of American multiculturalism might be viewed as a reaction to post-9/11 social struggles in the United States.¹⁰⁴ By providing her account of her own positive experience with diversity in America, her 'American musical journey' serves as an invitation to the public to preserve the open attitude and the cosmopolitan atmosphere that she encountered as part of her own emigration. Yet, celebrating the United States as a multicultural society, when world news was dominated by the war in Iraq in 2003, can be considered controversial and potentially inflammatory in its disregarding of the socio-political tensions of the time. In this context, creating a bridge between her own Eastern and Western cultural experiences seems a rather insufficient effort towards creating 'a better future in the new century', as the preface to her symphony proposes. Chen Yi's utopian vision of 'a real universal language' raises the question of whether there are places beyond her musical imaginary world of 'Western and Eastern'.

Despite the fact that Chen Yi's music attempts to bypass the theoretical tension between achieving 'equal rights' and recognising cultural difference, Chen Yi's sense of cultural

¹⁰³The original quotation is '我是一个交响乐团低音提琴的首席,可是这是我第一次演奏我自己的声音'. Quoted in Wang, 'A Musical Analysis', 82. The English translation is my own.

¹⁰⁴Rubin and Verheul, *American Multiculturalism*, 7-8.

difference is an essential part of her sense of identity and belonging, hence it forms the foundation from which she relates to other cultures. In other words, Chen Yi's Chinese heritage is the source of her confidence and her sense of self, which enables her cultural dialoguing. Several implications arise from these observations. Firstly, the meaning of Chen Yi's 'communication' is predicated upon the differences between the cultures that she is effectively communicating. Emphasising cultural origins is the way that she orientates herself in the world, as that emphasis necessarily groups people according to their supposed cultural associations. Chen Yi's primary approach to other people is therefore to categorise them according to their culture, so that their representation in her music is effected through the employment of well-established cultural references and markers.

1.7 Cultural Translator and/or Post-Colonial Informant

For Chen Yi, who means to serve as a facilitator of intercultural communication, the idea of translation enables an understanding between cultures as it represents her own cultural identity. In other words, through her translation project, Chen Yi becomes an informant for Chinese music, culture and values in the United States. Yet, the nature and purpose of the cultural informant and translator requires discussion, particularly as Gayatri Spivak's critical notions of the 'native informant' and the 'postcolonial informant' shed light upon this discussion of Chen Yi's functioning in this informant role.

The 'native informant' is a term borrowed from anthropological writings to describe 'a native member of a community who could communicate with foreign investigators to help them to learn about (or inform upon) their culture'.¹⁰⁵ In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), Spivak points out that the native informant is a figure who can only provide data to be interpreted by the anthropologist, but does not possess individual agency.¹⁰⁶ The

¹⁰⁵Jenni Ramone, 'Native and Nation', in *Postcolonial Theories* (Houndmills (Basingstoke), UK; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 127-154, at 139.

¹⁰⁶Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA; London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1999), 49.

native informant therefore cannot autonomously read the information provided, but is always subject to an anthropological reading.¹⁰⁷

The ‘postcolonial informant’, on the other hand, is a figure who has ability to speak about the native culture because of his/her own intellectual position and specific cultural knowledge. Yet, as Spivak further points out, a significant gap exists between the account provided by the postcolonial informant and the voices of the ethnic minorities that the informant attempts to represent:

The postcolonial informant has rather little to say about the oppressed minorities *in* the decolonized nation as such, except, at best, as especially well-prepared investigator. Yet the aura of identification with those distant objects of oppression clings to these informants as, again, at best, they identify with the other racial and ethnic minorities in metropolitan space. At worst, they take advantage of the aura and play the native informant uncontaminated by disavowed involvement with the machinery or the production of knowledge. Thus this last group . . . undermines the struggle by simulating an effect of a new third world, by piecing together great legitimizing narratives of cultural and ethnic specificity and continuity, and of national identity [. . .].¹⁰⁸

In Spivak’s view, the appropriation of an aura of ethnic authenticity can be damaging for the represented minorities as it provides the illusion of authority while not truly speaking for the ethnic Other, and without truly subverting the power imbalance between the conqueror/conquered or the master/slave. This criticism might, as posited of the multicultural society portrayed in *Symphony No. 3*, be leveled at Chen Yi.

Chen Yi’s role as a cultural translator presents many characteristics of the postcolonial informant that Spivak identifies in the passage quoted. With her wide use of folk musical tunes from ethnic minorities, as in the works *Duo Ye* (1984, Dong ethnic minority in China), *Ge Xu* (1994, Zhuang minority), *Ji-Dong-Nuo* (2005, Yao minority), *Chinese Myths Cantata* (1996, Yao minority), *Tibetan Tunes* (2007) and so on, Chen Yi does not prepare the data for her audiences to conduct an anthropological reading; rather, she enacts her agency, in her

¹⁰⁷Ramone, ‘Native and Nation’, 142.

¹⁰⁸Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 360. Italics are Spivak’s.

position as a celebrated contemporary composer, and reads the data through her translation project to her audiences. These ethnic musical and cultural materials are translated into her own 'unique musical language'. For example, apart from folk tunes, a number of Chinese classical poems – which are either set into her choral music or which inspire her instrumental music – are translated by Chen Yi herself into English and into music.

Yet at the same time, Chen Yi empowers herself with these data, as a person with an authentic knowledge that she can use to speak of, to reproduce and to appropriate of these data. In her interviews, there is no critical mentioning of the living conditions or the social problems of the ethnic minorities from which she sources her folk-tune materials; whereas great emphasis is placed on the common language spoken by the composer and the farmers – another way to claim her authority in presenting those musical materials.

It bears stating that translation is never a neutral site, and that Chen Yi's emphasis on her musical hybrid being a 'natural' result of authentic life experiences raises the question of what 'unnaturalness' or 'artificiality' she is attempting to avoid, that her invented folk tunes might elicit. I contend that Chen Yi's main struggle concerns the claim of ownership over culture, meaning the authority that she must claim over both Western classical music and Chinese cultural heritage in order to translate them. While the former is part of her personal history, it certainly does not belong to the millenarian Chinese cultural heritage from which she claims to descend. Within her musical production, Chen Yi attempts to solve and to respond to this critical dilemma by bridging the two traditions through her musical translation. As pointed out in the introduction, the synthesis of elements from both cultures has been a matter of contention, generating readings of Asian neo-Orientalism, self-exoticism, nationalism, and capitalism. I suggest that by applying a postcolonial reading to her role as a cultural translator, the cultural fusion presented in her works shows yet another dimension of the controversy. In terms of Chen Yi relating to other minorities in a metropolitan space, as in the second movement of *Symphony No.3*, only an attempted dialogue is portrayed. Yet, as

a member of a multicultural society in an American metropolitan space, the nature of her attempt is to remove existing conflicts, resistances and incongruities from within that milieu. In so doing, she legitimises her hybrid musical practices and empowers herself through ‘the[se] narratives of cultural and ethnic specificity and continuity’ that she represents in her music.¹⁰⁹

In this chapter, I have provided the first of my case studies towards this thesis by presenting a composer who embraces the practice of musical hybridity as part of the cross-cultural narrative. This chapter has investigated the way in which Chen Yi constructs her musical identity through her idea and practice of cultural translation. In particular, I have examined the possibilities and challenges inherent in Chen Yi’s translation project, which aims to enhance cultural understanding and to promote equal recognition. The ideological divide between Chen Yi and Tan Dun that is identified in this chapter points out the divergent philosophical bases of the common compositional practice of cultural fusion, which in turn challenges the current understanding of cultural fusion as a way of transcending boundary and difference. As shown, Chen Yi’s translation project is grounded in the existence of cultural boundary and difference. Language, both as a practical tool and a metaphor for communication, is significant in Chen Yi’s compositional philosophy; it allows her to justify her compositional choices, as her native language is Chinese and that language speaks naturally through her other language: music. Certainly, the existence of multiple human languages necessitates the idea of translation as a way of enhancing understanding between cultures. Importantly, by directing attention to her idea of cultural translation, we can locate the translational space in which she believes she can realise her works. In her *Symphony No.3*, the space Chen Yi locates is multicultural America; yet, as her ‘melting pot’ movement shows, by eliminating the social meanings behind her chosen materials, her multicultural ideal is achieved by removing, rather than confronting, the tension within multiculturalism. The double bass player’s moving statement to Chen Yi reveals that the divide of ‘our and

¹⁰⁹Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*.

their music' has been perpetuated and reinforced. Consequently, the remaining chapters of this dissertation examine two other case studies for which issues of cultural hybridity and identity are discussed from different perspectives to the ones here adopted, as the starting point for both is the rejection of perceived cultural identity in their musical compositions.

Chapter 2

In Search of Identity in the World of ‘Nonsense’: Unsuik Chin’s *Alice in Wonderland* (2007)

Born in Seoul, South Korea in 1961, Unsuik Chin has been an established figure on the contemporary music scene for the past decade. Largely self-taught, Chin received her first formal training with Sukhi Kang (1934-) at Seoul National University. In 1985, she moved to Germany to study with György Ligeti on a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) scholarship. Winning the prestigious Grawemeyer Award in 2004 for her *Violin Concerto* (2001) earned her worldwide recognition. Since the premiere of her opera *Alice in Wonderland* in 2007, her appearances in major contemporary musical events have been amassing rapidly and include: the BBC’s Total Immersion series of 2011 in London; the Miller Theatre’s Composer Portraits series of 2013 at Columbia University in New York City; and the 2014 Lucerne Festival in Lucerne, Switzerland.

Like Chen Yi, Unsuik Chin belongs to a new generation of Asian composers who went abroad to hone their compositional skills during the mid-1980s and went on to garner international recognition in the mid-1990s. Unlike Chen Yi, however, Chin has a fundamentally different approach to the East-meets-West paradigm. While Chen Yi’s compositional practice adopts many overt Chinese ethnic elements, Chin tries to avoid ‘sounding Korean’. Given this deliberate effort to denationalise her style, this chapter uses three methods to examine Chin’s

attitude towards questions of identity in relation to her compositional practice. The first draws on her interviews – particularly those in recently published book on her music *Im Spiegel der Zeit: Die Komponistin Unsuk Chin* – to examine Chin's choices of musical identity and her pursuit of the idea of a universally accessible music.¹ The second method discusses Chin's interpretation, adaptation and parody of Lewis Carroll's story, *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland*, in her opera, *Alice in Wonderland*. I assess Chin's effort to demonstrate the witty intertextuality of Carroll's novel for her audience, and I argue that her approach to Carroll's text reveals the nature of her ideal 'universal' audience. I further demonstrate that Chin departs from Carroll in her musical portrayal of Alice's development, and that this interpretation of the maturation theme is Chin's creative response to Alice's famous question, 'Who in the world am I?'.² As a final method, I observe what these materials tell us about Chin's self-positioning, and what implications her case has for the study of musical identity among contemporary East Asian composers.

2.1 Identity: Reality versus Illusion

Unsuk Chin is constantly presented as a composer who defies categorisation.³ She is often quoted as stating that her 'music does not belong to any school'.⁴ Paul Griffiths' programme note for the 'Total Immersion' Day, held at the Barbican Centre in 2011 and entitled 'A Spinner of Illusory Reality', notes Chin's generic 'in-betweenness':

¹Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*.

²*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) was first published by McMillan & Co in 1865. The edition referenced is *The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition* published by Penguin Books in 2001. Alice's famous line "'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle" appears in 'Chapter 2. The Pool of Tears'. See Lewis Carroll, John Tenniel and Martin Gardner, *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and, Through the Looking-Glass* Martin Gardner (ed.), (London, UK: Penguin, 2001), 20-9, at 22.

³Choon Mee Kim, *Harmonia Koreana: A Short History of 20th-Century Korean Music* (Seoul: Hollym, 2011), 92-3.

⁴Yoo, 'Western Music in Modern Korea', 146. The quotation is from the author's interview with Unsuk Chin on 18 March 2005.

Any local colour in the work of one born in Seoul in 1961, is much harder to find – nor one might add, does Chin’s music proclaim a specifically female sensibility. Rather, we seem to be in a world between worlds: between Asian and Euro-American, between female and male, between present and past [...] This is not music as autobiography or self-expression...⁵

Griffiths’ observation that ‘local color’ is difficult to discern in Chin’s music is supported by Chin’s conscious evasion of a ‘Korean’ sound, which she admits in a 2005 interview with Hae Young Yoo:

Yoo: How did you get interested in non-European music and folk music? Have you ever studied Korean traditional music?

Chin: Through Ligeti I was exposed to various kinds of music. Gamelan was one of them. It was especially attractive to me since gamelan music is very complex and abstract, yet full of vitality... I think gamelan has universal qualities but Korean music is understood only by Koreans... When any one uses Korean material it becomes obvious right away, so I don’t want to use it.⁶

Chin’s response to Yoo’s question expresses an unequivocal ambition to produce a universally-accessible music. However, it also reveals an inherent paradox in her conception of the ‘universal’: is Korean traditional music really only comprehensible to Koreans? Is there no ‘universal’ value to traditional ethnic music? Why, by contrast, does Gamelan music have ‘universal qualities’? Alongside these problems in Chin’s definition of ‘universal music’, one can also see a clear avoidance of ‘self-orientalisation’. In fact, Chin’s attitude towards non-European music has attracted some critics’ attention. For example, Maris Gothóni has noticed how ‘Unsuk Chin has largely avoided composing for instruments from traditional non-European musical cultures: the dangers of musical exoticism see[m] too great to her’.⁷

⁵Paul Griffiths, ‘Programme Notes’, in *Unsuk Chin: A Spinner of Illusory Realities* (London, UK: BBC Symphony Orchestra, 2011), 4-5.

⁶Yoo, ‘Western Music in Modern Korea’, 143.

⁷Maris Gothóni, Programme Note to Unsuk Chin, *Šu* (2009), Boosey & Hawkes [web page] <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Unsuk-Chin-u/52419%5C&langid=1>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

Further to her points on nationality in the interview, Chin denies the role of gender, religion and location in the formation of her musical identity. When asked why she decided to stay in Germany, she answers: 'because I don't have anything to do in Korea'.⁸ As Chin explains, the attraction of Berlin is that it does not prescribe her any role:

I stay in Berlin because it is a good place to live for foreigners. It doesn't have anything to do with composing, but it gives me a freedom to be myself. I am an outsider in Germany. I am much more recognized and almost all of my works are performed outside of Germany. [...] [Contemporary] German music is not universal even though Germany has an extraordinary musical culture. Their music exists only for the composers from Germany or German culture. They are still very exclusive to 12-tone music.⁹

In this passage, Chin expresses that even if she currently resides in Berlin, which provides her with the artistic freedom she longs for, she is not influenced by and has not attempted to compose what is culturally recognised as 'German music'. Notably, the word 'universal' recurs as she criticises contemporary German music as being exclusively twelve-tone and thus 'not universal'.

When asked about whether any other factors influence her music, such as religion, she denies having any religious affiliation: 'I am not a Christian even though both my parents are. None of my music is religious because I am not religious. I believe the musician needs to transcend religion'.¹⁰ Further challenging the standard identity categories that society applies to composers, Chin seems to reject most ardently being defined by her gender:

Yoo: Are there any difficulties in being a well-established Korean woman composer? What do you think of the Korean [W]oman [M]usic [S]ociety?

Chin: I have no opinion.¹¹

⁸Yoo, 'Western Music in Modern Korea', 145.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 146.

¹¹Ibid.

As these various responses indicate, Chin's detachment from the environment she inhabits and from social categorisations is crucial to her artistic freedom and imagination. Crucially, Chin's renunciation of established musical schools and identity categories evinces her profound awareness of the limitations imposed by all fixed identities. Underlying these rejections is her fundamental questioning of the concept of identity.

Identity and Choice

While the 2005 interview with Hae Young Yoo shows us what identity categories are rejected in Chin's self-concept, the interviews collated in the recently published book, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, offers valuable insight into her view of the concept of identity. Significantly, in an interview conducted in 2010 by Patrick Hahn, Chin mentions the danger of '*Identitätsfalle*' (G. 'identity trap') – a term she borrows from the Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen.¹² *Identitätsfalle* is the German title of Sen's well-known book *Identity and Violence: the Illusion of Destiny*, and Chin appropriates the concept as her explanation of what she attempts to avoid as a composer:

Patrick Hahn: To many composers, a stay in a foreign country, like the one that was made possible for you by the German Academic Exchange Service [DAAD], is also an occasion to engage with the idea of their own identity; so for example Toshio Hosokawa,¹³ who only in Europe really found his way back to his Asian roots. For yourself, however, this hardly seems to play a role.¹⁴

¹²Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 2006), The interview was conducted by Patrick Hahn on 29 May 2010 in Cologne.

¹³Toshio Hosokawa (1955-) is a Japanese composer who came to Berlin in 1976 to study composition with Isang Yun. His music explores the relationship between Western avant-garde art and traditional Japanese culture. His compositions are influenced by the concepts of Zen Buddhism and the static structures of the *Gagaku* music of the Japanese court. See 'Toshio Hosokawa', *Shott Music GmbH & Co.KG* [web page] <<http://www.schott-music.com/shop/persons/az/toshio-hosokawa>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

¹⁴'Für viele Komponistinnen und Komponisten ist ein Aufenthalt in der Fremde, wie er Ihnen durch den Deutschen Akademischen Austauschdienst ermöglicht wurde, auch ein Anlass, sich mit der eigenen Identität zu beschäftigen, so wie beispielsweise Toshio Hosokawa, der erst in Europa wirklich zu seinen asiatischen Wurzeln gefunden hat. Bei Ihnen scheint das jedoch kaum eine Rolle zu spielen.' See, Patrick Hahn, "'Gemischte Identität" und "Sprachspiele". Unsuk Chin im Gespräch mit Patrick Hahn ["Mixed identity" and "language games." Unsuk Chin in Conversation with Patrick Hahn]" in Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 176. Unless otherwise stated, all English translations of German texts are mine.

Chin: When you live in a foreign culture, you naturally begin to think about yourself. Only I do not think that this is very relevant to music, although what I find still enriches my life immensely is the engagement with the most diverse musical cultures. I think that art has always been created through mingling and exchange. It is well known that no society possesses an authentic, unadulterated, homogenous cultural origin. Therefore, I believe that it does not make any sense to categorise different artistic manifestations according to their apparent cultural origins.

There is in fact no such thing as 'Asian music', just as there is no such thing as 'German music', leaving aside the fact that the traditional musical cultures of the individual Asian countries are already very distinct. In central Europe, I have often found that people's conception of Asian culture and society is a complete fantasy. Conversely, the same phenomenon is of course also found in East Asia. The problem arises when there are rigid expectations which you, as a newcomer, have to fulfill to be accepted. So I reject this kind of 'identity trap', to use the term coined by Amartya Sen.¹⁵

Chin's response suggests the emptiness of such terms as 'Asian music' or 'German music', as well as her refusal to fall into Identitätsfalle; that is, to establish her name by conforming to any expectations that might be seen as stereotypical of a nationality. In his book, Sen criticises the reductionist approach to identity which involves a singular affiliation to a culture or religion. To Sen, this view is not only an illusion but also a form of violence, because he sees this diminution of humanity to religion or ethnicity alone as the major cause of contemporary conflicts between civilisations. Sen states:

¹⁵ 'Wenn man in einer fremden Kultur lebt, fängt man natürlich an, über sich selbst und seine Herkunft nachzudenken- das geschieht automatisch. Auch ich mache diesen Prozess durch. Nur glaube ich nicht, dass das für die Musik sehr relevant ist. Was mich dagegen noch immer ungemein bereichert ist die Beschäftigung mit den verschiedensten musikalischen Kulturen. Ich denke, dass Kunst schon seit jeher durch Vermischung und Austausch entstanden ist. Wie man weiß, besitzt ja keine Gesellschaft authentische, unverfälschte und einheitliche kulturelle Wurzeln. Daher glaube ich, dass es nicht viel bringt, verschiedene künstlerische Erscheinungen nach angeblichen Kulturkreisen zu kategorisieren. Eine »asiatische Musik« gibt es ebenso wenig wie eine »deutsche Musik«, ganz abgesehen davon, dass schon die traditionellen musikalischen Kulturen der einzelnen asiatischen Länder extrem verschieden sind. In Mitteleuropa habe ich oft erlebt, dass die hiesige Vorstellung von asiatischer Kultur und Gesellschaft ein Phantasma ist. Dasselbe Phänomen kann man umgekehrt natürlich auch in Ostasien erleben. Problematisch wird es dann, wenn es starre Erwartungen gibt, die man als Zugereiste erfüllen muss, um akzeptiert zu werden. So eine »Identitätsfalle« –um hier einen Begriff von Amartya Sen zu gebrauchen –lehne ich ab.' Ibid., 176-7

[...] [H]istory and background are not the only way of seeing ourselves and the groups to which we belong. There are a great variety of categories to which we simultaneously belong. I can be, at the same time, an Asian, an Indian citizen, a Bengali with Bangladeshi ancestry, an American or British resident, an economist, a dabbler in philosophy, an author, a Sankritist, a strong believer in secularism and democracy, a man, a feminist, a heterosexual, a defender of gay and lesbian rights, with a nonreligious lifestyle, from a Hindu background, a non-Brahmin, and a non believer in an afterlife (and also, in case the question is asked, a non-believer in a “before-life” as well).¹⁶

Given Chin’s renunciation of problematic identity categorisations, as expressed through her interviews, Sen’s argument for the multiplicity of identities within the individual has a particular resonance for her. Of note, however, is an apparent difference between Chin’s and Sen’s proposals for avoiding the false illusion of the single identity. While Sen’s thesis emphasises that human beings enjoy many identities simultaneously, Chin rather stresses that she belongs to no identity groups at all. Chin does not celebrate plural or mixed identities, nor does she wish to base her musical identity on such diversity. As she states in a 2012 interview for the performance for her three compositions, *Šu* (2009), *Violin Concerto* (2001), *Fantasie mécanique* (1994, rev. 1997) in the 2012 Edinburgh International Festival:

I am very interested in different cultures but my primary goal is not to pursue a mixture of East and West, nor to belong to any specific group. I simply try to compose my own music and to realise my own ideas in it. I don’t think I belong anywhere in particular.¹⁷

Nevertheless, what Chin appropriates from Sen’s book is his proposition of the ‘freedom of choice’ and ‘the role of reasoning in the choice of identity’.¹⁸ Sen is in favour of the idea of cultural liberty; he promotes a society which encourages freedom of thought and which allows individuals to make their own choices about what elements of family, religion, nationality or any other ideology they wish to retain for themselves.¹⁹ Given Chin’s wish for

¹⁶ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 19.

¹⁷ Kate Molleson, ‘The Stuff of Dreams’, *Herald Scotland* [web page] (2012) <http://www.heraldsotland.com/arts%5C_ents/13070358.The%5C_stuff%5C_of%5C_dreams/>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

¹⁸ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence*, xvii.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

the 'freedom to be [her]self', Sen's view of the reasoned choice inherent in identity effectively liberates Chin. Chin's will to be '[her]self' is consequently not about the discovery of who she is or is supposed to be, as predetermined without critical examination. Chin clearly feels that, while she happens to be the product of the cultural encounter a hundred years ago when Western classical music was imported to Korea, she ought not to be destined to have a mixed musical identity as a result.

It can be inferred that, for Chin, her musical identity is a set of choices to be made freely, rather than a required embracing of what has been imposed upon her. Accordingly, the investigation of her attitude towards questions of identity should move from the simple recognition of her desire for the freedom of choice, to the careful examination of what her choices have been and how she developed her compositional approaches and aesthetics to suit those decisions.

Chin's first choice was to decide that the synthetic style – such as that of her Korean forebear Isang Yun (1917-1995), who also moved to Germany – was not her own. In the 2010 interview with Stefan Drees cited above, Chin openly discusses Yun's stylistic mixture of 'East' and 'West' for the first time.²⁰ She explains that while Yun's style might have worked in the Europe of the 1960s, it may well not have worked in the Europe of the 1980s – the time during which Chin relocated to Germany.²¹ Chin further points out that, being of a younger generation, she has a different relationship with traditional Korean music:

Chin: Isang Yun was born in 1917, at the time when traditional Korean music was still actually played in the villages. However, I grew up with European music and almost never heard any folk music. [...] Besides, there was a generational issue; that is, the court music tradition had already been interrupted by the Japanese occupation of Korea in 1910, roughly 50 years before I was born. Therefore, I had a very different relationship with the Korean music tradition from the very beginning. This resulted in some differences between Yun and me. [...] Many

²⁰The interview was conducted by Stefan Drees on 24 August 2010 in Berlin. The transcript of the interview is compiled in Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 13-26.

²¹*Ibid.*, 21.

people asked me later why I did not go to study with Yun in Germany. But it was never an issue of discussion and, musically speaking, I believed that studying with Yun would not help me in the slightest.²²

Chin here shares her very genuine experience of having limited knowledge of the traditional music of her own country, which is common among Asian musicians and composers but is overlooked by the cross-cultural-encounter narrative in current studies of East Asian composers. It is clear that Chin made a conscious choice not to have a 'rediscovery' journey, in the same vein of such composers as Tan Dun, because it is simply not true to her personal experience. However, she does admit that it is very common for people encountering a new circumstance to reflect on their own culture from their newly-acquired perspective: '[w]hen you live in a foreign culture, you naturally begin to think about yourself.'²³ Yet despite having undergone this process, Chin does not consider these reflections of culture to be musically relevant.²⁴ She therefore rejects grounding her identity in the expectation of having had such experiences.

Chin's second significant career decision was choosing with whom to study after moving to Germany, if not with Isang Yun. Amongst many avant-garde composers established in Germany, she chose György Ligeti (1923-2006), as she felt that Ligeti's music spoke to her.²⁵ However, studying with Ligeti proved to be a traumatic experience at first: the pieces that Chin presented to Ligeti – which had been awarded several prestigious prizes for young composers, such as Gaudeamus International Composers Award in 1985 – were devalued by her new teacher. Chin recalls:

²² 'Isang Yun wurde 1917 geboren, zu einer Zeit, als man auf den Dörfern tatsächlich noch viel traditionelle koreanische Musik spielte, während ich selbst als Kind mit der europäischen Musik aufgewachsen bin und so gut wie keine landesübliche Musik mehr gehört habe. [...] Das war ebenfalls eine Generationsfrage: Die höfische Musiktradition war ja bereits 1910, also 50 Jahre vor meiner Geburt, durch die japanische Annexion Koreas unterbrochen worden. Ich hatte daher von Anfang an einen ganz anderen Bezug zur klassischen koreanischen Musiktradition. Schon daraus resultierten gewisse Differenzen zwischen Yun und mir. [...] Viele Leute haben mich später gefragt, warum ich in Deutschland nicht zu ihm gegangen bin. Aber das stand einfach nicht zur Diskussion, und ich glaube, dass mich das musikalisch nicht im Geringsten weitergebracht hätte.' *ibid.*, 21-2.

²³ Cf. footnote 15

²⁴ Cf. footnote 15

²⁵ Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 22.

Given my old-fashioned pieces, he was beside himself: "YOU come from Korea, you've never been in Germany and you are writing now as a cliché of New Music. This cannot be true! Just imagine waking up tomorrow morning as a complete different person!" Yes, that would be nice, but how do you do that? I was plunged into a deep crisis.²⁶

Chin's crisis after studying with Ligeti is well documented in many biographical accounts of Chin's career: she reportedly endured a three-year compositional block during which she was unable to compose a single note.²⁷ While building a new musical identity, she avoided what she considered *Identitätsfalle* by not 'rediscovering' her cultural roots. Chin instead destroyed her established compositional habits by immersing herself in the electronic studio of the Technical University of Berlin in 1988. She regarded this process as painful but constructive. When she returned to writing for acoustic instruments, she masterminded a breakthrough composition, *Akrostichon-Wortspiel* (*Acrostic-Wordplay*, 1991, rev. 1993), which is often regarded as Chin's 'opus 1'. Since its premiere in 1991, *Akrostichon-Wortspiel* – comprised of seven scenes from fairy tales for soprano and ensemble – has been performed in more than twenty countries, and marks in hindsight the beginning of a new phase in her compositional career. Yet while critics have recognised *Akrostichon-Wortspiel* as Chin's breakthrough, there is no clear discussion as to what exactly signals the change in Chin's approach. I observe that there are two important compositional aspects of *Akrostichon-Wortspiel* that have been overlooked: firstly, the literary subject matters in the piece; and secondly, Chin's bold experimentation with the boundary between language and music.

The choice of subject matters for *Akrostichon-Wortspiel* is revealing. The texts of the seven pieces are inspired by scenes from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* and Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story*. These two children's books share more than their

²⁶'Angesichts meiner altmodischen Stücke war er außer sich: »DU kommst aus Korea, warst noch nie in Deutschland und schreibst schon jetzt so ein Klischee von Neuer Musik. Das darf nicht wahr sein! Stell dir doch einfach vor, morgen wachst du auf und bist ein ganz anderer Mensch!« Ja, das wäre schön, aber wie soll man das schaffen? Ich befand mich in der tiefsten Krise.' Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 179.

²⁷Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 25; Jane Garvey, 'Unsuk Chin says "For me reactions or reviews are not very important. I can read them but I always try to keep a distance."', *Celebrating Women Composers* [radio interview] (2011) <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02kwdz2>>, accessed 30 Sept. 2015.

genre: they are both *Bildungsroman*, whose young protagonists, in approaching maturity, encounter and engage with the rules of a fantastical or magical world.²⁸ The journey of development, for Alice, goes through Wonderland and the world of the looking glass, just as Bastian travels through Fantastica in *The Neverending Story*, meeting with his alter ego Atreiu. To demonstrate Chin's use of these tales, the lyrics of the second piece in *Akrostichon-Wortspiel*, entitled 'Das Rätsel von den drei magischen Toren' ('The Puzzle of the Three Magic Gates'), are inspired by a passage from Chapter VI of *The Neverending Story*, which bears the same title. The chapter describes the last step of the Atreiu's quest for the Southern Oracle, to find out a cure for the ailing infant Empress of Fantastica. In order to reach the Southern Oracle, three magic gates need to be crossed, and Atreiu's approaching of these gates is the basis for Chin's second piece. The first gate is guarded by two sphinxes, which allow people to pass according to an unfathomable will with no apparent rationale. To go through the second gate, one must face one's true self – an experience which, according to the novel, few people can manage. The key to the third gate is to forget oneself entirely, as demonstrated by Atreiu's response to the Oracle's command: 'Who am I? [...] I don't know. I have a feeling I once knew. But does it matter?'²⁹ Atreiu's self-effacing amnesia, in this final stage before the Oracle, bears a striking resemblance to what Ligeti reportedly asked of Chin in their work together: that she '[j]ust imagine waking up tomorrow morning as a completely different person'.

During the period of self-searching that resulted in *Akrostichon-Wortspiel*, Chin developed her fascination with gaming and rules, her non-semantic use of literary texts and her characteristic view of reality in the fantasy world. Chin explains certain guidelines for the wordplay in the score:

²⁸A 'Bildungsroman' is 'a novel dealing with one person's formative years or spiritual education'; the term derives from the German *Bildung* 'education' and *Roman* 'a novel' (*OED*, 'Bildungsroman' n.). ('Bildungsroman, n.', *OED Online. Oxford University Press* [online database] (2015) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/18946?redirectedFrom=bildungsroman#eid>>, accessed 04 Oct. 2015)

²⁹The quotation appears in Chapter VII 'The Voice of Silence'. See Michael Ende, *The Neverending Story*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, NY: Puffin Books, 1985), 114.

The selected texts have been worked upon in different ways: sometimes the consonants and vowels have been randomly joined together, at other times the words have been read backwards so that only the symbolic meaning remains.³⁰

Chin creates many incomprehensible words in the piece; in fact she composes two movements using, as her lyrics, only alphabets such as individual letters or solmisation. Chin discusses her non-semantic treatment of the text in the interview with Patrick Hahn:

Patrick Hahn: [...] The idea of language as a game can be found in many of your works: what do such language games have to do with your music?³¹

Chin: This is actually similar to my interest in electro-acoustic music: the thing that fascinates me is not language itself, but language used as a tool, as a material which is incredibly adaptable. What is always important here are texts, words, conditions or situations which stimulate musical thoughts in me. However, I prefer to dispense entirely with any text-based emotional plane or message. Whenever I use texts or words, I treat them like pitch, timbre or rhythm - hence my great love for word play and 'word music' ...³²

Chin explains that by regarding words and letters as variables – in the same way as that timbre, intensity and frequency are treated in electronic music – the text can lose its semantic meaning and become a bare succession of sounds. Arguably, this attitude towards language represents yet another manifestation of Chin's rejection of any 'national' or 'ethnic' elements within her music. Had the German text of *The Neverending Story* been left untouched, it would have spoken preferentially to German-speaking listeners. This way of treating the text, instead, by transforming the words to the point of making them unintelligible, puts everyone

³⁰Unsuk Chin, Composer's Notes to Unsuk Chin, *Akrostichon-Wortspiel* (Acrostic-Wordplay) (1991, rev. 1993), Boosey & Hawkes [web page] <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Unsuk-Chin-Akrostichon-Wortspiel/7177>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

³¹'Die Idee des Sprachspiels findet man ja in vielen Ihrer Werke: Was haben solche Sprachspiele mit Ihrer Musik zu tun?' Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 180.

³²'Es ist eigentlich vergleichbar mit meinem Interesse an der elektroakustischen Musik: Was mich fasziniert, ist nicht die Sprache selbst, sondern die Sprache als Werkzeug, als unglaublich variables Material. Texte, Worte, Zustände oder Situationen, die in mir musikalische Gedanken stimulieren, sind dabei immer sehr wichtig. Ich ziehe es aber vor, gänzlich auf eine textbezogene emotionale Ebene oder Botschaft zu verzichten. Wenn ich Texte oder Wörter benutze, behandle ich sie genauso wie Tonhöhen, Klangfarbe oder Rhythmus - daher kommt meine große Zuneigung zum Wortspiel und zur »Wortmusik« ...'. *ibid.*, 180.

in the audience on the same level when relating to the pieces, whatever language they speak. In doing so, the words become bare sounds – the basis for a universal music language.

2.2 Towards the ‘Universal’

Chin’s musical practice often accords with her musical statements about her music. When examining her music, one is pressed to find any explicitly Korean or East Asian subject matter, sound material, or conceptual influence. Instead, we find many compositions incorporating ‘Western’ inspirations. In her orchestral work, *Miroirs des temps* (1999), for instance, Chin evokes medieval compositional techniques such as musical palindromes and crab canons from composers Guillaume de Machaut (c.1300-1377) and Johannes Ciconia (c.1370-1412).³³ *Die Troerinnen* (1986), a piece for three female singers, women’s choir and orchestra, is based on texts from Euripides’ play, *The Trojan Women* (415 BC). The opening of the first movement of her *Cello Concerto* (2009) recalls the first few bars of Claude Debussy’s piano prelude *Des pas sur la neige* (‘Footprints in the Snow’, 1909).

Remarkably, the reception of her oeuvres has corresponded almost exactly to her ‘non-Korean’ compositional principle; few if any critics have attempted any association between her output and her native ethnic sounds. *Xi* is an exception, both in terms of Chin’s approach and in terms of the piece’s reception. *Xi* (1998) is Chin’s longest electro-acoustical piece for ensemble and electronics. The word *Xi* is Korean, denoting the smallest unit and the origin of all things. In the music, Chin develops an elemental sonic cell into much more complex musical structures.³⁴ This evolution from the simple to the complex reflects the broader idea of *Xi* as a metaphor for the metamorphosis of all things. This is the only piece that contains an explicitly Korean association. As we might expect, this unusual title elicited

³³Arnold Whittall, ‘Unsuk Chin in Focus: Meditations & Mechanics’, *The Musical Times*, 141 /1870 (2000), 21–22+24–32; See also, Frank Harders-Wuthenow, Programme Notes to Unsuk Chin, *Miroirs des temps* (1999, rev. 2001), *Boosey & Hawkes* [web page] <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Unsuk-Chin-Miroirs-des-temps/5584>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

³⁴Frank Harders-Wuthenow, Programme Note to Unsuk Chin, *Xi* (1998), *Boosey & Hawkes* [web page] <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Unsuk-Chin-Xi/15297%5C&langid=1>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

some attention for the work. In an interview for the website *US Asians*, when asked about the name of the piece, Chin answers by evading and negating the question:

Interviewer: Within *Xi*, what initially brought you to create something based on the Korean definition of the composition's title?

Chin: The piece is not based on the title. It's contrariwise: the title suits the piece – in my opinion.³⁵

In this statement, the composer disregards the ethnic heritage of *Xi* and its potential influence on the piece. Chin both shuns any linguistic explanation of the word in a specifically Korean cultural context, and negates any inference that her work is the product of some localised or ethnically-inspired conception. For Chin, the concept of *Xi*, when conceived as a symbol, represents a broader idea of origin and creation that she portrays in the music. This thought process is itself universalising and supports her vision of a de-localised music that can be understood and appreciated by all.

Creating a widely accessible musical language has been the governing principle in Chin's composition, as she states:

[...] My music doesn't belong to any school. I want to write music that speaks to all kinds of people. [...] For me, a good piece of music is one in which people from all different groups maybe don't understand everything but can at least get something out of it. It is very important to me that my music speaks to all of these people on a certain level.³⁶

The passage is salient to our understanding of the problematic politics of exoticism for Chin at different levels. First, as already observed, Chin's idea of the universal seems to be predicated on the accessibility of her music to audiences, irrespective of their cultural, musical or ideological associations. The necessity for widespread reception, then, is central to her conception of a universal musical language. Furthermore, her statement also reflects an anxiety about musical and cultural inheritance, which goes beyond attributions of 'Korean-

³⁵US ASIANS, 'Unsub Chin Interview: Daring to Cross Many Boundaries', *US ASIANS* [web page] <<http://usasians-articles.tripod.com/unsuk-chin-music-compositions.html%5C#xi>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

³⁶Yoo, 'Western Music in Modern Korea', 146.

ness'. That is, an association of her work with *any* school or culture is construed by Chin as both a limitation and a mark of unoriginality. Yet, how exactly does she realise this vision of a universally appealing, culturally non-specific musical language? Does her music always live up to this aim? Her 2007 opera *Alice in Wonderland* provides an interesting test of, and challenge to, her conception of a universal 'music that speaks to all kinds of people'.³⁷ Indeed, what first attracted Chin to Lewis Carroll's literary masterpiece was the universal quality of his narrative.³⁸ However, while the reception of her other works has been relatively positive, the production of *Alice* has met with much criticism. By scrutinising her operatic adaptation of *Alice*, I will assess her vision of universality both in the execution of the opera and in its reception, and conclude by asking what this might tell us about Chin's assertion of musical accessibility.

2.3 The 2007 Opera *Alice in Wonderland*

Alice in Wonderland was premiered at the opening of the Munich Opera Festival on 30 June 2007. Presented by the Bavarian State Opera, the new work was conducted by the company's artistic director Kent Nagano (1951-), and staged by Achim Freyer (1934-). The libretto, based on Lewis Carroll's classic tale, was created by the composer in collaboration with David Henry Hwang (1957-), author of the award-winning play *M. Butterfly* (1988). Costumes, masks, and puppets were designed by Nina Weitzner.

The commissioning of the opera was initiated by American conductor Kent Nagano, a longtime champion of Chin's, during the time when he was the music director of the Los Angeles Opera; the *Alice* opera was originally scheduled as one of two premieres for the 2005-6 season. However, the L.A. Opera later encountered a budgetary problem and felt that two world premieres in a single season would be too risky and expensive. Consequently, the company postponed the *Alice* project indefinitely and chose instead to present *Grendel*

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Unsuk Chin, Programme Notes to Unsuk Chin, *Alice in Wonderland* (2007), *Bayerische Staatsoper*.

(2006) by Elliot Goldenthal (1954-). Nagano later took the *Alice* project with him when he became music director of the Bavarian State Opera.³⁹

The genesis of the *Alice* opera

Although it is Nagano who encouraged Chin to write an opera, the subject matter of Chin's first opera was her own decision. Lewis Carroll's two *Alice* books had long been a source of inspiration for Chin. By 1991, she had used the theme of time going backward, inspired by *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, in the third movement 'Die Spielregel - sträwkcür tieZ' ('The Rules of the Game / sdrawkcab emiT') in *Akrostichon-Wortspiel*. The form of the title 'sdrawkcab emiT' reflects both its content and its German meaning – 'time running backwards' – which refers to one of several temporal and spatial experiences that characterise the looking-glass world. Chin first encountered Lewis Carroll by chance as an adult in Korea, from her reading of Douglas R. Hofstadter's cult work of interdisciplinary science, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid: A Metaphorical Fugue on Minds and Machines in the Spirit of Lewis Carroll* (1971).⁴⁰ Each chapter of Hofstadter's book presents a dialogue between the Tortoise and Achilles, which was inspired by Lewis Carroll's 'What the Tortoise Said to Achilles', an article written in 1895 for the philosophical journal *Mind*.⁴¹ Through Hofstadter, Chin came across another mathematician, Martin Gardner, and went on to read Gardner's critical edition of Carroll's text, *The Annotated Alice* (1960). Through these books, Chin became aware of the multi-layered complexity of Carroll's texts, as well as the divergent critical approaches towards reading them.

A figure that might have influenced Chin's choice of the subject is Chin's teacher, Ligeti. Ligeti himself was fond of nonsensical verses and the sense of humour they generate. He composed a vocal work entitled *Nonsense Madrigals* (1988-1993) for the King's Singers.

³⁹Mark Swed, 'Thumbs Up for 'Alice in Wonderland'', *Los Angeles Times* [web page] (2007) <<http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jul/07/entertainment/et-alice7>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

⁴⁰Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 131.

⁴¹Lewis Carroll, 'What the Tortoise Said to Achilles', *Mind*, IV /14 (1895), 278–280.

The texts of the first madrigal ‘Two Dreams and Little Bat’, the fifth ‘The Lobster Quadrille’ and the last madrigal ‘A long, Sad Tale’ are based on Carroll’s two classical books. According to Chin, Ligeti also planned to adapt Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* into an opera, but he could not realise this idea before he passed away. In an interview, she states ‘[o]nly when I learned that he [Ligeti] would probably not realize the project, I ventured to concretize my idea.’⁴²

In her letter of December 2003, in which she proposes her opera project *Alice* to Christophe Albrecht, the director of the Bavarian National State Opera, Chin explains her particular interest in the *Alice* books, and outlines her intended approach to them in some detail.⁴³ Firstly, she expresses a particular fascination with the intricate textures of logical, philosophical, and semantic puzzles in Carroll’s novels. While most people today are familiar with the popular renditions of *Alice* – perhaps most notably Disney’s 1951 animated feature film – for Chin the profundity of the original books cannot be reflected in adaptations which focus simply on the comic aspects of Carroll’s narrative.⁴⁴ In contrast, Chin lists a wide range of writers, philosophers and logicians who are to some degree influenced by the *Alice* books, such as T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Jorge Luis Borges, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilles Deleuze, and Hofstadter and Gardner. For Chin, Carroll’s books represent an ideal work of art, in that they ‘spea[k] to all. . . people on a certain level’.

Secondly, in response to *Alice*, Chin claims to have felt a strong personal affinity with Alice’s dream-world, particularly as she found the dreams of her own childhood reflected in it. Chin states:

When I first read the story as an adult, I was amazed at the similarity between my dreams and Carroll’s dream stories. It seemed to me as if Lewis Carroll had already described what I would dream more than a

⁴² ‘Erst als ich erfuhr, dass er das Projekt wahrscheinlich nicht realisieren würde, wagte ich, meine Idee zu konkretisieren’. In Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 129.

⁴³ The letter is included in *Im Spiegel der Zeit* edited by Drees. See, Unsuk Chin, ‘Brief an Christoph Albrecht vom 15. Dezember 2003’ [Letter to Christoph Albrecht of 15 December 2003] in *ibid.*, 126-130.

⁴⁴ US ASIANS, ‘Unsuk Chin Interview’; Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 126-7.

hundred years later. I'm not sure whether I could describe my dreams using our language. I probably could not even convey a fraction of them, as they really are.⁴⁵

Chin's first reaction after reading the books exemplifies the archetypal nature of Carroll's contribution to children's literature which, according to Peter Hunt, achieved 'a narrative voice that closed [...] the gap between writer and reader'.⁴⁶ As Hunt explains, by removing the controlling voice of an omniscient adult narrator, Carroll allowed readers to think for themselves.⁴⁷ In addition, Chin draws attention to a common misconception about the books in her letter:

Even though here we are referring throughout to an Alice-‘story’, Carroll's Alice-books are not actually ‘stories’ as such. It would be delusional to call them fairy tales, since they are devoid of any moral or emotions, and since – in contrast to the fairy tale – good and evil do not play any role in them. There is no such thing as consequential actions here; instead there is the rubbing against each other of various situations packed with absurdity, word games and nonsense. The substance of these ‘stories’ consists largely of word games with a twisted logic, the basis of which is an ‘altered’ physical law. Every single sentence in the book has been carefully constructed and polished by Carroll according to this ‘altered logic’.⁴⁸

Chin mentions Carroll's radical departure from ordinary Victorian children's books through his *Alice* story, which openly mocks conventional didacticism through its absurdist structure.

⁴⁵ ‘Als ich als Erwachsene zum ersten Mal Alice gelesen hatte, war ich über die Parallelität zwischen meinen Träumen und Carrolls Traumgeschichten erstaunt. Es kam mir vor, als hätte Lewis Carroll bereits beschrieben, was ich mehr als hundert Jahre danach träumen würde. Ich bin mir nicht sicher, ob ich meine Träume anhand unserer Sprache beschreiben könnte. Wahrscheinlich könnte ich nicht einmal einen Bruchteil davon vermitteln, wie sie wirklich sind.’ Unsuk Chin, ‘Brief an Christoph Albrecht vom 15. Dezember 2003’ [Letter to Christoph Albrecht of 15 December 2003] in Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 129.

⁴⁶ Peter Hunt, Introduction to Peter Hunt (ed.), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), vi–xlii, at xxxii.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ ‘Obwohl hier ständig von einer Alice-»Geschichte« die Rede ist, sind Carrolls Alice Bücher eigentlich keine Geschichten. Eine große Illusion wäre es, sie als Märchen zu bezeichnen, da sie frei von jeglicher Moral und von Emotionen sind, und da bei ihnen Gut und Böse- im Gegensatz zu Märchen- keine Rolle spielen. Folgerichtige Handlungen gibt es hier nicht; stattdessen aber Aneinanderreibungen diverser Zustände voller Absurdität, Wortspiele und »nonsense«. Die Substanz dieser »Geschichten« besteht zum größten Teil aus Sprachspielen mit verdrehter Logik, der ein »anderes« physikalisches Gesetz zugrunde liegt. Jeder Satz wurde von Carroll nach dieser »Logik« sorgfältig konstruiert und feingeschliffen.’ Chin, ‘Brief an Christoph Albrecht’ in Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 126–8.

Carroll chose not to follow stereotypical children's books which emphasised the moralistic consequences of good and evil. Coextensively and critically, the fact that Chin herself chose not to adhere to the stereotype of East-meets-West suggests that she appreciates art that resists conformity. Rather than embracing the tradition of moralising children's literature, Carroll's texts, like the nonsense poems of Edward Lear, consist of language games, puns and parodies of startlingly originality, and are inventive and experimental in their use of these devices. Towards further retaining the spirit of the source, Chin insisted that the premiere of her own *Alice* opera should be performed in its original English, in spite of it being an opera composed by a Korean, conducted by a Japanese-American and staged in a German opera house.⁴⁹

The 2007 Premiere

Since the Munich premiere, Chin's *Alice* opera has had four subsequent productions – a testament to its initial success. The second took place in Switzerland at the Grand Théâtre de Genève in June 2010 and the third was presented by Theater Bielefeld in May 2011, once again in Germany. The opera's US debut was in June 2012 at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and was directed by Michael Christie. The first UK production was directed by Netia Jones and performed at the Barbican Centre in March 2015. The following discussion will focus on the opera's first production in Munich.

The opera's 2007 premiere, its huge financial investment coupled with the composer's reputation, generated tremendous anticipation. As Raphael Mostel put it, '[a] frenzy of speculation and a palpable excitement ran throughout the world's music aficionados.'⁵⁰ Not only did critics and opera-goers speculate about the content of her adaptation, they also wondered about Chin's decision to adapt a Victorian children's classic for her inaugural

⁴⁹Unsuk Chin's letter to the conductor, Kent Nagano, in Program Notes to *Alice in Wonderland*, (Bayerische Staatsoper, 2007), 31-2.

⁵⁰Raphael Mostel, 'Unsuk Chin's "Alice in Wonderland"', *Opera Today* [web page] (2007) <http://www.operatoday.com/content/2007/08/unsuk%5C_chins%5C_aliph>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

operatic piece. What Chin found compelling about Carroll's text was the universality of its subject matter.⁵¹ Having read Carroll's *Alice* in South Korea as an adult, Chin was immediately fascinated by its appeal to 'different groups of people – regardless of age, education, profession or nationality. It can captivate experts and laymen, children and adults as well. That is also an artistic ideal for me'.⁵² As this remark reveals Chin's own reception of Carroll's *Alice*, it further demonstrates her projected hope for the reception of her own operatic rendition. Yet, after the premiere, opinions varied greatly on the music and production; critic Zeo Strimpel described the reaction as 'a mixture of boos and spirited applause'.⁵³

According to reviews, the production garnered the fiercest criticism while the performers earned the highest accolades. Varied opinions have been expressed about the music. However, most critics were united in their aversion to what was a defining feature of Chin's musical language in this work, namely her 'excessive' use of musical quotations from other compositions – a subject which therefore commands discussion.⁵⁴

⁵¹Unsub Chin's letter to the conductor, Kent Nagano, in Program Notes to *Alice in Wonderland*, (Bayerische Staatsoper, 2007), 31-2.

⁵²Eric Richmond and ArenaPAL, 'Unsub chin Interview about Alice in Wonderland Opera (March 2007)', *Boosey & Hawkes Website* [web page] (2007) <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/news/Unsub-Chin-interview-about-Alice-in-Wonderland-opera/11401%5C&LangID=1>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

⁵³Zoe Strimpel, 'Alice in Wonderland' in Munich', *The New York Sun* [web page] (2007) <<http://www.nysun.com/blogs/letter-from-london/2007/11/alice-in-wonderland-in-munich.html>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

⁵⁴Swed, 'Thumbs Up'; Rick Jones, 'Unsub Chin: *Alice in Wonderland* (DVD)', *The Times* (2008) <<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/music/albumreviews/article2420068.ece>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015; Raymond Tuttle, 'Unsub Chin: Alice in Wonderland', *ClassicalNet* [web page] (2008) <<http://www.classical.net/music/recs/reviews/e/eas72418dvda.php>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015; Mostel, 'Unsub Chin's "Alice in Wonderland"'; Jen F. Laurson, 'A Wonderland of Possibilities: Unsub Chin's First Opera Premiered in Munich', *Classical Weta 90.9 FM* (2007) <<http://www.weta.org/fmblog/?p=129>>, accessed 10 Nov. 2010; Jeffrey A. Leisic, 'Alice in Wonderland', *Opera News* [web page] (2007) <http://www.operanews.com/Opera%5C_News%5C_Magazine/2007/10/Review/MUNICH%5C_%5C%E2%5C%80%5C%94%5C%C2%5C%A0Alice%5C_in%5C_Wonderland,%5C_M%5C%C3%5C%BCnchner%5C_Opern-Festspiele,%5C_7/7/07.html>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015; Andrew Clements, 'Alice in Wonderland', *The Guardian* [web page] (2007) <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2007/jul/09/classicalmusicandopera>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015; Falk Hafner, 'Kaleidoskop: "Alice in Wonderland" von Unsub Chin in Munchen', *MusikTexte*, 114 (2007).

Kleptomania or Kaleidoscope?

Unfriendly reviewers have identified an ‘inordinate’ number of European classical echoes in Chin’s *Alice*.⁵⁵ While some praised Chin’s composition as ‘a kaleidoscope of many styles’ or ‘a palette of exquisite orchestral writing’, others diagnosed her behaviour as ‘compositional kleptomania’.⁵⁶ As Raphael Mostel unfavourably observed:

One principal source of allusions [in Chin’s *Alice*] is Ravel’s infinitely more witty and magical “L’Enfant et les Sortilèges.” An almost direct quotation of Prokofiev’s “Romeo and Juliet” had an inserted trio section derived from Ravel’s Piano Concerto in G, complete with slapstick... Not to mention the distracting memories of [...] Rossini.⁵⁷

Other musical quotations were identified: the bass clarinet solo in ‘Interlude 1’, for instance, reminded some reviewers of the opening to Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924);⁵⁸ ‘Scene 5: A Mad Tea-Party’ in *Alice* was regarded as ‘an enormously skillful Baroque mix’;⁵⁹ furthermore, the influence of Chin’s teacher, Ligeti, was also thought to be recurrent throughout the piece.⁶⁰ Remarkably, most commentators appeared to be intolerant of those musical allusions, finding them distracting rather than creative.

Yet, as mentioned, parody is both a defining characteristic and an attractive feature of Carroll’s text; indeed, all of the poems in Carroll’s *Alice* parody familiar eighteenth- and nineteenth-century verses, such as Isaac Watts’ ‘Against Idleness and Mischief’ (1715) and Robert Southey’s ‘The Old Man’s Comforts And How He Gained Them’ (1799).⁶¹ The

⁵⁵Mostel, ‘Unsuk Chin’s “Alice in Wonderland”’.

⁵⁶Swed, ‘Thumbs Up’; Mostel, ‘Unsuk Chin’s “Alice in Wonderland”’; Hafner, ‘Kaleidoskop’.

⁵⁷Mostel, ‘Unsuk Chin’s “Alice in Wonderland”’.

⁵⁸Swed, ‘Thumbs Up’; Laurson, ‘A Wonderland of Possibilities’.

⁵⁹Leipsic, ‘Alice in Wonderland’.

⁶⁰Tuttle, ‘Unsuk Chin: Alice in Wonderland’; Ung-Aang Talay, ‘Lacking a Distinctive Voice’, *Bangkok Post* [web page] (2010) <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/entertainment/music/12863/>>, accessed 10 Sept. 2014.

⁶¹The importance of textual parody in Carroll’s work is demonstrated in the edition referenced: *The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition* published by Penguin Books in 2001. In *Alice*, Carroll’s poem ‘How Doth The Little Crocodile’, which appears in ‘2. The Pool of Tears’, is a parody of Watts’ popular verse ‘Against Idleness and Mischief’ from *Divine Songs for Children*, published in 1715. The poem ‘You are Old Father William’, which appears in ‘5. Advice from a Caterpillar’, is a parody of Southey’s long-forgotten didactic poem ‘The Old Man’s Comforts And How He Gained Them’, published in 1799. Cf. Carroll, Tenniel and Gardner, *The Annotated Alice*, 23-24, 51-54.

parodic effect of Carroll's poems has a three-fold significance for any interpretation of Chin's *Alice*. Firstly, the scattered lines from Carroll's own literary forebears help to evoke familiarity; contemporaneous readers could immediately recognise the metre and recite the first few lines of each verse. Secondly, Carroll's deliberate renditions of these household verses serve to acknowledge the connection between his text and an established literary tradition.⁶² Thirdly and most importantly, as Ronald Reichertz notes, Carroll's parodies of old English works partake of an innovative play with, and manipulation of that very tradition. Carroll simultaneously mimics and ridicules that textual history in order to operate within and beyond its literary confines and conventions.⁶³

When looking closely at Chin's *Alice*, one can see how her musical parodies could generate similar responses to those proposed for Carroll, as facilitated by the use of parody in Carroll's *Alice*. The recognisable musical quotations in Chin's opera help to establish an intimate rapport between the piece and the listener. Furthermore, they can also be perceived as an homage to the Western musical tradition, including the established tradition of using quotations in avant-garde music since the 1960s.

As Joseph Auner points out, the musical developments in the immediate post-war era were largely driven by the belief that 'the only way of moving forward was by leaving the past behind and starting anew'.⁶⁴ Composers attempted to 'create music that could exist without the blood of tradition', such as new approaches to sound and texture through scientific models and technologies.⁶⁵ However, the post-war modernist renunciation of musical tradition began to change in the 1960s, as an increasing number of composers began

⁶²Florence Milner, 'The Poems in "Alice in Wonderland"', in Robert Phillips (ed.), *Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild As Seen Through the Critics Looking-Glasses, 1865-1971* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1974), 295-302. The article was first published in *The Bookman*, no. XVIII, September (1903): 13-6.

⁶³Ronald Reichertz, *The Making of the Alice Books: Lewis Carroll's Uses of Earlier Children's Literature* (Montreal, CA; Kingston, CA; London, UK: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).

⁶⁴Auner, *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, 247.

⁶⁵David Joel Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 111.

to re-engage with the musical past through quotations, collages, allusions and parodies.⁶⁶ For example, German composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann (1918-1970)'s opera *Die Soldaten* (1957-64) employs substantial stylistic borrowings and found materials including quotations from Josquine des Prez, J.S. Bach and plainchant alongside with elements of jazz.⁶⁷ His *Musique pour les soupers du Roi Ubu* ('Music for King Ubu's repasts', 1962-6) consists entirely of quotations from other composers such as Berlioz's 'March to the Scaffold' in *Symphonie Fantastique*, Wagner's 'The Ride of the Valkyries' in *Die Walküre*, Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* and a quote from Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke IX*.⁶⁸ The manipulation of pre-existing materials and their historical references represent Zimmermann's particular vision of musical temporality as 'an experience which occurs both in time [while] embodying time within itself', simultaneously co-existing in the past, present and future.⁶⁹

Indeed, the use of quotations embodies different meanings and functions for different composers or musical works. As J. Peter Burkholder points out, composers have used quotations to create a sense of humor through the unexpected juxtapositioning of pre-existent materials and current works.⁷⁰ The evocation of quotations is sometimes related to a composer's own personal memory. For example, in his book *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music* (2003), David Metzger remarks on how quotations in the works of American composers Charles Ives represent his recollection of childhood and sense of nostalgia.⁷¹ Other composers quote familiar music to make social commentaries and engage with political issues. For instance, in his *Mass: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers* (1971), American composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) employs a range of blues and jazz passages and conveys his antiwar message in the Latin

⁶⁶ Auner, *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, 247.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 258-9.

⁶⁸ Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 419.

⁶⁹ Cited in ibid., 419.

⁷⁰ J. Peter Burkholder, 'Quotation', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* [online database] <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52854>>, accessed 20 July 2016.

⁷¹ Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning*, 15-46.

text.⁷² Most importantly, the reference to musical history through quotations was used by composers to communicate the influence of past cultural tradition and to contemplate the direction of future music. For example, Luciano Berio based the third movement of his *Sinfonia* (1968) on the Scherzo of Gustav Mahler's *Second Symphony*, as he regarded that Mahler's music 'seems to carry all the weight of the last two centuries of musical history'.⁷³ Accordingly, Auner notes, in *Sinfonia*, a sense that 'individual parts are striving to assert their own histories and identities'.⁷⁴

Similarly, the evocation of quotations in *Alice* serves as Chin's way to confront and comment on a range of musical traditions. As Chin admits in the interview conducted in March 2007 for the opera's premiere on 30 June, 'I play with musical meanings through references to different styles and the parodistic musical underlining of the different characters'.⁷⁵ In other words, she employs all these musical parodies to demonstrate not only her awareness of traditions, styles and conventions, but also, like Carroll, her ability to play with musical traditions and meanings.⁷⁶

The re-engagement with the past through the use of quotations becomes a means to deal with not only issues of tradition but also identity. As Auner points out, many composers evoke musical history through quotations to 'both define and undermine identities of every kind'.⁷⁷ It is in this evocation of history and tradition to deal with issues of identity that one find a critical insight into Chin's deliberate construction of her musical identity; namely, what kind of history she chose to engage with in order to define her musical identity. The 1960s was also the era in which the conventional reception paradigm of East-meets-West began to emerge.⁷⁸ As mentioned in the introduction in this thesis, East Asian composers

⁷²Auner, *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, 261.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 259.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 260.

⁷⁵Richmond and ArenaPAL, 'Unsuk Chin Interview'.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷Auner, *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, 258.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 274-6.

such as Chou Wen-Chung, Toru Takemitsu and Isang Yun began to attract international attention during the 1960s with compositions featuring the incorporation of the composer's own cultural heritage.⁷⁹ By evoking quotations ranging from Baroque to twentieth-century music, Chin clearly chose to engage with the quotation traditions in Western art music rather than the tradition of 'East-meets-West'. In other words, this particular use of quotations serves as Chin's gesture to set the context of her music as the Western tradition rather than the tradition of cultural hybridisation, and thus to define her musical identity through the history and tradition with which she deliberately chose to engage.

However, the negative reviews Chin received after her *Alice* premiere are telling. Upon observation, commentators not only did not appreciate Chin's ingenuity in translating Carroll's intertextuality using musical parodies; their negative responses demonstrate the incongruity between Chin's deliberate construction of musical identity and the critical reception of her effort. Given that the use of quotations is an established tradition in Western art music, the question arises as to why the commentators reacted so negatively to Chin's use of parodies in her opera. Their reaction seems to suggest that Chin, as a 'Korean' composer, was viewed as culturally 'Other' by the commentators and thus as inappropriately engaging with this tradition.⁸⁰ Indeed, more than twenty mixed reviews appeared after the premiere from both German and American musical journals, such as Wolfgang Schreiber's article in *Opernwelt*, Marco Frei's review in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Falk Hafner's commentary in *MusikTexte* or American Jeffery A. Leipsic's article in *Opera News*.⁸¹ Yet, there was no attempt on the part of any critic to examine or to recognise Chin's use of quotation as being part of the long tradition of borrowing in Western art music. Juxtaposing Chin's deliberate effort to set the interpretive scene for her music with the commentators' ignorance and dismay in

⁷⁹Ibid., 274-6.

⁸⁰I thank Professor Nicholas Cook (Cambridge) for contributing this observation to my viva and dissertation.

⁸¹Marco Frei, 'Bericht: Alles über Alice: Uraufführung von Unsik Chin's "Alice in Wonderland" in München', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 168 (2007); Wolfgang Schreiber, 'Plastische Klangskulpturen', *Opernwelt*, 38 (2007); Hafner, 'Kaleidoskop'; Leipsic, 'Alice in Wonderland'.

response, quotation in this opera becomes a crucial site to observe issues of identity both in and surrounding Chin's music.

As a musical work that is consciously critical of its own musical heritage, Chin's *Alice* becomes particularly significant towards understanding her compositional approach and musical identity. Notably, Chin's other works contain few or no musical quotations; this tendency is in keeping with her characteristic evasiveness and her claim of individuality. Conversely, her *Alice* piece appears to be obsessed with quotations and citations of musical influences. Reminiscent of Carroll's text, Chin's work stakes its claim to originality by mimicking and mocking existing musical traditions. This suggests that Chin's compositional gestures should not be perceived as antagonistic to Carroll's text and to the established tradition in Western art music. Rather, they should be recognised as expressions of anxieties: the anxieties of reception and of influence, as well as the anxiety of being marginalised or stereotypically categorised as an ethnic or regional artist. Chin's concerns, then, are not exclusively hers, but widely experienced both in the literary and musical world, and by East Asian composers in particular.

The 'Universal' Alice

The Making of the Libretto

To emphasise the witty language and intertextual quality of Carroll's text, Chin and librettist David Henry Hwang employ three methods to turn Carroll's text into an operatic libretto. Firstly, Chin and Hwang imitate Carroll's principal of wordplay and reconfigure it into a new text. For example, in the Mad Tea-Party scene, the Mad Hatter's phrase – "I know what I miss" "I miss what I know" they are the same thing!"⁸² – is in the opera a parody of Carroll's own wordplay: "I breath when I sleep" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe"!⁸³

⁸²Unsuk Chin, *Alice in Wonderland: Opera in One Act (vocal score)* (London, UK: Boosey & Hawkes, 2007), 179.

⁸³Chapter 7, 'Tea-Party', 74. The line is Dormouse's.

Their second method is to incorporate the source of Carroll's parody or inspiration into the libretto. For example, Jane Taylor's 'The Star', which is the source of Carroll's parodic poem 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Bat', is juxtaposed with Carroll's parody and incorporated into the libretto.⁸⁴ Their third practice is to incorporate the responses of later generations to Carroll's text. For example, the Mad Hatter's riddle in the original book, 'Why is a raven like a writing desk?', was intended as an unanswered riddle, as Carroll later admitted.⁸⁵ Despite this, *The Spectator* in England launched a competition for answers to the riddle in 1991. The winner's answer – '[b]ecause without them both *Brave New World* could not have been written' – is included into the libretto.⁸⁶ Most of these textural references are demonstrated in Martin Gardner's edition, *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (2001), which suggests that *The Annotated Alice* was Chin and Hwang's major reference guide in creating the libretto. To assess how Chin and Hwang transpose the intricate textual parody of Carroll's text into the opera, in the discussion that follows, I will focus on the scene, 'A Mad Tea-party'.

A Mad Tea-Party

'A Mad Tea Party', Scene V, best demonstrates Chin and Hwang's first method of transposing the intricate textual parody of Carroll's text into the opera. In fact, Scene V is the one where many critics find the most excessive and distracting musical quotations,⁸⁷ and it is evident that Chin uses musical borrowings and allusions in this scene extensively. I will argue, however, that the 'excessive' quotations found in the scene are by no means a compositional plagiarism but are rather proof of the composer's attempt to redirect her audiences' attention to the inter-textual quality of Carroll's *Alice*. In other words, Chin's frequent references to the traditions of European classical music are themselves a tribute to Carroll's literary parodies.

⁸⁴Chin, *Alice in Wonderland*, vocal score, 192-3.

⁸⁵Carroll, Tenniel and Gardner, *The Annotated Alice*, 75-7.

⁸⁶Ibid., 76.

⁸⁷Cf. note 59

At the end of Chin's Scene IV, the Cheshire Cat suggests to Alice that 'if it's sense you want / go see the MARCH HARE, / since MARCH is the month / for cutting your hair'.⁸⁸ The Cat's sentence, based on the homophones 'hare' and 'hair', is not originally in Carroll's book, but Hwang and Chin have created the lines by imitating Carroll's homophonic wordplay, found in such instances as tale/tail and knot/not in his text.⁸⁹ Following the Cat's suggestion, in the beginning of Scene V, Alice approaches the March Hare's house in a wood. There is a long table set under the tree outside, at which the Mad Hatter and the March Hare sit with their elbows resting on the sleeping Dormouse. Alice has arrived just in time for tea, which is served at six o'clock. Hanging on the wall, there is a large watch that stands eternally stopped at six o'clock. Since time has been frozen, it is always six o'clock; thus, it is always tea time.

'A Mad Tea Party' consists of five parts: orchestral prologue (bars 482-563), 'No Room' (bars 564-582), 'Riddles' (bars 583-701), 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' (bars 702-778) and 'Time' (bars 779-871). As the critics note, Chin uses a variety of musical borrowings, beginning with references to 'busy Prokofiev-style strings' in the prologue, and then allusions to figured bass recitative in 'No Room'.⁹⁰ In the Mad Hatter's riddles, Chin juxtaposes baroque recitative with Schoenberg's *Sprechgesang*. 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Bat' is the most humorous section, where Chin parodies the melody of the popular nursery rhyme 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'. The ultimate goal behind all these parodies is to find musical parallels to the textual parodies and linguistic nonsense exhibited in Carroll's text. To demonstrate Chin's use of stylistic parodies and musical quotations, the following discussion will focus particularly on 'No Room', 'Riddles', and 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Bat'.

⁸⁸Chin, *Alice in Wonderland*, vocal score, 163.

⁸⁹The homophones tale/tail and knot/not appear in Chapter 3, 'A Caucus-Race and a Long Tale'. When the Mouse mentions that 'mine is a long and a sad tale', Alice replies 'It is a long tail certainly... but why do you call it sad?'. Alice again later misinterprets the Mouse's meaning. When she accuses the Mouse of having got to 'the fifth bend', to which the Mouse replies, 'I have *not*', Alice assumes his expression to mean a 'knot' and offers to help the Mouse untwist. See Carroll, Tenniel and Gardner, *The Annotated Alice*, 34-6.

⁹⁰Jones, 'Unsuk Chin: *Alice in Wonderland* (DVD)'.

No Room

‘No Room’ is the second part of ‘A Mad Tea-Party’ scene, featuring the quarrel between Alice, the Mad Hatter, the March hare and Dormouse. The following is the summary of the plot of the opera scene, where the libretto follows Carroll’s original story faithfully. The March Hare, the Mad Hatter and Dormouse are on the stage having a tea-party while sitting at a long - and mostly empty - table. When Alice approaches, the Mad Hatter and the March Hare tell her that there is no room at the table. The Mad Hatter and the March Hare oppose Alice’s joining the party with yells of ‘No room! No room!’, but Alice seats herself in a large arm-chair nonetheless. The March Hare goes on to offer Alice wine, though there is none, and Alice complains about this lack of politeness in offering her nonexistent wine. The March Hare counters that it was very uncivil of her to invite herself to their party in the first place. As Bernard Patten points out, what Carroll plays with here in the original story (and Chin reproduces in her opera), is the common informal logical fallacy, *tu quoque* (L. ‘you too’).⁹¹ The March Hare defends himself against Alice’s criticism by criticising Alice’s failure to act consistently in accordance with her position; he attempts to show that Alice’s objection of rudeness applies equally to her own behaviour. However, the illogicality of the exchange lies in the fact that two acts of reciprocal rudeness render neither of the contenders as polite.

In ‘No Room’, Chin parodies the recitative style of baroque opera, using the secco recitative accompanied by harpsichord arpeggios. At the start of ‘No Room’, the sonority changes immediately from the full orchestra, with timpani playing *tremolo* in *ffff* in prologue, to a solo harpsichord arpeggio. The huge contrast of musical texture, between full orchestra and continuo, makes the overt baroque style particularly striking, audible and amusing. In ‘No Room’, this baroque recitative constitutes a dialogue, or a quarrel, between Alice, the Mad Hatter, the Dormouse and the March Hare. The disagreements between these characters

⁹¹Bernard M. Patten, ‘A Mad Tea Party’, in *The Logic of Alice: Clear Thinking in Wonderland* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2009), 207-254, 208.

are reinforced not only by the rapid chord changes, but also by mocking and altering the characters' melodic lines as Carroll does with their textual lines. As shown in Example 2.1, the music starts with the harpsichord's introduction of arpeggios on an A-major triad (bar 564), and the March Hare's and the Mad Hatter's declamatory words of 'No room' are set to notes of the chord. Alice joins with the chord note a', but her important word of '*plenty*' leads to a change from A major to D major (Example 2.1, bar 566). Unlike the Mad Hatter's and the March Hare's syllabic setting, the crucial and originally italicised word '*plenty*' in Alice's line in Carroll's book is stretched and accentuated in a melismatic manner. The argument goes on and, at bar 568, the Mad Hatter proceeds to E major 7th chord. Alice counters by extending the seventh chord to a ninth chord by adding f'', in her emphasised word 'see—' in the line 'I don't see any wine'. The Mad Hatter's reply, 'there isn't any', leads the music to F major (bar 570). Alice condemns the Mad Hatter's rudeness by changing the chord back to A minor and emphasises the key words 'rude' and 'offer' (bar 571). Chin's use of chord changes for different ideas appropriates a standard element of recitative for opera in the 17th and 18th centuries. During the course of the disagreement, the melody has gradually modulated from the original A major to A minor.

Notably, in her scoring, Chin follows Carroll's illogic of *tu quoque*. That is, Alice's melodic line, 'it was rude of you to of-fer', is mocked by the March Hare's '[i]t was rude of you to sit' – set in identical notes but for the last word of 'sit', which is an accented note, d[#]' (bars 572-3). In the March Hare's refutation, the important word, 'sit', not only raises the melody to a dissonant augmented second, from c'' to d[#]', but is also supported by an unprepared seventh chord in E: vii⁷ (Example 2.1, bar 573). These accented dissonances, both melodic and harmonic, mirror the Mad Hatter's suggestion that Alice's uncivil behaviour causes 'dissonance' to the tea party. Interestingly, the March Hare's d[#]' is then appropriated by Alice's aggressive and accelerated reply: 'There is room for more than three' (Example 2.1, bars 574-5). In the end, the March Hare forces the disagreement to a closure by resolving

Alice's D $\sharp$ to E, and then quickly bringing A into the tonic, giving a sense of a perfect cadence (bar 576). However, the disagreement is still unresolved and merely returns to the original point, with the March Hare and the Dormouse both insisting 'No room!', set on the same notes as when the quarrel started. The difference is that, as the Dormouse's descending scale clearly tells us, the key has transformed from A major to A minor.

MARCH HARE and MAD HATTER see ALICE.

564 **ad lib.** (♩ ca. 60)

Alice *mf* There is

March Hare *f* No room!

Dormouse

Mad Hatter *f* No room!

ad lib. (♩ ca. 60)
Hpsd. *f*

Example 2.1 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 564-576. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

She sits indignantly in a large arm-chair at one end of the table. Over the next section, the DORMOUSE wakes up several times, yawns and falls back asleep.

566

plen - ty of room.

No room !

f snoring

No room !

Hpsd. 9

Tbn. *p* *mf* *f*

Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 564-576 (cont)

569

Alice

I don't see a - ny wine

March Hare

Have some wine!

There is - n't a - ny.

(*f*)

Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 564-576 (cont)

571

Alice

Then it was rude of you to of - fer. *in cynical tone*

March Hare

It was rude of you to

Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 564-576 (cont)

573

Alice

There is

March Hare

sit with-out an in-vi-ta-tion. *snoring*

Dormouse

(f) *p* *port.* *f*

Tbn.

Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 564-576 (cont)

575 accel. a tempo

room for more than three.

No room!

No room!

accel. a tempo

ff

Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 564-576 (cont)

‘Riddles’

The quarrel ends when the Mad Hatter introduces the famous riddle: ‘Why is a raven like a writing desk?’. Excited by the thought of having fun with riddles, Alice replies: ‘I believe I can guess that’. In the original story, Carroll (again mirrored by Chin and Hwang) uses wordplay to interrogate the logic of language in the following exchange:

‘Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?’ said the March Hare.

‘Exactly so,’ said Alice.

‘Then you should say what you mean,’ the March Hare went on.

‘I do,’ Alice hastily replied; ‘at least—at least I mean what I say—that’s the same thing, you know.’

‘Not the same thing a bit!’ said the Hatter. ‘You might just as well say that “I see what I eat” is the same thing as “I eat what I see”!’

‘You might just as well say,’ added the March Hare, ‘that “I like what I get” is the same thing as “I get what I like”!’

‘You might just as well say,’ added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, ‘that “I breathe when I sleep” is the same thing as “I sleep when I breathe”!’⁹²

⁹²Chapter 7, ‘A Mad Tea-Party’ in Carroll, ‘What the Tortoise Said to Achilles’, 73-4.

The Mad Hatter attacks Alice's poor reasoning by arguing that Alice has confused subjects with predicates and therefore contradicted the rule that one cannot safely be switched with the other.⁹³ The Mad Hatter does this by offering a counter example: 'I see what I eat' is not the same thing as 'I eat what I see'. Although this rule may be true in most cases, the Mad Hatter does not seem to consider that it may not apply in Alice's case; that is to say, there are particular instances in which what one says is exactly what one means and vice versa. Just as Carroll's original text plays with the ambiguity of language and of grammar, Chin and Hwang choose to elaborate upon these kinds of subject-predicate reversals in their libretto. For example, the Mad Hatter's words in the libretto are changed from 'I see what I eat' to 'I am what I eat'; while the March Hare's line is altered from 'I like what I get' to 'I know what I miss'. Later, in the trio sung by Alice, the Dormouse and the Mad Hatter, there is a line which says, "I kill what I love" is the same thing as "I love what I kill". In some of these alterations, the humorous tone in Carroll's original text is replaced by a bleaker and nightmarish mood, such as that suggested by the phrase in 'I kill what I love'. The instance shows that Chin and Hwang have interpreted different aspects of Carroll's Wonderland as reflecting a world of disorder, contradictions, violence and madness.

In this scene, Chin also explores the boundary between meaning and nonsense in both the literary and the musical world. Echoing Carroll's playing with the logic of language, Chin plays with the logic of music. In order to mirror the text's logical inversions, Chin employs various contrapuntal techniques borrowed from imitative counterpoint, including motivic inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion. Ironically, the linguistic elements in Carroll's text, which are the sources of the logical contradiction, become not merely logical but proof of mastery of the craft – precisely when they are transported to musical examples. That is, the linguistic innocence becomes musically sophisticated in the transposition.

⁹³David S. Brown, 'Reasoning Down the Rabbit Hole: Logical Lessons in Wonderland', in *Alice in Wonderland and Philosophy: Curiouser and Curiouser* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 79-92.

These decisions demonstrate Chin's deliberate choice not to create musical 'nonsense' in her Alice opera. When asked in an interview what her musical equivalent is to the 'nonsense' in Carroll's text, Chin answers: 'For me, using free aleatoric approaches to describe the nonsense is not an option, as it could become too exaggerated.'⁹⁴ Having ruled out such chance procedures as free aleatoric, Chin treats Carroll's nonsensical linguistic jokes in a rigorous way, with strictly and carefully controlled rules borrowed from the principles of counterpoint. The section therefore sounds like a play, as well as a display of contrapuntal possibilities, such as crab canon, table canon and musical palindrome. This compositional decision reflects Chin's views on Carroll's dreamworld as a 'different reality' with self-consistent logic.⁹⁵ For Chin, Carroll's nonsense is not an improvisatory free association but is instead based on firm laws.

To transpose Carroll's word games and nonsensical poetry into music, Chin employs several musical devices. Firstly, she plays with the word-note order. In the line, 'I am what I eat', each word is associated with a corresponding note. As shown in Example 2.2, at bar 594, 'I am what I eat' is pitched as g-c-f[#]-e^b-a. As the words are reordered into 'I eat what I am', the pitches are also reconfigured into e^b-a-f[#]-g-c. Furthermore, in the March Hare's line, 'I know what I miss. I miss what I know', at bar 595, Chin not only plays again with a word-note association, she also provides us with two examples of palindromic melody; that is, musical motives which can be read forwards or backwards while the melody remains unchanged. 'I know what I miss' is scored as b^b-a'-g'-a'-b^b, and 'I miss what I know' as a'-b^b-g'-b^b-a'. Each of these two five-note motives (blue arrows in Example 2.2), when read in a retrograde direction (red arrows), is identical to itself.

⁹⁴Richmond and ArenaPAL, 'Unsuk Chin Interview'.

⁹⁵In her letter to Christophe Albrecht, Chin also provides her commentaries on Carroll's dream-world. In the letter, she states that Carroll's 'nonsense' is not really without 'sense': because the action takes place in 'wonderland', all things are possible within the rules of such a place. For Chin, Carroll's dream-world is never formless or random and is scarcely 'nonsense'; it is rather based on 'a "different" physical law' which makes Carroll's fictional world logically possible, despite the fact that it displays laws for its own physical universe, which are different from those of the real world. See, Drees, *Im Spiegel der Zeit*, 128.

The musical score is divided into two systems, measures 593-595. The first system (measures 593-594) features the Mad Hatter singing in the bass line, with the Dormouse in the treble line. The piano accompaniment includes a Harp (Hp.) and a Mandolin (Mand.). The second system (measures 595-596) features the March Hare singing in the treble line, with the Dormouse in the bass line. The piano accompaniment includes a Harp (Hp.), a Mandolin (Mand.), and a Harmonica (Harm.).

Measure 593: Dormouse (treble clef) has a whole rest. Mad Hatter (bass clef) sings: "Not the same a bit ! You might just as well say, 'I am what I eat' is the same thing as, 'I eat what I am'". The piano accompaniment (Hp. and Mand.) starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a piano (*ppp*) dynamic. The Harp (Hp.) has a glissando (gliss.) marked.

Measure 594: Mad Hatter continues singing. The piano accompaniment (Hp. and Mand.) continues with a piano (*ppp*) dynamic. The Harp (Hp.) has a glissando (gliss.) marked.

Measure 595: March Hare (treble clef) sings: "Or- 'I know what I miss' 'I miss what I know' They are the same thing !". The Dormouse (bass clef) has a whole rest. The piano accompaniment (Hp., Mand., and Harm.) continues with a piano (*ppp*) dynamic. The Harp (Hp.) has a glissando (gliss.) marked.

Measure 596: March Hare continues singing. The Dormouse (bass clef) has a whole rest. The piano accompaniment (Hp., Mand., and Harm.) continues with a piano (*ppp*) dynamic. The Harp (Hp.) has a glissando (gliss.) marked.

Example 2.2 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 593-595. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

In the succeeding trio sung by Alice, the March Hare and the Mad Hatter, Chin continues her play with musical puzzles. Chin's main construction method resembles the principle of fugal imitation. First of all, in order to treat Carroll's five-word sentence patterns, 'I x what I y', 'I y what I x', and the passage 'is the same thing as', Chin chooses an irregular and mixed metre, 5/4. The 5/4 meter enables Chin to group words into (2+3) and (3+2), as shown in Example 2.3. Secondly, aside from mirroring Carroll's change of word order, Chin demonstrates three types of musical palindrome in the beginning of the trio, at bars 596-599. As demonstrated in bar 595, Chin composes another two melodic motives – a'-c''-b'-c''-a (bar 596-7) and c''-a-b-a-c'' (bar 598-9) – each of which can form an identical melody when read in reverse. In addition to this melodic retrograde, the two melodies form a rhythmic palindrome with each other, such that the rhythm of the two melodic motives is 2+2+1+3+2, 2+3+1+2+2. Furthermore, this four-bar melody forms an identical melody when read upside-down, as illustrated in Example 2.3 (in red colour). This device is reminiscent of table canon, which combines retrograde with inversion. Chin's use of these common melodic transformation methods can be regarded as Chin's musical parallels for the famous narrative frames of the two Alice books. Inversion recalls the theme of the world turned upside down in *Alice's Adventurers in Wonderland*, and retrograde mirrors the looking-glass world in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*.

Original Score (2+3) (3+2) (2+3) (3+2)

Alice 596 "I am what I eat" "I eat what I am"

March Hare "I eat what I am"

180° Rotated Score

Alice 599 "I eat what I am" "I am what I eat"

March Hare "I am what I eat"

596

Example 2.3 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 596-599. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

'Twinkle Twinkle Little Bat'

The most humorous musical parody in this opera is the Mad Hatter's song, 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Bat', where Chin refers to the well-known nursery rhyme, 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'. In Carroll's original text, the Mad Hatter tells Alice that, in the great concert hosted by the Queen of Hearts, he had to sing:

'Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you're at!
[...]
'Up above the world you fly
Like a tea-tray in the sky.
Twinkle, Twinkle——⁹⁶

Carroll's poem parodies the first quatrain of Jane Taylor's (1783-1824) famous poem, 'The Star', which was published in 1806 in *Rhymes for the Nursery*.⁹⁷ The first quatrains of 'The Star' were later set to the French melody 'Ah! Vous Dirais-Je, Maman', and was first published along with that tune in 1838.⁹⁸

In Carroll's nonsensical parody, there is a substitution of the rhyming words 'star' by 'bat'; 'are' by 'at' and 'fly' by 'high'; and of the non-rhyming 'diamond' by 'tea-tray'. Scholars have tried to make sense of these seemingly nonsensical substitutions from a linguistic and semiotic point of view. Susanne Holthuis, for example, contends that while a bat is nothing like a tea-tray, the elements of 'bat' and 'tea-tray' can be understood within the context of the co-textual framework. The subject of 'bats' has already occurred in Chapter 1's phrase, 'Do cats eat bats? Do bats eat cats?'; similarly, 'tea-tray' can be comprehended according to 'the scenographic framework of the chapter "A Mad-Tea Party"'.⁹⁹

⁹⁶Chapter 7, 'A Mad Tea-Party', Carroll, Tenniel and Gardner, *The Annotated Alice*, 76-7.

⁹⁷*Rhymes for the Nursery* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1806), 10. Cited in Martin Gardner, 'Jane Taylor', in Martin Gardner (ed.), *Best Remembered Poems* (New York, NY; London, UK: Dover; Constable, 1992), 172.

⁹⁸Max Cryer, 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star', in *Love Me Tender: The Stories Behind the World's Best-Loved Songs* (London, UK: Frances Lincoln, 2008), 83-5. The French melody 'Ah! vous dirais-je, Maman' was published in 1761 in Paris. See, James J. Fuld, 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star', in *The Book of World-Famous Music: Classical, Popular and Folk* (New York, NY: Dover, 2000), 593.

⁹⁹Susanne Holthuis, 'Alice in Wonderland - Aspects of Intertextuality', in Rachel Fordyce and Carla Marcello (ed.), *Semiotics and Linguistics in Alice's World* (Berlin, DE: W. de Gruyter, 1994), 132.

However, this co-textual framework is enriched in Chin and Hwang's libretto. The libretto presents us with a different version— one which reworks both Taylor's 'The Star' and Carroll's parody:

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you're at!
Up above the world you fly
Like an ash-tray in the sky.
Twinkle twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Twinkle, sprinkle, brittle stew,
*How I thunder what you are!*¹⁰⁰

The first stanza is almost identical except that 'a tea-tray' is replaced by 'an ash-tray'. Naturally, given the lack of resemblance between these items, some commentators have questioned this alteration, saying that it has no apparent reasoning. Yet while Carroll's version is probably the most famous parody of 'The Star', there is another well-known parody by a 20th-century astronomer which refers to ash:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star
We know exactly what you are:
Nuclear furnace in the sky,
You'll burn to ashes by and by.

This verse comes from British science writer Nigel Calder (1931-2014), as it was published in his book, *Violent Universe* (1969).¹⁰¹ It was later quoted in the famous science textbook, *Galaxies in the Universe: An Introduction*,¹⁰² creating the possibility for the concept of ash to be selected by Chin and Hwang and incorporated into the libretto as a nonsensical 'ash-tray'. Where this derivation is possible, the libretto is no longer Carroll's parody of Taylor's 'The Star' but Chin and Hwang's parody of Taylor's poem, Carroll's and an anonymous

¹⁰⁰Chin, *Alice in Wonderland*, vocal score, 192-3.

¹⁰¹Nigel Calder, *Violent Universe: An Eye-Witness Account of the New Astronomy* (London, UK: Futura Publications, 1975).

¹⁰²Linda Siobhan Sparke and John Sill III Gallagher, 'Active Galactic Nuclei and The Early History of Galaxies', in *Galaxies in the Universe: An Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 314.

astronomer's version of the poem as well. As Chin and Hwuang's appropriation of the public riddle answer demonstrates, the assimilation of later responses to Carroll's text is one of the three major principles in their forming of the libretto. Accordingly, Chin's seemingly nonsensical parody assumes contemporary relevance through such modern, interdisciplinary associations.

The libretto does not solely rest on the substitution of words; it also plays with the English phonemes. In the second stanza, the initial phoneme of 'wonder' in the second line is changed to 'thunder' in the fourth line. Similarly, the final phoneme of 'star' in the first line is altered to 'stew' in the third line. The first three words in the third line of the second stanza of Hwang's poem, 'Twinkle, sprinkle, brittle', and the later words, 'Twinkle, sprinkle, wrinkle, crinkle, triple, treacle, scramble, scribble [...]' (Example 2.4, bars 720-721), are playing with the same principle of changing phonemes. In this way, words are chosen for their phonetic significance rather than their semantic meaning, which might be completely lost in the process. Notably, the interest in the non-semantic use of texts is one of the characteristic features of Chin's vocal compositions, including *Akrostichon-Wortspiel*, *Kalá* (2000) and *Cantatrix Sopranica* (2005).

The musical treatment of the Mad Hatter's song provides another instance of Chin's effort to retain Carroll's language, wittiness and convoluted logic in her music. Mirroring Carroll's change of the rhyming word in the first line from 'star' to 'bat', Chin substitutes the last note of the famous melody – c'-c'-g'-g'-a'-a'-g' – by raising the last note up a minor second to b^b (Example 2.4, bar 708). Just as the word 'bat' comes as a surprise, so does the note of b^b. In the next sentence, Chin makes a variation by changing the opening perfect 5th upward melody into a downward perfect 5th, but the modified rhyme in Carroll's text – on 'bat' and 'at' – is kept by using the same b^b note (Example 2.4, bar 710). When Alice joins the third line, the melody returns to the well-known tune; however, in the ending phrase, the familiar descending diatonic tune is distorted into a descending chromatic melody (Example 2.4, bars

712-715). Chin therefore not only adopts the tune from the famous nursery rhyme, but also appropriates the melody quoted by a succession of classical composers before her, including both Mozart and Haydn. Consequently, the last chromatic passage coheres with one of the three major pitch materials in this opera – whole-tone scale, C major scale and chromatic scale – and presents an allusion to Mozart's *Twelve Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, Maman"*, K. 265/300e Variation X. These multiple musical references parallel the inner workings of the libretto.

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 705-721) features Mad Hatter's vocal line and piano accompaniment. Mad Hatter's lyrics are: "Time and I were once on good terms. But we quarreled last March, just before he went mad. At the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, Where I sang: Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle bat!" The piano accompaniment includes a triangle and a cymbal. The second system (measures 709-721) features Alice's vocal line and Mad Hatter's vocal line. Alice's lyrics are: "I've heard something like it. Up a-bove the world you fly, How I won-der what you're at!" Mad Hatter's lyrics are: "to Alice: You know this song, perhaps? Up a-bove the world you fly,". The piano accompaniment includes a cymbal. The score is marked with "meno mosso" and "p" (piano).

Example 2.4 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 705-721. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

In terms of the musical setting, the nineteenth-century British tea-party custom is de-contextualised in a manner that ranges between baroque musical style and early twentieth-century styles. As Chin herself states, '[i]n the scene containing the Mad Hatter's riddle,

714

Alice

like an ash-tray in the sky, Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle star, How I won-der what you are,

Mad Hatter

like an ash-tray in the sky,

ca. 120

mf

Ww. Mar.

mp

Detailed description: This musical score snippet shows measures 714 to 721. Alice's vocal line (treble clef) begins at measure 714 with the lyrics 'like an ash-tray in the sky, Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle star, How I won-der what you are,'. The tempo is marked 'ca. 120' and the dynamic is 'mf'. Mad Hatter's vocal line (bass clef) enters at measure 715 with the lyrics 'like an ash-tray in the sky,'. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a waltz-like melody in the right hand, marked 'Ww. Mar.' and 'mp', with a tempo of 'ca. 120'.

Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 705-721 (cont.)

718

Alice

Twin - kle, sprin - kle, brit - tle stew, How I thun - der what you are.

Vln.

Pno.

Detailed description: This musical score snippet shows measures 718 to 721. Alice's vocal line (treble clef) begins at measure 718 with the lyrics 'Twin - kle, sprin - kle, brit - tle stew, How I thun - der what you are.' The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a waltz-like melody in the right hand, marked 'Vln.' and 'Pno.', with a tempo of 'ca. 120'.

Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 705-721 (cont.)

720

Alice
Twin - kle, sprin - kle, wrin - kle, crin - kle, tri - ple, trea - cle, scram - ble, scrib - ble,

March Hare
Twin - kle, wrin - kle, tri - ple, scram - ble,

Mad Hatter
Twin - kle, wrin - kle, tri - ple, scram - ble,

Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene V, bb. 705-721 (cont.)

I play with musical riddles all the way from the Baroque to Schoenberg'.¹⁰³ The quasi-baroque operatic atmosphere occurring in the middle of a twentieth-first century opera has numerous effects. It serves as both the musical equivalent of Carroll's literary parody and an engagement with the genre's history, from baroque operatic recitative to Schoenberg's Sprechgesang. The unmoving clock hanging on the wall further reminds the viewer of what the Mad Hatter recalls during the endlessly rotating tea party – that the normal flow of time is suspended while sitting at his table, allowing elements from distant epochs to coexist and to dialogue with astonishing effect. Most importantly for Chin, however, the main aim of the opera is to entertain her audiences with her musical riddles, as Carroll entertained Alice Liddell and her sisters with his original parodies and puzzles.

¹⁰³Tristan Kraft, 'Girls of Summer', *Opera News* (2012) <http://www.operanews.com/Opera%5C_News%5C_Magazine/2012/6/Features/Girls%5C_of%5C_Summer%5C_%5C_Unsuk%5C_Chin.html>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

Alice's Identity Crisis and Transformation

Further to the the intertextual referencing that characterises this opera, processes of transformation and metamorphosis feature prominently and thematically. Where Chin differentiates most noticeably from Carroll's text is her operatic interpretation of Alice's identity crisis and character development. Although Chin follows Carroll's narrative faithfully, she makes several changes to the plot in the libretto. These changes are significant to Chin's musical portrayal of Alice's identity development. Some literary scholars maintain that the figure of Alice does not achieve any particular goal due to the episodic nature of Carroll's story. Richard Kelly, for example, states that 'Alice's character does not appear to develop or significantly change throughout the tale'.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to the stasis of the literary Alice, the operatic Alice's voice and musical styles are constantly changing throughout Chin's opera, depending on the situations in which she finds herself. Playing with the concept of leitmotif, Chin gives two important characters, the White Rabbit and Alice, contrasting thematic materials. The theme of the White Rabbit is characterised by the patterning of his footsteps, set in a stable 2/4 meter (Example 2.5, bars 125-142), whereas Alice's music, as an unexpected follower, is represented by irregular and unstable triplets (Example 2.5, bars 143-149). While the Rabbit's theme is based on clusters, Alice's main pitch material is a blank C major (Example 2.5, bars 143-149). Consequently, when these two characters join together, the music fluctuates between the two styles (Example 2.6). Yet unlike the White Rabbit's theme, which stays almost identical at the end of the opera (Example 2.7, bars 574-583), Alice's music constantly changes over the course of the opera, and never fully returns to the simple C major style with which she begins her journey. In the following discussion, I will examine the operatic interpretation of Alice's transformation, and explore the possibility of Alice's vocal fluctuations as an indication of the protagonist's self discovery.

¹⁰⁴Richard Michael Kelly, Introduction to Richard Michael Kelly (ed.), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Peterborough, ON; Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2011), 9–40, 15.

Scene II
- Pool of Tears -
- A Caucus-Race and a long Tale -

Alice hears the pattering of footsteps in the distance, growing louder. The WHITE RABBIT enters.

ca. 100-104

125

Alice

White Rabbit

Mouse

Old Man 2

ca. 100-104

Vln., Vla.: pizz.

pp

poco a poco cresc.

130

mf

Oh, dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late! too

f sub.p

134

late! She'll be so cross, I'm good as gone! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

poco a poco cresc.

Port.

Example 2.5 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene II, bb. 125-149. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

138 (mf)

White Rabbit

I shall be too late! _____ too late! _____

(poco a poco cresc.) ----- *f* decresc.

Alice pursues the White Rabbit, trying not to lose sight of him as he navigates a labyrinth of light and darkness, alternately appearing, then disappearing, to us and her.

143

Hrp.

Cl.

mp

Marimba

Fl.

Bsn.

Mar.

Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene II, bb. 125-149 (cont)

189

Ob.

Cl.

Fl.

Str.

mp

Mar.

p

pp

195

f

PPP

mf

Mar.

201

Ob.

Fl.

mp

p

Example 2.6 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene II, bb. 189-206. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

Finale - Dream II -

ALICE, KING, INVISIBLE MAN, (WHITE RABBIT)

ALICE runs out of the court. She finds herself in the hall from the beginning of the story. She looks around for a long moment.

♩ ca. 60

565 Plate Bell

ppp

Hp., Pno.

p

8^{va}

The WHITE RABBIT enters. He takes his watch out of his waistcoat-pocket, looks at it, crosses past ALICE, and exits.

♩ ca. 100 - 104

572

Vln. pizz.

ppp

poco a poco cresc.

(8)

ALICE takes the golden key from the table and opens one of the doors to reach the beautiful garden.

♩ ca. 60

579

f

decresc.

pppp

p

Tba., Cbsn.

Example 2.7 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act 1, Finale, Dream II, bb. 565-586. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

‘Who in the world am I?’

Alice's first question, after falling down the rabbit hole, is not ‘where am I?’ but ‘who am I?’. In Scene II, after going through many changes in body size, Alice expresses her confusion about her identity in the song ‘Who in the world am I?’ Chin's musical portrayal of this most crucial question is effective in terms of the pitch material that she utilises, and Alice's identity crisis is represented by the pauses between the words in the song. As Example 2.8 shows, the line ‘Who in the world am I?’ is delivered in a disconnected way – sung in a syllabic setting with a melodic line interrupted by rests between the words. The fragmented music communicates Alice's uncertainty and incomplete sense of self. In a world that actively challenges her perspective and her sense of self, Alice struggles to determine what constitutes her identity. The six-note motive – f[#] – e[”] – c[”] – b^b – d[’] – g[#] – is hinted at several times when she has gone through changing body sizes. Example 2.9 shows that the first appearance of the motive is just before the line ‘Drink me!’ (bars 274-278). The theme recurs before the line ‘Eat me!’ (Example 2.10, bars 218-222). Chin thereby utilises the concept of leitmotif to associate Alice's curiosity – indicated by her instructions of ‘drink me’ and ‘eat me’ – to the subsequent bodily changes which symbolise Alice's struggle to identify herself.

*Distractedly, Alice picks up the kid glove and fans herself with the fan.
As she sings the following, she begins to shrink slowly.*

384 ca. 72 - 76

Alice

Str. pizz.

p secco

mp

accelerando poco a poco

392

p

Who in the

p

(accel. poco a poco)

399

world am I? Ah, that's the great puz -

Example 2.8 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene II, bb. 384-406 . © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

In frustration, she slams shut the door, then returns to the ...
ca. 92 -96

*... table , where she finds
a little bottle on which is written ...*

274

ppp *p* *p*

Tb. Str. Cl. 3 Vc.

f

279

mf

Alice

Drink me!

Fl. Tpt.

f *p* *f* *p*

Example 2.9 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene II, bb. 274-282. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

She falls to the ground and cries.

313 Picc. Str. pizz. Cl. *f f p p*

In her grief, her eyes alight upon a small box under the table, on which is written ...

Alice *mf* *Eat me!*

Vln. Fl. Str. Tpt. *p p mf p f > p*

Example 2.10 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, Scene II, bb. 313-323. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

In this aria, one can find that Alice's melodic line in the beginning of the opera – the scale-like triplet based on the C major – is changed to the whole tone scale. It seems that, for Chin, the six-word puzzle is best matched with the six-note or whole-tone scale, as the six-note motive f[♯]'-e''-c''-b[♭]'-d'-g[♯]' in fact forms the whole tone scale: C-D-E-F[♯]-G[♯]-A[♯] (B[♭]). This traditionally unstable scale, with its directionless nature makes it the best pitch material for depicting Alice's confusion. Yet Chin's portrayal of Alice's confusion is not heavy and dark, even though Alice is meant to later swim in the pool of her own tears. Set in a triple meter – Alice's meter – and accompanied by the strings' *pizzicato*, the musical style has a *scherzo* or a dance-like feeling, which suggests Chin's ability to portray the protagonist's struggle in a humorous context.

Interlude I: Advice from a Caterpillar



Figure 2.1 *The Caterpillar and Alice* drawn by Sir John Tenniel in 1865 and engraved by Jonathan Stephenson in 1988.

The complexities of Chin's cultural positioning are showcased in Interlude I, where Alice 'hears words of wisdom from the caterpillar about the advantages of change'.¹⁰⁵ Looking at the libretto, the music and the staging of *Alice*, Chin's innovative interpretations of Carroll's text stand out, particularly as she addresses the concept of metamorphosis. 'Interlude I: Advice from a Caterpillar' (Appendix) demonstrates a tension between the synergy traditionally expected of opera and the sense of competition between music, words and action that Chin has generated. This tension not only resonates with Alice's struggle with physical transformation, but more broadly reflects the inherent conflicts within Chin's view of 'universality'.

The first significant change that Chin makes to the original written dialogue between Alice and the Caterpillar – aside from restructuring the text itself (see Appendix) – is to turn it into a 'silenced text'.¹⁰⁶ Chin explains the aural instinct upon which her version of the Caterpillar is based:

Deciding on voice parts is an instinctive process which is difficult to analyze. Reading the text I already had vivid aural images [...] and it became clear that one character should be a non-singing role, being represented only through an instrument.¹⁰⁷

Chin's Caterpillar effectively assumes the non-singing role, whose instrument is a bass clarinet. In the staging for the Munich première, an enormous caterpillar playing the bass clarinet solo of Interlude I is situated at centre stage. This solo is delivered without any singing or orchestral accompaniment, and the audience is prompted to read the words which are projected onto the stage as subtitles. Alice also does not sing; instead, she interacts with the Caterpillar via awkward hand gestures, which include sexually suggestive and self-mutilating body language. Intriguingly, Alice carries a doll duplicate of herself in the Interlude. Midway through the solo, an immobile, masked girl slowly decapitates the

¹⁰⁵ 'Opera Synopsis', *Boosey & Hawkes Website* <<http://www.boosey.com/pages/opera/moredetails.asp?musicid=30989>>, accessed 10 Sept. 2014.

¹⁰⁶ Chapter 5, 'Advice from a Caterpillar', Carroll, Tenniel and Gardner, *The Annotated Alice*, 49-58.

¹⁰⁷ Richmond and ArenaPAL, 'Unsub Chin Interview'.

head of her doll avatar and reattaches it in one disturbing hand motion. This evocative fragmentation of the body corresponds to the disorientation of the senses which the Interlude creates through its multimedia presentation of the silent dialogue – a dialogue that is itself a disturbing re-imagining of Carroll’s text (see Appendix).

Comparing the stage scene to Sir John Tenniel’s iconic original illustration (Figure 2.1), Chin visibly meshes the text with the illustration in the new multimedia setting. The composer chooses the bass clarinet as a substitute for the hookah – an Arabian tobacco pipe – in the original story. The significance of this substitution cannot be overstated. In Carroll’s text, the hookah appears at the beginning of the Caterpillar chapter in the following lines: ‘The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.’¹⁰⁸ In the original version of the story, the tobacco pipe actually serves as an impediment to communication, while in Chin’s production the hookah/clarinet becomes an enabler of communication. This is evident in her stage directions for ‘Interlude I’:

The Caterpillar sits on a huge mushroom, with a Bass Clarinet. Alice enters. They look at each other for some time in silence. Then, the Caterpillar begins to “speak”.¹⁰⁹

In giving these directions, Chin stresses the role of the bass clarinet as the Caterpillar’s principal speech device. She repeats this point in an addendum to the earlier remarks: ‘NOTE: By playing his Bass Clarinet, the Caterpillar will “speak” his lines, which are projected as text’.¹¹⁰ In contrast to Carroll’s text, the operatic ‘hookah’ – now the bass clarinet – assumes the burden of communication. The emphasis on the instrument as the Caterpillar’s primary means of speech also indicates a privileging of ‘purely’ musical language over both written and verbal languages. The supposed primacy of music is manifested in Chin’s choice of style in the Caterpillar’s solo music. As Example 2.11 shows, the solo is composed in a

¹⁰⁸Chapter 5, “Advice from a Caterpillar”, Carroll, ‘What the Tortoise Said to Achilles’, 49.

¹⁰⁹Chin, *Alice in Wonderland*, vocal score, 117.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

fantastic, quasi-improvised style, featuring characteristic woodwind virtuosity. The opening phrase, with an ascending *portamento* at the end, parodies the opening passage of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*.

The text begins to project onto the stage after line seven.¹¹¹ While the structure of verbal communication requires pauses and stops for change of breath – both for interlocutory exchange and for rhetorical emphasis – Chin's piece is devoid of the bar lines which might suggest the measured constructions of conversation. The rising and falling scales glide freely, without any sense of conversational, structural direction. Indeed, the large intervallic leaps, wide range, fast arpeggios and overblown clusters also show a scale and range which verbal communication cannot achieve. With these musical lines, the words 'Who are you?' appear twelve times with twelve different thematic, rhythmic and dynamic expressions (Example 2.11, lines 7, 18, 19). The searching nature of the Caterpillar's insistent interrogation of Alice is expressed in the stylistic range and number of these clarinet outbursts. Notably, the majority of these 'Who are you?' units are set to three-note musical gestures, often with speech-like inflections; yet, these inflections are exaggerated beyond the length and proportion of ordinary speech. Set instrumentally, each 'Who are you?' is at the same time speech-like and yet transcending the bounds of quotidian speech structures, entertaining ideas of instrumental recitative only to dismiss them. Significantly, then, the operatic representation of the Caterpillar's searching questions, and its biting critique, suggests Chin's ideal of the universal communicative potential of music.

¹¹¹Since the solo piece does not contain any bar number or bar lines, I use line numbers here to denote each musical line shown in the actual score.

ad lib. $\text{ca. } 66$
B-Klar.

line 1 f port. f ff

line 7 mp Who are you? Not to know is quite fine cer-tain-ty is a crime. Who are

line 17 search for tumors $cresc.$

$\text{ca. } 66$
Alice balks, returns to the Caterpillar.

line 18 $ffff$ $fp < fff > < f > < f > < f > < f p$ Who are you? Who

tempo rubato $\text{ca. } 76$

line 19 $gliss.$ $cresc.$ ff p are. you? Don't forget:

line 25 9 10 10 9 $cresc.$ by a toad.

Example 2.11 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Interlude I, lines 1, 7, 17, 18, 19, 25. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

The decision to supplement the musical realisation of the Caterpillar's words, by projecting the verbal dialogue onto the stage as subtitles, demonstrates the extent to which Chin's 'Interlude I' fractures communication into a disorienting array of media. The Bass Clarinet solo, the textual advice of the Caterpillar, and the protagonist's body language may appear at first as a coherent whole. However, it is surely confusing to the viewer that Chin substitutes the clarinet for the Caterpillar's vocal text and then compensates by projecting it on stage, at the same time infusing the Bass Clarinet solo with the variegated nuances of the Caterpillar's question. The problem which results from this multimedia and multisensory bombardment is salient to Chin's strictures about distinguishing 'universal' from 'non-universal' communication. This overwhelming experience begs the question of which medium an audience member should privilege as being the one communicating the 'right' message in the scene, by committing his or her critical attention to it. Thus, the concurrence of Alice's self-dismembering body language, the Caterpillar's musical language, and the disembodied verbal language as virtual text should not be regarded as a cooperative synergy. Rather, they symbolise the division within Alice's own cognitive universe, where every mode of communication – seeing, reading, writing and listening – competes not only for the protagonist's attention but also for that of the audience. In this circumstance, no mode of communication is entirely comprehensible, either independently or together. Indeed, the chaos of signals, resulting from this symbolic representation of Alice's psychological dilemma and physical uncertainty, disorients the audience's experience of Interlude I.

Chin's compositional strategy is not surprising given the identity crisis that comprises the Alice narrative. The struggle for the proper mode of expression, self-identification, and self-representation is, after all, the theme of Carroll's writing. In Carroll's text, the dialogue between the Caterpillar and Alice reveals the protagonist's confusion over her own evolving physical form. Consider the following exchange between the two characters in the book:

Alice replied very politely, 'for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.'

‘It isn’t,’ said the Caterpillar.
 ‘Well, perhaps you haven’t found it so yet,’ said Alice; ‘but when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you know—and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you’ll feel it a little queer, won’t you?’
 ‘Not a bit,’ said the Caterpillar.¹¹²

Carroll’s Alice experiences an ongoing identity crisis precisely because of her unstable, shape-shifting physiology. The conversation between the Caterpillar and Alice is really about the process of change and, in particular, metamorphosis. Unlike the ironical, change-resistant Caterpillar, Alice is already experiencing the queerness of bodily transformation as a human chrysalis. Chin’s ‘Interlude I’ is much more explicit than Carroll’s text about what psychological effects these changes might entail. For instance, the operatic Caterpillar advises Alice to check beneath her dress for burgeoning sexual characteristics. Some critics have noted the phallic effect of the Caterpillar’s suggestive shape and oversized length.¹¹³ As Strimpel puts it, ‘the uneasy sexual element was brought out [...] when a singsong command from a giant animal has Alice lift her bloomers’.¹¹⁴ The phallic interlocutor tells her that ‘neath your dress, neath your bloomers / You must always search for tumors’. At his behest, Chin’s Alice lifts up her skirt and bends down to examine her own nether regions. The suggestive undertone of this burlesque exchange effectively parodies Carroll’s relatively demure characterisation of Alice’s metamorphosis. The evocative juxtaposition of the phallic Caterpillar and the corseted protagonist onstage takes the transformational process to another level: it metaphorically inducts her into the social world as a sexed and sexual being. More important still, the chaos and pain which accompany these physical and sexual changes resonate with the chaos of the signals in Interlude I.

¹¹²Carroll, Tenniel and Gardner, *The Annotated Alice*, 45.

¹¹³Tuttle, ‘Unsub Chin: Alice in Wonderland’; Strimpel, ‘Alice in Wonderland’ in Munich; Talay, ‘Lacking a Distinctive Voice’; Swed, ‘Thumbs Up’.

¹¹⁴Strimpel, ‘Alice in Wonderland’ in Munich’.

The Alice-Queen Match

Although Carroll's Alice undergoes a dramatic growth spurt in the final chapter of the first book, her transformation is not one of ontological change, such as that of evolving from a caterpillar to a butterfly.¹¹⁵ It is more accurately a reversion to her original human size. Throughout the famous court confrontation between Alice and the despotic Queen of Hearts, Carroll reminds his readers constantly of the protagonist's return to her former body. During the Queen's climactic pronouncement of 'Sentence first—verdict afterwards', the literary Alice openly rebukes her insubstantial authority and challenges the tyrannical proclamation, calling it 'Stuff and nonsense!'¹¹⁶ When the growing heroine refuses to be silenced at the behest of the whimsical Queen, and is ordered to be executed, Alice's dismissal of the Queen's hollow command is significant. Carroll writes:

'Who cares for *you*?' said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!'¹¹⁷

In reality, Alice's sense of agency is rediscovered through the restoration of her full size. Unlike Carroll's Alice, whose transformation is simply characterised by the restoration of body and power, Chin's Alice undertakes a more striking metamorphosis in the penultimate scene, 'Scene VII: Who Stole the Tarts? – Alice's Evidence.' Her acquisition of sovereign power in the operatic scene is, by comparison, more substantial, more physical and more audible.

In order to see how the operatic Alice achieves this force, one notes the contrast between the piece 'So many heads and so little time' in Scene VI, and the piece 'They told me you had been to her' in Scene VII. In the former, when Alice encounters the Queen for the first time in the opera, her part is not performed as continuous song phrases, but as short spoken replies to the Queen's vocal puissance. Alice does not have vocal command, let alone musical

¹¹⁵Chapter 12, "Alice's Evidence". Carroll, Tenniel and Gardner, *The Annotated Alice*, 123-132.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 129.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

eloquence at this point. As can be seen in Example 2.12, the Queen's long, continuous vocal line monopolises the conversation, forcing her audience to listen and to obey (Example 2.12, bars 1014-1029). This dominance is evident in Chin's stage instruction: 'As the Queen sings, she gestures as if conducting the orchestra' (Example 2.12, bar 1014). What the Queen demands is not an interlocutor but an audience who complies with her ideas and commands. Hence, Alice can only reply to the Queen's question, 'What's your name, child?', in brief spoken outbursts (Example 2.12, bars 1033, 1036).

As the Queen sings, she gestures as if conducting the orchestra.

Queen 1014 *f* ca. 88 *ff*

Two heads are bet-ter than one. And four-teen heads bet-ter than

Queen 1018 *f*

two. And six million, three thou-sand, four hun-dred, and one, su-pe-ri-or-

Queen 1022 *fff* *port*

still by far! So roll, heads roll, roll be-fore me

Queen 1027 *ff* *fff*

come forth, see your Queen, and roll! What's your name,

The Queen turns angrily from the orchestra. The Queen processes towards Alice.

Alice 1032 *mp*

My name is Alice, so please your majesty.

Queen *f*

child? And who are these?

Alice 1036 ca. 60 *fff*

How should I know? It's surely no business of mine. Non-sense

Queen *fff*

Off with her head! Off with ...

Example 2.12 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act I, scene VI, bb. 1014-1037: Alice first meets the Queen of the Hearts. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

In the penultimate piece, Chin reverses the Queen's and Alice's principal modes of utterance in their confrontation. Alice no longer expresses herself in stuttering, submissive speech but in a singing voice. By contrast, the Queen's line is largely delivered in a *Sprechstimme* manner – written with cross-shaped note heads such as in Example 2.13, bars 515-516, and Example 2.14, bars 523-524. While Carroll's Alice bases her authority on the essential powerlessness of the Queen's card form and her own growing size, the operatic Alice actively expresses her supremacy over the Queen via the appropriation of her sovereign voice and range. Alice's besting of the Queen is wittily demonstrated in a manner that gestures outside the plot to the genre, as Alice and the Queen engage the archetypal soprano contest of high and long notes.

Also remarkable in this penultimate scene is that Alice repeatedly 'quotes' the Queen's vocal scale and range, and then surpasses it. Moreover, the lengths of her notes also tend to exceed those of the Queen. Consider the following exchange between the Queen and Alice in the opera:

The Queen: 'The paper proves her guilt!'

Alice: 'You've proven nothing of the sort! Except this court is a game with no rules at all!'

507 **ff** *She points to ALICE. The Court erupts into gasps and swoons.* **f**

Queen her. The pa - per proves her

510 **f**

Alice You've

Queen guilt! So off with her head!

512

Alice prov - en noth - ing of the sort! Ex - cept this court is a game ____ with no

Queen

515 **ff** *Takes the harness bells and brandish*

Alice rules ____ at all!

Queen with both Of course we have rules! ____
forearms

Example 2.13 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act 1, scene VII, bb. 507-516. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

As Example 2.13 shows, while the Queen's vocal line extends for a longer duration and exerts much gravity in its performance, her counterpart's line is comparatively shorter but much more agitated. However, the descending portamento from $\sharp f$ to c at the end of the Queen's long 'guilt!' provides a qualitative register of her declining authority (Example 2.13, bar 510). In the first phrase of her reply, 'You've proven nothing of the sort!', Alice echoes the Queen's range by starting with the same note of $\flat b$, then reaching $\sharp f$, and arriving at g on the emphatic 'noth' of 'nothing' (Example 2.13, bars 511-513). Importantly, the highest note of g in bar 511, in the Queen's vocal line, is appropriated by her human foil in Alice. Although Alice's musical phrase is shorter, she is already trying to outstrip the Queen's vocal range. The protagonist's rise in stature and power does not stop at the mere imitation of range. In the following line – 'Except this court is a game with no rules at all!' – Alice surpasses the Queen's high g by ascending to $\sharp g$, then a . Chin also emphasises the all-important words of 'game' and 'rules' with continuous high pitches at $\sharp g$ and f (Example 2.13, bars 513-515). It is significant that Alice's $\sharp g$ now exceeds the Queen's highest range. Furthermore, both 'game' and 'rules' are stably and confidently maintained in their respective pitches, whereas the Queen's $\sharp f$ falls off, literally, from its high pedestal to c in bar 510. In this musical dialogue, Alice plays the 'game' by acknowledging and then violating the 'rules' using these range quotations, which in turn render this whole farce a nonsensical 'nothing.'

Indeed, this confrontational exchange marks the progressive decline in the Queen character's make-believe authority. Her weakening power becomes evident in the ensuing altercation. When the Queen irrationally pronounces, 'Sentence first, verdict afterwards', one can identify a very noticeable change in her voice. The line is performed as *Sprechstimme*, largely deprived of its singing quality (Example 2.14, bars 523-524). In effect, the Queen is losing musical command of her self-expression; she is effectively 'losing her voice'. In contrast, Alice's angry retorts demonstrate her rising verbal and musical command. The cru-

cial sentence, 'Stuff and nonsense!', is performed with a combination of speech and singing voice (Example 2.15, bar 528). As Example 2.15 shows, the words 'stuff' and 'nonsense' are spoken as accented *Sprechstimme*, while the word 'and' is sung in an ascending whole-note scale with *glissando*. As the Queen's voice declines almost an octave, Alice's voice rises gradually. Not only does the young protagonist acquire the former's lost musical control, she once again quotes and exceeds the highest note in her counterpart's line. Alice quotes the Queen's high g" on the 'af' of 'afterwards' and tops it with $\sharp g$ " on 'non' syllable of 'nonsense' (Example 2.14, bar 524; Example 2.15, bar 528). Accordingly, Alice demonstrates her mastery of sound – singing and speech, pitch and language – after mastering all the rules of this game.

Example 2.14 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act 1, scene VII, bb. 521-525. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

Example 2.15 Unsuk Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act 1, scene VII, b. 528. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

In fact, as the Queen's pitch keeps falling, the girl protagonist's pitch continues to rise. Alice's vocal range climbs as high as b^b " in the scornful exclamation, 'You're nothing but a pack of cards[!]' (Example 2.16, bar 542). As Example 2.16 shows, this critical rise in pitch actually signals the beginning of a vocal contest in both pitch and duration between Alice and

the Queen. From bars 544-548, Alice maintains the pitch of her vocal proclamation ('All of you!') consistently over a longer duration. Meanwhile, the Queen is unable to maintain pitch in her recalcitrant 'No! No!', as it tumbles through a descending *portamento* in bars 545 and 547. In the contest over vocal capacity and endurance, Alice wins out. In bar 546, when Alice rises to b², the Queen falls short by reaching b¹ only. Moreover, the latter fails even to sustain her vocal line at that pitch, as b¹ plunges by more than an octave to a¹ through *portamento*. In bar 548, when Alice raises her pitch to c³, the Queen's reply falls short again by half a tone to b². Once again, her b² on the first 'No!' plunges by more than an octave to g¹ by *portamento*. Humbled by these repeated frustrations, the Queen makes a final attempt to chase after Alice's high c³ after falling to g¹ on the second 'No[!]'. Desperate now, she forces an ascending *portamento* to c³ on the last defiant 'No[!]'. However, Alice's pitch never dips below g² even as the Queen spouts out her three emotionally fluctuating 'No's. Here, Alice flexes her vocal supremacy over a supposedly mature female authority figure by gliding effortlessly to c³ above the Queen's final, frantic assertion of power. Since the operatic Alice has just removed her giant wire-meshed mask in bar 546, her demonstration of vocal supremacy over the Queen and the 'Pack of Cards' coincides with her physical transformation and emerging sense of identity. Voice, body, language, maturation and female sovereignty therefore combine in Alice's supreme vocal expression of personal strength, self-confidence and self-knowledge. Chin's Alice has played the game, mastered its rules, and won the match.

538

Alice *fff* *Brandish the harness bells.* I'm not af-

Queen Such non-sense! Off with her head!

541

Alice -raid. You're noth-ing but a pack of cards!

Queen No! Such non-sense!

544

Alice All of you!

Queen No! No!

546

Alice Pack of cards! All

Queen No! No!

548

Alice of you!

Queen No!

550

Alice Pack of cards!

Queen No! No!

Example 2.16 Unsub Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act 1, scene VII, bb. 538-551, Queen and Alice parts. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

2.4 'I am what I am'

Through the Queen-Alice match, Chin has tackled the identity issue inherent in Alice's question, 'Who in the world am I'? However, there is an underlying problem in Chin's triumphant portrayal of Alice's transformation and mastery. Despite the protagonist's repeated vocal display of superior range, pitch and duration, that superiority is predicated on vocal appropriation. While the literary Alice bases her ascendancy on the recovery and rediscovery of her innate agency and physical superiority, the operatic Alice expresses her ascendancy through her appropriation of the Queen's tessitura and performative power. The final court scene of Alice in front of the barbarous Queen therefore plays a vital role in both Carroll's book and Chin's opera. For the literary Alice, the court represents the illusory fantasy world from which the 'Pack of Cards', representing a spurious authority, derives its hitherto-unquestioned power. As a political accessory to the despotic regime of the Red Queen of Hearts, the court is part of the problem and not the solution to the character's self-acceptance, challenging Alice's eventual mastery of the situation.

The court takes on a very different a role in Chin's work. As soon as the operatic Alice sings, 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!' in bar 535 (Example 2.17), the jurors as the court audience begin to interrogate each other – 'Are you a card?' – repeatedly in plain speech, until the close of the scene (Example 2.17, bars 538-540). When Alice reaches her victorious *c[#]*, the court audience actually applauds her virtuosic performance, even as they collapse into a dispersing 'pack of cards'. The opera-goers are therefore represented on stage by the court audience, pronouncing their judgment on Alice's performance, as well as on Chin's display of virtuosic power and musical mastery. Thus, the operatic revision of the court scene shows how critical the audience's reception is in the achievement of Alice's self-mastery and maturation.

535

Alice

you? You're ____ noth-ing but a pack of cards!

Everybody is completely confused and irritated.

538 **p**

Frog, Dormouse, Rat

What! No! Pack of cards? Really? We are?

poco a poco cresc.

12

Jurors

Ferret, Hedgehog, Lizard

Really? Are you a card? No! Such nonsense!

poco a poco cresc.

Bantam Cock, Mole, Duck

Pack of cards? No! Really? Are you a card?

poco a poco cresc.

Squirrel, Storking, Mousling

What! We are what? No! Pack of cards? I carry a card!

poco a poco cresc.

p

Soprano

We are? Really? No! Pack of cards?

poco a poco cresc.

Alto

No! Pack of cards? Am I a card? We are what?

poco a poco cresc.

Tenor

Pack of cards? No! Such nonsense! I carry a card.

poco a poco cresc.

Bass

Am I a card? No, you're much too fat! We are what?

poco a poco cresc.

Example 2.17 Unsub Chin, *Alice In Wonderland*, Act 1, scene VII, bb. 535-540. © 2007 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. By kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes Bote & Bock Berlin.

If the penultimate scene is extrapolated into the context of reception, Chin's effort to attract universal applause becomes discernible. While Carroll draws on his own cultural and literary inheritance to promote a receptive response to his work, Chin – like her operatic Alice – draws not only on the English literary tradition but on a host of Western musical traditions, both compositional and performative. While Carroll's first audience was a small group of children to whom he told the stories in Oxford, Chin's work is designed to appeal immediately to a wider and more global audience. Nevertheless, the effect of Chin's work is contingent upon its appropriation of the Alice story and its English context, which raises pertinent questions about her views on universal music.

Universal music is, after all, Chin's ultimate goal as a professional composer. By assimilating various Western musical traditions, she attempts to transcend regional sounds and to avoid the danger of 'auto-exoticism' by attracting diverse audiences. Like Alice herself, Chin demonstrates that she can play by the 'rules' and master the 'game' of European and American music. As Carroll's nonsensical riddles have attracted myriad attempts to solve them, Chin intends for her musical riddles to compel her audiences to decode and decipher them. Ironically, no matter how much she parodies and appropriates musical traditions in the opera, the reception of her work depends considerably on the extent of her audience's musical and textual knowledge. Chin's operatic attempt at creating universal sounds still falls within a musical sphere that is both predefined and culturally determined. Her audience represents a pocket of 'universality' at best, and her vision of the 'universal' seems to form another regional view.

Chin's reiteration of her desire for the 'freedom to be [her]self', with its anti-contextual posture, presents a challenge to the dominating perspective of cross-cultural encounter in the study of new East Asian music. Chin's reason for rejecting and not using Korean music is astonishingly simple: Korean music is not her musical past.¹¹⁸ Consequently, what Chin offers is a vivid and alternative reality – one in which issues of transcending, blurring,

¹¹⁸Cf. notes 22-24

crossing or confronting cultural boundaries are altogether absent. Instead, Chin turns the issue of identity into a set of choices – in her case, the choice to be a composer rather than a ‘Korean’ composer. Chin’s next opera, *Alice Through the Looking Glass* will premiere in Covent Garden, London in the 2018/19 season. It therefore remains to be seen how Chin will deal with Alice’s predetermined destiny as a pawn advancing to a Queen.

Chapter 3

Towards an Ecological Identity:

Nature and Environmental Consciousness in Karen Tanaka's Music

Born in Tokyo in 1961, Japanese composer Karen Tanaka began her musical education with piano lessons at the age of four and then formal composition lessons at the age of ten. She read French literature at Aoyama Gakuin University and went on to study composition with Akira Miyoshi (1933-) at the Toho Gakuen School of Music from 1982 to 1986. In 1986, Tanaka moved to Paris to study composition with spectralist Tristan Murail, going on to work with experimental composer Luciano Berio in Florence (1990-91). During 1991-92, she took part in a composition and computer music course at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM). In 1987 she received the Gaudeamus Prize at the International Music Week in Amsterdam for her piano concerto *Anamorphose* (1986), and in 1988 she received the Muramatsu Prize. After living in France for 10 years as a freelance composer, she moved to the United States in 2005, where she currently teaches composition at the California Institute of the Arts.

Having received international awards in the late 1980s, Tanaka is considered as one of a number of inspiring composers of the 'post-Takemitsu' generation. In Luciana Galliano's 2002 book *Yōgaku: Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century*, Tanaka's music is mentioned

in a subsection entitled ‘The Next Generation’ in Chapter 8, ‘The Closing Decades of the Twentieth Century’, introducing her major compositions up until *Wave Mechanics* (1994).¹ Galliano introduces Tanaka as a composer with IRCAM training, who uses audio technology to compose and execute her music. Given this technical experience, Tanaka’s ‘sensitivity to timbre’ has been observed as one of her notable skills.² Stephen Long’s 2004 article, ‘Japanese Composers of the Post-Takemitsu Generation’, aims to expand the West’s understanding of contemporary Japanese music by introducing more composers who have been overshadowed by ‘the towering international reputation of Toru Takemitsu’.³ Tanaka is discussed along with other eight Japanese composers born between 1940-1970. Long points out Tanaka’s stylistic expansion, from exploring her own electroacoustic musical potential to engaging with the styles of minimalism and the New Age in the end of 1990s and early twenty-first century.⁴ The later styles can be found in her works *Techno Etudes* (2000) and *Questions of Nature* (1998).⁵ While Long’s article points out the stylistic evolution in her music since the turn of the century, her biography from her publisher Chester Music identifies a new theme in her works:

[Tanaka’s] love of nature and concern for the environment has influenced many of her works, including *Frozen Horizon* [1998], *Water and Stone* [1996], *Invisible Curve* [1996], *Dreamscape* [2001], *Tales of Trees* [2003], *Crystalline* [1988] and *Questions of Nature* [1998].⁶

Despite the fact that two prevalent themes – audio technology and electroacoustic music, and nature and the environment – have been identified in Tanaka’s work, to date there has no

¹Luciana Galliano, *Yogaku: Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Martin Mayes (Lanham, MD; London, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 310-11.

²Ibid., 311.

³Stephen Long, ‘Japanese Composers of the Post-Takemitsu Generation’, *Tempo*, 58 /228 (2004), 14–22, at 14.

⁴Ibid., 21.

⁵Ibid., 21.

⁶Music Sales Classical, ‘Karen Tanaka: Long Biography’, *Music Sales Classical* [web page] <<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/long-bio/Karen-Tanaka>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2015.

detailed examination or sustained study of how the two themes relate to each other or to the formation of her musical identity, which is this chapter's focus.

Tanaka's conception of nature is significant towards understanding her attitude towards questions of identity. In the manner of Unsuk Chin (Chapter 2), Tanaka seeks to avoid being characterised or stereotyped by any association with national or regional inspiration, and instead appeals to universal ideas – which are, in Tanaka's case, ideas of nature. When examining Tanaka's music, it is difficult to find any explicitly Japanese or East Asian subject matter, sound material or conceptual influence. The theme of 'East-meets-West' is absent in Tanaka's music, whereas themes related to nature are prevalent. Particularly, Tanaka is fascinated by a variety of natural phenomena such as the dispersion of light, the echo of sounds or the phenomena of polarization, which exist universally and certainly beyond geographical limitations. Drawing her musical inspirations upon universally existent natural phenomena is arguably Tanaka's way of avoiding being categorised or labeled as a regional artist. Tanaka's relinquishing of the compositional practice of 'East-meets-West' is therefore implicit in her focus on the natural world.

In order to understand Tanaka's view of her musical identity, this chapter examines Tanaka's musical approaches to nature as a function of her sense of selfhood and her own existence relative to the natural world. It begins by a brief discussion on the music of her forebear, Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996), especially his use of the concept of Japanese promenade garden, in order to contextualise Tanaka's non-cultural approach to nature. The second part of the chapter investigates the origination and the subsequent transformation of Tanaka's attitude towards nature, from being a mere musical inspiration to a subject of environmental concern; and from Tanaka having a passing interest in the environment to developing a sense of responsibility for it. This chapter suggests that the natural world is far beyond a mere compositional inspiration for Tanaka. Rather, Tanaka's evolving attitude

towards the natural world reflects her search for her own musical identity, her personhood and her artistic purpose in the world.

This evolution in Tanaka's perspective involves the composer's attempt to address the longstanding philosophical question, which can be seen, in broad terms, as reflecting a human existentialist concern: can nature exist independently entity outside of human perception and interference and, if so, can the process of its investigation and discovery be conveyed through musical sound? Such questions reflect a concern with issues of identity, and as this chapter later shows, Tanaka places a strategic emphasis on human identity. This chapter observes that Tanaka is not only interested in natural phenomena, but more precisely in the concept of what lies beyond human perception. Tanaka has exhibited this interest in the imperceptible since her earliest compositions, including *Prismes* (1984), which I examine first. The orchestral piece, *Prismes*, serves as a starting point towards understanding her curiosity about how science and technology have changed the human perception of reality. Tanaka is acutely aware of the limitations of the human senses, and of the need for tools, such as prisms, to render perceptible the hidden aspects of nature – specifically, in this case, the revelation of the multiple colours present in a white beam of light upon decomposition, and the recomposition of the same as it passes through opportunely shaped pieces of glasses. This process is musically mirrored by the combination and the separation of different instrumental tone colours.

If prisms and other technological tools are invaluable in expanding human perceptions of the external world, they can also delude people. *Anamorphose* (1986), the second piece considered in this chapter, explores the parallels between the distorted images created by optical devices and the distorted timbre created by spectral musicians using computer technologies. Analyses of sound spectra contribute to the understanding of sound and human auditory perception; however, spectralist musicians can also exploit the same tools to manipulate sound, thereby modifying its innermost features to the point of making it almost

unrecognizable from the original sound sample. Tanaka explores such digital distortions in *Anarmorphose*.

Tanaka's *Initium* (1993) for orchestra and live electronics, realised at IRCAM, reaffirms her understanding that 'the computer is an integral part of [the] compositional process'. Yet she also states a crucial imperative, to ' [listen] to sound behaviour which exists in nature yet is waiting to be unveiled'.⁷ This statement indicates a significant departure from spectralist composers, in that it expresses her intent to observe sound in its context rather than in the sound laboratory. This shift represents not only the restoration of sound to its cultural, environmental and political contexts but also the reassigned responsibility of the human ear in Tanaka's perception and approach. The resulting piece expressing this new perspective is *Echo Canyon* (1995), which marks Tanaka's environmental awakening. The piece takes its inspiration from the composer's remembrance of the colours and sounds experienced during a visit to Bryce Canyon in Utah. Significantly, the canyon visit serves the composer in reaching a new awareness about 'the planet Earth', motivating her to shift her focus from examining natural phenomena, independently of their context, towards establishing a more holistic and grounded ecological approach to music.

I contend that the scientific understanding of sound, which Tanaka acquired through her encounter with spectralist music in the mid-1980s, deepened her awareness of the limitations of human perception and led her to recognise nature as a real entity existing outside human construction. This recognition made her conscious of growing concerns for the fragility of nature, which in turn prompted her to convey the urgency of environmental issues through her works – the point of departure from her spectralist forebears. These aspects render her work highly relevant in current eco-critical debates, and so consequently the final section in this chapter provides an eco-critical reading of Tanaka's piano pedagogical series, *Children of Light* (1999). The relevance of this work to a discussion of Tanaka's view of the human-nature

⁷Karen Tanaka, Programme Notes to Karen Tanaka, *Initium* (1993), *Music Sales Classical* [web page] (1993) <<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/1562/8157>>, accessed 17 Sept. 2015.

relationship is that it demonstrates her attempt to convey an ecological message through the series, by presenting endangered animals in their own environments musically, so as to raise awareness and prompt an ethical response in young piano performers, their teachers and audiences. This chapter concludes by examining how Tanaka's evolving concept of nature informs her sense of self and her view of human identity, as these existential questions are explored in her music.

3.1 The Role of Humans in Takemitsu's Concept of Nature

The aim of the first section of this chapter is to set up a foil against which I can compare Tanaka's concept of nature as her response to the question of identity. Given that nature features prominently in the works of that giant of Japanese contemporary music, Toru Takemitsu, Tanaka's own focus on the natural world can be seen to trace back to her forebearer's thematics. Yet while one might assume Takemitsu's works to have influenced Tanaka, this section posits him instead as an exemplar which Tanaka counteracts through her own non-cultural approach to nature and to music.

Takemitsu's preoccupation with the relationship between nature, life and music is exemplified in his collection of thirteen essays entitled *Nature and Music*, written in 1962.⁸ Despite what this broad title might suggest, Takemitsu explicitly states that the goal of his music is not to merely imitate or portray nature:

Although I think constantly about the relationship of music and nature, for me music does not exist to describe natural scenery. While it is true that I am sometimes impressed by natural scenery devoid of human life, and that may motivate my own composing, at the same time I cannot forget the tawdry and seamy side of human existence. I cannot conceive of nature and human beings as opposing elements, but prefer to emphasize living harmoniously, which I like to call naturalness.⁹

⁸All thirteen essays are collated and reprinted in *Confronting Silence* under the heading *Nature and Music*, 3-26

⁹Toru Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, trans & ed. Yoshiko Kakudo and Glenn Glasow (Berkeley, CA: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995), 13.

According to this passage, Takemitsu does not espouse the picturesque depiction of natural scenery in music, as typified by pastoral conventions. Moreover, the passage suggests that the human element is indispensable in his concept of nature. Takemitsu strongly disapproves of the numerical manipulation of music such as that which occurs in the twelve-tone technique, serialism, and in post-war 'total serialism'.¹⁰ After experimenting with the twelve-tone and serial techniques in his early works, Takemitsu came to believe that 'constructing sounds through mathematical formulas is trivial'.¹¹ In his 1960 essay, 'A personal approach', Takemitsu writes:

The twelve-tone method of composition may be the result of historical necessity, but it presents some very dangerous aspects. The mathematical and geometric pursuit of sound apparent in the technique is purely an intellectual act. It can result in the same weaknesses as those that arise in any overspecialized aesthetic purity. It carries with it the danger of hardening perceptions, and it is the perceptions that are the basic elements in creativity. Of course we should have the courage to discover new systems and face new methods. But we should not forget that these things must be dealt with by human hands.¹²

For Takemitsu, the mathematical treatment of modernist music shares the same problem as the over-aestheticised pastoral tradition in music: it mechanises the organic nature of human creativity and excludes the so-called 'impurity' of human life, thereby limiting the vast potential of human perception and experience.¹³ To Takemitsu, an artist should 'discover new systems and face new methods', but he should not discover them only for the sake of creating something new or formalising a new conception of art.

¹⁰'Integral serialism or total serialism is the use of series for aspects such as duration, dynamics, and register as well as pitch'. See Arnold Whittall, *The Cambridge Introduction to Serialism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 273.

¹¹Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 14. Takemitsu experimented the serial technique in his early works such as *Music of Tree* (1961), *Ring* (1961) and others.

¹²*Ibid.*, 80.

¹³Takemitsu is not alone in his harsh assessment of modernist music. As Paul Griffiths points out, 'serialism was castigated as mathematical, even anti-human.' See Paul Griffiths, 'Serialism Continued', in *A Concise History of Modern Music: From Debussy to Boulez* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 140-155 at 140.

Like Cage, Takemitsu wanted to liberate sounds from human regulations and release them from the bondage of human expression. He states this desire – which he shared with many twentieth-century composers – in the following way:

I wish to free sounds from the trite rules of music. Rules that are in turn stifled by formulas and calculations. I want to give sounds the freedom to breath. Rather than [being based] on the ideology of self-expression, music should be based on the profound relationship to nature—sometimes gentle, sometimes harsh. When sounds are possessed by ideas instead of having their own identity, music suffers.¹⁴

In this passage, Takemitsu voices once again his disapproval of subjecting sound to mathematical formulation. More importantly, Takemitsu envisions a more egalitarian association between the composer and the sound. In his conception, music should not be a series of sounds organised for the purpose of expressing one's ideas or emotions.¹⁵ This desire to dominate sound reflects our tendency to govern nature for our own ends, reinforcing a hierarchical, master-slave relationship between humanity and sound. Takemitsu further describes this approach as '[moving] sounds around as if you were driving a car'.¹⁶

Significantly, Takemitsu echoes Cage's Zen-inflected aim to free sound from human intention and dominance. Cage famously asserts in 1974: 'I wanted my work to be free of my own likes and dislikes, because I think music should be free of the feelings and ideas of the composer, which bears obvious parallels to Takemitsu's feeling about the appropriation of sounds.'¹⁷ However, while both composers adopt the oriental philosophy of 'non-intentionality' in their compositional practices, their applications of the concept differ greatly. Rather than following Cage's famous assertion – 'let sounds be themselves' – with minimal human intervention or mediation, Takemitsu believes that 'for sounds to come into

¹⁴Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 4.

¹⁵For Takemitsu's reflections on the problems of musical expression, see *ibid.*, 3-4, 12-3, 56-7.

¹⁶The full quotation: 'To move sounds around, as though you were driving a car, is the worst thing that you can do with them.' Quoted in liner notes of 'In an Autumn Garden', Toru Takemitsu, Deutsche Grammophon 3931140, 2002, [CD].

¹⁷Refer to Cage in conversation with Jeff Goldberg (1974), in Richard Kostelanetz, 'His Own Music (to 1970)', in *Conversing with Cage* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1987), 65.

being they must reverberate through the composer'.¹⁸ Takemitsu insists on a collaborative, working relationship between the composer and his sounds, with both as equal subjects; he himself admits, '[b]oth my acceptance and my suspicion of "chance music" stem from this point of view.'¹⁹ Rather than using 'dice procedure' to organise sounds, Takemitsu seeks to collaborate with his sounds. His method is to treat sounds neither as subordinates nor as strangers:

I am not using sounds to compose; rather, I am working with sounds. Sometimes I feel helpless because I have not been able to speak the language of my companions [sounds].²⁰

Although both Cage and Takemitsu approach composition with the concept of 'non-intentionality', their execution of the philosophy in music diverges quite radically. While the former tries to liberate sounds from the burden of human self-expression through self-alienation, the latter attempts to become a co-creator with his sounds. To understand how Takemitsu realises his idea of humanity's co-involvement with nature, the following part will explore his piano concerto *Arc*, the work inspired by the concept of the Japanese promenade garden.

Composer as a Co-creator Gardener

Composed in 1963-6, Takemitsu's *Arc for Piano and Orchestra* incorporates his philosophical outlook on the creative partnership between sound and listener into the dynamics between nature and gardener, and stroller and world. Importantly, the work is the first of Takemitsu's inspired by the concept of the Japanese garden.²¹ *Arc* includes two parts, each consisting of three movements: *Arc Part I: I. Pile* (1963), *II. Solitude* (1966), *III. Your Love and the*

¹⁸Cage's perspective is to '[l]et sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expression of human sentiments' (1957). See John Cage, 'Experimental Music', in *Silence: Lecture and Writings* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 10; Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 14.

¹⁹Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 16.

²⁰Toru Takemitsu, *Takemitsu Toru Chosakushu*, 武満徹著作集 [Toru Takemitsu: Collected Writings] Shuntaro Tanikawa and Takashi Funayama (eds.), (Tokyo, JP: Shinchosha, 2000), Vol. 3, 240.

²¹After this work, Takemitsu subsequently composed several works also inspired by the Japanese Garden, such as *Dorian Horizon* (1966), *A Flock Descends into a Pentagonal Garden* (1977), and *Garden Rain* (1974).

Crossing (1963); and *Arc Part II: Texture* (1964), *Reflection* (1966), *Coda... Shall begin from the end* (1966). In *Arc*, Takemitsu places a human stroller in his musical garden, which is the musician engaged:

In *Arc* for Piano and Orchestra, written in 1963 for Yuji Takahashi as soloist, the stroller is Mr. Takahashi. He has a unique way of walking that resembles limping, which is important in this piece.²²

The multilayered interaction between the garden and the stroller in *Arc Part I* serves to demonstrate Takemitsu's negotiation of the relationship between humanity and nature – the composer and the sound – as autonomous agents. Consequently, my study of *Arc* probes the relationship between the multi-focal orchestration of the garden elements and the solo piano performance of the stroller. This section will conclude with an examination of Takemitsu's portrayal of the cooperative interaction between human, sound, and nature in order to achieve the goal of responsible co-creation.

Generally, there are two categories of Japanese garden. The first is *Kaiyū-shiki-teien*, or the promenade garden, which is designed with a path that leads the itinerant viewer from one carefully composed scene to another. Characterised by winding paths, obscuring fences and oblique bamboos, the promenade garden deploys the concept of *miegakure*, or 'hide-and-reveal'.²³ The other kind is the *Karesansui* garden, or Japanese rock garden, the most famous example being at the Ryōan-ji Temple in Kyoto. These rock gardens often have white sand in place of water, as well as carefully arranged stones. Deliberately organised to present a minimalist and miniature view of the world, the *Karesansui* garden is meant to facilitate meditation. Where the promenade garden encourages the patient and active development of a mutual understanding between the scene and the stroller, the rock garden enables the meditator to attain a state of inward serenity and self-understanding through the open and

Some of these garden-themed works were inspired by existing gardens, some are gardens of Takemitsu's imagination.

²²Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 120.

²³For a more detailed discussion of Japanese gardens, see Masao Hayakawa, *The Garden Art of Japan*, trans. Richard L. Gage (New York, NY; Tokyo, JP: Weatherhill; Heibonsha, 1973).

uncluttered space of the garden. Simulating a typical promenade garden, Takemitsu's *Arc* enacts a peripatetic's journey of revelation and discovery, as the stroller converses with one object after another in the imaginary garden. Takemitsu explains his love for the accessibility, the wandering freedom, and the 'hide-and-reveal' quality of the promenade garden scheme:

I love gardens. They do not reject people. There one can walk freely, pause to view the entire garden, or gaze at a single tree. Plants, rocks and sand show changes, constant change.²⁴

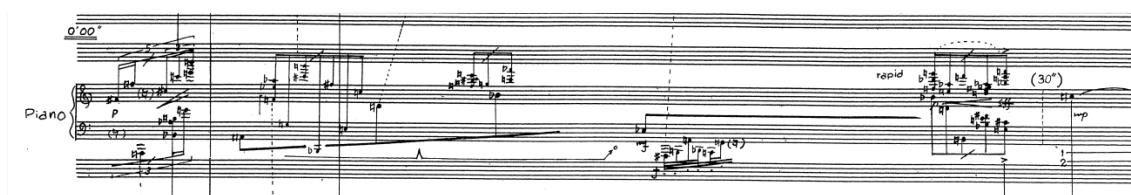
Takemitsu loves the garden because it is where human beings can experience and listen to the constantly changing flow and forms of nature. Importantly, Takemitsu's musical garden emanates a process of co-creation and close listening. In *Arc*, the human element is indispensable, as the stroller, or the piano soloist, comes to represent not only the composer-as-listener but also the whole of the human race. Takemitsu once noted that composing music is similar to designing a garden, as each musical part role-plays a different element in the garden. He states: 'It is the garden that gives the [compositional] ideas form.'²⁵ Conventionally, the garden is appreciated as a spatial expression, while music is traditionally treated as a temporal experience. However, in *Arc*, the garden and the music are embedded together in a common time-space dimension. The orchestra in *Arc* is divided into six groups: four of mixed instruments, one of string and one of brass. Each group represents one of four objects in the garden: grass (G), tree (T), rock (R), and sand (S).²⁶ As Takemitsu himself states, the peripatetic figure – the solo pianist – in his musical promenade garden is important. Like the viewer of a 'handscroll painting', the stroller/solo pianist in *Arc* is given the freedom to 'walk' at his/her own preferred pace and in the direction of his/her own choosing. For instance, unlike the orchestral part representing the garden elements, the piano part is devoid of any bar lines throughout the piece. At the beginning of the piano solo, in Movement I (Example 3.1), Takemitsu indicates the duration for the completion of the first two passages

²⁴Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 95.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 119.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 95-6.

– 30 seconds in this case – but does not actually give the precise time value to each note. In choosing his or her own pace, the pianist emulates the viewer rolling open a handscroll painting, pausing over scenes that he/she likes while moving quickly through others. The flexibility of interpretation is consigned to the pianist's spontaneous interaction with the orchestral garden and the real and imagined habitats of sound, as these are the performance venue, the season, and the audience.



Example 3.1 Piano Part, Takemitsu, *Arc part I*, Movement 1: *Pile*, 6. Reproduced by permission of Editions Salabert, Paris / Hal Leonard MGB

As Takemitsu points out, four tempi are involved in *Arc*: ‘the two tempi for solo instruments [Groups Grass and Tree], the personal tempo for the solo piano, and the conductor’s tempo’.²⁷ The relationship between the four tempi is complex, but the tempo of the stroller-as-viewer is of paramount interest. As the one unfurling the scroll, and unraveling the scenery, the speed at which the piano soloist plays each note affects when the orchestral part comes in, as well as the quality of the interaction between the piano/stroller and the orchestra/garden objects. The human element is clearly indispensable to this interactive dialogue and creative collaboration, the outcome of which changes with different solo performers, as they make different journeys through the garden. While the movement of sounds conveys the changing shades of the garden through sun and rain, day and night, and season after season, the multi-focused spots of the garden, in conjunction with the path of the stroller, create a sense of moving in space – like a viewer moving through an unfolding landscape in a handscroll painting.

²⁷Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 96.

Takemitsu realises the idea of co-creatorship between humanity and nature through the use of indeterminate notations. In *Arc*, the pianist not only decides his own pace of performance, he also selects the order of the group instruments in certain sections. In the two 'cue' signs on page 8 (see Example 3.2), Takemitsu instructs that the 'pianist should give a cue to any instrument of the group' and then 'if [the] pianist have [*sic*] given cue to a[n] instrument of the 1st group, next cue must be given to [...] any instrument of the 4th group.'

Example 3.2 Piano Part, Takemitsu, *Arc part I*, Movement 1: *Pile*, 8. Reproduced by permission of Editions Salabert, Paris / Hal Leonard MGB

The significance of these instructions is manifold. Firstly, by cuing the garden elements, the pianist assumes the role of a conversation starter in his dialogue with nature. Secondly, by endowing the pianist with freedom to select any instrument(s), Takemitsu enables the stroller to project his personal feelings onto an individual garden element or a combination of garden elements, freely and spontaneously. Thirdly and most importantly, the pianist is required to listen carefully and responsibly to every sound of every element before providing his own response. Although Takemitsu employs indeterminate notations, which give the pianist the freedom to decide the performing order, *Arc* is not 'chance music'. He stresses that 'the content of the garden of music is strictly planned in advance' and that there is no chance element involved.²⁸ The prearranged score for the instruments of Groups 1 and 4, following the cued entry (in Examples 3.3 and 3.4), is a clear indication of advanced planning. What *Arc* tries to achieve is a balance between the improvisational liberty of the pianist – to choose which instruments to cue for entry – and the controlled arrangement of the musical score.

²⁸Ibid., 125-6.

Nevertheless, each instrumentalist's autonomy in Groups 1 and 4 is demonstrated in the freedom to choose his/her own tempo in responding to the pianist's cue. The piece is therefore not conceived as merely a personal expression of the stroller/human element, but also as an improvised exchange between the pianist and the 'pre-existing' garden elements. Takemitsu's musical garden embodies a forum of sounds in which human and nature can respond to one another. As Example 3.5 shows, the pianist converses with the rocks, represented by the brass group, at a much slower pace, compared to an earlier, quicker interaction with the grass group (see Examples 3.1 and 3.2). This contrast in tempi evinces the potential for each garden/natural object to elicit a latent trait in the human listener. As Takemitsu imagines it, this idealistic method is only possible in such garden-esque soundscapes, where both humanity and nature can live harmoniously and inspirationally with each other.

As Takemitsu explains, '*Arc* is a musical garden that changes with each performance'.²⁹ For example, in Takahashi's premiere concert in 1963, conducted by Seiji Ozawa, he chose to cue the flute player in the first group and in return, the flautist responded with a rather faster speed.³⁰ However, a completely different atmosphere was generated when pianist Rolf Hind chose, in his 2006 recording, to cue the horn player in the first group and the horn player responded with a slower speed and soft tone colour.³¹ While the former exchange presents an impression of turbulent conversation, the latter gives a feeling of everyday dialogue. The pianist's spontaneous and irreproducible response to the garden and to the objects therein presents an interactive vision of nature that is unique to the moment and to the person. This interaction is not achieved by the repetition or variation of thematic materials between the piano solo and the orchestra parts; rather, this interaction begins with both sides' listening actively, and then continues with the pianist's cueing and the cued instrumentalist's subsequent responses.

²⁹Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 96.

³⁰Toru Takemitsu, *Arc*, in 'Orchestral Space 1966', Yuji Takashi, Victor, NCS-544, 2006, [CD].

³¹Toru Takemitsu, *Arc I*, in 'Toru Takemitsu: Arc; Green', Rolf Hind and London Sinfonietta, London Sinfonietta, SIN CD3, 2011, [CD].

Example 3.3 Group 1 (Grass), Takemitsu, *Arc part I*, Movement 1: *Pile* (Paris, FR: Salabert, 1963), 12. Reproduced by permission of Editions Salabert, Paris / Hal Leonard MGB

— G r o u p 4 —

Alto Flute (in G) [Horn]

10" rapid

15" 20" vibr. poco

possibly fast

Oboe [Percussion]

15" 20" rapid

possibly fast

Bass Clarinet [Celesta]

possibly fast

possibly stacc

Horn [Oboe]

possibly fast

Celesta [Guitar]

10" 2" 4"

5" 7"

3" 5"

Example 3.4 Group 4 (Rock), Takemitsu, *Arc part I*, Movement 1: *Pile*, 13. Reproduced by permission of Editions Salabert, Paris / Hal Leonard MGB

Example 3.5 Piano and Brass (Rock Group), Takemitsu, *Arc part I*, Movement 1: *Pile*, 10. Reproduced by permission of Editions Salabert, Paris / Hal Leonard MGB

In reflecting on *Arc*, Takemitsu reinforces the ‘naturalness’ of the composition as it encourages ‘active listening’ in the musician:

I think music must awaken natural emotion within us, an extremely sensuous process. Music is not merely notes on paper. It begins with an active listening to sound. And the ability to hear different emotions in sound is the essence of composing.³²

In this passage, the composer does not seek to express himself; instead, he is charged with the duty of listening deeply to the insides of sounds. This recalls Takemitsu’s high regard for sound as his companion rather than his tool for his personal expression. Thrown into what is initially an unfamiliar and disorienting garden space, the *Arc* soloist is compelled by an ethical impulse to understand the environs, to tend to its subjects, and to evolve his own subjectivity in turn. The soloist’s extemporaneous reaction, which builds and changes over the course of his stroll through the soundscape, is therefore a powerful articulation of this co-creative process, experience and exchange with the environment. The consequence of this is not only the recognition of human responsibility, but also the revival of the artistically-created world

³²Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 126.

through the musician/stroller's self-awakening. Given Takemitsu's conscientious example, the challenge for any succeeding and innovating composer becomes to inspire the audience to reconsider the natural world itself, and potentially in a more global sense in our modern age – where nature is not necessarily or inextricably bound to the composer's own culture of origin.

3.2 *Prismes* and the Nature of Light

Karen Tanaka's ideas of nature differ radically from those of Takemitsu. Despite the fact that they both foreground nature as a major subject in their music, they differ in their attitude towards the traditional Japanese view of nature and, more particularly, in how they view humanity's relationship with nature. Where the human element is indispensable in Takemitsu's concept of the natural world, humans initially seem to be absent in Tanaka's music. While Takemitsu uses the concept of the Japanese promenade garden to resolve the problem of avant-garde music that distances itself from audiences, Tanaka's concept of nature is not culturally bound, nor is it attached to a particular place.

Tanaka's interest in nature began with an interest in the human perception of certain physical phenomena – particularly, in the first instance, the phenomenon of light, which is thematically evident in her earlier compositions such as *Prismes* (1984) and *Anamorphose* (1986). *Prismes* will be analysed first, not only because it illuminates Tanaka's attitude towards the material inspiring her music, but because prisms serve as a metaphor for her approach to composition – as a medium for revealing something preexisting which is initially concealed from human perception. As her first important composition, *Prismes Pour Orchestre* – composed in 1984 when she was a university student in Japan – portrays the refraction of light through prisms. In her programme note, Tanaka states:

I have attempted to project the various phenomena of light made through a prism onto the world of sound, and to create a sound prism by the use of the various tone colours on [sic] the orchestral palette.³³

In optics, a prism is an instrument used to study the behaviour and the properties of light. The ‘various phenomena of light’ to which Tanaka refers are the refraction and the dispersion of the constitutive colours of the light spectrum after passing through a prism, and their recombination into white light following their passage through a second prism. Unlike a mirror, a prism is not meant to reflect what you see but to reveal what you cannot see. Tanaka’s title *Prismes*, which is the French plural noun for ‘Prisms’, indicates the multiplicity of the whole process.

Where such scientific concepts are sources of inspiration for Tanaka’s compositions, she draws a parallel in her programme note for *Prismes* between the properties of light and sound, associating the colours of light with the distinctive tone colors of instrumental sounds. Mirroring Tanaka’s attempt ‘to create a sound prism by the use of the various tone colours on [sic] the orchestral palette’, the orchestration of *Prismes* – with its meticulous design – is undeniably the focal point of the piece. To achieve its prismatic effect, Tanaka employs a wide range of instruments to extend her choice of instrumental colours. Along with instruments that are commonly used in a symphony orchestra, such as strings, woodwind, brass and percussion, Tanaka also includes a celesta, a piano and two harps in her instrumentation. Tanaka further employs four groups of percussion instruments - ranging from pitched instruments, such as timpani, marimba, glockenspiel and tubular bells, to non-pitched instruments, such as suspended cymbals, gongs, anvil and tom-toms. The most unusual amongst them is an Egyptian percussion instrument, the sistrum.³⁴ This wide range of percussion sounds is used

³³Karen Tanaka, Programme Notes to Karen Tanaka, *Prismes* (1984), *Music Sales Classical* [web page] (1984) <<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/1562/8152>>, accessed 17 Sept. 2015.

³⁴A sistrum is an Egyptian percussion instrument under the category of ‘shaken idiophones with a frame’ in Ertuğrul Sevsay’s book *The Cambridge Guide to Orchestration*. The shape of the sistrum is like a horseshoe with handle. The instrument produces sound by shaking the four to six discs which are mounted on a bar between the horseshoe. See Ertuğrul Sevsay, ‘Percussion Instruments’ in *The Cambridge Guide to Orchestration* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 139-194, at 162.

primarily to decorate the melodic themes of the strings and woodwinds with short, rapid and fragmentary passages.

The process of the decomposition and recomposition of a beam of white light unfolds with the structure of the piece. In the beginning (bars 1-11), Tanaka immediately presents listeners with a full orchestral sound, which blends all of the instrumental groups. This opening sonority can be heard as an undispersed white light, which constitute all colours. At rehearsal number 2 (bar 12), the orchestra 'passes through' the first prism. Each distinct group starts being 'dispersed' from the original full orchestral sonority: the strings appear first (at bar 12), are joined subsequently by the woodwinds (bar 15) and then followed by the brass ensemble (bar 17). At rehearsal number 5, the piece reaches its full dispersion with an orchestral unison (bars 28-29). The difference between the opening gesture and this orchestral unity is conceptually similar to the one between a beam of white light and a rainbow: in both cases all of the colours are present, but only in the latter are they individually visible because they are spatially dispersed. Upon completion of this process, Tanaka selects one group of the orchestra at a time and begins decomposing and recomposing it again, until the end of the piece, when the orchestra 'passes' through the last prism and gets reunited into a single white light 'beam'. By presenting at first a blended 'colour', then a series of different dispersed colours and finally a blended colour again, Tanaka's orchestration is a powerful musical translation of the optical phenomenon inspiring the piece. The following sections will examine aspects of Tanaka's compositional strategy in detail. In particular, I will focus on the main characteristic of this piece: the use of orchestral unison or octave *tutti* to portray the dispersed colours from a white light beam. While it might seem counterintuitive at first to represent the optical dispersion with *tutti*, I demonstrate in my later discussion that by limiting the pitch material of the orchestral instruments to a single pitch class in a climactic point (rehearsal number 5, bars 28-29), Tanaka makes the characteristic colour of each instrumental colour even more audible.

Prismes emphasises the dispersion of the distinctive tonal qualities of each instrument, rather than the blending of them, to create a new orchestral sonority. In the piece, as she moves through the dispersal process, the composer habitually employs small ensembles instead of those with large numbers of instruments. In addition, Tanaka shows a completely different approach to the use of the wind ensemble than that of the string ensemble in this piece. The wind choir is the most heterogeneous group in the orchestra, as compared to the string or brass instruments. The various sound characteristics of the woodwind instruments are due to the member instruments being a mixture of different types of embouchure and sound production, and different forms of vibrating columns in cylindrical or conical shapes.³⁵ These varying sound qualities can cause tuning or sound imbalance between the instruments.³⁶ Consequently, Tanaka's way of using the wind ensemble in this piece is showing the tone colour of each instrument one by one.

In bars 84-92, the musical focus is the woodwind ensemble alone. As seen in Example 3.6, the composer displays the colours of the individual woodwind instruments, and more specifically the different colours of each performer, by adding one voice at a time. Starting with the lowest sound in the wind choir - the first bassoon, playing *pianissimo* in f' - that music is joined by the second and the third bassoon successively, each of which is in the gentle tenor register. The melodic line is then given to the oboes, overlapped by the clarinets. Unlike the three bassoons, which stay in the same register, the register of the oboes and clarinets is expanded. The second and third oboes are scored in the much mellower alto register, in contrast to the higher and more intense register utilised by oboe I. The sound of the clarinets spreads over three octaves, from the deep tones of the bass clarinet to the elegiac low register of the b-flat instruments. The notes are finally taken up by the highest members of the woodwind family, the flutes, with gradually accumulating dynamics from *pp* to *ff*. Where Tanaka has scored each wind instrument in its best and most effective register,

³⁵Ertuğul Sevsay, 'Wind Instruments', in *The Cambridge Guide to Orchestration*, 71-138, at 74.

³⁶*Ibid.*

once the flutes have finally joined the melodic line, the woodwind choir achieves its full range. Each line has similar rhythmic figures, such as tied triplets, and stays in the same register without any big leap. According to Tanaka, the music of *Prismes* is based on two central notes: B^b and E.³⁷ The woodwind ensemble passage described above is part of the process moving from the orchestral B^b *tutti* (bar 55) to E, which is reached by the final entry of the flutes. Once the woodwind instruments have each and all been demonstrated, the colour of the musical passage is augmented by the brightness of the brass and the percussion. As shown in Example 3.6 (Rehearsal Number 21, bars 93-96), the wind ensemble, while accelerating in tempo, is sustained by the vibrancy of the brass in homophonic *tutti*; the brass in turn interlock with the percussion, which play a completely different rhythmic figure.

³⁷Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Prismes*.

The image shows a page of a musical score for Karen Tanaka's *Prismes Pour Orchestra*, measures 83-97. The page is numbered 83 at the top left and 19 in a box at the top center. The score is written for a large orchestra, with staves for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, Euphonium, and Double Bass. The music is in 2/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. The score is marked with 'p' (piano) and 'esp.' (espressivo). The title 'Prismes Pour Orchestra' is written in a small font above the staff for the Flute and Oboe. The page is printed on a white background with black ink.

Example 3.6 Karen Tanaka, *Prismes Pour Orchestra*, bb. 83-97. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1984 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

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Furthermore, Tanaka deliberately contrasts this sonority with the sudden appearance of a wholly different sound - that of the string ensemble. For the entire next section – rehearsal numbers 23-7, bars 100-121 (Example 3.6 and 3.7) – the melody is given to the strings alone, creating a largely uniform and blended instrumental colour (Example 3.7). In contrast to the other groups of orchestral instruments, bowed string instruments obtain an almost homogeneous sound due to their common technique of sound production.³⁸ In this sudden change of ‘colours’ from rich to simple, the melodic line moves around the orchestra, from one section of instruments to another – creating contrasts in tone colours throughout the piece.

Example 3.7 Karen Tanaka, *Prismes Pour Orchestra*, bb. 104-107. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1984 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

Working towards the overall prismatic effect, Tanaka builds up to the climax of the piece through the use of orchestral *tutti* at a single pitch class. At a first glance, Tanaka’s multiplying of a single pitch class through added instruments may seem to contradict her intention of showing the full spectrum of colours in the orchestra. For instance, Ertuğrul Sevsay mentions in his book on orchestration that from an acoustic perspective, ‘the more different instruments are combined in unison, the more brilliance will be lost from the

³⁸Ertuğrul Sevsay, ‘String Instruments’, in *The Cambridge Guide to Orchestration*, 3-70 at 3.

‘colour’, due to the interaction of the harmonics’.³⁹ I would argue precisely the opposite: that Tanaka’s juxtaposition of different instruments playing at the same pitch class signals her emerging interest in the timbre of sound.

At the end of the first section (Example 3.8, bars 50-55), Tanaka demonstrates the distinctive tone quality of the different instruments all sounding a B flat, by accumulating five successive entries (Example 3.8). In bar 51, the first entry is the strings and the vibraphone I. The resulting sound is of powerful and piercing violins supported by a warm bass and the resonant vibraphone playing in tremolo. The second entry in bar 52 is a mixture of instruments from three different groups: four French horns, three cellos and two clarinets. The sound produced is then dominated by the penetrating French horn, with the clarinets playing in a more muted register (Example 3.8). The third entry is a mixture of lower instruments in different groups: the bassoons, the trombones and violas (Example 3.8, bar 53). Once again, the very full sound of the trombones outweighs the other two members. The fourth entry goes to the higher register woodwinds and is sustained by the instruments of the previous bars – only now playing an octave lower (bar 54). The sound range then spreads, from a strong and thick trombone texture to plangent oboes to screeching flutes. From bar 52-4, the collective B-flat notes are accompanied by two harps playing fragmentary melodic figures. The final effect in bar 55 is attained by the entry of the two harps’ sweeping glissandi and by the accented clusters of the piano, making its only and climactic entry. Astonishingly, for the duration of these five bars, only one pitch is used. The composer reduces the range of acoustical information, including pitch and dynamics, but increases the complexity of tonal qualities, thus building to the intense climax of the piece. Looking at the progress of these five bars, there is no distinction between background or foreground, no tension or resolution, no dominating or subordinate sounds; there is instead a vast spectrum of timbres of a single B-flat note across the extended orchestra.

³⁹Ertuğrul Sevsay, ‘Summary and a Further Look at the Scores of the Twentieth Century’ in *The Cambridge Guide to Orchestration*, 594-630 at 596.

Example 3.8 Karen Tanaka, *Prismes Pour Orchestra*, bb. 50-55. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1984 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

Tanaka's resulting climax does not simply allow a new colour for the pitch B-flat; Tanaka rather discovers the tonal quality of each instrument by assigning the same note to each one. Through the use of octave *tutti*, she differentiates the way each instrumental B-flat sounds, not only by its pitch and dynamics, but also by its 'timbre', which is defined as all of the qualities of the sound but pitch and loudness.⁴⁰ Although Tanaka herself does not use the term 'timbre', her juxtaposition of different instruments playing at the same pitch class and loudness signals her emerging interest in the timbre of sound. It is the distinctiveness of each instrument timbre which Tanaka intends to separate out in the last note of orchestral unison. Consequently, the reiteration of the notes at a single pitch class serves to reinforce the expressive quality of the climax, not to impede it. The last sound heard by the listeners, therefore, is the aural realisation of her prismatic metaphor: a glittering spectrum of colours dispersed from a beam of white light.

Accordingly, the idea of prisms as a medium for uncovering the nature of light, which originates beyond human perception, becomes an important metaphor both for Tanaka's compositional philosophy and for her attitude towards science, technology and nature. For Tanaka, the instrumental value of a prism is threefold. Firstly, as mentioned above, it is a scientific instrument used to observe natural phenomena. In other words, it is a device operating between the human and physical worlds, through which the human mind can access and apprehend the workings of nature. This scientific way of engaging with nature, by observation and empirical study, constitutes the foundation of Tanaka's approach to the natural world. A natural phenomenon, according to Tanaka, is something waiting to be uncovered. By this understanding, the natural world represents permanent verities and humankind acts in the role of observer and discoverer of these realities. Consequently, in

⁴⁰The American National Standards Institute definition of 'timbre' is as 'that attribute of sensation in terms of which a listener can judge that two sounds having the same loudness and pitch are dissimilar'. See Thomas D. Rossing, 'Pitch and Timber' in *The Science of Sound* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1990), 109-141 at 125.

Tanaka's portrayal of the natural world, one can discern her maintaining an objective distance from the natural world, and effecting minimal human interaction with it.

The second value of a prism is in its revelatory function. In fact, the natural world is always waiting to be discovered, and so its mysteries may not be immediately apparent. They therefore require a medium to reveal it. What interests Tanaka are the diverse phenomena of light as revealed through a prism, rather than the singular optical phenomenon perceived by the human eye. A prism, in other words, is a human aid for transcending human perceptual limits. For example, a rainbow is a phenomenon that occurs in nature as the refraction of light by water drops; yet without a prism and the knowledge of natural laws acquired through it, we would not know its cause, nor would we be able to identify it as an effect of the refraction of light. This insight strongly influences Tanaka's positive stance towards technology in general, and music technology in particular. Music technology, for Tanaka, is a tool that allows her to access the natural worlds of sound. This explains her constant use of music technology, either in her compositional processes or in the performances of her music, as this chapter demonstrates in the following section.

A third value that Tanaka ascribes to the prism is its role as a medium. The prism, as a median object, produces neither a cause nor an effect; it is an actor in a process but not a final goal in itself. Tanaka takes a prism as her guiding metaphor, precisely because she is conscious of the limitations of human perception and so is aware of the significance of technologies for the human investigation of the world. Yet, at the same time, Tanaka is also aware of the danger of mistaking the medium as an end itself. This awareness of the role of a medium as a means, but not the ultimate goal, is best exemplified in her work *Initium* (1993), which she composed after taking a one-year computer music course at IRCAM. In this work, Tanaka uses a computer to analyse and synthesise sounds, and yet the manipulation of sounds is not her primary goal. The aim of the piece is 'to project the beginning of life onto the orchestral soundspace by listening to sound behaviour which exists in nature yet is waiting

to be unveiled'.⁴¹ This statement demonstrates her awareness of and interest in the eternal world that lies beyond – or in this case before – human perception. This awareness, I argue, is the crucial element that eventually leads her to recognise and engage with environmental issues.

Through *Prismes*, Tanaka appropriates the prismatic metaphor for her broader sound world, and consequently the prism is one of her favourite musical subjects. Its image has served as the inspiration for subsequent works such as *Crystalline* (1988), *Hommage en Cristal* (1991), *Metallic Crystal* (1994-5). The physical properties of the prism – glassy, solid and transparent – have even become the qualities of the sound that she pursues in her compositions. For example, in *Anamorphose* (1986) for piano and orchestra, which was composed just after *Prismes*, she instructs the pianist: '[T]he piano part requires a solid, crystal sound'.⁴² The requirement that a sound be both solid and crystalline recurs in her *Crystalline* for solo piano, where she remarks that 'a glassy, solid sound is required: like a cold, crystal sound sculpture.'⁴³ Most importantly, in the same way that a prism is an instrument used to study the nature of light, Tanaka's imagined sound prism leads her to explore the nature of sound with the prolific spectralist composer, Tristan Murail, in Paris.

3.3 *Initium* and the Nature of Sound

From tone colour to timbre

In 1986, two years after completing *Prismes*, Tanaka moved to Paris to study composition under Tristan Murail, with the aid of a French government scholarship. The move had a profound impact on Tanaka's stylistic development, in that it exposed her to two new

⁴¹Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Initium*.

⁴²Karen Tanaka, Programme Note to Karen Tanaka, *Anamorphose* (1986), *Music Sales Classical* [web page] (1986) <<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/1562/8150>>, accessed 05 Sept. 2015.

⁴³Karen Tanaka, Programme Notes to Karen Tanaka, *Crystalline* (1988), *Music Sales Classical* [web page] (1988) <<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/1562/11273>>, accessed 17 Sept. 2015.

influences: the aesthetics and techniques of spectral music and the latest music technology at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM). Tanaka's teacher, Murail, was among the founders of spectral music and is renowned for composing using sound spectrum analysis, which examines the relative amplitudes of the different frequencies present in a sound. Training with Murail had a significant impact on both Tanaka's compositional language and her approach to sound. Importantly, the scientific analysis of sound spectra broadened Tanaka's interest from 'the various phenomena of light' to the objective understanding of the physical phenomena of sound. The second influence came from the opportunity to immerse herself in the latest music technology at IRCAM. In 1991-2, after five years in France, Tanaka took a computer music course and worked as an intern at IRCAM, where she experimented with the IRCAM Signal Processing Workstation (ISPW) and the ProTools programme on Macintosh computers.⁴⁴ Her access to these facilities, which would have been impossible outside sound-research institutions in the early 1990s, greatly influenced her work between 1992 and 1999, during which time she used spectral analysis to compose music and employed audio technology such as microphones, amplifiers, loudspeakers, digital reverb and mixing tables in the execution of her music.

We might see this period as continuing conceptually from her previous works: the use of prisms as instruments for discovering light is paralleled by the use of music technology for discovering the nature of sound. This section introduces some important features of spectral music, showing how the techniques and aesthetics of spectral music, and the entire experience of interning in IRCAM, influenced Tanaka's compositional mindset and her concept of nature. The interest of spectral musicians in the way sound is perceived resonates with the themes of human perception and its limitations that Tanaka explores in her first works. It therefore followed naturally for her, during her stay at IRCAM, to investigate the alternative potential of the techniques employed by spectralist composers to study and manipulate the features

⁴⁴Karen Tanaka, Programme Notes to Karen Tanaka, *Metallic Crystal* (1995), *Music Sales Classical* [web page] (1995) <<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/8155>>, accessed 17 Sept. 2015.

of sounds. The pieces composed during her stay at IRCAM demonstrate her strengthening interest in a science-based understanding of natural phenomena. Furthermore, in what constitutes an innovation for the spectral music field, she incorporates these techniques and concepts into her composition of pieces inspired by ecological themes. To establish the terminology and the techniques that Tanaka employs, the following section provides a basic introduction to spectral music.

Spectral music and the analysis of the sound spectrum

Spectral music originated in France in the early 1970s. The term, coined by French composer and philosopher Hugues Dufourt in 1979, refers to a set of compositional techniques that utilise the acoustic properties of sound – sound spectra and overtone series (or partials) – as their compositional material.⁴⁵ In order to understand the acoustic properties of sound, spectral composers used computers to perform sound spectrum analysis; yet, the reason for incorporating sound spectrum analysis into their compositions was not to push musical composition into the realm of numbers and calculations. The primary goal of these composers was to connect with listeners' aural perception. As such, the spectral movement started as a reaction to the avant-garde tradition in post-war Europe, who based their music on 'abstract combinations on paper', such as the serialist method.⁴⁶ This way of composing music was criticised by both Murail and Gérard Grisey – another of the founders of spectral music – as being disengaged from the listeners' aural perception.⁴⁷ Conversely, spectral music took the

⁴⁵Julian Anderson, 'Spectral Music', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* [online database] <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50982>>, accessed 17 Sept. 2015; The term 'partial' is used for the sound whose overtones do not necessarily from an integer multiple of the fundamental frequency, such as a bell sound. See Thomas D. Rossing, *The Science of Sound* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1990), 53-62 at 56-7.

⁴⁶Tristan Murail, 'After-thoughts', *Contemporary Music Review*, 24 /2-3 (2005), 269–272, at 270.

⁴⁷Murail, 'After-thoughts', 270; Gérard Grisey and Joshua Fineberg, 'Did you say spectral?', *Contemporary Music Review*, 19 /3 (2000), 1–3, at 1.

acoustic qualities of sound itself as its guiding principle, often using the analysis of sound spectra as its creative starting point.⁴⁸

The idea behind sound spectral analysis, or spectrogram analysis, is both powerful and significant, because it shows not only the structure of a sound but also how the human auditory mechanism perceives a sound. When a sound hits the eardrum, the ear responds to the sound wave and sends a coded representation to the brain that is analogous to spectral analysis.⁴⁹ Sound spectral analysis is therefore a visual representation of how the ear perceives sounds, and more specifically, the timbre of sounds. In this regard, sound spectrum analysis is crucial to spectral composers, as their ultimate goal is to engage the listener's ear. Since sound spectral analysis shows the structure of sound and gives information about how the human auditory system perceives sound, spectral music is regarded as the meeting point of acoustical and psycho-acoustical aspects of music.⁵⁰

The aesthetics and the practice of spectral music are significant to Tanaka's developing compositional process. First of all, with the acquired knowledge of sound spectrum analysis, Tanaka's attempt to create an imaginary sound prism in her *Prismes* found empirical grounding. Indeed, the idea of sound spectrum analysis is analogous to deconstructing white light by means of a prism. Since sound and light are both waves, they are both characterised by frequency, wavelength and amplitude. For light, frequency corresponds to colour and amplitude to intensity, whereas for sound these correspond to pitch and loudness respectively. Just as a prism can split a beam of white light into its component frequencies and amplitudes, so can a sound be divided into its constituent frequencies and amplitudes, by using spectrum analysis.⁵¹ A commonly used computer algorithm for performing sound spectrum analysis is called Fast Fourier Transformation (FFT). Therefore, FFT assumes the role of a 'sound

⁴⁸Anderson, 'Spectral Music'.

⁴⁹William A. Sethares, 'The Science of Sound', in *Tuning, Timbre, Spectrum, Scale* (London, UK: Springer, 2005), at 16; Daniel Pressnitzer and Stephen McAdams, 'Acoustics, Psychoacoustics and Spectral Music', *Contemporary Music Review*, 19 /2 (2000), 33–59, at 43.

⁵⁰Joshua Fineberg, 'Spectral Music', *Contemporary Music Review*, 19 /2 (2000), 1–5, at 2; Pressnitzer and McAdams, 'Acoustics, Psychoacoustics and Spectral Music', 33.

⁵¹Sethares, 'The Science of Sound', 13.

prism'.⁵² Through its calculations, Tanaka accesses the physical properties of sound and can turn her imaginary sound prism into an actual musical phenomenon.

Another representation of a sound is a sound 'envelope'. An envelope of sound refers to 'the overall shape of the waveform' of a sound,⁵³ representing amplitude change over time'.⁵⁴ As Figure 3.1 shows, the envelope is characterised by its attack; its sustain, or steady state; and its decay. The 'attack' stage is the beginning of the sound, whence silence (0 db) grows to its peak, at point 2 on the time line. In the present example, during the 'sustain' stage, the intensity slightly lowers until reaching the 'decay' stage, where it drops much faster until it fades into the 0 db silence level at time point 4.⁵⁵ Apart from their own sound spectra, different instrumental sounds also have their own characteristic envelope. For instance, the envelope of a violin note features a loud attack due to the bow touching the string, and a very short decay as the string almost completely stops vibrating as soon as the bow ceases its contact.⁵⁶

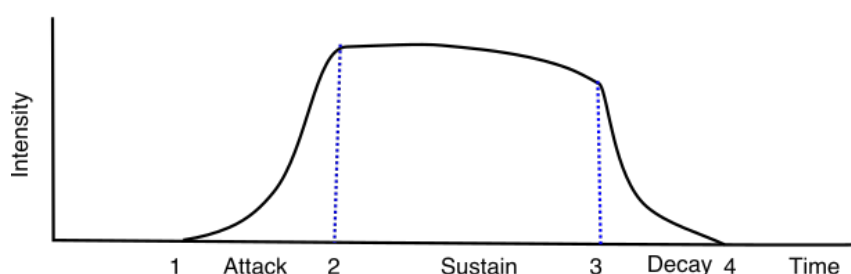


Figure 3.1 An Envelope of a Sound.

⁵²Sethares, 'The Science of Sound', 13.

⁵³A 'waveform' is defined by the *OED* as a term in Physics referring to 'the curve showing the shape of a wave at a given time'. 'Waveform, n.', *OED Online*. Oxford University Press [online database] (2015) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/226387?redirectedFrom=waveform%5C#eid>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

⁵⁴'Temporal Attributes', in E. Bruce Goldstein (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Perception* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2010), 1003.

⁵⁵Sven E Carlsson, 'Robert L. Mott's Nine Components of Sound', *FilmSound.org* [web page] <<http://filmsound.org/articles/ninecomponents/9components.htm>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

⁵⁶Bernard Richardson, 'The Physics of the Violin', in Robin Stowell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), at 35-36.

The perceived timbre of a sound is mostly determined by its spectrum – that is, the frequencies and the relative intensities of its partials, and its envelope.⁵⁷ Timbre is therefore a crucial concept to spectralist composers such as Murail and Grisey, because it helps to create a more holistic view of the phenomena of sound than that which is supplied by analysing pitch and loudness alone. Accordingly, the term ‘timbre’ in spectral music is much more strictly defined than in traditional usage, and is determined by looking at a sound’s spectrum, envelope and behaviour through time, rather than at the subjective semantic description of tone colour.

The impact of spectralist music on Tanaka

As previously suggested, Tanaka’s compositional style was greatly influenced by spectralist practices and by the opportunity to immerse herself in the most up-to-date music technology at IRCAM. The period from 1986 to 1992 – during which Tanaka went from studying with Murail to working as an intern in IRCAM – was key for her, as she gained new expertise about music technology and developed a wholly new attitude towards composition over these years. Tanaka’s experimentation with spectralist techniques brought changes to the terms that she used, and still uses, in describing her own compositions. These changes signal the crucial evolution in her perception of sound and timbre. A comparison of *Prismes* to the works composed immediately following her studies with Murail – works such as *Anamorphose* (1986) and *Crystalline* (1988) – reveals substantial differences in the way that Tanaka describes the basic elements of her compositions. *Anamorphose* for piano and orchestra, which won the Gaudeamus Prize in 1987, is Tanaka’s first major work completed after moving to Paris.⁵⁸ Tanaka gives the following explanation of the title *Anamorphose*:

⁵⁷Brian C. J. Moore, ‘Loudness, Pitch and Timbre’, in E. Bruce Goldstein (ed.), *The Blackwell Handbook of Sensation and Perception* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), at 429–31. Rossing, ‘Pitch and Timbre’, 125–7.

⁵⁸Gaudeamus Prize is an annual international compositional award given to a promising young composer who has successfully competed in the Gaudeamus Music Week. The prize was originally awarded by the Gaudeamus Foundation, a Dutch organization founded in 1945 by A. F. Maas. Since 2008, the foundation

“Anamorphose” means a distorted figuration in the technical terminology of optics. In *Anamorphose* I have tried to compose distorted timbre as well as structure throughout the whole piece.⁵⁹ In the preface to her score, Tanaka further explains that the distorted sounds of the piece are a representation of optical distortions in ‘the world of sound’.⁶⁰ In these statements, the parallel between optical and aural phenomena, which occurs in *Prismes*, recurs. Where *Prismes* reveals the component colours of light through a prism, which are usually indiscernible by the human eye, *Anamorphose*, on the other hand, depicts the optical illusions caused by the distortion of images. Both works are concerned with the limits of human perception, but are at opposite poles. *Prismes* focuses on the idea of discovery, whereas *Anamorphose* plays with concealment through distortion. Despite the similarity of the theme of visual perception in these two works, the visual/aural analogies are dissimilar. In *Prismes*, Tanaka attempts to portray the colours of light by using ‘the various tone colours’.⁶¹ In *Anamorphose*, however, she utilises an effect of ‘distorted timbre’ to represent ‘a distorted figuration’.⁶²

Tanaka’s shift from ‘tone colours’ to ‘timbre’ in *Anamorphose* is significant for two reasons. First, the analysis of the sound spectrum, learned from spectral music, permits her to use the concept of ‘timbre’ in the specialised manner of spectralist composers. As explained, for spectral music, the timbre of a sound means the complex combination of the relative strength of harmonics, its envelope and its behaviour in time. In *Prismes*, Tanaka’s juxtaposition of different instruments with the same pitch and volume already shows her attentiveness to differentiating the tone colours of individual instruments. It is by performing sound spectrum analysis that she then acquires the knowledge of timbre in its acoustic and psychoacoustic sense, where as she states: ‘I try to perceive the cycle of all the notes and

has been incorporated into the Muziek Centrum Nederland (MCN) organisation. Tanaka’s *Anamorphose* was awarded the Gaudeamus Prize in 1987, a year after she relocated to France. Unsuk Chin’s *Spektra for Three Celli* was awarded the prize in 1985.

⁵⁹Tanaka, Programme Note to *Anamorphose*.

⁶⁰Karen Tanaka, Preface to Karen Tanaka, *Anamorphose* (London, UK: Chester Music, 1986).

⁶¹Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Prismes*.

⁶²Tanaka, Preface to *Anamorphose*.

[to] comprehend their figure and system'.⁶³ Looking at the acoustic properties of a sound, or in Murail's words, 'the exploration of the *interior* [my italics] of sounds' influences Tanaka's change of terminology.⁶⁴ Through spectral analysis, Tanaka's tone colours are given empirical grounding, where the term 'timbre' is employed with the precision and weight of meaning derived from spectral music. Notably, what Tanaka refers to in her programme note is not simply 'timbre' but 'distorted timbre'; she intends to use distorted timbre to represent the deformed images, or 'anamorphoses'. Nevertheless, Tanaka's word 'distorted' is not subjective but stems from her previous knowledge of the scientific analysis of sound. Only after fully comprehending a sound and looking carefully at its graphic representation does Tanaka feel confident enough to manipulate and 'distort' it.

The second significant change in Tanaka's terminology is that her important pitch materials, B flat and E in her earlier works, no longer function as 'notes' but as 'axes'. While in her programme note for *Prismes*, Tanaka states, 'B flat and E serve as central notes throughout the work',⁶⁵ in *Crystalline* (1988) she writes that 'B flat and E are used as axes throughout the work'.⁶⁶ *Crystalline* for solo piano was composed after *Anamorphose*. Where in this piece, Tanaka no longer sees her essential compositional materials as notes, this suggests the influence of her teacher, Murail. In his article 'Spectres et lutins' (1982), translated as 'Spectra and Sprites' (1984), Murail questions the terminology used by composers and asks, 'why do we always have to speak of music in terms of notes?'⁶⁷ Murail further remarks, as part of his criticism of 12-tone serialist method:

There is a conceptual error from the very beginning: a composer does not work with 12 notes, x rhythmic figures, x dynamic markings, all infinitely permutable; he works with sound and time.⁶⁸

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Tristan Murail, 'Scelsi and L'Itinéraire: The Exploration of Sound', *Contemporary Music Review*, 24 /2-3 (2005), 181–185, at 183.

⁶⁵Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Prismes*.

⁶⁶Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Crystalline*.

⁶⁷Tristan Murail, 'Spectra and Sprites', *Contemporary Music Review*, 24 /2-3 (2005), 137–147, 137.

⁶⁸Ibid., 137.

Murail's articulation of 'sound and time' is derived from viewing sound as 'the combination of pure frequencies' that evolves in time.⁶⁹ In Joshua Fineberg's article 'Guide to the Basic Concepts and Techniques of Spectral Music', Fineberg further elaborates on the problem of considering sounds as only notes.⁷⁰ As an example, he points out that the semitone between middle C and D Flat is different from the semitone between the C and D Flat three registers higher, but further explains that if sounds are viewed as notes alone, this difference cannot be distinguished.⁷¹

Tanaka's own elaboration on Fineberg's point of view was to see her chosen pitch not merely as a 'sound' but as an 'axis'. Referring to the two important pitches of her compositions, B flat and E, as 'axes', immediately suggests a scientific framework for the pieces, according to which Tanaka visualises her musical structures as coordinate axes in geometry. By employing the pitches B flat and E as the system of reference for the piece, Tanaka does not adhere to the hierarchical relationships of tonal music, nor does she attribute equal importance to all the sounds, as in serialism. Her musical axes are abstract lines, but are simultaneously substantial and practical tools for the visualisation, measurement and coordination of musical movement.

The period after completing *Crystalline* in 1991-2, was when Tanaka took part in a composition and computer music course in IRCAM, experimenting with new approaches using the latest music technology. *Initium* for orchestra and live electronics, composed in 1993, was the outcome of this experience of sonic exploration. In the programme note to *Initium*, Tanaka remarks on the essential role that computers played in the process of composition, as it involved a new form of recognition:

Prior to composing 'Initium', I spent two years researching new approaches to composition with the latest computer technologies at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM)

⁶⁹Murail, 'Spectra and Sprites', 138.

⁷⁰Joshua Fineberg, 'Guide to the Basic Concepts and Techniques of Spectral Music', *Contemporary Music Review*, 19 /2 (2000), 81-113, at 81-2.

⁷¹Ibid., 82.

in Paris. I came away from this experience with the awareness that the computer is an integral part of compositional process for analyzing, synthesizing and understanding musical sound, and organizing musical structure. In 'Initium' I used computers to examine and organize spectra for compositional purposes.⁷²

In this statement, Tanaka's attitude towards the role of computers in musical composition can be related to the idea of a prism as an instrument for studying light reaffirming the importance of the medium in the compositional process. Tanaka further explains both the meaning of the title *Initium* and her goal for the piece:

Initium, in Latin, has several meanings. It would be most appropriate in this case to be translated as 'beginning'. My goal for this piece was to project the beginning of life onto the orchestral soundspace by listening to sound behaviour which exists in nature yet is waiting to be unveiled.⁷³

Arguably, Tanaka's focus on the concept of 'beginning' mirrors the new technological phase into which she had entered, and her expressed goal to map the sounds of nature onto 'the orchestral soundspace' projects her newfound interest in observing sounds in their own context. Indeed, Tanaka's note signals her own new 'beginning', which occurs straight after her experience in IRCAM and in several different ways. Firstly, as she indicates, this notion of starting anew marks a new phase of her compositional style. After *Initium*, Tanaka went on to employ music technology such as a digital reverb and a mixing table in most of her works for the next seven years. Secondly, at IRCAM, she not only experimented with the latest music technology, she experienced the advent of the digitalisation of everyday life and its accompanying changes to the human sense of time and space. Tanaka remarks in the same programme note: 'I felt that the time was rapidly changing as I encountered emails and Internet in the early 90s in IRCAM in Paris.'⁷⁴ The most revealing statement is her goal for *Initium*: 'to project the beginning of life onto the orchestral soundspace by listening to sound behaviour which exists in nature yet is waiting to be unveiled.' Remarkably, Tanaka

⁷²Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Initium*.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

associates ‘the beginning of life’ with the behaviour of sound. It seems that, after studying the physical properties of a sound – namely, its spectrum and envelope and its beginning, middle and end – Tanaka sees a resemblance between the nature of life and the nature of sound. For her, it seems, the process of a sound – its rise and fall, its origin and its end, its evolution and its diminution – reminds her of the realities of life itself. Most importantly, her stated method of ‘listening to sound behaviour which exists in nature’ signals a change in the environment in which she plans to study sounds. In fact her subsequent studies on sound are not restricted to a sound laboratory, such as that at IRCAM, but extend to include the natural world. This new recognition prompts her to observe the sound behaviour of the ‘echo’ in a canyon, which results in the piece *Echo Canyon*, her first piece inspired by a natural landscape.

3.4 *Echo Canyon* and ‘the Planet Earth’

Composed in 1995, *Echo Canyon* is based on Tanaka’s memory of visiting Bryce Canyon in the summer of 1993. It is the first of her works to draw inspiration directly from a specific location and landscape, and in her programme notes she recalls her impressions vividly:

The title ‘Echo Canyon’ is inspired by the Bryce Canyon in Utah, which I visited during the summer of 1993. There the red and orange rocks change tint according to the sunlight and the season. One feels transported, as if on another planet. The sound of echoes through the canyon remains deeply engraved into my mind. Time passes slowly there, one could even sense the rotation of the planet Earth. ‘Echo Canyon’ was composed based on my memories of this magical prehistoric territory.⁷⁵

Tanaka’s account of her reaction to the canyon demonstrates her heightened awareness of the reflection of light and its changing colours, which recalls her long-standing interest in the nature of light. The rocks’ changing shades of orange are caused by the sunlight’s varying angle on them throughout the course of the day. As described, Tanaka’s experience

⁷⁵Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Metallic Crystal*.

of Bryce Canyon is not only visual but aural, and ‘the echo of sounds’, leaving a profound imprint on her memory, are reminiscent of her imperative to ‘liste[n] to [natural] sound behaviour’.⁷⁶ Geologically, Bryce Canyon is in fact not a canyon but a set of horseshoe-shaped natural amphitheatres, making it an apt natural sound laboratory for Tanaka. The echo that Tanaka observes results from the reflection of sound from the canyon wall. Significantly, the change of location for Tanaka’s observation, from a sound laboratory to a real-world natural environment, has the effect of making her recognise the reality of ‘Earth’ and her personal connection to it. This newfound awareness brings her a surreal and magical feeling of having been ‘transported’ to ‘another planet’, making Tanaka no longer just an observer of nature but one who is also emotionally influenced by her own discoveries.

In the following section, I analyse how Tanaka uses the characteristic musical notations in spectralist music to control the timbre of a sound, and how the ‘sounds of echoes’ are conveyed in *Echo Canyon*. I further discuss Tanaka’s use of audio technology in this piece and the questions it raises about the performance of music. The final section explores how Tanaka’s recognition of the planet Earth leads her to engage with environmental issues, rather than looking at a single natural or musical phenomenon in isolation, establishing the point at which she departs from her spectralist instruction.

Echo Canyon is an instrumental, small-ensemble piece scored for 14 players: flute/alto flute, oboe/English horn, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, percussion as two sets of crotales and two vibraphones, two violins, viola, cello and double bass.⁷⁷ The compositional language of *Echo Canyon*, including its musical notation, is greatly influenced by spectral music. Over its nine minutes, the piece demonstrates that Tanaka’s spectralist understanding of the acoustic properties of a sound continues to influence her approach to timbre and performance. She looks at each note as an individual acoustical phenomenon, carefully

⁷⁶Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Initium*.

⁷⁷Music From Japan, ‘Echo Canyon’, *Music From Japan Works Information* <<http://www.musicfromjapan.org/resources/m400w7.htm>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015, This piece was commissioned by the Shirakawa Hall in Nagoya, Japan and was premiered by NHK Radio Chamber Orchestra at Shirakawa Hall in 1995. Its European début was performed by the Matrix Ensemble in London in 1997.

considering its spectrum and envelope. When examining her performance instructions and the gestural language of the music's opening, this approach becomes clear. Figure 3.2 shows Tanaka's performance instructions.

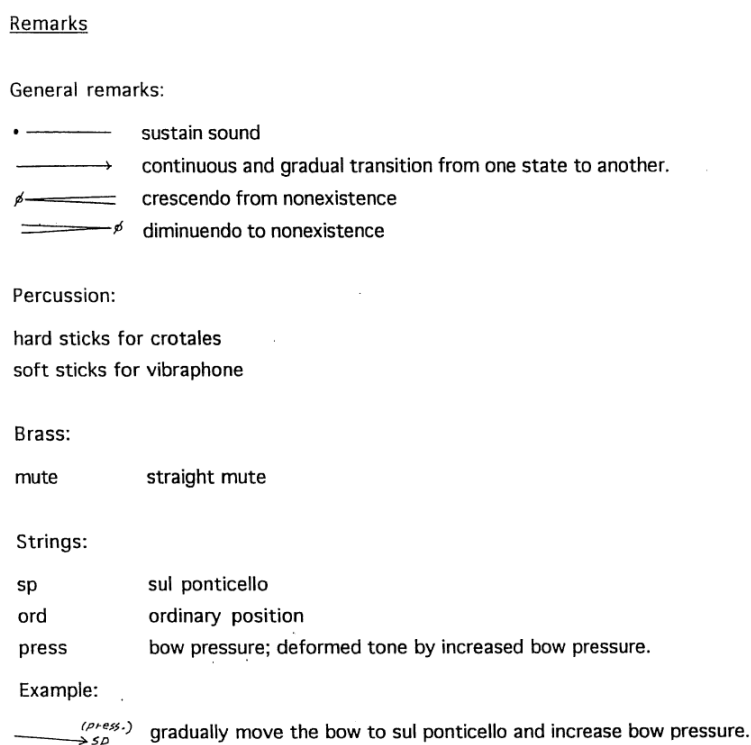


Figure 3.2 Karen Tanaka, Performance Instructions, *Echo Canyon*. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1995 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

Tanaka's performance instructions demonstrate how she controls the timbre of a sound – its envelope and its partials – in this piece, drawing the performers' attention to the transformation of timbre and their role in creating it. The 'general remarks' indicate that, to achieve the aural outcomes she desires, Tanaka manages the envelope of a sound by giving instructions on how the sound should 'start, sustain and decay'. For example, the first two give two different ways of sustaining a sound. The first symbol, a horizontal line, indicates simply a sound sustained by playing instruments in their 'normal' fashion. For the second symbol, Tanaka indicates that the sound should be held in a 'continuous and gradual transition

from one state to another’ – a technique used to change a string instrument’s bow position, such as gradually moving from *sul ponticello*, bowing close to the bridge, to *sul normale*, the ordinary bowing position – or vice versa. The change of bow position is sometimes combined with an increase in bow pressure, which is marked as ‘press’ in the example Tanaka gives for the string’s performance.

The third and fourth symbols and their associated remarks indicate, respectively, how sounds should be articulated and completed. In other words, in this piece, there are two ways of starting a sound: ‘crescendo from nonexistence’, and the characteristic attack of the individual instrument. Similarly, there are also two ways of finishing a sound: ‘decrescendo to nonexistence’, and the characteristic decay of the instrumental sound. The term ‘nonexistence’ is represented by the symbol ‘ø’ in the score, while the performance instructions for the strings, signalled by ‘*sp*’ and ‘*ord*’, influence the relative strength of partials presented in a sound. For example, bowing in the *ponticello* region increases many higher partials, resulting in the thin, nasal, and ‘glassy’ sound that Tanaka desires. At the extreme, the fundamental pitch will be nearly or completely suppressed, producing a very different spectrum, with the first overtone acting as the new fundamental.⁷⁸ These remarks and instructions allow Tanaka to demonstrate effectively the timbral transformation of a sound in time.

Mirroring the acoustic phenomenon of natural echoes, Tanaka’s presentation of ‘the original sound’ in this piece always starts from ‘nonexistence’; and ‘the sound of echo’ always starts from a direct attack, as the phenomenon of the echo itself is the reflection of a preexisting sound. Inevitably, the echoes decay into ‘nonexistence’. Example 3.9 demonstrates how Tanaka’s ‘echo’ is realised in her score. The *f*’ by vibraphone I in bar 2 acts as the original sound, and the *f*” by vibraphone II in bar 3 acts as the echo. The original sound, the vibraphone I *f*’, starts from nonexistence or ‘ø’, then sustains its sound for eleven bars by playing *tremolo in crescendo*, and finally ends itself with a diminuendo. By contrast,

⁷⁸Patricia Strange and Allen Strange, ‘Bowing’, in *The Contemporary Violin: Extended Performance Techniques* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 1-55, at 3.

the sound of the vibraphone II f' starts with its normal attack in bar 3 in pp, and decays into nonexistence 'ø' in bar 12.

Example 3.9 Karen Tanaka, *Echo Canyon*, bb. 1-13, Percussion Part. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1995 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

It must be noted here that the notational marks used in the piece were not invented by Tanaka but were adopted from the field of spectral music. Figure 3.3 shows a comparison of the notational explanations in the scores of Tanaka's *Echo Canyon* and Murail's *Désintégrations* (1982), revealing that all Tanaka's symbols and remarks can be found in Murail's. For instance, the symbol of 'ø', which is the first in Murail's score, indicates either a very weak attack or non-attack. Tanaka then uses 'ø' to indicate that the sound should start as if from 'nonexistence', with similar meaning and usage to Murail. Furthermore, their instructions to

the strings feature a strong attack and a short decay.⁷⁹ Tanaka thus instructs the viola to start the sound from an almost inaudible attack, which can fully express her marking of *lontano* (see Example 3.10). From bars 2-6, the f' moves between different bowing positions and bow pressures. In bar 2, the f' is played by moving from a standard bowing position to a position close to the bridge (*sul ponticello*), coupled with gradually increasing bow pressure and amplitude. In bars 3-4, the sound slowly softens as the pressure of the bow is gradually released, and the bow is returned to its original position. Once the original bowing position has been resumed, the sound continues to increase in volume in bar 5. Then again, from the third beat of bar 5, the viola f' starts moving to the bridge, but this time without increasing bow pressure. Finally, this very particular sound gradually diminishes and decays into 'nonexistence' in bar 6. Tanaka has therefore started the piece by presenting the timbre of the sound of a viola f', continuously changing in time, by carefully manipulating its spectrum and envelope – an effect reminiscent of spectral musicians' belief that 'music is ultimately sound evolving in time'.⁸⁰

In addition to this musical notation system, Tanaka's *Echo Canyon* employs the idea of instrumental, or orchestral synthesis, which derives from spectral music. An instrumental synthesis refers to a method of orchestration which takes a sound spectrum as a model and seeks to simultaneously break it down and reproduce it, using a range of orchestral instruments; it is one of the most influential techniques of spectral music, and has therefore helped to shape Tanaka's compositional practice.⁸¹

As one of the main features of spectral music, the technique of instrumental synthesis not only exemplifies the spectralist composers' idea of taking sound itself as a model and a subject; it also embodies their philosophy about the 'composer-as-an-observer-of-sound'. As Murail puts it: 'Musical notation no longer exists as a given nor as a point of departure; it

⁷⁹Jürgen Meyer, 'Tonal Characteristics of Musical Instruments', in Uwe Hansen (ed.), *Acoustics and the Performance of Music* (New York, NY: Springer New York, 2009), 85-95.

⁸⁰Fineberg, 'Spectral Music', at 2.

⁸¹Anderson, 'Spectral Music'; For a detailed discussion on the instrumental synthesis of an instrument sound, see Joshua Fineberg, 'Musical Examples', *Contemporary Music Review*, 19 /2 (2000), 115-134.

The image displays two systems of a musical score for strings, specifically measures 1-8. The top system is marked with a 4/4 time signature and a tempo of '♩ (♩=50) lontano'. It includes staves for Violin I (VI.1), Violin II (VI.2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The bottom system continues the score with measures 5 through 8. The notation includes various dynamics such as *pp*, *mf*, *f*, *dim.*, and *cresc.*, along with performance instructions like 'poco a poco cresc.' and 'ord.'. The score is written in a standard musical notation style with clefs, notes, and rests.

Example 3.10 Karen Tanaka, *Echo Canyon*, bb. 1-8, Strings Part. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1995 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

only serves as the end point of compositional process and to transcribe the results obtained for the observer.⁸² One must bear in mind that spectralist music originated as a reaction against the serialist method which prevailed in post-war Europe. Accordingly, Murail reminds us that music does not come from designing an abstract 12-tone musical row or musical idea on paper, but from the observation of the ‘interior of sounds’, as analysed by computer technology.⁸³ Importantly, Murail’s statement reveals the guiding principle of spectral music: that a musical composition does not come from an abstract idea but from a concrete, genuine understanding of the scientific and physical aspects of sound itself. In this sense, the role of composer is not that of an inventor but that of an observer of sounds. Computer technology, as manifested in a sonogram analysis, is a tool that allows composers to access the nature of sounds – their components and their behaviours in time. A musical score, according to the spectralist viewpoint, is a record of a composer’s sonic observation. It is this notion

⁸²Murail, ‘Spectra and Sprites’, 139.

⁸³Murail, ‘Scelsi and L’Itinéraire’, 183.

of composer-as-observer that influenced Tanaka profoundly, both in terms of her vision of what it is to be a composer, and in her compositional relationship with the natural world. The natural world, for Tanaka, is imbued with phenomena ‘which [exist] in nature yet [are] waiting to be unveiled’.⁸⁴ The natural world is beyond human intervention, and Tanaka’s engagement with this pre-existing world happens by uncovering it and explaining its inner workings, in as objective and accurate a manner as possible.

Tanaka employs orchestral synthesis at the beginning of *Echo Canyon*. The first note, the viola f’, can be heard as the fundamental throughout the first section. Consequently, as Example 3.11 shows, the second entry – f’ played by vibraphone I in bar 2 – and the third entry – f’ by cello in bar 3 – both duplicate the fundamental. The fourth entry – f’’ by vibraphone II in bar 3 – acts as the first overtone, or the second partial or harmonic, which is amplified by the first viola f’ moving to the *sul ponticello* position, emphasising the higher partial. The fifth entry – e^b’’ by violin I – features the seventh partial, and the sixth entry – bb’’’ by the second violin – is the eleventh partial. Remarkably, the first note, still on the viola, undergoes timbral change as it swings between the now-strengthened higher harmonics and its normal relative harmonic strength, due to the constant change of the bowing position. Yet while most of the techniques that Tanaka employs to organise and manipulate the timbre of a sound – such as changing the bow contact position and the bow pressure or using instrumental synthesis – can be found in the music of Tanaka’s spectralist instructors, what makes this piece distinctive is the way that the audio technology is employed in its performance.

Echo and Reverberation

The unique effect of Tanaka’s *Echo Canyon* is achieved through a combination of orchestration and technological manipulation. ‘The sound of echoes’, the theme of this piece, first occurs within percussion I and II and then moves between percussion and strings. That is,

⁸⁴Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Initium*.

Perc.1
 Cro.
 Vib.
 Perc.2
 Cro.
 Vib.
 4/4 (♩ = 50) *lontano*
 3
 VI.1
 VI.2
 Vla.
 Vc.
 Cb.

poco a poco cresc.
pp sempre
pp sempre (echo)
pp
ord.
poco a poco cresc.
pp
mf
f dim.
pp
poco a
dim.
pp
poco

Example 3.11 Tanaka, *Echo Canyon*, bb. 1-4. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1995 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

the percussion groups play the role of the original sound and the string ensemble acts as their echoes. As Example 3.12 shows, the crotale e^b in bar 14 is followed by e^b in the second violin one octave higher, which is also the second partial of the pitch e^b . The crotale in percussion I, c , in bar 17, is then followed by the first violin c in the same bar. This occurs again later in bar 23.

Example 3.12 Tanaka, *Echo Canyon*, bb. 14-18. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1995 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

For the string ensemble to achieve the effect of the ‘natural echoes’, which the composer recalls from Bryce Canyon, Tanaka employs musical technologies to prolong the reverberation time and enhance the effect of ‘echo’ in the group. The score has the following instructions:

In order to make reverberation for the string part, the following equipment is required.

- 5 directional microphones (for 2 violins, 1 viola, 1 Violoncello and 1 Contrabass)
- digital reverb
- 1 mixing table (8 inputs, 2 outputs and 2 auxiliaries send after fader)
- 1 stereo amplifier
- 2 high-quality loudspeakers

The reverb time should be adjusted to the acoustics of the hall for a combined reverb time of 3.0-4.5 seconds.⁸⁵

In other words, in order to simulate the canyon echoes, Tanaka employs two kinds of sound effects: echo and reverberation. The two effects in *Echo Canyon* are communicated by two different media: the echo is performed by acoustic instruments, strings and percussion, while reverberation is realised electronically. In acoustic terms, echo and reverberation are both sounds reflected by an obstacle – the difference between them is constituted by the distance between the source and its reflecting surface. In echo, the distance is such that the reflected sound can be perceived as a distinct sound from the source, whereas in reverberation the original and reflected sounds are overlapped. A reverberation can therefore be seen as a collection of echoes communicated through layers of sounds.⁸⁶

As indicated in the instructions above, the audio technology Tanaka that employs for creating the reverberation for the strings includes directional microphones, a digital reverb, a mixing table, a stereo amplifier and high quality loudspeakers. To simulate the sound echo, Tanaka sets the reverberation time of 3.0-4.5 seconds. Figure 3.4 shows the spatial placement of instrumentalists, microphones and speakers:

⁸⁵Tanaka, Performance Instructions to *Echo Canyon* (London, UK: Chester Music, 1995).

⁸⁶John R. Pierce, ‘No Title’, in *The Science of Musical Sound* (New York, NY: Freeman, 1992).

Layout

- 5 directional microphones
- s 2 high quality loudspeakers

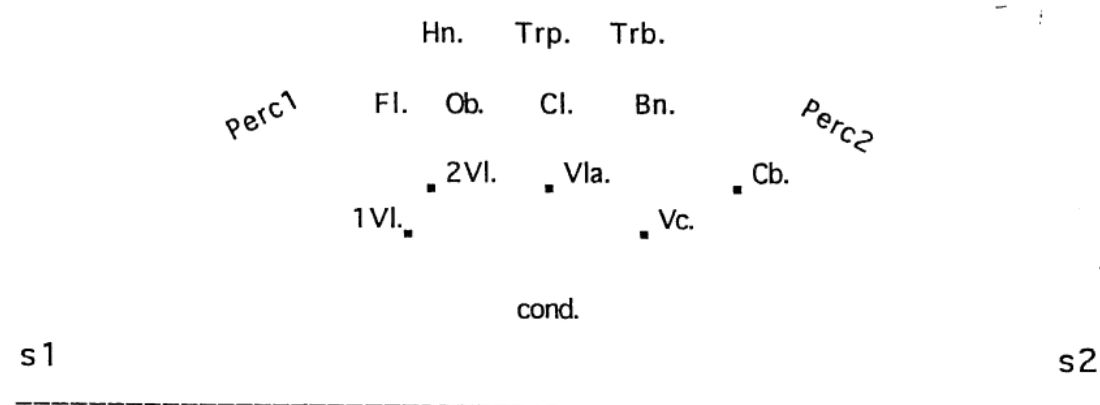


Figure 3.4 Spatial placement of the instruments, microphones and speakers in *Echo Canyon*. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1995 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

For *Echo Canyon*, Tanaka specifies the use of directional microphones (Figure 3.4). Unlike a non-directional microphone, which picks up sound from every direction equally, a directional microphone gathers only the sound that is right in front of it, while rejecting sounds from other directions.⁸⁷ As Figure 3.4 shows, Tanaka places directional microphones in front of the string instruments; this placement has relevant acoustic considerations, since the sound of bowed instruments has a short decay.⁸⁸

A mixing table – as in all of Tanaka’s works of this period – is used for live sound playback situations.⁸⁹ A mixing table is an electronic device which allows for the simultaneous combination of different sounds and instruments, and further permits the selection of how sounds are blended together.⁹⁰ In this piece, the table is used to send signals to and from a digital reverb and then over to the loudspeakers. Tanaka gives instructions for two auxiliaries with a post-fader setting to link to the digital reverb. A digital reverb is a device that generates a time delay of the direct sound; it enables the sound engineer to obtain very realistic effects that simulate actual acoustic environments, which provides listeners with a sense of either a constructed space, for example a room, or a natural environment, such as Bryce Canyon. The sounds of strings heard by the listeners are therefore digitally processed and highly controlled in order to simulate, precisely, the echoing effect that Tanaka desires. In this digital way, Tanaka eliminates the character of different performance spaces, so that the echoing effect is the same no matter which performers are used or where the music is performed. In this sense, Tanaka’s music becomes the polar opposite of Takemitsu’s compositions. While the co-creatorship between humanity and nature generates a unique and irreproducible moment in Takemitsu’s *Arc*, Tanaka’s *Echo Canyon* features a reproduction of a pre-existing sonic event as observed by the composer, which will go on to be reproduced in each and every subsequent

⁸⁷Julio D’Escriván Rincón, ‘A Studio Overview’, in *Music Technology* (New Yoerk, NY; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 48-53.

⁸⁸Richardson, ‘The Physics of the Violin’, 35-6.

⁸⁹Compositions that employ a mixing table include *Initium* (1993), *Wave Mechanics I* (1994), *Echo Canyon* (1995), *Frozen Horizon* (1998), and *Water and Stone* (1998).

⁹⁰D’Escriván Rincón, ‘A Studio Overview’, 22-39.

performance. In accordance with the spectralists' idea of the composer-as-observer, Tanaka's canyon is the locus of a human attempt to discover, observe and understand the workings of sound, and then to notate these features in a musical score. This process corresponds to Murail's idea that the musical score is 'the end point of compositional process. . . to transcribe the results obtained for the observer', yet it pushes it far beyond the sound laboratory.⁹¹ For spectralist music, the pre-existing event to be observed is the sound behaviour of a chosen sound sample, as analysed by a computer in a sound lab. In the case of *Echo Canyon*, the pre-existing event is the sound behaviour of 'echo' observed in Bryce Canyon.

Crucially, *Echo Canyon* demonstrates not only Tanaka's observation of sound phenomena, but also her emerging, existential sense of 'the planet Earth'. Tanaka's account of her reaction to the canyon signals her shift from looking at each single natural phenomenon in isolation to recognising a more holistic natural scope: 'the rotation of the planet Earth'. This realisation of her own connection to the much larger geophysical context makes her feel 'transported to another planet', having never before – in her compositions – seen or understood the globe in this larger way. The novelty of the approach is at this stage reflected more in Tanaka's subject matter than in her compositional practice. While the influence of spectral music can still be traced in Tanaka's musical language, for the first time the phenomenon portrayed – the echo in Bryce Canyon and the passing of time in that space – is inextricably linked to a physical, geographical place. With this global perspective gained at the end of the 1990s, Tanaka takes to observing the reality of the relationship between humanity and nature in the twentieth century, and begins to address environmental issues in her music. As a career point, therefore, *Echo Canyon* signals Tanaka's environmental awakening. Consequently, in the following section, I explore one of Tanaka's most frequently performed works: her piano collection for young performers, *Children of Light* (1999), an environmental critique based

⁹¹Murail, 'Spectra and Sprites'.

on those animals selected by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for their 1996 list of endangered species.⁹²

3.5 *Children of Light* and ‘Our’ Planet Earth

The expanded and interconnected view that Tanaka gains in Bryce Canyon marks the beginning of her emerging sense of the planet and its history, and serves as a starting point for her environmental and ecological awakening. Consequently, Tanaka turns to examine the reality of how humans and nature interact with each other, and she begins to realise the extent of humanity’s intrusion upon on the natural world; the fragility of Earth; and the environmental crisis that is the modern condition facing all humankind. Since *Echo Canyon* (1995), environmental issues have taken centre stage in Tanaka’s music. By the end of the 1990s, she was engaged in composing two works which were actively expressing her concern for contemporary environmental problems: *Questions of Nature* (1998) and *Children of Light* (1998-9). Despite their similar theme, these two compositions were written with wholly different audiences in mind. While *Children of Light* is dedicated to young piano performers, *Questions of Nature* is intended for adult radio listeners.

Commissioned by Radio France, the taped electroacoustic music *Questions of Nature* consists of five short pieces: *Forest*, *Air*, *Ocean*, *Light* and *Earth*, none of which lasts more than two minutes. According to Tanaka, they were intended as radio jingles to be broadcasted several times a day before either the news or a classical music programme.⁹³ The five pieces are composed in the manner of *Musique Concrète* as a mixture of electronically generated sounds, sounds recorded from nature, and sounds from acoustic instruments. In her programme notes to *Children of Light* and *Questions of Nature*, she expresses concerns

⁹²Karen Tanaka, Programme Notes to Karen Tanaka, *Children of Light* (1999), *Music Sales Classical* [web page] (1999) <<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/14613>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

⁹³Personal communication from Karen Tanaka to the author, 4 May 2012.

about environmental degradation and advocates the respect that she feels humankind should show towards our fragile planet:

The 20th century gave birth to a remarkable revolution in science and technology. But it was also a period of environmental destruction. The beauty of nature and its resources, that took millions of years to develop, have been damaged and depleted in just a few decades. Many wild animals have become extinct because their living environment has been destroyed, or because they have been hunted. The theme of *Children of Light* is wild animals in danger, and environmental problems, such as deforestation, sea pollution, ozone depletion, global warming and so on. [...] ⁹⁴

It is our responsibility as a community to protect the natural environment and the ecosystem for future generations. I hope that we will have a greater respect for the land and the resources we share. [...] [*Questions of Nature*] was composed as a homage to the endangered planet [E]arth. ⁹⁵

These notes mark the first time that Tanaka had publicly expressed concern about humanity's destructive behaviour towards nature. At a first glance, Tanaka's reflection on the antagonism between technological innovations and environmental problems seems simply to echo the growing global concern at the turn of the twenty-first century. However, given Tanaka's engagement with the spectralist approach to musical composition – itself a product of the development of the scientific understanding of sound – and her use of audio technologies that require considerable energy, such as microphones, loudspeakers, reverberation and synthesizer, in many of her works up to this point, her statements raise urgent questions for music composers and practitioners. Where sound technology and environmental issues coincide, one might ask, on the one hand, if the recent development of musical audio/digital technologies, with their associated environmental costs, are contributing to the current environmental crisis; on the other, whether the scientific understanding of sound might help composers and listeners to build a better and less destructive relationship with the physical

⁹⁴Karen Tanaka, 'Preface' to *Children of Light*, (London, UK: Chester Music, 1999).

⁹⁵Karen Tanaka, Programme Notes to Karen Tanaka, *Question of Nature* (1998), *Music Sales Classical* [web page] (1998) <<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/1562/11120>>, accessed 18 Sept. 2015.

world. However, as a potential hindrance to that improvement, one might also question whether musical technologies such as Tanaka’s recordings in fact perpetuate a false and fantastical view that everything is infinitely reproducible.

From the composition of *Echo Canyon* to that of *Children of Light*, one can identify two developments related to Tanaka’s increased awareness of environmental issues. In *Echo Canyon*, Tanaka uses audio technologies to control reverberation times in the performance space, in order to simulate the sound of echoes in Bryce Canyon. However, in *Children of Light*, the use of technology to control sound, to make it precise and reproducible, is effectively overturned. *Children of Light* stems from Tanaka’s understanding that not everything in life can be reproduced, and deals with the irreversible changes that humankind has brought to ecosystems and lifeforms which, once destroyed, are indeed irreproducible. This work can be considered Tanaka’s way of warning against the common misconception that science and technology can indefinitely extend human power and longevity on the planet. If animals become extinct or natural resources are depleted, these losses are irreversible.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that Tanaka is not criticising technology tout court: she has used it in her previous works and is aware of its musical potential. Tanaka is rather calling attention to the responsibility that technologies have in making good use of scientific knowledge. As discussed, at this point in her career, Tanaka’s attitude has shifted from examining isolated, decontextualised phenomena to emphasising their greater context, such as the inseparability of animals from their environment. Significantly, Tanaka’s use of the words ‘we’, ‘community’ and ‘our responsibility’ in her preface, emphasises a collective obligation and communicates Tanaka’s personal, human concern for the environment. More pertinent to the present study is her own identification within the broader human community, which punctuates her now fully researched and developed sense of self. *Children of Light* and *Questions of Nature*, as artistic expressions, are what Tanaka can actually do as a composer – they are immediate and practical gestures. The final section of this chapter will therefore

provide an ecological reading of Tanaka's pedagogical piano series, *Children of Light*, as it demonstrates her commitment to alerting young pianists to the cause of 'wild animals in danger'.⁹⁶

Before analysing Tanaka's *Children of Light* using an ecocritical approach, it is important to understand a newly formed field in the study of music, ecomusicology, and its precursor in literary studies, ecocriticism. Ecocriticism, or eco-critical literary studies originates from two roots: the study of American nature writing and British Romanticism. In 1992, the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) was established in America to promote interdisciplinary studies in the environmental humanities and arts. As a burgeoning academic movement in the Anglo-American scholarship of the early 1990s, ecocriticism has moved from being peripheral in cultural studies to occupying a central position within contemporary literary scholarship over the past twenty years. The founding figure of ecocriticism, English literary scholar Cheryll Glotfelty, defined ecocriticism as '[...] the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment', in the first anthology of its kind, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996).⁹⁷ In his 2012 book, *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrad proposed a refined definition of ecocriticism as 'the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history, entailing critical analysis of the term "human" itself'.⁹⁸ The characteristic attitude of ecocriticism, as Peter Barry points out in his *Beginning Theory?* (2009), is that 'ecocritics reject the notion [...] that everything is socially and/or linguistically constructed. [...] For the ecocritic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves [...]'.⁹⁹ The aspiration is to correct the 'pathetic fallacy' that is typical of anthropocentric cultural studies theories – which strengthens our intuitive tendency to see our emotions reflected in the surround-

⁹⁶Tanaka, Programme Notes to *Children of Light*.

⁹⁷Cheryll Glotfelty, Introduction to Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (eds.), *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens, GA; London, UK: University of Georgia Press, 1996), xv–xxxvii, at xviii.

⁹⁸Greg Garrard, 'Beginnings: Pollution', in *Ecocriticism* (London, UK: Routledge, 2012), at 5.

⁹⁹Peters Barry, 'Ecocriticism', in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2009), 248–271, at 252.

ing environment – and to recognise instead nature's intrinsic value.¹⁰⁰ Yet, the attempt to recognise the real existence of the outer world in literature also poses methodological and interpretive challenges to ecocritics. Ecocriticism has itself been criticised as embracing nature uncritically, or as 'an anti-enlightenment and counter revolution'.¹⁰¹ Garrard also points out the ecocritic's complex and uneasy relationship with constructionism.¹⁰² Where on the one hand, one should re-evaluate the literal truth contained in the text, on the other hand, it is too restricting to confine oneself in the view that 'nature is always in some ways constructed'.¹⁰³ Major ecocritics further responded to ecocriticism's tension with constructionist models. Richard Kerridge suggests that the mission of ecocriticism in English studies is to address interconnectedness, and to find the balance between metaphorical and material interpretations of nature, such as the balance between interpreting an owl in a literary work symbolically – as representing an abstract concept – or literally, as a real owl.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, James McKusick, in his discussion of the English Romantic poets, proposes the need to engage dialectically with both the 'nature-as-ground' and 'nature-as-construct' possibilities, both the materialist and the constructionist perspectives.¹⁰⁵

Ecocritical scholarship is currently preoccupied with revisiting canonical texts as well as analysing recent works dealing with environmental crises. Where the field developed from studies of Anglophone literatures, it has now crossed over into different disciplines and geographical areas, including India, Japan, China, and Germany, as shown in the newly published *Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*. Furthermore, since it was born as a form of

¹⁰⁰Neil Evernden, 'Beyond Ecology: Self, Place and the Pathetic Fallacy', *North American Review*, 263 /4 (1978), 16–20.

¹⁰¹Greg Garrard (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1–24, at 2.

¹⁰²Garrard, 'Beginnings: Pollution', 10.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴Richard Kerridge, 'Ecocriticism and the Mission of "English"', in Greg Garrard (ed.), *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), at 13.

¹⁰⁵James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000) 15–7, cited in Kevin Hutchings, 'Teaching Romantic Ecology in Northern Canada' in Garrard, 'Beginnings: Pollution', at 52.

artistic critique, the approach has also now been adopted in studies of film and music.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, in the same cultural vein, ecomusicology has emerged as a new subfield of musicology, consciously formed in response to an increasing concern for the environment in the humanities, and as an effort to bring the ecocritical approach into the study of music. The term 'ecomusicology' first appeared in 2002, in a review article by Alexander Rehding, entitled 'Eco-musicology', in which he discusses three recently published German books on music and nature.¹⁰⁷ The term was later employed by Nancy Guy in her 2009 article entitled 'Flowing Down Taiwan's Tamsui River: Towards an Ecomusicology of the Environmental Imagination', which discusses how popular Taiwanese songs address the increasing concern for environmental issues in Taiwan.¹⁰⁸ In 2011, a collection of short articles appeared in colloquy in *JAMS* under the title, 'Ecomusicology: Ecocriticism and Musicology', which can be regarded altogether as a manifesto for the official establishment of an ecocritical approach within the study of music. The collection is bookended by two articles written by musicologist Aaron S. Allen, who defines ecomusicology broadly as the study of the relationship between nature, culture and music, thereby recalling the definition of ecocriticism pioneered by ecocritic Glotfelty. Allen attributes the principles of ecomusicology to precursors such as Canadian composer Murray R. Schaffer, with his notion of soundscape in *The Tuning of the World* (1977), and ethnomusicologist Steven Feld's idea of acoustic ecology in his *Sound and Sentiment* (1982).

As a critical contribution to this growing field, I explore in this section how Tanaka responds to and communicates environmental problems in her music. Tanaka's compositional intent in *Children of Light* is particularly relevant to current ecocriticism, not only because the subject matter is animals in danger, but also because of its engagement with the representation of animals and the notion of planet. In Garrad's *Ecocriticism*, 'animals' and 'planet' are

¹⁰⁶Garrad, *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*.

¹⁰⁷Alexander Rehding, 'Eco-Musicology', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 127 /2 (2002), 305–320.

¹⁰⁸Nancy Guy, 'Flowing Down Taiwan's Tamsui River: Towards an Ecomusicology of the Environmental Imagination', *Ethnomusicology*, 53 /2 (2009), 218–249.

both new tropes opposing the conventional trope of pastoralism. My eco-critical reading of Tanaka's collection will thus examine four aspects: the ways that environmental messages are conveyed in this collection; the mode of representing animals that Tanaka employs; the planetary stance that Tanaka is trying to foster; and the model of human-nature relationships that Tanaka has chosen. The aim of this section is not only to bring an ecocritical perspective to discussion of Tanaka's music but also to lay the foundation for a later discussion on if and how the sense of local enters in her environmental imagination and the implications for her sense of self and her musical identity in the concluding section.

Commissioned by the Japanese publisher Edition KAWAI, *Children of Light* (1998-99) is Tanaka's response to reading the 1996 IUCN *Red List of Threatened Species*.¹⁰⁹ With the aim of raising children's environmental awareness, *Children of Light* is a collection of twenty-five short pieces suitable for children who are progressing from an intermediate to an upper-intermediate level in piano studies. In the preface to the work, Tanaka addresses the children directly, presenting them with the problems of endangered species and the destruction of animal habitats as well as the beauty and resources of the natural world, and calling upon the young artists to assume their part in safeguarding the planet.

As pedagogical piano pieces with the aim of conveying environmental messages, the collection is designed to convey both musical and environmental knowledge. At the outset, there are two pages explaining the musical terminology used throughout the collection, written in both their original Italian and in Japanese. For each piece, Tanaka provides linguistic descriptors for tempo and expression such as 'lightly', 'joyfully', and 'lively'. Furthermore, each piece is titled in both English and Japanese; as an example, the first piece is entitled 'Blue Planet' or 青い惑星. According to its didactic purpose, the difficulty of execution tends to increase over the course of the collection, in terms of its rhythmic complexity, tone production, and its interpretational demands.

¹⁰⁹Preface to Karen Tanaka, *Children of Light* (London, UK: Chester Music, 1999).

My first ecocritical exploration will examine how Tanaka's music engages with the real environment in this collection. Tanaka's environmental message is conveyed as much in her presentation of the collection as it is in the musical texture that she assigns to each piece. The pieces are grouped into five sections, which are structured according to the ecosystems of the animals treated: those of the ocean, the African jungle, the Asian forests, the air, and finally a series of places where the aurora is observable:

1-5	<i>Blue Planet</i>	Animals living in the sea
6-10	<i>Green Paradise</i>	Animals living in the African jungle and savannah
11-15	<i>Prisms in the Forest</i>	Animals living in Asian forests and swamps
16-20	<i>Air</i>	Birds
21-25	<i>Northern Lights</i>	Animals living in the Arctic, the Galapagos Islands, Australia and the USA ¹¹⁰

The first piece of each section introduces the natural environment of the animals presented in the section, while the subsequent pieces portray animals selected from the list. For example, the first section is about marine animals, so that after 'Blue Planet' (No. 1), there are 'Sea Turtle' (No. 2), 'Dugong' (No. 3), 'Coral Reef' (No. 4), and 'Blue Whale' (No. 5). Coextensively, where the fourth section is dedicated to endangered birds, the first piece of the section is entitled 'Air' (No.16), and is followed by 'Red-faced Parrot' (No. 17), 'Kiwi' (No. 18), 'Crested Ibis' (No. 19) and 'Crowned Eagle' (No. 20). With this five-section structure, Tanaka conveys the environmental knowledge of each animal's habitat and emphasises the inseparable relationship between animals and their living environments to the young piano performers who are learning these works.

The second dimension of the environment represented in the music is in the texture and style of each piece. The musical texture of most pieces included in this collection is a simple two-part writing, with one part functioning as melody and the other acting as accompaniment. The accompaniment part consists of a recurring rhythmic pattern in a one or two-bar unit, usually performed by either the left or the right hand on the keyboard, apart from some pieces such as 'Northern Lights' (No. 21) or 'Polar Bear' (No. 25) where the pattern is sustained

¹¹⁰Tanaka, *Children of Light*.

between the two hands. In fact, Tanaka employs recurring rhythmic patterns in much of her music for young piano learners. For example, in *Lavender Field* (2000), commissioned by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), Tanaka explains her use of the rhythmic pattern in an interview conducted by the board:

[The] rhythm pattern in the right hand represents lavender bushes waving in the gentle wind and suggest[s] that performers imagine weaving colour and scent with sounds.¹¹¹

Tanaka’s emphasis on the presence of the external world, as the pre-existing event before the composition, is evident in this statement. She instructs the player to imagine the multi-sensory experience of being in a lavender field and to integrate the sense of sight and smell into the sense of touch on the piano keyboard. In these ways, the music is a reflection of a real-life experience. Importantly, for Tanaka, the pattern not only has its own pedagogical goals but also relates to the literal movement of the subject matter in the piece – in this case, the moving of lavender bushes in the wind. Accordingly, the pieces in *Children of Light*, with their ‘melody’ and ‘accompaniment’ texture, can be heard as the subject-title ‘animal’ moving in its own ‘environment’.

Extrapolating from the example set by *Lavender Field*, the rhythmic pattern in each piece of *Children of Light* can be regarded as having a double function: firstly, it sets out technical challenges for young piano students to master. In terms of piano technique, in order to maintain rhythmic evenness, players need to develop skills such as finger dexterity, independence, wrist relaxation, and a steady internal beat. The real technical challenge arises, however, when the student has to join the rhythmic pattern of one hand with the shape of the melody presented by the other hand. It can be argued that the accompaniment part is often neglected by piano students, however crucial its role in the flow of a piece. By practising the different patterns in each piece, the player can improve the techniques of the weaker hand and master a specific mechanical goal.

¹¹¹ ‘Spectrum 3: composing now’, *Libretto* [online journal] (2001) <<http://www.abrsm.org/resources/libretto/libretto0102.pdf>>, accessed 30 Sept. 2015.

The second function of the rhythmic pattern is that its recurring nature can act as the ‘habitat’ of the animal portrayed. The environmental element, even in those cases where its portrayal can be ascribed to the ‘accompaniment’ part, is crucial to the rendering of the various pieces. The environment is not ‘a framing device’, to reference the literary ecocritic Lawrence Buell’s term, in the same way that the recurring pattern is not merely an accompaniment, but rather forms the ecosystem of the piece.¹¹²

With this interpretative approach in mind, a closer look at the different recurring patterns in this collection will help us to understand the different environments portrayed, as well as how the animals interact with their respective habitats. A comparison of the open sea waters of ‘Sea Turtle’ (No. 2) to the Asian swamps of ‘Chinese Alligator’ (No. 14) is revealing. The recurring pattern in the left hand in Sea Turtle features the perfect fifth, with a slow speed motion symbolising steady sea waves (Example 3.13). The melody in the right hand, combining triplets within 2/2 time, gives the impression of a turtle swimming in water rather than walking on land, which music in two time usually generates (Example 3.13). In ‘Chinese Alligator’, on the other hand, the pattern is not a simple perfect fifth but a combination with both leaping and conjunct intervals in two three-note patterns. As Example 3.14 shows, the pattern (F-c^b-d, F-B^b-c[#]) consists of the four melodic intervals: the perfect fifth followed by a major second, and then an augmented fourth followed by a major second. The fast alteration between the consonant and dissonant intervals in ‘Chinese Alligator’ generates a feeling of turbidity, offering a striking contrast with the pattern of harmonious intervals of the perfect fifth in ‘Sea Turtle’ – in the same way that the murky waters of a swamp differ from the more fluid currents of sea water.

If the recurring pattern can be read as the environment in which the animal moves, the melody can be suggestive of the animal’s movement. As a comparison, melodies of swimming, walking and flying animals are shown in Example 3.15. The different animal

¹¹²Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 1-28, at 25.

2. ウミガメ

Sea Turtle

生息地：大西洋、太平洋、インド洋、黒海、地中海
 [Home : Atlantic, Pacific, Indian Ocean, Black and Mediterranean Sea]

田中カレン 作曲
 Karen Tanaka

1 Gently (♩ = 58)

5

9

Example 3.13 Karen Tanaka, *Children of Light*, No.2 ‘Sea Turtle’, in *Children of Light*, bb. 1-12. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1999 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

14. ワニ

Chinese Alligator

〔 生息地：中国 〕
〔 Home : China 〕

田中カレン 作曲
Karen Tanaka

Humorously (♩. = 60)

1

pp

p

P5+ M2 A4+M2

5

pp

mf

8

p

12

mp

Example 3.14 Karen Tanaka, *Children of Light*, No.14 'Chinese Alligator', in *Children of Light*, bb. 1-15. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1999 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

motions are suggested by the intervals used, and by the rhythmic features of the melody itself. While the sea turtle swims in conjunct intervals in slow *legato*, the Mountain Gorilla walks in a short, energetic, rhythmic pattern. Red-faced parrot, on the other hand, glides freely in the high registers of the keyboard with an irregular, flexible 5/8 time (Example 3.15). Despite the sea turtle and chinese alligator belonging to different aquatic ecosystem (deep sea versus freshwater), they both are water animals. Accordingly, the chromatic movement of the right hand in ‘Chinese Alligator’ conveys a sense of ‘smooth flow’ (Example 3.14, bars 10-15, right hand), similar to the conjunctive melodies of the sea animals of the first section such as ‘Sea Turtle’ (Example 3.13, bars 3-12, right hand) — mainly moving by *legato* and conjunct intervals, in contrast with, for example, the melodies of the land animal pieces such as ‘Mountain Gorilla’ or of the birds such as ‘Red-Faced Parrot’ (Example 3.15).

No. 2 'Sea Turtle': Swimming

1 Gently ($\text{♩} = 58$)

5

No. 7 'Mountain Gorilla': Walking

5 [Lively ($\text{♩} = 108$)

9

No. 17 'Red-Faced Parrot': Flying

Gently ($\text{♩} = 108$)

6

to ④

1. 2.

Example 3.15 A comparison of animal movements portrayed in Karen Tanaka's *Children of Light*: 'Sea Turtle' (bb. 1-4), 'Mountain Gorilla' (bb. 5-12) and 'Red-Faced Parrot' (bb. 1-9). Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1999 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

Where each piece in its entirety can be heard as the representation of an animal moving within its own natural environment, Tanaka’s musical rendering of the subject matter is effectively anchored in realism, with its musical elements conveying perceptible aspects of the animal being portrayed. As both the left- and right-hand parts constitute the piece, so are the animals inseparable from their environment. Not only is the title of each piece important to its interpretation, but also to the habitat to which the animal belongs.

Still more significant in *Children of Light* is the effect of the animals’ extinction for its overall meaning. The second aspect of my ecocritical reading examines Tanaka’s representation of animals in this collection, and compares it to the musical treatment of animals in classical music repertoires used nowadays in children’s classical music education, namely Camille Saint-Saëns’ *The Carnival of the Animals* (1886) and Sergej Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf* (1936). Tanaka clearly does not want to follow the anthropomorphised representation of animals that is characteristic of these two pieces. The animals in Tanaka’s collection are not personalised or humanised, nor is there any attempt on the composer’s part to evoke overly sentimental or sympathetic feelings towards the animal subjects.

Composing with a different purpose than that of Tanaka, Saint-Saëns clearly stated that his ‘grand zoological fantasy’ – as it was subtitled ‘*Grande Fantaisie Zoologique*’ – was written as a musical joke to entertain his friends.¹¹³ The French composer even requested that the music not be published or even performed during his lifetime, as it would undermine his reputation as a serious composer.¹¹⁴ In his renderings of animals in music, Saint-Saëns took inspiration from widely-recognised stereotypes, portraying animals in a pleasing and humorous light to make them interesting to his listeners. His ‘Elephant’, for example, is of an unspecified breed, and the composer’s interest lies in the comical effect that the transposition of known melodies by Mendelssohn and Berlioz to lower registers will have on the audience, as they suggest the heaviness of the animal. Analogously, Jacques Offenbach’s slowed-down

¹¹³ Liner Notes to Camille Saint-Saëns, *Carnivaux des Animaux* (1991), Naxos 8.550499 [CD].

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Can Can, as appropriated in ‘Tortues’, represents the characteristic slowness of the turtles. The humour that pervades Saint-Saëns’ collection – with the added use of quotations from his illustrious forebears in ‘Fossiles’, and the inclusion of a piece parodying learners practicing their technical exercises – is as distant from the attitude expressed in *Children of Light* as it could be.

Though Saint-Saëns’ *Carnival* was not meant to educate children, Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf* does share a pedagogical intent with *Children of Light*. Yet, Prokofiev’s piece is directed to children as listeners rather than performers, and is concerned with introducing them to the different characters of the several orchestral instruments. For this purpose, Prokofiev assigns a specific role to each instrument; for example, the bird is represented by flutes, the duck by oboes, and the wolf by French horns. These assignments are made to match the characteristics of the animal in the tale and the sound properties and possibilities of the instruments. It can be argued, however, that the sound and the instrumental features dominate the compositional process, so that the animals and the tale in general serve only as a frame to capture the interest of the young listeners. In *Peter and the Wolf*, the anthropomorphisation of the animals is an integral part of the pedagogical process: the stereotyped understandings of the animals are exploited to help remember the characteristics of the instruments, such as the assignment of the flute to the bird, with its high-pitched singing and rapid flying movements. Unrealistic elements, such as the dialogue between Peter and the bird, are also present. Conversely, in *Children of Light*, the animals and the environment are the starting point of the compositional process: Tanaka first selected them from the *IUCN Red List* and then composed dedicated pieces where the musical elements are as functional to the representation of the endangered species as they are to the development of the young pianists’ skills.

Despite the fact that Tanaka ‘painstakingly’ reviewed the endangered lists, as she states in her preface to the collection, *Children of Light* does not attempt to evoke children’s sympa-

thetic emotions. Instead, Tanaka tries to generate a sense of ethical responsibility towards all living creatures on the planet through the recognition of their realness. Tanaka’s animals are not like the ones described in fairy tales, where stereotypical traits are commonly associated with them, as she is aware of the risk of representing animals with human personalities and characteristics. The danger of anthropomorphising animals lies in giving children false information about animals’ true behaviours, and in encouraging them to attribute value to the imaginary rather than to reality. To further dissuade children from relating to animals according to their usefulness to humans, Tanaka categorises them according to ‘objective facts’ about them: the environments that they inhabit; the characteristic ways in which they move; and the shared fact of their endangered status. Tanaka’s portrayal of the non-human world is therefore indicative as opposed to prescriptive; it serves to demonstrate Tanaka’s negotiation between representation and materiality.

The third eco-critical aspect of *Children of Light* is Tanaka’s attempt to foster a planetary perspective for children. This effort is evident in the very first piece of the collection, ‘Blue Planet’. Tanaka’s description of this piece, written directly under the title, sets the galactic stance of this collection and its purveyors: ‘from a far [*sic*], as if you are watching the Earth from space’.¹¹⁵ This celestial standpoint recalls the newfound sense of the planetary that Tanaka gained through her experience of Bryce Canyon. While Tanaka’s own compositional process evolved from observing a single natural phenomenon independently of its environment, to finally developing a holistic sense of the planet Earth, she clearly wishes for children to grasp the wholeness of the planet as a biosphere in the first instance. In other words, developing a planetary vision is what she most urgently wills for younger generations to do, so that they can acknowledge the global scale of environmental issues.

As Example 3.16 shows, the first piece of this collection, ‘Blue Planet’, begins with the recurring pattern in the left hand introducing two perfect fifth intervals, c’-g’, d’’-g’. The 6/8 time gives the piece a feeling of orbiting, rotating and revolving rather than dancing

¹¹⁵Tanaka, *Children of Light*, 11.

or marching. Interestingly, the melody features the irregular three-phrase structure rather than a conventional symmetrical structure consisting of 2 or 4 phrases, with the third phrase prolonged to six bars long (bars 11-16). In accordance with this irregular phrase design, the piece is enclosed within a two-bar introduction and a three-bar codetta. Apart from the melody in the right hand, the first note in each bar in the left hand forms a counter melody, with a bass line descending chromatically from c' to G (bars 1-16). In order to sustain this descending chromatic line, the player needs to work on building the strength of his/her left little finger, which will play the first note in each bar.

As the first piece of the collection, it is rhythmically simple but features a range of different intervals, both harmonically and melodically. The pedagogical goal of these combinations is to train children to be able to recognise different intervals and to understand how the progression of intervals generates a sense of momentum and direction for the piece. For example, each of the three musical phrases builds to its own highest point through tension and resolution, moving from an augmented 4th to much more consonant intervals (Example 3.16, bars 4-5, 8-9, 12-13). The climax is in the third phrase, where the augmented fourth is released to an octave in bar 13. The ability to identify intervals and to express musical directions, as generated by the different qualities of intervals, is crucial to performing this piece well. Tanaka's pedagogical aim is therefore to develop both piano technique and aural skills at once.

Despite featuring combinations of musical intervals, Tanaka's galactic stance, 'from a far [sic]... watching the Earth from space', does not evoke the 'music of the spheres' imagined by the ancient Greeks in their mathematical ratio, which expressed a sense of harmony and balance in the universe. Rather, Tanaka's 'Blue Planet' is reminiscent of the iconic image of *The Blue Marble*, a photograph of the Earth taken by the Apollo 17 astronauts in December 1972. Although humans have been imagining the Earth since ancient times, Tanaka's idea of observing 'Earth from space' had long since left the domain of romantic fantasy, and

1. 光のこども 1 — 青い惑星

Child of Light 1 - Blue Planet

From a far, as if you are watching the Earth from space

(♩. = 50)

田中カレン 作曲
Karen Tanaka

The musical score is written for piano and right hand. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The time signature is 6/8. The tempo is marked as 50 beats per minute (♩. = 50). The score is divided into five systems. The piano part (left hand) includes dynamics such as *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The right-hand part includes articulations such as *P5*, *m3*, *P8*, and *A4*. The score is annotated with green circles around specific notes and a blue bracket labeled *P5* over a sequence of notes in the first system.

Example 3.16 Karen Tanaka, *Children of Light*, No.1 'Blue Planet', bb. 1-19. Music by Karen Tanaka. © Copyright 1999 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Printed by permission of Chester Music Limited.

was in fact possible due to scientific progress and achievements. As historian Robert Poole points out, since the public release of the ‘The Blue Marble’ photo, the phrase ‘Blue Planet’ has been associated with the concept of caring for the Earth.¹¹⁶ Environmentalists cite the evidence gathered from Earth-observation satellites that humans now affect the environment on a global scale. Consequently, Tanaka’s Blue Planet evokes this iconic image as a reminder of our planet’s isolation and fragility in our advanced age. Environmentalists cite the evidence gathered from Earth-observation satellites that humans now affect the environment on a global scale. Consequently, Tanaka’s ‘Blue Planet’ evokes this iconic image as a reminder of our planet’s isolation and fragility in our advanced age.

While Tanaka’s sense of the planet was awakened by the genuine, physical experience of listening to sounds of echoes reverberating from the canyon walls, Tanaka had in fact already experienced another way of imagining the globe, during her time at IRCAM in 1992-93, where as she recalls of the advent of the booming Internet: ‘I felt that the time was rapidly changing’.¹¹⁷ As an overseas student from a different continent, with the development of information technology, Tanaka was newly able to contact friends in Japan via electronic mails and to receive world news through the internet – experiences which have since become commonplace in our culture and daily life. Significantly, this introduction to digital communications made Tanaka envisage future generations’ experiences of imagining the globe, as well as their relationships with both local and global concepts. It can be argued that people’s sense of the globe is mostly an indirect experience, mediated through technology. Rather than representing a child playing with a dugong, or the impossible scenario of a sea turtle interacting with a mountain gorilla, Tanaka’s stance of ‘gazing upon the whole planet from afar’ establishes a non-interactive and indirect experience of the globe, as if

¹¹⁶Robert K. Poole, ‘Blue Marble’, in *Earthrise: How Man First Saw the Earth* (New Haven, CT; London, UK: Yale University Press, 2008), at 91-96.

¹¹⁷The original quote is ‘パリでは、IRCAM（フランス国立音響音楽研究所）にいたこともあり、90年代前半に電子メールやインターネットに接し、時代が急速に変化していることを実感しました。’. See Sudoh Eiko, ‘田中カレンさん「聴き手に感動を与えられる作品を」’, *PTNA* [web page] (2009) <http://www.piano.or.jp/report/02soc/pmj/2009/11/20_9608.html>, accessed 27 Sept. 2015, The English translation of the Japanese text is mine.

mediated by technology. From this spectator stance, the collection is designed as a series of ‘zoom’ shots moving in: first obtaining the holistic view of the planet; then zooming in on the larger regional environments within it; then zooming further in to look at how the animals interact with their habitats in detail. Written in 1999, the year that Google launched its now-ubiquitous search engine, this ‘zooming in and zooming out’ method seems to anticipate the Google Earth apparatus. Moreover, the stance of watching the Earth from afar, which Tanaka wishes for children to adopt, recalls her spectralist musical training and her mentor Murail’s notion of the ‘composer as an observer of sound’, mediated by the data and the graphical representations derived from the spectrogram. Though Tanaka leaves the comfort zone of the IRCAM sound laboratory, to directly confront sounds in their natural environments, the influence of her technological training is still apparent.

While both Tanaka and Takemitsu engage in the musical treatment of the natural world in their compositions, Tanaka’s spectator model operates in stark contrast to Takemitsu’s engagement model. The critical implication of Tanaka’s removed and observational position is that the student-player is examining and observing the animals rather than becoming them. In Takemitsu’s musical garden, the different groups of instruments are role-playing the garden elements of grass, flowers or stones, thus establishing a mechanism for the performers to identify themselves with their natural elements. Tanaka, by contrast, does not employ an interactive model that emphasises the irreproducibility of interactive moments. Tanaka rather emphasises ‘interconnection’ without ‘direct interaction’, suggesting the limitations of the engagement model that Takemitsu proposes. Relying on a direct experience to develop the impulse to protect is unrealistic in the case of the animals portrayed in Tanaka’s collection: only a handful of people, let alone people, could ever have the immediate experience of encountering such creatures.

According to the vision presented in Tanaka’s *Children of Light*, ethical responsibility does not need to come from direct experience or interaction – it is an attitude that one can

adopt. Through the collection, Tanaka fosters the sense of humanity being other than, but not superior to animals, insisting that we are all united in our need for a healthy environment in order to survive.

3.6 Towards an Ecological Identity

In this chapter, I have traced the development of Tanaka's attitude towards the natural world and how it has evolved over the course of her compositional career from being a source of musical inspiration to a subject of environmental concern. In doing so, I have demonstrated that the two current discrete views on Tanaka – Tanaka as a composer of IRCAM experiences, employing scientific metaphors, and Tanaka as a composer whose love of nature has influenced many of her compositions – are not mutually exclusive but are in fact related, the latter being a development of the former. The scientific phenomena that inspire Tanaka, such as light dispersion, wave mechanics, polarisation, and the elements of nature such as crystals and water, are presented not only as functions of cognition, but as evidence of the existence of an external world, independent from the observer. What attracts Tanaka to these natural occurrences is not their aesthetic or artistic qualities so much as the intrinsic value of their existence. Finally, and most relevant to the main concern of this thesis, the evolving relationship between the composer and the natural world in this case mirrors the process of Tanaka's search for her own musical identity.

To recapitulate the trajectory of Tanaka's scientific journey of self discovery, her first major work, *Prismes* (1984), exemplifies her interest in the process of acquiring knowledge of the natural world cognitively and objectively. Through the process of revealing the constituent colours of white light in the piece, Tanaka presents the human quest to understand the objective truth of nature while stressing the importance of technology as a tool for expanding the investigators' perceptions beyond their innate limits. Already in this first work,

the natural world appears as an entity existing independently of human construction and outside its perception, with the composer acting as an observer of what is independently real.

Tanaka's initial attitude develops by coming in contact with the field of spectral movement. In the same way that prisms allow humans to reveal the hidden colours of light, the cutting-edge technology at IRCAM offers a way to go beyond the limits of hearing sound. Analysis of the timbre of sounds, their properties and their behaviours, become both the subject matter and the compositional method of Tanaka's works in this period, of *Initium* (1993) in particular. Natural phenomena continue to be a source of inspiration, for her works such as *Polarization* (1994), *Metallic Crystal* (1995), *Wave Mechanics II* (1994), and *Northern Lights* (2002). Yet, the natural phenomena that Tanaka examines in these compositions are decontextualised, in that they are effectively extracted from their environmental contexts. The music is therefore not the expression of Tanaka's inner world but is rather based on events in the physical world, without any geographical or cultural delineation. Arguably, up to this point, Tanaka's sense of self within her musical productions has been intentionally obscured. By referencing her work as being inspired by the independent, external universe, and by avoiding any explicit cultural references, Tanaka prevents herself from being categorised as a regional artist.

Echo Canyon, which explores the behaviour of sound in a natural setting rather than in a sound laboratory, marks the beginning of a re-contextualisation process occurring in Tanaka's work. For the first time, the subject matter in Tanaka's work is identified not only as a result of the composer's observations of nature but as a recollection of her own real-world experience of a physical place. *Echo Canyon* therefore constitutes Tanaka's environmental awakening, as in subsequent years she begins reflecting on the relationship between humankind and nature, recognising the former as an active and destructive agent within the latter. The awareness of nature's vulnerability subtends her collection for young piano performers, *Children of Light*. Returning sound to its context in this piece, Tanaka further re-contextualises her position as being within the whole globe rather than in any

specific part of it. By recognising environmental problems as modern challenges faced by the whole of humanity, and by realising the shared responsibilities of all human beings towards their planet Earth, Tanaka finds her own cosmopolitan identity as a citizen of the world.

While Takemitsu's musical approach to nature corresponds to his rediscovery of the merits of traditional Japanese culture, Tanaka's treatment of the natural world does not start from any geographical place. Tanaka's objective study of the natural world in her earlier compositions can therefore be regarded as a method of decontextualising her music. In her subsequent re-contextualizing process, from *Echo Canyon* onwards, the concept of Japan is still nowhere to be found in her work, and her self identification transcends to a broader transnational level. Significantly, one does not need to be acquainted with traditional Japanese concepts or representations of nature to understand the nature that Tanaka portrays in her music. Tanaka does not address the interconnectedness of nature according to a traditional Japanese view, nor does her version of nature celebrate such treasured national symbols as Mount Fuji or the cherry blossom. I contend that it is precisely because of this lack of Japanese-ness that current studies of contemporary Japanese composers have not recognised the importance of nature in Tanaka's musical world.

The finding of the first section of this chapter - that Takemitsu's attitude towards sound reflects his general attitude towards the human-nature relationship - is applicable in Tanaka's case as well. Nonetheless, they contrast in how they view the role of composers in the sound world, and the role of humans in the natural world. Takemitsu regards sound as his compositional companion and works with sound, as humanity co-creates with the natural elements in *Arc*. Influenced by spectral music practices, Tanaka, regards the role of the composer as an observer, whose task it is to study and to understand the nature and the behaviour of sound. While Takemitsu emphasises the engagement of humanity with nature, humans are effectively non-engaged observers in Tanaka's ideology. Even in later recognising her association with the planet Earth, and in conveying environmental messages, Tanaka

advocates both a cognitive and a non-engagement model. Remarkably, despite having these different orientations, both Tanaka and Takemitsu arrive at the same awareness of the shared responsibility of all humankind to protect the natural world.

Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka respond to the same dilemma of 'East-meets-West' in radically different ways. In seeking to preempt any association of their works with culturally specific environments, they attempt to disassociate themselves from their culture of origin and to universalise their music. Nonetheless, their strategies to recontextualise and universalise themselves are strikingly opposed. While Unsuk Chin strives to achieve a 'universal music' by stressing her individuality and her free and autonomous sense of self, Tanaka addresses the modern condition shared by humanity in the tension between technological advancement and environmental destruction. In this way, Tanaka identifies herself with all human beings. Similarly, the question of boundaries manifests itself differently in the cases of Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka. For Chin, according to her 'non-Korean' principle, the boundary of East and West is left behind long before the compositional process begins, so that there is no need to blur, cross, or transcend it. Consequently, Chin avoids any imperative to embrace a mixed identity. Tanaka, on the other hand, resets the East-West cultural boundary to delineate instead the boundary between humans and non-humans. According to her gaze, Tanaka's ecological identity does not rest on her identification with the non-human world; rather, her observing stance suggests that she regards the non-human world as a pure otherness that needs to be understood and respected. Recognising the intrinsic value of the external world, Tanaka sets the boundary between herself and it. Once that Other is clearly defined, Tanaka's sense of her own humanity is established.

Conclusions

As this thesis set out to explore problems of identity in contemporary East Asian music, it ultimately provides a more expansive picture of identity discourse in the field. Through its focus on three composers, the project offers three distinct ways of constructing musical identities, expressed through Greimas's terms : Chen Yi's embracing of cultural fusion, Unsuk Chin's 'anti-fusion' and Karen Tanaka's 'non-fusion'. These studies thus present three radically different reactions to cross-cultural synthesis.

Hitherto, the responses by Chin and Tanaka have been critically overlooked, as they reject the interpolation of apparently indigenous materials into their music. By presenting three radically different manifestations of identity discourses, this thesis complicates our understanding of the identity politics of contemporary East Asian musicians, as it challenges current approaches that cannot accommodate the cases of Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka. Moving beyond merely tracing 'oriental elements' in these composers' works, I aim to fill the gap of current knowledge by showing that anti-fusion and non-fusion are manifestations of identity discourse too, though they might seem otherwise through their dismissal of traditional cultural associations. From these reactions, we find in fact that East-meets-West, or the discourse of cultural hybridity, is a contrived hegemonic narrative that succeeding generations of composers are working to debunk.

In aiming to reach a critical conclusion to this thesis, I offer a comparison between the three case studies' identity choices and representations and complete the thesis by discussing the implications of my study for music scholarship taking place in the East Asian region.

C.1 Rethinking ‘Boundary’

The concept of the border is useful for visualising the different responses of my three case studies to the ‘East-meet-West’ paradigm. Chen Yi has constantly been viewed as a composer who transcends cultural and musical boundaries. However, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 1, with her aspiration to be a ‘cultural translator’, the boundary is crossed but not eliminated, because her musical identity – as demonstrated by her idea of cultural translation – depends upon her imagining of a boundary. Conversely, for Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka, ‘East-meets-West’ presents a problem rather than a solution to their search for musical identity. In order to forestall any interpretation or labelling of their works as a mere expressions of a regional culture, they both undertake a de-contextualisation process in order to gain, for their music, a supposedly universal breadth. While their goals of composing a de-localised music are similar, the strategies employed by Chin and Tanaka are remarkably different. Chin’s chosen method is to stress the individual character of her music and the purposeful selection of her source materials for their thematic resonance. In her case, by choosing to live in the West and to compose within the Western art music tradition, the concept of any boundary is left well behind her in her past, so that there is no need to cross, blur or transcend it in her music. Karen Tanaka, on the other hand, reconfigures that former boundary. Within Tanaka’s musical world, the distinction is between the human and natural worlds, rather than between human cultures or countries. By investigating natural phenomena or presenting the tension between technology and the environment, Tanaka deals with issues shared by the whole of humankind, which is an essentially unifying gesture.

The reactions of these composers to the concept of the East/West boundary are as varied as the meaning of universality is for each of them. Unsuk Chin stresses repeatedly that the central aim for her music to ‘speak to all...people on a certain level’.¹ Within her compositions, there are frequent allusions to and citations of Western musical and cultural

¹Yoo, ‘Western Music in Modern Korea’, 146.

traditions, as my analyses of *Alice in Wonderland* have demonstrated. The way that Chin re-imagines universality is by removing any possible association of her music with her culture of origin, even at the risk of embracing the 'old Western centre'. Chin's 'non-Korean' principle achieves this aim. Similarly, to prevent any 'excessive' interpretation of her music beyond the context of the music itself, Chin embraces self-referentiality and the notion of an 'absolute' form of music that 'speaks to itself'.² Similarly, Chin's universal ideal can be discerned from her interest in using texts non-semantically, freeing them from the constraints of a specific linguistic law. Examples of this semantic rebellion include *Acrostic Wordplay*, in which the selected texts are randomly joined together, and *Alice in Wonderland*, in which nonsense is a strong component.

Like Unsuk Chin, Tanaka avoids the practice of cultural fusion, and both composers undergo a de-contextualising and universalising process. Unlike Chin, however, Tanaka's universalising stage is not about trying to make her music as universally accessible as Chin wishes hers to be. Rather, Tanaka remakes her earlier musical inspiration to reflect a universally recognised ecological principle – one grounded in nature, as the phenomena of light dispersion and sound echo are. Tanaka's environmental awakening, presented in later pieces such as *Question of Nature* (1999) and *Children of Light* (1999), addresses the modern human condition that is shared by and facing all of humankind. In this way, Tanaka's cosmopolitan identity bypasses any sub-categorisation according to 'locality', 'nationality', 'ethnicity' or 'gender'. Tanaka's and Chin's opposing strategies in de-contextualising themselves result

²When asked by Paul Kilbey what she wants listeners to take away from her music, Chin cites Finnish contemporary composer Jukka Tiensuu's view that 'music should be able to speak for itself'. See Kilbey, Paul, 'Bachtrack Composers Project: Unsuk Chin (b.1961)', *Bachtrack* [web page] (2013) <<https://bachtrack.com/interview-unsuk-chin>>, accessed 25 Aug. 2015; As Maris Gothóni has noted, Chin's interest in self-referentiality is best evident in the works *Cantatrix Sopranica* (Soprano Singer, 2004-5), *Miroirs des temps* (1999, rev. 2001), *Kalá* (2000-01) and *snagS&Snarls* (2003-4). In these works, Chin employs palindromes, crab canons, and anagrams to reflect the linguistic features in her chosen text. In this way, Chin's music mirrors the text and vice versa. See Maris Gothóni, Howard Weiner (trans.) Programme Note to Unsuk Chin, *snagS&Snarls* (2003-04), *Boosey & Hawkes* [web page] <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Unsuk-Chin-snagS-Snarls/45588&langid=1>>, accessed 25 Aug. 2015; Unsuk Chin, Programme Notes to Unsuk Chin, *Cantatrix Sopranica* (2005), *Boosey & Hawkes* [web page] <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Unsuk-Chin-Cantatrix-Sopranica/45367>>, accessed 25 Aug. 2015.

in fundamentally disparate compositional philosophies. According to her self-referential strategy, Chin embraces a view of art for art's sake, whereas Tanaka maintains a view that both political and ethical messages should be embedded in a composition. Chen Yi, in contrast to both, aspires to interpolate her native language and culture into what she sees as a universal language: music. In so doing, she incorporates her culture of origin into the universal mainstream of contemporary music.

This thesis proposes that these 'universal' manifestations offer an alternative angle on how identity politics operate in East Asian new music. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the entanglement between identity, difference and a universal ideal is not an exclusively East Asian phenomenon. Any composers who feel themselves to be outside the mainstream (e.g. so-called 'nationalist' composers of the last century from Russia, Spain and so on) will wrestle with the relationship between identity as a marker of distinctiveness and the notion of common or universal identity. I contend that the will of these East Asian composers to universalise their compositions is a reaction to their own historical and cultural 'otherness' and their position far beyond the origins of Western classical music. The various reactions to the problem of 'otherness' that I have observed in the three case studies of this thesis reveal that their cultural difference is still crucial to their musical concerns as it influences their compositional outlook, whether directly or indirectly.

The manner in which Chen Yi and Unsuk Chin authorise themselves is radically opposite. Chen Yi's music, which employs indigenous Chinese sounds, touches upon the politics of ethnic authenticity and cultural ownership, as current research has recognised. Chin's music, as stated above, constantly refers to Western culture and so involves the same issues of cultural authenticity and ownership that Chen Yi's music does. While Chen Yi wishes to be authentically Chinese, Unsuk Chin wishes to be considered as an authentically Western composer – or at least as a 'composer' rather than a 'Korean' composer. While Chen demonstrates the authenticity of her Chinese musical knowledge and empowers her authorial

voice in that way, Chin establishes her own authorial voice by constantly citing Western culture, to demonstrate her ability to work within that tradition.

Existing literature on Unsuk Chin either focuses on aspects of her compositional technique, or interprets her as a composer who defies categorisation with her individual voice. Chin's own forceful statements – such as 'my music speaks for itself' or 'my music does not belong to any school' – bolster her critical singularity. Consequently, she steers clear of the debates on identity politics in contemporary East Asian music. However, this thesis argues that Chin's appropriation and manipulation of 'Western' materials can be seen as manifestations of identity politics and of a strategy of identity construction now emerging in East Asian new music. This new strategy involves a process of identity construction that deliberately rejects the stereotypical cross-cultural optimism of former generations and demonstrates the East Asian composer's ability to establish her or his own authorial voice within the realm of the Western classical music tradition. Chin at times mocks the Western traditions that she appropriates, as Carroll does in his *Alice in Wonderland*. Yet the Western tradition is what she engages with, and not any Asian praxis beyond that immediate context and interest.

My study reconsiders two pressing issues in current East Asian music scholarship: firstly, the matter of situating East Asian composers in the age of globalisation; and secondly, that of establishing a critical perspective which accounts for East Asia's economic, historical, geographical and political particularity, without reverting to stereotypical views.

The composer's reactions identified in my thesis correspond to the first issue of situating East Asian new music in the age of globalisation. This topic was previously addressed in the 2013 study *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West*, which moves away from postcolonial debates surrounding the Western centre versus the non-Western periphery, and towards the interactions between 'local' and 'global' by applying theories of cultural globalisation. In so doing, it refines a theoretical model

that can accommodate most cultures as part of our changing contemporary world. Yet, the subsection 'Voices of/in Art Music', which includes articles discussing contemporary Chinese, Korean and Japanese respectively, still revolves around composers being involved with their own cultural traditions. I contend that research that focuses only on the use of indigenous materials in music is inherently limiting. To facilitate the de-colonialisation of East Asian new music and to usher it into the age of globalisation, research on identity should expand the discussion to examine how composers deal with global issues, topics or materials in their music. Tanaka's music demonstrates a clear shift from an emphasis on 'West versus non-West' to a focus on worldwide concerns, such as the 1999 civil war in Kosovo; the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States; the earthquake and tsunami on the 11th of March in Japan; and environmental issues on a global scale. None of these pieces attempts to evoke local colours in order to represent the country in which the event happened, not even the piece written concerning the Japanese tsunami.

Understanding that the responses from the three composers I have focussed on are to the same dilemma of cultural difference, there are critical implications in overlooking the reactions of anti-fusion and non-fusion as identity constructs. Where on the one hand, one might ask if these forms are merely an alternative response to the current dominant narrative, on the other, one might see them as signalling an on-going tendency of East Asian composers to concern themselves with issues of identity, in what might be perceived as a 'negative' as well as a 'positive' sense. Several composers from the next generation have offered their personal opinions on this matter. Chinese composer Wang Ying (1976-), quoted in the introduction to this thesis, claims that she does not want to be the kind of composer who can only compose on the pentatonic scale.³ Japanese-born and UK-based composer Dai Fujikura (1977-) expresses a similar imperative in his programme note to *Okeanos Breeze* (2001), which was commissioned by the English contemporary music ensemble Okeanos, for a mix of Western and Japanese instruments including oboe, clarinet, viola, koto, sho, shakuhachi:

³Tian, 'Not a Chinese Composer'.

Okeanos Breeze was commissioned to celebrate Japan 2001 and was performed in parallel with the Textural Space textile exhibition. [...] I did not dwell much on all that clichéd 'crossing-the-border', 'east-meets-west' rubbish that I see in a lot of publicity material for performances using Japanese instruments.⁴

Fujikura's dismissal of cultural hybridisation as 'clichéd... rubbish' demonstrates the increasing inclination of composers to disassociate themselves from traditional stereotypes, and this tendency will require further study to secure itself as a definite movement. However, what we can discern from these reactions and statements of later generation composers is that the cross-cultural paradigm still prevails as a hegemonic narrative that composers have to resist. The interpolation of traditional elements from a composer's culture of origin has been a feature among East Asian composers of the post-war generations for two purposes: firstly, composers have used the practice to establish a distinct voice that avoids merely imitating or repeating the trends in Western avant-garde music. In other words, traditional materials have served as tools for Asian composers to distinguish themselves from the mainstream style of the Western avant-garde. Secondly, by bringing cultural traditions into contemporary musical composition, the practice has served to revive traditions that had declined due to each East Asian country's former Westernisation project. As Peter Burt quotes in his conclusion to *The Music of Toru Takemitsu*, one commentator observes that 'it is unavoidable that any Japanese professional musician, who composes or performs in the realm of Western art music, has to confront the problem of how to identify himself as a Japanese'.⁵ As this thesis has demonstrated, this practice, once regarded as a solution, has now become a problem for the East Asian composer. In fact, what now concerns this generation is how not to be an East Asian composer.

In terms of current music scholarship taking place in the geographical region of East Asia, the various examples in my case studies and the issues discussed in my thesis offer

⁴Dai Fujikura, Programme Notes to Dai Fujikura, *Okeanos Breeze* (2001), [web page] <http://www.daifujikura.com/un/lw_OkeanosBreeze.html>, accessed 27 July 2015.

⁵Burt, *The Music of Toru Takemitsu*, 235.

certain timely insights. The composer's conflict between searching for a personal voice based on cultural particularity, while avoiding the pitfalls of cultural stereotyping, has the potential to affect music scholarship about Asian countries moving forward from this point. Current music studies in East Asia seek to integrate themselves in the region in order to develop a perspective which takes into account East Asia's economic, historical, geographical and political distinctiveness. The East Asian Regional Association of the International Musicological Society (IMS-EA) was founded in 2011 with the aim to provide opportunities for exchanges between music researchers in the region. Seoul National University in Korea hosted a successful inaugural conference in 2011, 'The Current Musicological Scene in East Asia', at which Frederick Lau presented a paper entitled, 'Is There an Asian Musicology?'.⁶ The second biennial conference was held in 2013 in Taiwan, under the theme of 'Musics in the Shifting Global Order', emphasising East Asia's rapidly transforming status from 'an object of study to an active producer and promoter of knowledge'.⁷ In December of 2015, the University of Hong Kong will host the third biennial conference entitled 'The Enterprise of Musicology: Trends in Our New Age', with its programme "to examine current trends of musicological thoughts, and in particular, 'Asian trends' – if such a phenomenon could be discerned."⁸ From the central concerns of these conferences, one can discern an effort to establish an Asian perspective, rather than simply following in the footsteps of Western musicology, and to consider the rapidly changing role of East Asia in the global stage.

Towards developing a more global understanding of East Asian contributions, both Takemitsu's and Tanaka's cases offer examples of how Japan, the West and the world interact. Takemitsu's conception of nature derives from the traditional Japanese view of the intimate relationship between humanity and nature, whereas Tanaka's scientific and cognitive view

⁶Provisional Program to the Conference 'Current Musicological Scene in East Asia' [web page] (2011) <<http://www.musicology.or.kr/admin/bbs/down.php?code=symposium&idx=5153&no=1>>, accessed 01 Sept. 2015.

⁷Call for Proposals to IMS-EA 2nd Biennial Conference [web page] (2013) <<http://www.gim.ntu.edu.tw/imsea2013/Call%20for%20Papers.html>>, accessed 01 Sept. 2015.

⁸Call for Proposals to IMS-EA 3rd Biennial Conference [web page] (2015) <<http://www.imsea2015.org/#!call-for-papers/ci5n>>, accessed 01 Sept. 2015.

of the natural world clearly departs from any traditional Japanese influence, while still presenting Western tints – as a prism represents, unmistakably, the scientific revolution in the West. However, for both, their music marks an attempt to push beyond the mentality of 'Japan and the West' to address issues shared by all of humanity. The stroller presented in Takemitsu's Japanese promenade garden is not Japanese; it is every stroller in the world. More precisely, the stroller is Takemitsu showing humans how to stroll in the world. As his musical garden demonstrates, a proper stroller should be attentive to surroundings, working with the environment – with the two as equal subjects – rather than subordinating and exploiting it. Most importantly, Takemitsu's and Tanaka's distinct approaches to nature should both be incorporated into our understanding of one of many Asian perspectives. An Asian perspective need not reinvent or remake its own traditions, and the 'remote' and the 'exotic' are not the only filters through which an Asian can assert their own unique perspective in the world.

By providing a more expansive understanding of identity discourses, which includes these variegated artistic perspectives and approaches, it is hoped above all that the present study offers paths towards the critical rethinking of what counts as an Asian perspective in a global, musical world.

Advice From a Caterpillar

Lewis Carroll's Original Text Chapter

5: Advice from a Caterpillar

Who are *you*?' said the Caterpillar.

Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I—I hardly know, sir, just at present— at least I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'

'What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar sternly. 'Explain yourself!'

'I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, sir' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'

'I don't see,' said the Caterpillar.

Opera's Libretto: Who are you

Interlude I: Advice form a Caterpillar

Who are you?

Not to know is quite fine certainly is a crime

Who are you?

Who are you?

All my life I will change.

Why do you find that strange?

Who are you?

Who are you?

So you ask who I am? (Alice's line)

And to that, I ask "why?" (Alice's line)

Who are you?

Who are you?

[Frustrated and angry, Alice starts to leave]

‘I’m afraid I can’t put it more clearly,’
Alice replied very politely, ‘for I can’t
understand it myself to begin with; and
being so many different sizes in a day is
very confusing.’

‘It isn’t,’ said the Caterpillar.

‘Well, perhaps you haven’t found it
so yet,’ said Alice; ‘but when you have
to turn into a chrysalis—you will some
day, you know—and then after that into a
butterfly, I should think you’ll feel it a
little queer, won’t you?’

‘Not a bit,’ said the Caterpillar.

‘Well, perhaps your feelings may
be different,’ said Alice; ‘all I know is, it
would feel very queer to *me*.’

‘You!’ said the Caterpillar contemptu-
ously. ‘Who are *you*?’

Come back here, now, today!

It’s important, I say:

‘neath your dress,’ neath your bloomers

You must always search for tumors

Who are you?

Who are you?

Don’t forget: Keep your temper or you
never remember

Think too hard and you will explode, then
your scalp will hit the road and be eaten
by a toad.

Who are you? Who are you?

To live, you surmise, is to go on changing
size.

No corset can contain, though they will
provide some pain,

all the swelling and the bloat of your
fleshy overcoat.

Then you’ll shrink another night, and
become a parasite, squiggling, squirming
through the mud in your search for
fresher blood.

Who are you?

One side will make you grow taller, the
other side will make you grow smaller

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